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## *The Transformational Impacts of the Language Tourism Experience*

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### **Abstract**

Studying a foreign language abroad is nowadays a global experiential learning practice. This article will conceptualise and analyse language tourism taking into account the underlying principles of language learning mobility. It will also examine language travel as a transformational experience at different levels. From the point of view of second language acquisition, the benefits of linguistic immersion are numerous (Freed, 1998). The development of the learners' communicative competence is closely linked to their expectations, motivation and attitudes toward language learning (Lightbrown & Spada, 1993). Depending on the demographic characteristics of the language tourists, such as their personality traits, age or background, their evolution as foreign language learners can affect their self-determination and the way they perceive themselves, as well as their perspectives on education. This can influence both their future educational and professional success (Commission of the European Communities, 2009). On the other hand, as the Contact Hypothesis and its subsequent revisions point out, learners can also benefit from the experience of being in contact with the host community, since their values and beliefs may change (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). Their new conception of otherness can foster cultural appreciation and understanding, but the culture shock may also lead to xenophobia. Therefore, cultural connectivity and personal beingness are strongly related (Wang, 2010). In this sense, language travel can have fundamental consequences in terms of social interaction and the construction of individual citizens' social identity. Similarly, language travellers' behaviour can have a double-edged effect on the host societies.

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## Introduction

This paper focuses on the effects that the language tourism experience can have on the foreign language learners who take part in Study Abroad (SA) programmes, the identification of such learners as language tourists and the implications of this new perspective.

Academic mobility is nowadays considered one of the keys to professional success, since “learning mobility, i.e. transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new skills, is one of the fundamental ways in which individuals, particularly young people, can strengthen their future employability as well as their personal development” (Commission of the European Communities, 2009, p. 2). The students who travel overseas to acquire new knowledge and develop new linguistic skills and intercultural competences tend to be mobile workers later on, which can contribute to build up human capital with the ability to innovate and compete internationally. This can also be a way to prevent the immobility paradox, whereby the lack of skills in some specific sectors and geographical regions lead to unfilled vacancies due to an existing mismatch between labour force qualification and labour market requirements. Moreover, according to the Commission of the European Communities academic internationalisation can broaden young people’s minds in terms of global identity and citizenship, thus reducing the risk of isolationism and xenophobia.

In 2002 the European Council pinpointed linguistic competences as crucial to a competitive knowledge-based economy and contemplated foreign languages as a life-skill for the European Union citizens which allowed them to take advantage of the economic and social benefits of free circulation within the EU. The European Council adopted in 2010 the so-called *Europe 2020 strategy*, including two programmes: *An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*, which stresses the relevance of language competences to a more dynamic labour market, and *Youth on the Move*, which highlights the imperative need for improved language skills to enable mobility. In addition, the Council Recommendation of 28 June 2011 recognized that language learning and intercultural competences must be acquired from early stages in both general and vocational education. As limited foreign language skills are still seen as an obstacle for learning and professional mobility, one of the main strategic objectives of EU policy is offer wide access to it. Therefore, the European Council invites the member states to “support mobility for the purpose of language learning, in order to help learners to overcome initial linguistic barriers and motivate them to acquire competence in at least two foreign languages” (Council of the European Union, 2011, OJ C 372/30).

Throughout the world, people travel abroad to learn a foreign language in different ways, and the consequences of such experience have been studied quite extensively since the late 1960s, although research has referred to a limited range of SA contexts and target languages (Churchill & DuFon, 2006). The next section will draw on the works carried out by a number of scholars in different periods to provide a general overview of the main findings. This exploratory review will be followed by a conceptualisation of language tourism analysing the determining factors, components and impacts associated to this phenomenon.

## Literature Review

### *SA research focus*

According to Freed (1998) the traditional research topics in this field examined the linguistic advantages of SA programmes -i.e. what was acquired by the participants, mainly with regard to oral development- and their perceptions of the SA experience, as well as how those perceptions shaped their Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Analytical research eventually shifted its focus from general proficiency to a more detailed look at specific linguistic gains, for example in terms of grammatical and prosodic characteristics or achievements in pragmatics and literacy skills, i.e. reading and writing (Churchill & DuFon, 2006).

Scholars also started to compare SLA at home and in SA environments, as well as how different learners' abilities developed in singular ways, how students fostered their own SLA by using diverse strategies and the role of learners' motivation and anxiety in this process. Another area of interest has been the effects of several aspects of SA programme design in SLA such as length, housing, leisure activities, classroom arrangements and learner grouping. Besides, the mediation of the host context and cultural differentiation in the provision of learning opportunities has also been researched (Churchill & DuFon, 2006).

When it comes to analysing the variables involved in SLA a number of elements come to play. Demographic aspects like age have been singled out (Long, 1990; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Lightbrown & Spada, 1993). Gender also seems to be a feature that can determine SLA in some specific cultures (Siegal, 1995; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Isabelli-García, 2006), particularly for female students, who sometimes might find it harder to benefit from interactions with the local community.

Other factors, like the learners' aptitude and their personality, can also intervene in SLA (Skehan, 1989; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Lightbrown & Spada, 1993). The most successful learners seem to be those who are more open and mature, who avoid maintaining a close contact with their home, try to integrate in host community or host family activities, and are persistent, managing to overcome negative encounters in their SA destinations (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002; Dewey, 2008).

The idiosyncrasy of the mother tongue and the target language (Freed, 1998), as well as the learners' perceived target language proficiency at the beginning of their SA stay, may also influence SLA (Yashima, 1999). Lower level students are supposed to perceive more linguistic gains, since changes in their language proficiency are more noticeable. However, the fact that they might see themselves as not being fit enough may affect their self-confidence, which can undermine their SLA. On the other hand, more advanced students are supposedly better prepared linguistically and culturally to make the most of their SA experience. Yet, because of the ceiling effect of some assessment instruments, which sometimes fail to measure linguistic gains at higher levels, their progress might go less unnoticed.

The students' background as language learners can also have a positive or negative repercussion on their future SLA experiences (Freed, 1998), as well as their learning preferences in relation to a number of aspects, such as sensory modes (Reid, 1987),

learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), cognitive styles (Larsen-Freeman, 1991) or methodological approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The length of SA programmes is believed to correlate to SLA too, as longer periods may offer more opportunities for language exposure and interaction. Nevertheless, even short SA programmes taking place over a semester or less have been reported to lead to linguistic gains in different areas (Warden et al., 1995; Campbell, 1996; Simões, 1996; Matsumura, 2001).

Another relevant issue is the SA learning context, both in terms of formal classroom setting and out-of-class environment (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004). To this respect, the leisure activities the participants engage in during their stay can be a more significant facilitator for their SLA than the actual formal instruction they receive (Fraser, 2002). Leisure pursuits can promote meaningful contact with native speakers and provide a valuable source for unmodified input. This can have important implications with regard to learners' attitudes and beliefs.

#### *Learner connectivity*

Wang (2010) states that language learners' identity is somehow related to the degree of belonging to a certain host community. Learners' identity, together with the quality and quantity of interaction they have with the locals, is a vital component of SLA. Language socialization entails benefitting from good opportunities to interact meaningfully using the target language.

If foreign language students manage to see their foreignness as a positive starting point and reconsider their own identities and contact expectations with the host community, they may succeed in connecting with host members (Papatsiba, 2006). Participants in SA programmes often expect that their communicative competence in the target language will be boosted by being immersed in the host culture. However, research has questioned this assumption, since sometimes the contact with the host community has been reported to be less intense and frequent than expected (Pellegrino, 1998; Rivers, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998a).

Language learners' attitudes and motivations play a major role in their SLA. Their beliefs regarding the language learning environment and the way they are perceived by locals in their SA destinations can influence their behaviour to their advantage or to their disadvantage. In turn, the way locals deal with learners can alter their attitudes (Isabelli-García, 2006).

Anxiety is related to learners' self-perceptions. Contrary to what students experience in a traditional classroom setting at home, SA sojourners can suffer from the negative consequences of culture clash and communication breakdown at their SA destinations. The evidence gathered by Tanaka and Ellis (2003) seems to suggest that some adjustment is needed so that anxiety eventually decreases, which is key for social integration into the host culture.

Proficiency can be improved effectively by interacting and relating to the locals in SA stays. When language students do not regard their proficiency in the target language as a barrier and are rather motivated than anxious, their interaction with native

speakers may be enhanced, which can increase learners' self-confidence. This can make them feel even more motivated, proficient and satisfied with their SA experience (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004).

On the other hand, if any cross-cultural misunderstanding occurs, if the hosts believe that the students' proficiency in the target language really is an impediment, or if the students are not able or willing to follow the local norms -for instance in terms of dress code or appearance, address forms, roles and participation in local activities- interaction may be restricted (Knight, & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002). This can cause rejection from the host community or generate a reduced or shallow contact. As a consequence, learners might withdraw, which can interfere with their SLA negatively and origin disappointment. Instead, persistent learners might struggle to improve their communicative competence, overcome the obstacles they come across and keep in touch with native speakers in their SA destinations. From the locals' point of view, this might make them more interesting and acceptable, which can encourage further interactions and result in successful SLA (Campbell, 1996; Kinginger & Farrell, 2004; Papatsiba, 2006).

For SLA to be effective the interactions of the participants in SA programmes should provide opportunities for both unmodified input and foreigner talk (Churchill & DuFon, 2006). Research has also concluded that it is essential to engage in individual and group contact. If students interact individually, the input they are exposed to can be more finely adapted to their proficiency level, whereas group interactions can offer them the possibility of tuning out if they consider that they are beyond their abilities, or tuning in to learn from the advantageous situation of participating in higher level conversations (Warden et al. 1995; Campbell, 1996).

Therefore, it is important for participants in SA programmes to try and integrate in different types of social networks. Apart from interacting with teachers inside and outside the classroom, students can socialise with the host community members by taking part in leisure options such as sports or social clubs or even do some volunteer community service, an internship, or a part-time job. This can promote significant social connections and linguistic development (Fraser, 2002). Evidence seems to support the notion that the most outstanding linguistic benefits come from friendship with local peers (Dewey, Belnap & Hillstrom, 2013).

The language students who make homestay arrangements abroad can have another supply of authentic input from their host families whenever the family dynamics -for example, with regard to work schedules- make it possible. Such students must be willing to be an active host member and try to cut down their ties back home (Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart, 2002). Some studies have examined the roles adopted by the students and the host families (Wilkinson, 1998a, 1998b; McMeekin, 2006) or the inconvenience of sharing a homestay lodging with other students (Churchill, 2003).

The relationship between fellow SA participants has also been analysed. Apparently, having a similar origin turns out to be useful in terms of logistic support at the SA destination, although it obviously does not foster SLA. In contrast, interacting with other SA participants with different nationalities seems to offer good chances to practice the target language without feeling overwhelmed by the host culture, and it

may also relieve the pressure that the SA experience can put on some students' shoulders (Wilkinson, 1998b).

### *Intercultural contact*

Intergroup contact has been largely researched. According to the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), also known as Intergroup Contact Theory, given the adequate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between different ethnic group members. Communication can lead to better intercultural understanding and interactions, since any contact can change the attitudes and behaviours of one group or individual with respect to another group, and those changes will determine any further contact.

Researchers have argued that some requirements must be met for such changes to take place (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Brown & Hewstone, 2005). To start with, both groups should have similar status, backgrounds, qualities and characteristics, and cooperate in the pursuit of similar objectives and interests. They should also have institutional support and engage in informal, personal relationships that can result in potential friendship. Moreover, group members should get closer through interpersonal and intergroup interactions which they regard as valuable.

Drawing on the Contact Hypothesis, a number of indirect intergroup contact strategies have been considered to promote positive intergroup attitudes. For instance, extended contact -i.e. knowing that a member of one's own group is the friend of an outgroup member- (Wright et al., 1997), or simply observing an ingroup member interact with an outgroup member (Mazziotta, Mummendey & Wright, 2011). Other indirect strategies also include imagined contact with a member of an outgroup (Crisp & Turner, 2009) and parasocial contact -i.e. interacting with an outgroup member through the media (Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes, 2005).

The cultural and psychological changes deriving from intercultural contact through acculturation processes have also been studied. Berry (1997) maintains that the ethnic groups and their individual members who form every plural society must face the question of how to acculturate. In this author's view "strategies with respect to two major issues are usually worked out by groups and individuals in their daily encounters with each other. These issues are: cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for); and contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves) (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

Following Berry's acculturation attitudes model, the degree of tendency to any of the two above mentioned issues leads to four different attitudinal responses or acculturation strategies. Assimilation is related to the fact that individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and wish to interact closely and regularly with the host culture. In contrast, separation occurs when individuals wish to maintain their original culture and avoid connecting with the host culture. Integration takes place when individuals are interested in holding on to their original culture, while at the same time extending relations in the host community. Finally, marginalisation arises if individuals have little possibility or interest in maintaining their original cultural



identity (usually because of imposed cultural loss), and are not interested in keeping contact with the host community either (usually due to exclusion or discrimination) (Berry, 1997).

Building on Berry's framework, Ward (1999) distinguishes between socio-cultural adjustment and psychological adjustment. The former is associated to the development of everyday operational skills in the host context, whereas the latter refers to personal well-being and psychological adaptation. As indicated by Ward (1999) sojourners' socio-cultural adjustment depends on the cultural proximity between their original culture and the host culture, the amount of contact with the host community members, the length of stay in the host destination, and the sojourners' sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

The relationship between intercultural contact mainly generated by international tourism, interethnic/language attitudes and second language (L2) motivation was addressed by Dörnyei and Csizér (2005). According to these authors, intercultural contact is both a means and an end in SLA since "on one hand, one of the main aims of learning second languages has traditionally been seen to establish meaningful contact across cultures, because L2 proficiency, by definition, creates the medium of communication between members of different ethnolinguistic communities. On the other hand, interethnic contact also creates opportunities for developing language skills and acts as a powerful influence shaping the learners' attitudinal/motivational disposition, thereby promoting motivated learning behavior" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005, p. 328).

These authors suggest that, generally speaking, from a Contact Hypothesis perspective the intercultural encounters between the tourists and the residents at a tourist location do not hold the required conditions for optimal contact, particularly in mature destinations. However, this may not be the case of language tourism, as language tourists' status and characteristics can be similar to those of some host community members, so social distance may not be an obstacle. They may also share interests, engage in cooperative tasks, and develop interpersonal and intergroup relationships, as the above mentioned empirical research sustains, provided that there is some degree of both socio-cultural and psychological adjustment and that assimilation or integration strategies come to play. This can be very favourable not only for the language tourists, but also for the host community members, who can benefit from the positive impacts of tourism if developed sustainably, for example in terms of opening the locals' minds to foreign cultures, learning foreign languages, and getting used to tolerating different patterns of behaviour and ideologies. Of course, if not managed properly, language tourism can also bring about separation, marginalisation or even xenophobia -among other negative effects- for both tourists and residents, hence the importance of studying this issue in depth.

Last but not least, as mentioned in the introduction language tourism often has full institutional endorsement. Indeed, language travel is nowadays regarded as a need by institutions like the Council of Europe and is promoted by public and private administrations. Yet, no official definition of language tourism has been articulated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the international leading United Nations agency in the field of tourism. The following sections will delve into this concept.

## Conceptualising Language Tourism

### *What is language tourism?*

The student who travels abroad to take part in a SA sojourn will be using several services provided by the tourism industry and may undertake a number of tourist activities.

According to the UNWTO tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. Tourism has implications on the destinations' economy, natural and built environment, and local population, as well as on the tourists themselves. The three basic forms of tourism -domestic tourism, inbound tourism, and outbound tourism- can be combined and originate internal tourism, national tourism and international tourism.

Travellers move between different geographic locations for any purpose and duration. The visitor is a particular type of traveller, so tourism is a subset of travel. A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a destination outside his/her usual place of residence for less than a year for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purposes) other than to be employed by a resident organization in the place visited. A visitor is classified as a tourist or overnight visitor if his/her trip includes an overnight stay. Otherwise, he/she is considered a same-day visitor or excursionist.

Ritchie (2003) states that tourism as an integrated system of components includes a number of interrelated factors, namely a demand side -the tourist market and their characteristics-, a supply side -the tourism industry-, a tourism impact side, and an origin-destination approach related to the interdependence between inbound, outbound and transit destinations and their demand, supply and impacts.

The UNWTO classifies tourism trips according to the main purpose. The category of education and training includes, for example, taking short-term courses paid by employers (excluding on-the-job training), following study programs (formal or informal) or acquiring specific skills through formal courses, such as language courses.

The Grand Tour, a study trip around Europe first carried out by young British scholars and aristocrats during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, is usually viewed as the beginning of cultural and educational tourism. Nowadays, the tourism experiences with educational and learning elements -such as language tourism- are becoming increasingly popular due to the promotion of lifelong learning and higher education in Western cultures, coupled with the willingness to explore postmodern tourist experiences in alternative tourist destinations (Ritchie, 2003).

As maintained by Smith and Jenner (1997), tourism can always have an educational component as it broadens the mind, but specific educational tourism market segments can be identified within the broad educational tourism field. Other authors associate educational tourism to adult extension programs and cultural educational tourism (Kalinowski & Weiler, 1992; Wood, 2001).

Ritchie (2003) distinguishes between two types of educational tourism: travel for purposeful study and travel incorporating learning elements. When presenting the dichotomy of tourism-first versus education-first educational tourism experiences, he argues that education-first segments like language schools students primarily motivated by learning may be considered tourists even if they are not regarded as such or if tourism is not a priority for them. Indeed, they have tourism-related impacts and needs, not to mention the regional development implications of their activities (i.e. visits to cultural tourist sites) for the target destinations.

Ritchie conceptualises educational tourism by proposing a systems and segmentation approach depicting the educational tourism market system which “illustrates the elements and settings that combine to provide the educational tourist experience and helps to conceptualize potential research avenues” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 14). From the demand or consumer perspective, Ritchie’s model comprises the educational tourist demographics, motivations, perceptions and travel behaviour; the personal impacts resulting from their experiences; and the interrelationship of these factors. From a supply or product perspective, the model includes the nature of the primary educational tourism product (formed by the combination of primary and secondary suppliers); the possible managing and marketing structures involved; the resource base for this form of tourism; the destination impacts it produces; and the interrelationship of all these factors.

The fragmentation of this sector due to the wide range of organisations involved in the provision, marketing and management of the educational tourism experience may be an obstacle for the stakeholders’ operational development. This, in turn, can limit the potential benefits for the target destinations, the tourism industry and the tourists. Therefore, it is particularly relevant to understand the complexities of this phenomenon through a systems-based approach.

On the other hand, segmentation -i.e. classifying consumers in sub-groups based on similar characteristics, needs and behaviour- can also help to further understand and manage educational consumers and the educational tourism industry. According to Ritchie, the three main types of segmentation are demographic and socio-economic (related to age, gender, income, employment and education), geographic (related to climate, location) and psychographic (including psychological concepts such as attitudes, values, opinions and personality characteristics). Ritchie analyses four major educational tourism segments: general educational tourism for both the youth and adult market; adult and senior’s educational tourism; international and domestic schools’ tourism; and international and domestic university/college students’ tourism.

A segmentation-based approach is useful in order to study the demand side of the educational tourism market system and the personal impacts, as well as the supply side, from both the education and tourism perspectives. It is important to know each segment’s features, needs, perceptions, motivations and preferences and how best manage the educational tourism experience, since a special interest determines the types of experience tourists look for, the type of product and setting which should be supplied to satisfy them, and the challenges associated with the marketing, managing and planning of this niche market.

In line with the guidelines of the UNWTO, Ritchie defines the educational tourist or educational stay-over as “a person who is away from their home town or country overnight, where education and learning are either the main reason for their trip or where education and learning are secondary reasons but are perceived as an important way of using leisure time” (Ritchie, 2003, p.18). In contrast, an excursionist or same-day educational tourist engages in a learning activity without staying overnight away from their home.

As for what constitutes educational tourism, Ritchie asserts that it is a “tourist activity undertaken by those who are undertaking an overnight vacation and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom education and learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip. This can include general educational tourism and adult study tours, international and domestic university and school students’ travel, including language schools, school excursions and exchange programmes. Educational tourism can be independently or formally organized and can be undertaken in a variety of natural or human-made settings” (Ritchie, 2003, p.18).

Building on the above mentioned considerations, following Ritchie and the UNWTO language tourism may be defined as a tourist activity undertaken by those travellers (or educational tourists) taking a trip which includes at least an overnight stay in a destination outside their usual place of residence for less than a year and for whom language learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip.

#### *Towards a working model of the language tourism market system*

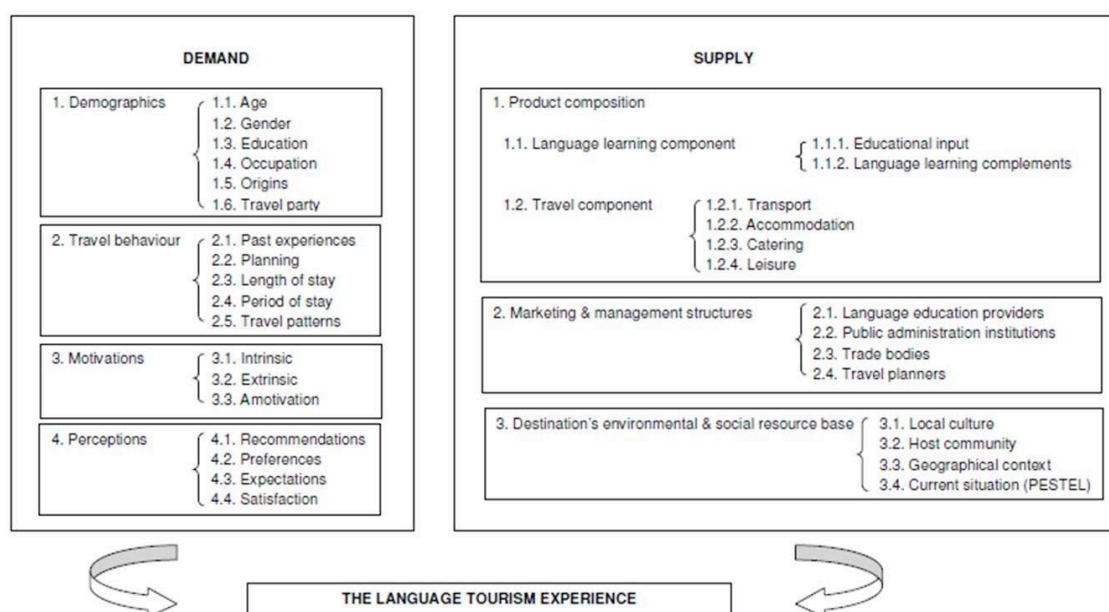
The conceptualisation of language tourism presented in this article is based on Ritchie’s model of the educational tourism market system and adapted to the idiosyncratic features of this specific niche.

The model presented in this article aims at putting a spotlight on the main ingredients that make up the language tourism experience concerning both the demand and the supply. From the point of view of the consumer (the demand), the demographic aspects include the language tourists' age, gender, education, occupation, origins and travel party (i.e. the people they travel with). When focusing on the demand the consumers' travel behaviour also needs to be taken into account by looking at their past language tourism experiences, the length and period of their current stay, who has been in charge of the planning, and the travel patterns followed before, during and after their current stay. In addition, the consumers' motivations and perceptions must be considered. The fact that consumers are intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, or amotivated has some bearing on the experience. Similarly, their perceptions in terms of whose recommendation they may have followed, their preferences regarding a wide range of travel and language learning factors, their expectations and degree of satisfaction are also determining.

With respect to the language tourism product (the supply), three key elements must be born in mind: the product composition, the marketing and management structures in charge of planning, promoting, selling and providing such product, and the language tourism destinations' environmental and social resource base. The language tourism product is made of a language learning component -i.e. some sort of educational input plus several possible language learning complements- and a travel component, which

may include transport, accommodation, catering and leisure arrangements. As for the marketing and management structures involved, they can range from language education providers, to public administration institutions, to trade bodies or travel planners. Finally, in order to analyse the environmental and social resource base at the target destinations the local culture and host community need to be studied, as well as their geographical context and their current situation relating to the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors that define them. Figure 1 offers an overview of the language tourism market system and its constituents.

Figure 1. The language tourism market system



Source: Own study

This framework can be used as a starting point to examine the factors that influence the language tourism experience, their interrelations and the impacts they produce at different levels. The approaches and lines of research deriving from this model are numerous and will hopefully take shape through subsequent studies.

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## *Contrastive Analysis of French and Yoruba Language*

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### **Abstract**

Language as an instrument of communication tends to produce divers effects through linguistic structure. All communication is grammatically governed by certain rules that have to be internalized in the listeners and speakers subconscious. It is evident however ,that the grammatical analysis of words are areas of importance in the study of language system. This paper tends to show the contrastive mode of the Yoruba vowel and consonants as compared with that of French language. The study reveals that vowel and consonant sounds in Yoruba language are always tonal and it is often accompanied by melodic register which has a harmonious and vocalic mechanism for oral expression. A process which helps in effective communication and shows an exceptional usefulness of sounds in Yoruba as when compared with French Language.

Keywords : Yoruba, French, Vowel, Consonant, Phonology, Communication and Language

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## Introduction

Language is a body of words common to a people of the same community or nation, the same geographical area, or the same cultural tradition. It is the human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication. The scientific study of language is called linguistics. As an object of linguistic study, "language" has two primary meanings: an abstract concept, and a specific linguistic system, just like in "French". In his definition of language as the modern discipline of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, explicitly formulated the distinction using the French word "*langage*" for language as a concept, "*langue*" as a specific instance of a language system, and "*parole*" for the concrete usage of speech in a particular language. Its structure is made up of significant units which when put together, form a complete structure of a sentence. According to Emile and Paytard (1970) : « The channels of communication are defined by the physical, social and psychological situation, by means of technic in which spoken words serve as a means of transmitting a message to an addressee of choice » (14). This reveals that language is the medium through which an information is communicated to someone or a group of people in a given situation. The aim of speaking and writing a language is basically to produce a pattern for transmitting a message. We cannot talk of communication without making mention of the message carried by the act. The message of communication of a given language reflects on the behaviour of the receiver. Jakobson stated that : « the message requires a contact, a physical channel and a psychological connection » (Jakobson 214). Each language of communication must have rules and according to Chomsky cited by Ahmadu Usman 2009, « to learn a language is to internalize the rules that govern the use of the language ». Our focus in this study is to do a contrastive analysis of sound in Yoruba in relation with French language. We shall expose the different types of sound (vowels and consonants) and expose areas of contrast.

## Insight on Yoruba

The different tradition of the Yoruba people trace its origin from Ile-Ife. The language is spoken by close to twenty five million people. Yoruba is one of the three major national languages in Nigeria, and also in some part of Benin and Togo. Yoruba is also spoken in Latin America such as Cuba and in Brazil by the descendants of African slaves. Yoruba is sub-divided in many dialects but among all there is a standard dialect spoken by the people of Oyo in Nigeria. It is obviously a tonal language due to its linguistic characteristics. Normally there are three levels of tone in the language which are « High » « Low » « Silent ». These levels of tones help in the articulation of different sounds in the language. Yoruba is known to be one of Nigeria's major languages and it has rich linguistic elements since inception. The language is made up of important vocabularies which varies according to the different dialects. The development of Yoruba Orthography dates back to the missionary era, with Rev. John Raban taking the lead. Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther adapted some part of Raban's Yoruba Orthography. There were a lot of academic discussions on the fundamentals as Yoruba language in the area of vowels and consonants, and this brought about many revisions of the Orthographies. In many of these Orthographic revision exercises, French Language and other European Languages were used as models, as efforts were made to modify some Yoruba words to be in harmony with

other words in other languages. There were controversies over the use of (kp) and (gb) which are in Yoruba but which are not in the European Languages. A comparative study of French and Yoruba phonological systems will reveal the differences which are assumed to be the cause of linguistic interference and the source of difficulties for second language learners, especially Yoruba learning French.

### **Essence of Contrastive Studies**

Language educators at both the secondary and tertiary Institutions and, indeed, at the primary school level are often confronted with pedagogical problems in the teaching of French. To many of the language teachers these problems defy solution. Their knowledge of theoretical linguistics is never brought to bear on language teaching and learning. The teacher has to teach French to students from diverse socio-linguistic backgrounds. To succeed as a language teacher, he needs to carry out comparative contrastive studies of French and the native languages of his students. The teacher who has made a comparative study of the phonological systems of the second language (French) and the native language (Yoruba) will know better what the real learning problems of his students are and how to solve them. The issue of inter-language and hence inter-lingual errors or even errors arising from interference can be tackled by contrastive analysis. The language teacher is also faced with the need to prepare teaching materials that meet the particular needs of his students. A linguistic comparison is basic and inescapable if the teacher wishes to make progress and not to just reshuffle the same old materials. Where the language teacher is given prescribed textbooks to use and he finds the book inadequate in both the linguistic and cultural contexts, his systematic comparative study will help in preparing supplementary exercises on very important aspects of the textbook.

A lot of achievements have been made in the area of language testing, especially in tests of French as a second language, as a result of linguistic comparison of French and students' native language. Although there are linguistic Universals, there are nonetheless features that are unique to languages. This uniqueness has to be borne in mind while constructing language tests. The application of linguistic comparison to language testing is important.

Contrastive linguistic study is capable of removing cross-cultural and cross-linguistic misinterpretation. If we ignore cultural and linguistic differences, we will misjudge our cultural neighbours as we constantly do today. Obviously, a form of language behavior which is generally comprehensive may have another meaning to others.

### **Statement of The Problems**

French and Yoruba, as languages, have co-existed in the discourse of Yoruba - French bilinguals for some time now. Historically, the growth of Yoruba -French bilingualism has not been without problems. French is a contact language in Nigeria, and in a situation such as this, the point of contact is usually the bilingual individual who does not know how and why he code-mixes and code-switches in his utterances nor does he know the root cause of language learning difficulties. Understanding more about language phenomenon is the general concern of linguists the world over. People hold different opinions about different languages. Some anthropological linguists who studied African languages viewed African Languages as little more than

echoes of noise, and that they are no match for European languages. Later studies (Greenberg 1970) revealed that the notion that African languages were inferior was disproved, as languages are of equal importance, and moreover have a lot of things in common. This paper aims at finding solutions to these research problems:

- a. Are there really similarities and differences between French and Yoruba phonological systems?
- b. In what areas are these similarities and differences?
- c. Do the differences, pose any learning problem?
- d. How are these learning problems solved?
- e. To what extent do the similarities facilitate or enhance learning of either of the two languages?
- f. What does a teacher gain from a contrastive study of this type?

In an attempt to solve these problems the paper covered certain grounds such as Alphabets, vowels, consonants, phonemes, and affixation.

### French and Yoruba Alphabets

French and Yoruba orthographic symbols differ significantly, though the direction of writing of both languages is from left to right thus:

French: a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Yoruba: a b d e e f g gb h i j k l m n o o p r s s t u w y

Yoruba alphabetical system has the consonantal sound /g/ as in "igba (Calabash), "agbe" (gourd) and "agbalagba" (adult). There is also the vowel sound (o). These two orthographies (gb) and (o) have no equivalent in French alphabet. There is however the absence of c,q,v,x,z, in Yoruba alphabet. One can then begin to appreciate the initial disparity between Yoruba and French.

### Vowel and Consonant Systems

In both French and Yoruba we have the following consonantal sounds:

French: /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /f/, /v/, [ʃ], [ʒ], /s/, [ʒ], /z/, /m/, /n/, /d/, /l/, /r/

Yoruba: /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /kp/, /gb/, /f/, /s/, /s/, /h/, /dz/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /l/, /j/, /w/.

Consonantal phonemes unique to Yoruba are: /gb/, /kp/ and /dz/.

Consonantal phonemes unique to French are: [ʃ], [ʒ], [ʒ]

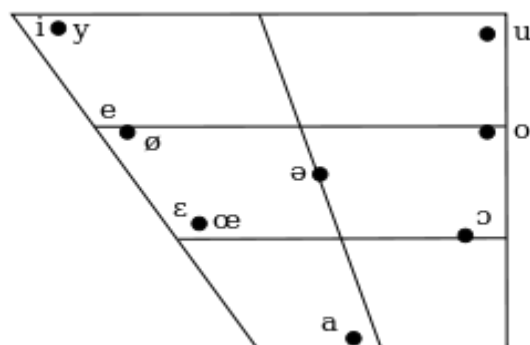
There are differences too in the French and Yoruba vowel phonemes, thus:

French vowels

French: /a/, /ã/, /e/ / ε /, / ə /, /i/, /o/, /ɔ/ /õ/, /œ/, /ø/, /u/, /y/

French semi-vowels: /j/, /ɥ/, /w/

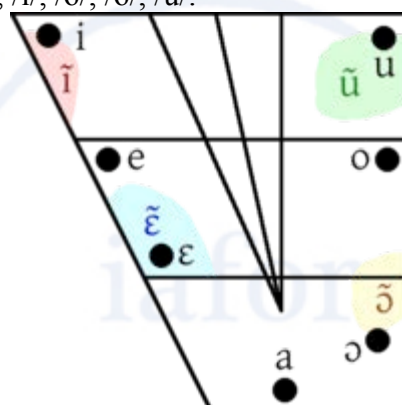
### Diagram of French Vowels



Oral vowels of French from Fougeron & Smith (1993:73).

### Diagram of Yoruba Vowels

Yoruba vowels: /a/, /e/, /ɛ/, /i/, /o/, /ɔ/, /u/.



Unrounded vowels are shown to the left of the dots and rounded vowels to the right. The speaker in question does not exhibit a contrast between /a/ and /ɑ/. Standard French contrasts up to thirteen oral vowels and up to four nasal vowels. The black points indicate the oral vowels and the coloured regions show the nasal vowels. It is necessary to note that the open vowels are pronounced with a traditional tendency of the language. Eg. *e* (*ɛ*) = [ɛ], *o* (*ɔ*) = [ɔ] and for [ʃ], note *ɕ* (*ʃ*). lastly, the digramme *gb* carries a labio-vélaire opening [g̠b̠] (it is pronounced by an opening of a single movement not as it is in a sequence [g] + [b]). In Bénin for example, Yoruba is written with the alphabet of the national language and this shows the difference between Yoruba of Nigeria and that of Benin.

### Oral Vowels and Nasal Vowels of Yoruba

Close: [i], [u], [ĩ], [ũ]

Mid close: [e], [o]

Mid open: [ɛ], [ɔ]

Open: [a]

The nature of the first nasal vowels [ã] is always used in the Oyo dialect. This vowel is contrastive. It is always in function with vowel [ɔ]. It should be noted that nasal vowels are often represented by these vowels « n », « in », « un », « en », « on ». but there are exceptions in the case of [n̠] and [ɪ] for example : « in̠ » which means « to the stomach » is pronounced as « in̠ũ ».

The following areas of difficulty for Yorubas learning French have been identified :

French Vowel Phonemes: /ã /, /ø/, /œ/, /õ/ and /y/

French Consonant Phonemes: /ʒ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /z/, /v/.

Yoruba learning French have difficulties in distinguishing /ã/ and /e /; /u/, /y/; /i/ and /ɛ/. They pronounced "fille" and "fill" "vide" and "fide"; "comme" and "com" alike without any distinction of vowel length and quality. They also substitute /f/ for /v/, /s/ for /z/, /t/ for /ø/ and /d/ for /ə/.

Absence of some phonemes in Yoruba are responsible for the following errors. "Zaria" pronounced as "Saria" "Vide" as "Fide".

The low pitch consonants such as [t] [k] are hardly used but the achievement of [r] is observed in the Lagos dialect. There are no closing and centering diphthongs in Yoruba hence Yoruba learners of French find difficulties in the following: /ø/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /z/, /v/ and /ã/. Syllable final consonants are difficult for Yoruba students learning French. They find it difficult to distinguish between voiced and voiceless final consonants. The reason might be that most Yoruba words end in vowels and not in consonants. This is responsible for vowel insertion in French spelling, as in "écolu" for "école", "vieni" for "vien", etc. Consonant clusters whether initial or final in a syllable are also problematic, and there is the tendency for Yoruba students to drop one of the consonants, or even substitute the consonant cluster with another phoneme entirely. The consonant "l" is often not pronounced in words which end with "l" as in collatéral, communale, comportemental, etc. Significant differences are also found in the stress and intonation patterns of French and Yoruba. Yoruba is a tonal language while French is not. French language relies on stress which is achieved by length, higher pitch or greater amplitude. This disparity makes Yoruba learners of French pronounce words or even speak without stressing any syllable or morpheme in sentences. Stress and intonation in French are capable of bringing about changes in meanings. Tones too in Yoruba are capable of bringing about changes in meaning, as in Oko (spear), Oko (hoe), Oko (husband) Oko (Vehicle), Igba (palm-wine tapper's climbing rope), Igba (garden egg), and Igba (time/period).

## Findings

Analysis of French and Yoruba phonological systems has revealed that: there are similarities and differences between French and Yoruba phonological systems.

## Differences

- a. Alphabets: there are 26 letters of the alphabet in French language, while there are 25 in Yoruba.
- b. Consonant and vowel phonemes: there are more consonant and vowel phonemes in French. There are no closing and centering diphthongs in Yoruba.
- c. Stress and Intonation: Yoruba has no stress and intonational pattern. Yoruba is however a tonal language.
- d. Vowel Harmony: Yoruba morphological system does not allow consonant clusters, a vowel must always follow a consonant. Most Yoruba words begin with vowels and end with vowels. This phenomenon accounts for the reason for vowel epenthesis in French loanwords.

Inflectional morpheme: Yoruba has no inflectional morphemes of the French types

**Similarities:**

- a. Assimilation and Contraction. Both languages have these processes.
- b. Morphemes: There are free, bound and derivational morphemes in French and Yoruba.
- c. Synonyms and Antonyms: French and Yoruba have them.

It has been noted that the higher the degree of similarity between French and Yoruba phonological and morphological systems, the easier it is for the speakers of Yoruba to learn French. New or strange phonemes cause considerable "difficulty in bilingual education. The ease or difficulty of learning phonological categories, experienced by Yoruba's learning French can be attributed to:

- (a) The competing phonemic categories of French and Yoruba,
- (b) The allophonic membership of the phonemic categories, and
- (c) The distributions of the categories within their respective systems.

There are errors arising from interference, interlanguage phenomenon, imperfect mastery of first language (L1) before learning of a second language, and errors emanating from the linguistic differences between the two languages. The similarities have a facilitatory effect on learning because the systems in Yoruba can be transferred to French.

**Conclusion**

A teacher who has done a contrastive study of French and Yoruba has a lot to gain. He knows the similarities and differences between the two languages. He also gets into grips with students' learning problems and has an insight into what constitutes an error and what is deviation from the norm. He understands the necessity for tact, patience and accommodation in teaching. Such a teacher is then better prepared in terms of the best methods of teaching any language. Contrastive analysis of French and Yoruba is a good method. The use of minimal pairs for teaching pronunciation and spelling has a salutary effect on teaching. Comparison of languages and cultures is very significant for these reasons:

- a. the need for the evaluation of language and culture contents of textbooks,
- b. the teacher has to prepare new teaching materials,
- c. the necessity for supplementing inadequate materials and
- d. for diagnosing difficulties arising from language variation or dialect differences. It is also significant for language testing purposes. Comparison exposes the teacher to diverse language testing techniques and enhances cultural understanding. It also helps in language research.

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## *The Attitude toward English One Course of the First Year Students*

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### **Abstract**

English 1 is a compulsory course that all first year students in Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya Songkhla have to study. The achievement of each student was not satisfying. There were a large number of students who did not pass. The information from the students showed that some of them had taken this course more than three or four times until they were retired as a result of this. Teachers try to help the students. Many possible techniques have been used such as tutorial sessions, additional assignment, adjustment of textbooks, including conducting research to help them. However, a number of students still failed in this course.

The objective of this research was to investigate the attitude of the first year students on English 1. The participants were 297 first year students taking the course in Semester 1 Academic year 2012. The questionnaire is a five rating scale of 2 sections: general information section and attitude section.

It was revealed that the students' attitude was; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity".

The analysis showed that most of the cases the students' attitude significantly depend on gender and the faculty they are studying.

Key words: Attitude, English One Course

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## Introduction

English is an important foreign language and it is a compulsory subject in all levels of the education (Ministry of Education, 2010). At Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla (RMUTSV), English 1 is a compulsory subject for first year students, in their first semester regardless of their majors. However, a number of students who didn't pass in this subject are still very high (see Table 1). All teachers who respond in this subject try to solve the problem by doing researches, providing extra courses or giving extra exercises but we still have a number of students who aren't successful in this course. This may be caused by students who have negative attitudes toward English or they don't see the importance of the English language in their lives. They only face or use the Thai language. Thus, there seems to be an urgent need to know the students' attitude in order to find ways to solve the problems and help students to succeed in their studies and gain more knowledge in English to prepare them for the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

**Table 1** Number of Students who take English 1 with Number of Students who pass and don't pass the course

Year	Number of Students	Pass	Fail	Percentage
2011	1,692	1,337	355	20.98
2010	1,775	1,532	243	13.69
2009	941	812	129	13.70
2008	682	593	89	13.04
2007	663	584	79	11.91
<b>Total</b>	5,753	4,858	895	15.56

**Source:** Office of Academic Promotion and Registration, RMUTSV

### The aims of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the first year students' attitude toward English 1 course as attitude has an important role to help or block students from gaining knowledge. The obtained information will provide useful information as sources or positive guides for teachers in improving the course and help to increase number of students who pass the English 1 course.

### The scope of the study

The study was limited to find the first year students' attitude of the English 1 course at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla. Therefore, the results of the study are applicable only to this university.

### Population and subject

The population of the study were 1,367 students who passed the University Entrance Examination and were studying in the first year for a bachelor's degree at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya Songkhla. They took the English 1 course as a compulsory subject in the first semester of academic year 2012. By using

Krejcie & Morgan, the 297 subject were obtained and were selected by stratified sampling and simple random sampling from the name lists of those population.

## Literature Review

An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols (Hogg & Vaughan 2005, p. 150). Moreover, Eagly & Chaiken, (1993, p. 1) said that attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. Attitude is not stable, communication and behavior of other people, are social influences in changing attitude, as well as an individual's motivation can made attitude change. Emotion plays a major role in persuasion, social influence, and attitude change. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (N.D.)[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attitude\\_change](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attitude_change) Retrieved 12 June 2012). Attitude is an interest that drives behavior. People tend to act favorably toward things they like and unfavorably toward things they do not like. That is, attitude has two sides: positive attitude and negative attitude. A positive attitude or interest or favorably helps you cope more easily with the daily life or problem. It brings optimism into your life, and makes it easier to avoid worries and negative thinking. If you adopt it as a way of life, it will bring constructive changes into your life, and makes them happier, brighter and more successful. (Sasson (N.D.)[http://www.successconsciousness.com/positive\\_attitude.htm](http://www.successconsciousness.com/positive_attitude.htm) Retrieved 12 June 2012). A negative attitude or unfavorably would be a person that would not have anything positive to say or do. This would be an attitude of bad feelings towards things or people. (<http://www.reference.com/motif/health/negative-attitude> Retrieved 12 June 2012). However, attitude can be changed from negative attitude to positive attitude or in the opposite. Positive attitude will be a good motivation for students to be success in their study. If students have positive attitude toward to a subject that they study, they will try to gain more knowledge and success in their study. From a research about attitudes and satisfaction of Mathayom 4-5 students in Pattani towards the English camp activities by Saidee and Sulaiman (2005) found that students had positive attitudes towards learning English after participating in the English Camp. Moreover, the activities in the camp can help students have more confidences in speaking English. Furthermore, the environment in the camp which isn't tense-students can wear casual clothes, do several activities such as playing games or singing by these students can unconscious learning. From this, teachers should create atmosphere for learning in order to bring positive attitude to students. As positive attitude can help students try to solve problems that they face and help them achieve more knowledge (Saidee and Sulaiman. 2005 cited in Journal of Human Sciences 2008). From a research about motivation and attitudes towards learning English: a study of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences And Technology found that learning English as a part of the culture had the least impact in students' English language motivation. On the other hand, data for the students' attitudes revealed that most of students had positive attitudes towards the social value and educational status of English. In addition, the findings showed the students' positive orientation toward the English language. Interestingly, the results indicated that a high number of the students showed their interest in the culture of the English speaking world as represented by English-language films. Some pedagogical implications could help tap the students' motivation and attitudes. Shuib (N.D.).

### Instrument in the research

A checklist to find students' attitude toward the English 1 course was used to gather the information from the subject. It consists of 2 parts: the first was about personal information of each student and the second part consists of 20 items which ask about students' attitude with the course. To do the checklist the subjects were required to rate each item of the checklist according to the following five point scales:

5	means	Absolutely Agree
4	means	Agree
3	means	Not Sure
2	means	Disagree
1	means	Strongly Disagree

### Data collection

The checklist to find students' attitude was distributed to the subjects at the end of the first semester of academic year 2012. In the first part, the subjects replied about themselves by putting / on their answer and in the second part they also responded to the checklist by putting / in each five point scale that they wanted. The obtained data were analyzed by using percentage (%), Mean  $\bar{X}$  and Standard Deviation (SD).

### Results of the study

#### Part 1 General Information Section

**Table 2 Number and Percentage in General Information of Subject**

Gender	No. of the subject	Percentage
Female	188	63.3
Male	109	36.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Faculty of</b>		
Engineering	66	22.2
Industrial Education and Technology	33	11.1
Business Administration	100	33.7
Liberal Arts	98	33.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The general information of the subject from Table 2 showed that the genders of the subject are females (63.3%) and males (36.7%). They were studying in faculty of Business Administration (33.7%), faculty of Liberal Arts (33%), faculty of Engineering (22.2%) and faculty of Industrial Education and Technology (11.1%) respectively.

## Part 2 The Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course

**Table 3 Mean Standard Deviation and Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course**

	$\bar{x}$	SD	Level of Attitude
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	3.83	0.797	Moderate
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	3.77	0.764	Moderate
3. English is easy for practice.	3.64	0.946	Moderate
4. English is helpful in future career.	4.35	0.720	High
5. I am very happy when study this course	3.78	1.019	Moderate
6. I want to be competent in English.	4.43	0.709	High
7. I think English is helpful.	4.27	0.802	High
8. I sent my homework on time.	4.15	0.770	Moderate
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	3.97	0.790	Moderate
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	3.71	0.781	Moderate
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	4.00	0.693	Moderate
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	4.21	0.648	High
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	4.04	0.679	Moderate
14. English 1 is an important course.	4.23	0.660	High
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV. , radio and internet etc.	3.98	0.782	Moderate
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	3.98	0.773	Moderate
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	3.81	0.957	Moderate
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	3.94	0.647	Moderate
19. English can help in professional development.	4.29	0.761	High
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	4.03	0.887	Moderate
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.487</b>	Moderate

Table 3 showed that the attitude of the subject toward English 1 course in a whole picture was at a moderate level (4.02), SD = 0.487). When considered it each item, found that the students' attitude towards English 1 course was; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues of a moderate level were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity".

### Part 3 The Analysis of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course by using Personal Information

**Table 4 Mean Standard Deviation and T-test of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course in Term of Gender**

	<b>t-test</b>	<b>Sig</b>
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	2.949	0.003*
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	2.816	0.005*
3. English is easy for practice.	2.356	0.019*
4. English is helpful in future career.	2.671	0.008*
5. I am very happy when study this course	2.476	0.014*
6. I want to be competent in English.	3.032	0.003*
7. I think English is helpful.	2.477	0.014*
8. I sent my homework on time.	5.069	0.000*
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	4.180	0.000*
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	2.140	0.033*
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	2.098	0.037*
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	2.507	0.013*
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	2.830	0.005*
14. English 1 is an important course.	1.891	0.060
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV, radio and internet etc.	2.670	0.008*
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	3.562	0.000*
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	2.907	0.004*
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	2.254	0.025*
19. English can help in professional development.	2.542	0.012*
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	1.264	0.207
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.446</b>	<b>0.000*</b>

The obtained data from Table 4 indicated that in term of gender almost each item female and male had different attitude with Sig 0.05. There were only two items that female and male didn't have different attitude that is "English 1 is an important course" and "I won't do others assignments when I am studying".

**Table 5 F-test of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course in Term of Faculty**

	<b>F-test</b>	<b>Sig</b>
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	31.801	0.000*
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	33.054	0.000*
3. English is easy for practice.	23.853	0.000*
4. English is helpful in future career.	15.098	0.000*
5. I am very happy when study this course	44.877	0.000*
6. I want to be competent in English.	7.516	0.000*
7. I think English is helpful.	21.818	0.000*
8. I sent my homework on time.	6.337	0.000*
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	4.222	0.006*
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	1.924	0.126
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	3.632	0.013*
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	5.812	0.001*
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	2.203	0.088
14. English 1 is an important course.	3.125	0.026*
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV, radio and internet etc.	3.627	0.013*
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	18.840	0.000*
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	29.742	0.000*
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	2.307	0.077
19. English can help in professional development.	5.992	0.001*
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	2.341	0.073
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.783</b>	<b>0.000*</b>

The information from Table 5 showed that the subject from different faculty almost had different attitude toward the English 1 course with 0.05 Sig. However, there were only four items that the subject from different faculty didn't have different attitude: "I always prepare before attending the class", "If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it", "If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book" and "I won't do others assignments when I am studying".

### Summary

For general information section, it was found that most of the subjects were female (63.3%) and male (36.7%). They are from Faculty of Business (33.7%), Faculty of Liberal Arts (33%), Faculty of Engineering (22.2) and Faculty of Industrial Education and Technology (11.1%) respectively. For attitude section, it was revealed the students' attitude towards English 1 course was at moderate level; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity". The analysis showed that most of the cases the students' attitude significantly depend on gender and the faculty they are studying.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Results of the study showed that the subject had attitude toward the English 1 course at a moderate level. The first 3 high score were “I want to be competent in English”, “English is helpful in future career” and “English can help in professional development”. That was, the subject needed to be good at English and they thought that English is helpful for them to find good job with good salary also the subject had good attitude that English could help them for career progression. In contrast, there were some issues that the subject had negative attitude with the course that was “English is easy to practice”, “I always prepare before attending the class” and “English can create confidence and creativity”. From these issues, it can be seen that the subject thought that English was very hard for them to practice, the subject didn’t prepare before they came to class and they thought that English can’t create confidence and creativity for them. We as teachers will have an important role to help students change their attitudes from negative to positive by providing them modern media teaching aids, useful technology, interesting teaching methodology or interesting and useful suggestion etc. As attitudes aren’t stable they can be change by several ways such as communication, behavior of other people and social influences. Moreover, an individual's motivation and emotion can made attitudes change. Thus, recommendations for further study are: it would be better to study about factors affecting the development of an attitude toward English of Thai learners and the responsible behavior toward English of Thai learners. These will help a researcher knows the attitude of Thai learners in deep points and the results from the studies will help the researcher or the teacher create more positive attitude to students in order to help them reach the goals in their studies. Furthermore, the achievement in English will help students have more confident in using English as a central language.



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***Grammaticality Judgement Test:  
Does It Reliably Measure English Language Proficiency?***

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**Abstract**

Language assessment is an important activity in any language classroom. Out of the various tests or measurements of grammatical competence, one method known as grammaticality judgment is by far the most controversial albeit its advantages in gauging linguistic competence. Research studies on grammatical judgment tests (GJTs) are still getting contradictory research results since its introduction in second language research from the mid-70s (Rimmer, 2006). While productive language tests measure language use of learners (i.e. performance), GJTs are “a standard method of determining whether a construction is well-formed ... where subjects make an intuitive pronouncement on the accuracy of form and structure in individual decontextualised sentences” (Rimmer, 2006, p.246). GJTs have been used to gauge linguistic competence of second language learners for more than three decades already, but the results differ. Several studies found GJTs reliable measures of learners’ language competence (e.g. Leong et al., 2012; Rahimy & Moradkhani, 2012), while almost the same number found otherwise (e.g. Ellis, 2005; Tabatabaei & Dehghani, 2011). Therefore, this study aims to contribute empirical evidence to the field by administering a GJT to 100 ESL undergraduates. Comparison is made between the GJT scores and SPM English and MUET results to investigate the relationship. A strong positive relationship among the three types of English proficiency measurement may indicate the reliability extent of the GJT as a measure of English language competence.

**Keywords:** grammar, grammaticality judgment, grammaticality judgment test, language competence, language performance

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## 1.0 Introduction

Grammaticality judgment test (GJT) is one of the many ways to measure language proficiency and knowledge of grammar. It was introduced to second language research from the mid-70s. According to Rimmer (2006), GJTs are “a standard method of determining whether a construction is well-formed ... where subjects make an intuitive pronouncement on the accuracy of form and structure in individual decontextualised sentences” (p.246). GJT is premised on the assumption that language proficiency comprises two types of language knowledge: receptive knowledge or language competence (i.e. knowing the grammar or metalinguistic awareness), and productive knowledge or language performance (i.e. using the language). Such tests are useful for the investigation of L2 learners’ competence (abstract knowledge) not their performance (actual use of language in contexts) (Gass, 1994). Hence, GJT data reflect what the learners know and not what they do. In a GJT test, learners judge and decide if a given item, usually taken out of context, is grammatical or not.

Over the years, GJT has been used by researchers to collect data about specific grammatical features in testing hypotheses, and data collected by a GJT is said to be more representative of a learner’s language competence than natural occurring data (Davies & Kaplan, 1998). It also allows the collection of negative evidence (ungrammatical samples) to compare with production problems such as slips and incomplete sentences (Schütze, 1996).

Despite the above mentioned usefulness of GJT, its application is riddled with controversies. Several studies found GJTs reliable measures of learners’ language competence (e.g. Leong et al., 2012; Rahimy & Moradkhani, 2012), while almost the same number found otherwise (e.g. Ellis, 2005; Tabatabaei & Dehghani, 2011). Other than the reliability issues, it has been debated that certain item formats of GJT are more reliable than others. The controversies related to GJT format can be related to, for example: selected versus constructed response, dichotomous versus multiple choice, ordinal versus Likert scale, and timed versus untimed test.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate the reliability of a self-designed GJT in measuring the English language proficiency of 100 ESL undergraduates. The participants’ performance scores on the GJT were compared to that of their SPM English and MUET results. The relationship was investigated by using Pearson correlation test. A high correlation index indicates high reliability between the two sets of test scores (GJT and SPM English; GJT and MUET) while a low correlation index indicates the low reliability in using the GJT to predict the performance on SPM English and MUET.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

The participants involved in the study were 100 undergraduates from two intact classes majoring in English language in a local public university. They were in the third year of their university studies.

The instrument was a self-designed GJT that was modeled after Gass (1994) and Salehi and Sanjareh (2013). The GJT comprises four sections with a total of 40

items. The first section on sentence grammaticality has 15 items with two response options each; the second section on correct word use has 5 items; the third section on gap-filling also has 15 items with three response format each; and the last section on sentence comprehension comprises 5 items. An example of each item format is as follows:

**Section A: Sentence Grammar – Tick Correct or Incorrect to a given sentence.**

Example: Most public buildings are air-conditioned and this means that any harmful tobacco smoke that are produced in one room will spread to other rooms through air-conditioning system.

**Section B: Word Use - Select the sentence that uses the given word correctly.**

Example: Whom

1. Most buy-out firms urgently need to return cash to investors, whom are impatient to see returns.
2. US authorities claim to have foiled the plot, whom, in the words of one of the alleged ringleaders.
3. He uses the world to interact with his son, with whom he has an estranged relationship.

**Section C: Cloze test - Choose the right words in order to produce grammatical sentences.**

Example: Symptoms of Alzheimer's usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, where dementia symptoms gradually \_\_\_\_\_ over time.

- a) worsens
- b) worsening
- c) worsen

**Section D: Sentence comprehension - Select the option that has similar meaning with the given sentence.**

Example: As for the Malaysian marine police, they have purchased high-speed boats, fast enough to catch pirate boats and durable enough to ram them if necessary.

1. The pirates own high-speed boats and they can escape from the Malaysian marine police very easily.
2. The government has allocated an amount of expenditure for the Malaysian marine police high-speed boats.
3. Once the Malaysian marine police detected the location of pirates, they chase and ram pirate boats if necessary using the high-speed boats they bought.

The GJT was conducted in class during a tutorial. The participants were told to write down their test start time and completion time on the test paper. Averagely they took between 15 to 25 minutes to complete the test. These data were collected for to find out if there is any relationship between test performance and

time spent on test. As such results are not within the scope of this paper, they will be reported in another paper.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

After the scores of the GJT, SPM English and MUET were obtained, the scores were categorised according to three levels of language proficiency (high, intermediate, and low) so that they were compatible for comparison (see Table 1). For the GJT, the highest possible score was 40, and lowest possible score was zero. Hence, the scores that fell within the range of zero – 13 was set as the low level, the scores within the range of 14-26 was set as the intermediate level, and those within 27-40 belonged to the high level. For MUET, the lowest band was 1 and the highest band was 6. Therefore, the lowest proficiency level for MUET was Band 1 or 2, the intermediate was Band 3 or 4, and the highest level was Band 5 or 6. Subsequently for SPM English, the lowest possible grade was 1 and the highest was 9. Hence, the grades that fell within the range of 1-3 were counted as low level, grades 4 – 6 were moderate level and grades 7-9 were considered high level of English proficiency.

Table 1  
Categorisation of language proficiency for GJT, MUET and SPM English

	GJT	MUET	SPM-English
High	27 - 40	5 - 6	7 - 9
Moderate	14 - 26	3-4	4 - 6
Low	0 - 13	1-2	1 - 3

The frequencies for each of the levels for the three tests were counted, and the results are as presented in Table 2. The results show that for the high proficiency level, about 80% of the participants scored the high proficiency level for SPM English, while about 30% was for GJT, and only about 8.5% was for MUET. On this basis, MUET would seem to be the most difficult English language for this group of participants. It should be noted that none of the participants was in the low proficiency group. The reason was because they were all majoring in English language, and the intake requirement was that they must scored at least an A in English and at least a Band 3 in MUET.

Table 2  
Frequency of proficiency levels for GJT, MUET and SPM English

	GJT (n= 92)	MUET (n= 82)	SPM-English (n= 82)
High	30.42% (n=28)	8.54% (n=7)	80.49% (n=66 )
Moderate	69.57% (n=64)	91.46% (n=75)	19.51% (n=16)
Low	00	00	00

With regards to whether there is any relationship between GJT with MUET and GJT with SPM English, the Pearson correlation index for GJT and MUET is 0.21 that indicates low level relationship (see Table 3). For GJT and SPM English, the Pearson correlation index is 0.03, indication no relationship between the two tests.

Table 3  
Relationship between GJT and MUET, and GJT and SPM English (n=82)

	MUET	GJT
Pearson Correlation	1	.21
Sig. (2-tailed)		.06
Pearson Correlation	.21	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.06	

	SPM	GJT
Pearson Correlation	1	.03
Sig. (2-tailed)		.80
Pearson Correlation	.03	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.80	

Several reasons may be able to account for the non-relationship between GJT and MUET, and GJT and SPM English. Firstly the MUET and SPM English are meant to test mostly integrated skills of language production in various formats. Only a very small part of MUET and SPM English are designed to measure grammatical competence, therefore the comparison is incompatible. Secondly, the participants were in their final year of the undergraduate program. They sat for their SPM English and MUET over three years ago, and hence the related scores may not accurately represent their current proficiency level.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

In hindsight, the current proficiency level of the participants should have been more accurately measured by a compatible productive test, and both the GJT and the productive tests should be set to test similar grammatical items. The GJT should have been more carefully designed to comprise only one type of test format so that confusion related to answering different test formats can be minimised.

Future research may also participants from across different disciplines and majoring in different area so that the data collected and the findings drawn could be more representative of the overall tertiary population of Malaysia. The present research study at best can serve as pilot research for improving the actual study.

The logo for the International Association for Applied Linguistics (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the word "iafor" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by two large, overlapping, semi-transparent circular arcs. The outer arc is a light red color, and the inner arc is a light blue color, matching the text. The arcs are positioned such that they appear to frame the text, with the red arc on the left and the blue arc on the right, creating a sense of depth and movement.



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***TESOL Teachers' Reflections on Their Language Learning Experiences:  
A Case Study of Three Primary English Language Teachers in Vietnam***

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**Abstract**

Given that language learning experience in the past has great impact on TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers' beliefs and practice today, this research study explores Vietnamese TESOL teachers' learning experience of English or other foreign languages during their school time and its impact on their construction of teacher identity. Data were collected from reflective journals and narrative interviews conducted with three primary English language teachers in Vietnam. Their learning history, from early 1980s to late 1990s, is embedded in the historical background and sociocultural context of Vietnam. The findings provide insight into foreign language teaching and learning practice, with which the participants engaged. In particular, traditional grammar-translation approaches dominated the discourse of foreign language education throughout the country. As a consequence, a generation of students at that time was demotivated to learn English and other foreign languages. Beyond the issues of teaching and learning, the research findings highlight varied aspects of the sociocultural context of post-war Vietnam encompassing language policy, education, socio-politics of language teaching, and social life. Rather than reflecting on their language learning experience as the course of past events, the participants regard it as a lesson for their TESOL practice today. They emphasise that TESOL education in the current context should not be developed on the teaching and learning practice in the past, but on a combination of local reality and the global trends. The study discusses implications for policies of foreign language education and TESOL in Vietnam.

Keywords: English language, learning experience, TESOL

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## **Introduction**

Language learning experience during school years can have a great impact on language teachers' teaching beliefs and practices today. In their teaching work, teachers often look back on how their language classes had taken place when they were at school. As a result, they can then make appropriate decisions for developing their current pedagogical practices. Given that a language learning history is seen as an integral part of a language teacher's trajectory of professional development, this research study explores Vietnamese TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) teachers' reflections on their learning experiences of English during their school days and the impact they have had on their identity construction as English language teachers. The participants are three primary English language teachers (three cases), who were engaged in English language learning during the 1980s and 1990s. Their reflections on foreign language education from that time could give them some valuable lessons in terms of constructing their own TESOL practice today. Beyond the issues of teaching and learning, the research findings highlight various aspects of the sociocultural context of post-war Vietnam encompassing language policy, education, the socio-politics of language teaching, and social life.

## **A Historical Overview of Language Teaching in Vietnam**

The Chinese written language played an important part, not only in the world of scholarship, but also in the sociocultural life of Vietnam. Within a period of ten centuries (from the 1000s to the early 1900s), it was the language of scholarship and administration, so learning Chinese script was a must for those who wanted to get access to the academic world and to gain social status. The seventeenth century marked a new chapter for language development in Vietnam as Catholic missionaries from Europe arrived in Vietnam to spread their religion. For the purpose of preaching to local people, they invented a new written form for the Vietnamese language on the basis of the Roman alphabetical system, from which the written form or script of the Vietnamese language used today, originated. In 1858, the French began the invasion of Vietnam and colonized the country until 1945. French was therefore used in educational settings as the medium of instruction, whereas the Vietnamese language was used in everyday life. The Chinese language was restricted to the triennial civil service examinations, which were officially brought to an end in 1916.

Vietnam became independent from the French in 1945, so the Vietnamese language with a Romanized script immediately became official throughout the country. Since the majority of the population was illiterate, first language (L1) education was given priority. Foreign language teaching, especially French, was neglected because of prejudice against anything that was left behind by the colonists. No sooner had the Vietnamese people begun to live in peace than they had to suffer the split of the country into two halves, each with a different government. Determined by political conditions, the L2 language teaching context indicated differences in policy and planning. The North, manipulated by Socialist countries, chose Russian and Mandarin Chinese for their foreign language curriculum, which was implemented mainly in high schools. In contrast, students in the South could study either English or French as their first foreign language for their seven years of secondary education. At the senior high school level, they studied the other tongue as the second foreign language

(Nguyen, 1997). As soon as the whole country was united in 1975, education in general, and foreign language teaching in particular, became a political consideration.

The close relationship with Socialist countries supported the teaching of Russian from the secondary to tertiary levels. Mandarin Chinese, however, was eliminated in the national curriculum for all levels because of the border dispute between the two countries in the late 1970s. Stereotyped as the “languages of Capitalism”, English and French were taught in some schools, especially in the South. The political upheaval had serious effects on the foreign language education in Vietnam once the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries collapsed. Russian was replaced by English as the first choice for a foreign language in all institutions because of the imperative to integrate into the global community. Since the Vietnamese government adopted the “open door” policy in 1986 in order to cooperate with all the world, other foreign languages have also been taught, such as Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, and Korean.

### **Language teachers’ learning experiences**

In education in general, teachers’ former schooling experience is seen as a source of personal practical knowledge, which teachers find important in their teaching work and their lives as well (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). By the same token, learning experiences in the field of language teaching are also an integral part of their ongoing process of learning to teach (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Tsui, 2011). Through the lens of language teacher identity, Miller (2009) highlights the role of teachers’ learning backgrounds together with other sociocultural factors as a resource for identity construction. From the perspective of teacher cognition, many teachers state that their beliefs about teaching today are often based on their learning experiences in the past (Bailey et al., 1996; Borg, 2006). With a research focus on second language teacher education, especially the initial stage when teachers enter their teaching careers, Farrell (2009) observed that novice language teachers often capitalise on their previous schooling experiences, which include “all levels of education, from kindergarten, elementary, and high school, to university” (p. 183). As teachers are so involved in their history, they not only recollect their old schooling experiences but also engage with the practice of reflective teaching (Burton, 2009; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Furthermore, stories teachers tell about their schooling are seen as narratives, which help teachers retell their lives in a sense that they “interpret their lives as told in different ways, to imagine different possibilities, and to actively write their lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 478).

Given the impact of their learning experience on teacher’s development, most empirical studies on teacher identity often take into account this important period. For example, in a research study on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers’ construction of identity, Duff and Uchida (1997) found that four participating teachers drew on their learning experiences in the past including classroom activities, examinations, textbooks and teachers’ teaching methods. In a similar vein, Hayes (2005) explored the process of becoming English language educators for three Sri Lankan participants and found that the participants’ motives for entering their teaching career were partly based on model English teachers at secondary schools. In Tsui’s study (2007), a lecturer of TESOL looked back on his learning history and related the past experiences to his teaching work at university. Other than that he

claimed that his identity as an EFL teacher was built on his learner identity. In relation to his students, he believed that his learner identity would help him to understand them and their learning problems. Overall, language learning experience is part of teachers' trajectories in learning how to teach. Grounded on both a theoretical background and previous studies on this topic, this research study could provide a useful insight into TESOL teachers' learning experiences in the Vietnamese context.

## **The study**

### *Methodology*

This research study is grounded on a qualitative approach because it provides an in-depth description, understanding and interpretation of the human experience (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Under the umbrella of the qualitative approach, a case study is specifically employed to explore the language learning experiences of three participants, known as the three cases. In education and other social sciences, a case study is advocated due to its advantages, including being central to allowing investigators to understand the phenomenon being studied in a holistic and meaningful way as the cases are placed in real-life contexts (Yin, 2009). In the same vein, Duff (2008) pointed out that case study research was being employed in an increasing number of studies in applied linguistics, especially research on the emergent themes of language teaching practice and teacher identity.

### *Participants*

Three primary English language teachers participated in this research study as the three cases. Given the characteristics and requirements of teaching English to young learners, they were all female. Hoa, aged 39 years, is the oldest in the group and she is teaching in a state primary school in Danang, a city in the middle of Vietnam. She started learning English as a compulsory subject in the secondary curriculum in 1984 and continued with this language study until she finished high school in 1991. After graduating from university in 1995, she entered a career of primary English language teaching, so she has had 18 years of teaching experience. Lan is 35 years old with 12 years of teaching experience. On her journey in foreign language learning, she commenced with Russian in the first grade of secondary education. Due to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, she had to invest her time in English learning in an evening centre while she was still learning Russian in school. After that she went to a prestigious high school for gifted students in foreign languages. She passed a highly competitive examination to be admitted into the English class in that school. At university, she did a Bachelor's degree in TESOL. She has worked in a prestigious private primary school in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam since university graduation. The last participant, Nguyen, undertook English language learning from 1991 to 1998 in a small school on the outskirts of Danang. Like Hoa and Lan, she chose a degree in TESOL at university. She has been an English teacher in a primary school in a poor village since 2002.

### *Data collection and analysis*

Data for this research study were collected from narrative interviews conducted with the three participating teachers. In qualitative research, an interview is seen as "the

central method of data generation studies [focusing] on participant life histories and narratives” (Talmy, 2010, p. 134). Likewise, Creswell (2013) suggests that personal conversations or interviews could be the best ways to have participants tell their story and lived experiences. Prior to conducting interviews with each case, an interview guide was developed. During the interview, each teacher narrated her English language learning experiences. After some icebreaker questions, each case was asked about when they had first learned English and how the English classes took place then. As the interviewees caught the flow of the interview, they felt more inspired and open to sharing all of their memories and experiences regarding English learning from the beginning of secondary school to university.

The data analysis was based on the procedure of data deduction and confirmation of findings. The text transcribed from each interview was carefully read and coded on the basis of inductive analysis procedures. As each participating teacher had her own history of language learning, the strategy of a single case analysis was used to highlight the unique features of each teacher’s lived history. In the last section, the three teachers addressed the same issue, that is, the lessons they had learnt from their learning experiences for their teaching practices today. As such, the strategy of a cross-case analysis was used.

## Findings

*Hoa: “English is a reminder of those days of hardship, happiness, and achievements”*

Hoa’s English learning trajectory was linked with socio-political upheavals, the consequences of which were visible both within her own family and in the mainstream society. After reunification, her parents were not employed by the new government, as they had worked for the rival side during the war. In the interview, she shuddered slightly at the memory:

My dad’s health was too bad; otherwise, he would have been... uhm...imprisoned... you know... like most soldiers who used to work for the South government. My mum had to sell all the belongings to open up a small stationery shop. My family, including five people, survived on that shop for nearly 20 years.

Despite adult concerns about socio-political issues, Hoa enjoyed her school life; and above all, she was excited to explore the beauty of the English language. Looking back on those days, Hoa said: “English is a reminder of my childhood mixed by hardship, happiness, and achievements”. From the very beginning, Hoa found a sense of belonging to this beautiful language, but it was viewed by most students as just another school subject:

I usually sat under the plum tree in front of my house practising English. I closed my eyes and mumbled the words. My mother passed by and she asked me “what’s wrong?”, and then she even told the neighbours “something’s wrong with my girl every time she comes home from school”. My brother explained, “She’s learning English”

Hoa's English learning history was also marked by sad stories. Among the students in her class, Hoa was closest to Mai and treated her as a "close confidant". By coincidence, Mai's father had also worked for the former South government; yet he was more miserable than Hoa's father due to a two-year imprisonment after reunification. The English language helped to connect the two girls with a similar family background. Hoa has always remembered the question Mai's father asked: "What do you learn English for?" The two girls failed to answer and then he said: "For freedom". As a thirteen-year-old girl, Hoa was not able to understand what he meant by such a short answer; but later, she knew that most families categorised as having a "bad profile" (for their employment or involvement in the South government), invested in their children's English learning. This was in preparation for emigration to English speaking countries in search of a better life and freedom. Sadly, Hoa often heard stories elsewhere about boats carrying emigrants sinking off the coast. In such a circumstance, the naïve girl could not help doubting her father's belief: "Is it for English and freedom that thousands of people have risked their lives on the ocean?"

*Lan: "Mum became my English learning companion"*

Russian marked the point of departure for Lan's foreign language learning journey because it was the only foreign language taught in her secondary school. Therefore, she took English lessons from an evening centre rather than from formal instruction at school. Teaching and learning practices in evening classes were, in Lan's recollection, dependent on the textbook named "Streamline". Teachers had no communicative activities other than to strictly follow the prescribed structure of the textbook. Lan recalled the activities in a typical evening English class in the early 1990s: choral reading, a role play for reading a dialogue, translating the dialogue from English to Vietnamese, finding Vietnamese meanings for new words, and listening to cassette tapes.

A significant event took place in the second semester of the English course when her mother was required by the local department of education to attend a TESOL course in the overall scheme of re-training Russian teachers to teach English. In despair, she had no other choice than to comply, because Russian was no longer taught in almost every school. Given such an unexpected event, Lan said that her mother became her "English learning companion". Lan easily surpassed her mother; yet she learned from her mother qualities necessary for a teacher such as patience, commitment, and a sensitivity to students' needs. In addition, the teaching knowledge and experience gained from her mother contributed to Lan's construction of her teaching expertise and professional identity:

At first, mum was kind of stressed. She often asked me to help her, because I had already learned for five months. Then she felt confident. She had background in Russian, so grammar was not a problem with her. I could ask her for help when I didn't understand any grammatical point. Mum had a lot of interesting materials to share with me. So my English improved a lot. What I learned from mum was her teaching manner; I mean the way she talked, explained, and instructed me. I think my teaching now has something of hers.



The English language knowledge, both acquired from the evening course and reinforced by her mother's learning sources, helped Lan secure a place at one of the country's most prestigious seats of learning for foreign languages. In the new school, Lan met the entry requirement for the English class, where all students were endowed with natural talent for English. Instead of being proud of her identity as a student in a prestigious school, she immediately became disappointed with its competitive environment, where every student made a determined effort to score full marks in the examinations. In such a culture of teaching and learning, there was hardly any room for communicative practice involving the English language. In those circumstances, Lan had a sense of herself as being isolated from the mainstream community regarding a perspective on English language purposes:

We had English classes every day. All of my classmates were diligent. Can you imagine we had six periods of English on the official timetable? But to prepare for competition, we were required to attend three extra classes. All we did was to complete the sample tests. I still remember we had to learn by heart hundreds of phrasal verbs, sentence transformation, clozes, and reading comprehension. It's funny that when I showed those to an Australian friend, he told me he couldn't complete all of them. I wonder why we had to study the kind of English that native speakers had never used.

*Nguyen: "I was super happy to speak English to foreigners"*

Nguyen lived in an impoverished suburb populated by the blue-collar working class, including workers, peasants, street vendors, and the unemployed. In most families, the basic needs for family survival were considered to be more important than children's access to English instruction. In terms of societal attitudes towards English, Nguyen still clearly recalls the incident when she told her neighbours about her delight in learning this language. Contrary to her excitement, they were indifferent to her emotions:

An old man living next door said to me: "We don't need English. Can you exchange it for food and money? We need those things for survival, not English..." I think that everyone had a hard life then. I mean that their basic needs were not met, so they couldn't think about the kids' education or how they learned English....or what they learned for.

The most beautiful memory about her English learning history was trying the English language acquired in a formal setting for communication in a real life context. Living close to an orphanage run by Catholic nuns, Nguyen often went there for volunteer work. One day, a group of foreign tourists happened to visit the orphanage. As none of the nuns could speak English, Nguyen offered to tell them about the orphanage in spite of her limited repertoire of English:

I was a little confused at first, but then tried to remember what I had learned in class. It's awesome that they could understand me. They introduced themselves to me and I could catch some basic information. I knew they're from the U.S. They came to visit my city and by the way dropped in to this orphanage. That moment was like ...I discovered something very important.

They were very glad to know that I was learning English.... and encouraged me to study better. I helped the nuns to welcome some more groups later on.

*“I will feel guilty if my students become dumb and deaf like our generation”: What can participants learn from their learning history for teaching practice today?*

In their narratives, each participant teacher highlighted important points of their English learning history. Despite their varied perspectives, these teachers, by common consent, regarded the experience of English learning as being a contribution to their current teaching practice today. Simply put, the English learning background from schooling was a good lesson that each teacher learns from for transforming their teaching practice today: “I see the English learning experience as a mirror to look into my teaching now”.

The foremost lesson they learned from their own learning experiences was that the prevalent approaches of grammar-translation in those days were no longer appropriate for language education these days. As a result, they prepared themselves for change; otherwise, they would be returning to the old paths of traditional teaching from which their generation had suffered: “I will feel guilty if students become dumb and deaf like our generation,” (Nguyen). To Lan, learners today, who are different from her generation, are a force for change: “Students today are active. We can’t teach them in the same ways our teachers taught us 20 years ago”.

Lan, in a voice of resistance, contended that there would be no room for grammar-translation methods in TESOL practice today. Rather than “writing a list of English words in one column and Vietnamese equivalents in the other column” and “forcing students to do grammar exercises all the time”, teachers today are required to engage students with communicative and creative activities. Furthermore, based on her own experience in English classes where there was a distance between teachers and students, Lan understands that teachers need to be more friendly and closer to students. By doing these things, teachers not only free themselves from traditional teaching practices, but also develop their own positive self-images:

In those days, I feel that teachers taught us in a traditional and passive way. So I always have this thought in my mind: I have to find some way to attract the students, or else they may feel my class is boring. I try to be friendly to my students. You know, when your students see you as a friend, they would be more confident in class. Since I realized that what they taught me at school was just something so simple and traditional, I think I have to do it differently. That’s my identity. You know, we teachers often discuss teaching methods, and some guys admit that they found their classes boring. And they explain: “I’m going the same way as my teachers before”. This is sad, ‘cos those teachers just copy what made them suffer in those days.

From quite a radical viewpoint, Nguyen and Hoa thought that the grammar-driven ELT practices of those days prevented them from developing communicative skills. In particular, Hoa recollected: “Students then hardly opened their mouth in an English class unless the teacher asked them to stand up to read out the answer”. Only after the committed teachers, namely the model teachers whom they each admired, took over the class were they instructed to speak English. Nevertheless, not all students were

lucky enough to be given inspiring English lessons by such enthusiastic teachers. In a determined effort to enable their students to speak English, and not to become “deaf and dumb” like their generation, the participant teachers all perceived the necessity of a communication-oriented ELT practice.

On one or two occasions during her schooling, Nguyen used English for communicating with foreigners in a real life context; hence she knew how crucial it was to offer students similar situations. However, the ELT context in Vietnam, where English is learned in the classroom rather than spoken in daily life, impedes this ambition. To provide learners with stimulating resources, the teachers have no other choice than to maximise learning opportunities within classrooms:

You know the occasions I talked to the native speakers in English....They had a great impact on my English learning. Now I really want my children to have a chance like that. I'm sure that they will love English and their English will improve a lot. But it's not easy to find foreigners in the surrounding areas. Another difficulty is that we never use English in the community. Then I have to think of teaching and learning activities...and make them relevant to a real life context. (Nguyen)

The participants agreed on the paramount importance of learners' positive attitudes, which must be mostly cultivated by teachers. They think this idea is essential because most English teachers in their school days neither inspired nor encouraged students to study, but threatened or demotivated them. “We students just sat in silence and listened to teachers in those days. If I teach young learners in that way, they don't bother to study,” said Hoa. Similarly, Nguyen explained how she differentiated her teaching today from her learning practices years ago:

In those days, the teacher taught us new words in class. At home, we had to write them many times to remember, say ten words again and again on four pieces of paper during one night. The day after in class, she checked them, but we almost always forgot. We remembered ten words at home, but five disappeared from our minds in class. Now I teach vocabulary in such a different way that children can remember new words right in class.

Nguyen has always remembered the critical incidents regarding the teacher-student relationships, which she witnessed in English classes in the past. The lesson she has learnt for her teaching practice today is that teachers should be sensitive and gentle to learners. It is also advisable that they not show their authoritarian side in class. Under no circumstance do they threaten students:

Now I want to check students' knowledge of the previous lesson, I just ask them some questions as if I'm talking to them. For example, they studied the structure ‘How old are you?’ yesterday, and today I want to check it. Before I start the lesson, I just go around the class and ask some students, ‘How old are you?’ If I follow the way of the teachers in those days, I will ask some children to go to my desk and say “Tell me the meaning of ‘*How old are you?*’ in Vietnamese”. Then they will be terribly scared.

The stories each participant teacher told addressed various issues emerging in their trajectory in English learning. Their perspectives on those issues and the whole history of language learning demonstrated both similarities and differences, reflecting the sociocultural background of each individual. Nevertheless, they had reached a shared belief that their current teaching work had benefited from what they had experienced in their English learning history. At a more conceptual level, they all perceived the experience of those days as a resource and also as a reflective tool for individual agency and identity construction: “I always reflect on what and how I was taught in those days, and then relate this to my current teaching context today” (Hoa).

## Discussion

The participants’ history of English language learning provides in-depth understanding not only of the discourse of English language education in the past, but also of teachers’ ongoing process of development. From the sociocultural perspective, the normative ways of thinking and acting as embedded in classrooms where teachers were once students, have great impact on their teaching work today (Johnson, 2009). Similarly, Borg (2006) suggested that teachers’ beliefs and practice partly result from their learning experiences in the classroom. Looking at their learning narratives, we can easily recognise that the participant teachers all had characteristics that could be ascribed to being a good learner of English, including knowledge of the English language, learning strategies, and motivations (Rubin, 2005; Ushioda, 2008). Their learning success, when judged in the sociocultural context of Vietnam during the historical period from 1981 to 1998, highlights their individual efforts to engage with English. They represent a small number of learners, who overcame constraints to be successful, while the majority of students were “dumb and deaf” in terms of English. Traditional approaches of teaching and learning were the most apparent aspect of their resistance to the discourse of language education in their time. More specifically, they rejected the dominant approaches of grammar-translation in most English classes at that time. In a transition from learners to teachers, they have promoted the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT), as a replacement for traditional approaches, for both TESOL and foreign language education in Vietnam. As teachers, they understand that students today are fundamentally different from students in their time of schooling; therefore, it is impossible to impose the educational norms and teaching approaches of a quarter of a century ago on the educational landscape today. In comparison to the literature, their perspectives on innovative education are contradictory to what has been discussed by leading researchers regarding the dichotomy between CLT and traditional methods. In other words, the three teachers among the multitude of English teachers elsewhere in Vietnam, have supported CLT and progressive pedagogies; whereas, in TESOL literature in particular, these approaches have been considered inappropriate or even counterproductive in the cultural and educational discourses in Asian contexts (Canagarajah, 2012; Le, 2004; McKay, 2010; Phan, 2008).

Beyond teaching and learning practices within classrooms, the participant teachers’ experiences in learning English depict Vietnamese society during the two-decade period, namely the 1980s and 1990s. It provides insight into the discourse of language teaching, the socio-politics of education, and the sociocultural mosaic of Vietnam. A sociological approach to their learning history will, accordingly, help researchers explore a variety of social and historical aspects at the core of teaching and learning

languages. In terms of the politics of TESOL, researchers have argued that Western ideologies are imposed on TESOL theory and practice as manifested in the import of CLT, liberal pedagogies, and cultural norms from the West, mainly from English-speaking countries, to non-Western contexts (Holliday, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; McKay, 2010). If this theoretical framework is used to explore the socio-politics of language education in Vietnam, social and cultural meanings hidden below the surface of language education are unlikely to be decoded. Through the participants' English learning history, we can see that the TESOL practice in Vietnam is not as "pure" and "naïve", as researchers have overgeneralized for all non-Western contexts. Given the historical background in Vietnam in the second half of the twentieth century, notably the division between the North and the South leading to the Vietnam War, politics penetrated the sociocultural life in Vietnam, especially in education as shown by the learning histories of the participants. Beyond the educational setting, people in the community, whether from a low education level or intellectual background, imposed their political views and stereotypes on English or other foreign languages. In this sense, the discourse of language education was affected by two political streams, one within the educational context and the other in mainstream society (Pennycook, 2000). Unfortunately, the sociopolitical complexity of language education in Vietnam has not attracted much attention.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides insight not only into English language education but also into the sociocultural life of Vietnam in the past. Three participating teachers see their experiences in learning English during their schooling as a source for their ongoing process of teacher development. It is, therefore, advisable that language teachers reflect on their learning history and relate their past experience to their trajectory of learning to teach. The most important lesson that the three teachers learned for their practice today was the progressive approaches to language teaching, and especially that CLT should be implemented. Otherwise, students today could experience a repeat of their teachers' language education failures from the past. Through their narratives, they hoped that education leaders would have appropriate policies in language education for the contemporary context in Vietnam.

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***Putting Object Before or After Verb:  
The Acquisition of VO and OV Word Order in Mandarin Chinese***

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**Abstract**

Mandarin Chinese canonically uses SVO word order. However, a definite object can precede the verb, yielding OV order. While previous studies have established SVO order as Mandarin-speaking children's earliest and most frequent, little research has explored how they acquire OV order. The current study investigated this acquisition by analyzing Mandarin-speaking children's OV utterances.

We analyzed 40 children's spontaneous speech from the CHILDES Mandarin corpus; ten children in each of four age groups: 14-, 20-, 26-, and 32-month-olds. Qualified utterances (i.e., containing at least one verb) were coded for word order: **VO** (SVO, VO), **OV** (*BaOV*, OV, OSV; SOV was excluded due to no occurrence), and Other. Frequencies were recast as percentages (of the total qualified utterances).

Compared to **VO** production, which appeared frequently from 20 months on, **OV** utterances emerged later. While both *BaOV* and OSV have only sporadic occurrences in 26- and 32-month-olds, OV utterances grew significantly from 26 months on. By 32 months, children used OV at adult levels.

Further analyses reveal that the objects used in all OV utterances followed the definiteness constraint (e.g., definite nouns/demonstratives), and that the variety of verb types grew with age (i.e., extending from action verbs to cognition/desire/experience verbs). Appropriate verbal complements and/or aspect markers co-occurred with these verbs to make well-formed OV utterances. In sum, Mandarin-speaking children acquire the OV frame later than the VO frame, but they can produce OV utterances much like adults before age three, supporting the claim that grammatical competence is accomplished quickly in young children.

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## Introduction

Mandarin Chinese canonically uses SVO word order. SVO order is produced highly frequently in Mandarin, and the early sentences of Mandarin learners reflect this frequency, having been found to be consistently SV or VO under age two and strictly SVO between ages 2;0 and 2;9 (Cheng, 1986; Erbaugh, 1992).

In addition to acquiring the canonical word order, however, child Mandarin learners face a more complex situation, because Mandarin Chinese also allows a number of word order variants (Li & Thompson, 1981). Specifically, preverbal objects with and without *Ba* (to have), the definite/indefinite contrast, and ellipsis of noun arguments, all yield non-SVO orders. First, the *Ba* marker is used on objects in sentences in which the object precedes the verb (i.e., *SBaOV*).

- (1) wo3 ba3 wan3 xi3 le (SBaOV)  
I ba dish wash PFV (Perfective aspect) 'I washed the dishes.'

Second, while indefinite objects typically appear after the verb, definite objects can precede the subject and verb, forming SOV and OSV order.

- (2) wo3 wan3 xi3 le (SOV)  
I dish wash PFV (Perfective aspect) 'I washed the dishes.'

- (3) wan3 wo3 xi3 le (OSV)  
dish I wash PFV (Perfective aspect) 'I washed the dishes.'

Third, Mandarin allows ellipsis of noun arguments when they can be inferred from the context. Such ellipsis results in missing subjects and/or objects. Therefore, both SOV and OSV orders might become OV when the subject is omitted.

- (4) wan3 xi3 le (OV)  
dish wash PFV (Perfective aspect) '(Someone) washed the dish.'

While previous studies have established SVO order as child Mandarin learners' earliest and most frequent, little research has investigated how non-canonical word orders are acquired. The purpose of the current study is to investigate Mandarin learners' acquisition of non-SVO orders. The specific research questions addressed are as follows:

- (1) How are Mandarin learners' non-SVO orders distributed as they grow?  
We examined frequency distribution of non-SVO orders in child production and age-related changes that occurred in the acquisition process.

- (2) Does Mandarin learners' non-SVO production follow the definiteness constraint and the complexity constraint?

The definiteness constraint means that the object in a non-SVO utterance has to be definite (Li & Thompson, 1983). The complexity constraint means that, if the bare form of a verb is not qualified for a full predicate in an utterance, the verb has to be morphologically complex, co-occurring with an appropriate verbal complement and/or an aspect marker (Du, 2006; Xu, 2012). By reviewing non-SVO utterances, we

examined whether Mandarin learners follow these two constraints while using non-SVO orders.

(3) How does the variety of verb types change in Mandarin learners' non-SVO production?

We also examined the verb types used in non-SVO utterances, which have not been investigated in previous studies (e.g., Cheng, 1986; Erbaugh, 1992), to see how the variety of verb types changes during the acquisition of non-SVO orders.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The participants consisted of 40 Mandarin Chinese-speaking children selected from the CHILDES Mandarin corpus (MacWhinney, 2000; Zhou, 2000). All participants were native Mandarin speakers living in Nanjing, China. The children were from one of four age groups: 14-, 20-, 26-, and 32-month-olds. The numbers of girls and boys within each group were equal. All the children showed no hearing impairment or developmental delay.

### *Procedure*

The mother-child conversation and interactions were video-recorded in each child's own day care classroom. The mother and her child began semi-structured play, in which they played and talked using the contents of four boxes. The four boxes respectively contained (1) a ball, (2) a popular toy, (3) paper and crayons, and (4) a picture book with stories in Chinese. All dyads were told to explore all the four boxes in about 10 minutes.

### *Transcription and Coding*

The transcripts were obtained from the CHILDES Mandarin corpus (MacWhinney, 2000; Zhou, 2000). Children's speech was used for data analysis. Coding was restricted to utterances appearing in their spontaneous speech. Therefore, all those utterances appearing in memorized or routine phrases, such as social routines (e.g. thank you, bye-bye, and so forth), songs, poems, nursery rhymes, and story narratives were excluded from coding. All of the children's utterances that fit the above criteria and included at least one verb and one object were manually parsed and coded for word order and verb type, i.e., the verb used in an utterance. For example, the verb used in "John pushed Mary" is "push".

Word order coding categories included Canonical (SVO, VO), Non-canonical (*BaOV*, *OV*, *OSV*, *SOV*), and Other. Frequencies were then turned into percentages (of the total qualified utterances). Verb type coding was conducted for the utterances in Non-canonical categories, i.e., *BaOV*, *OV*, and *OSV*.

## **Results**

The first question addressed in the current study is whether Mandarin learners acquire non-canonical orders on a purely frequency-related basis. The frequency distribution

of canonical and non-canonical orders in child production is presented in Figure 1. As expected, canonical order appeared frequently from 20 months on (14% & 24%). This supports the previous findings (i.e., Cheng, 1986; Erbaugh, 1992) in that children grasp VO order as soon as they start to combine words.

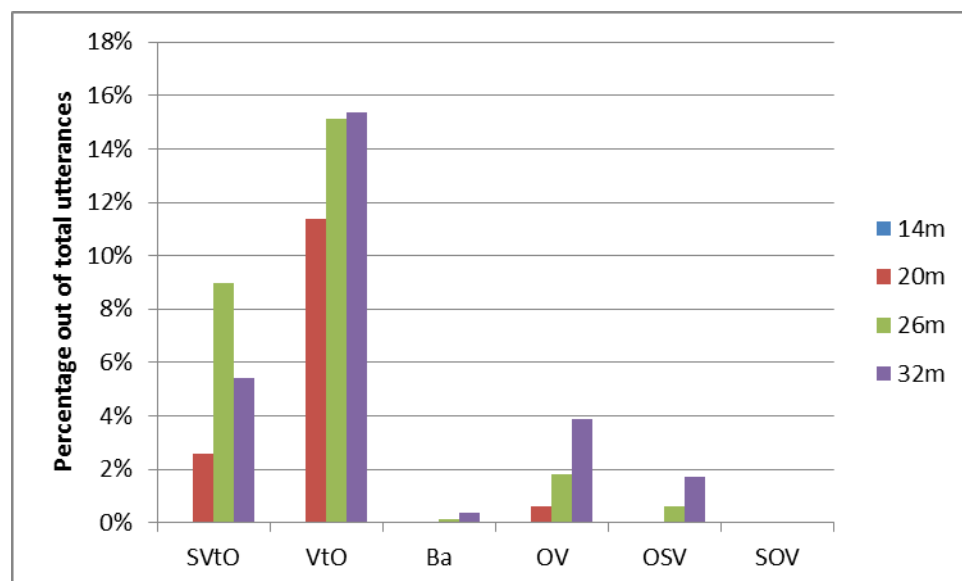


Figure 1. Frequency percentage of total qualified utterances of canonical and non-canonical word orders produced by the four age groups

Compared to their early SVO production, children produced non-canonical word orders much later and more rarely. As presented in Figure 1, the OV utterances began in 20 months and kept increasing through 32 months. There were sporadic occurrences with *BaOV* and *OSV* orders only by 26- and 32-month-olds. No occurrences of *SOV* were observed at all; thus, *SOV* order was excluded from the subsequent analyses.

ANOVAs of the children's utterances (word order by age group) revealed a significant age group by order interaction, with only OV production showing significant age-related changes ( $F(3, 36) = 4.449, p < 0.01$ ). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that 32-month-olds ( $M = 3.88\%$ ,  $SD = 4.45\%$ ) produced significantly more OV utterances than 20-month-olds ( $M = 0.61\%$ ,  $SD = 1.33\%$ ) and 14-month-olds ( $M = 0\%$ ,  $SD = 0\%$ ). By 32 months, children used OV order at adult levels (3.88% vs. 3.73%; adult percentages were obtained from the same transcription, i.e., the speech of mothers who were videotaped with their children). Because only the OV utterances showed age-related changes, the subsequent analyses focused on the OV utterances.

The second question addressed in the current study first asks whether Mandarin learners follow the definiteness constraint, which requires a definite object to appear before the verb. As mentioned above, the OV utterances emerged in 20 months and increased significantly from 26 months on. The total number of OV utterances by these three age groups is 25: 20-month-olds produced 3 utterances while both 26- and 32-month-olds produced 11. Examination of these 25 OV utterances shows that all the objects appeared either as definite nouns or as demonstratives and pronouns. The definite nouns used are ones that appeared in ongoing conversation with mothers. The

demonstratives used include *zhe4ge*, ‘this (one)’ and *na4ge* ‘that (one)’. Only one pronoun was used (by a 32-month-old). The objects and their frequencies appearing in these 25 OV utterances are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

The object used in OV utterances

<u>Age</u>	<u>Object used</u>	<u>English equivalent</u>	<u>Type</u>
20m	da4de	The big (one)	definite noun
	zhe4ge (2)	This (one)	demonstrative
26m	zhe4ge (7)	This (one)	demonstrative
	na4ge	That (one)	demonstrative
	huai4dan4	The bad guy	definite noun
	yao1guai4	The devil	definite noun
	xiao3pang2yo3 de chi4che1	The car for kids	definite noun
32m	zhe4ge (6)	This (one)	demonstrative
	she2me	Whatever; Anything	pronoun
	xiao3chang2	The little bed	definite noun
	xiao3shiong2	The little bear	definite noun
	xiao3de	The small (one)	definite noun
	lan2se4	The blue (marker)	definite noun

Note: The numbers in parentheses indicate the frequencies of objects that appeared more than once

The second question also concerns whether Mandarin learners follow complexity constraint, which requires a verb to be morphologically complex, co-occurring with the appropriate verbal complement and/or an aspect marker when the bare form of the verb is not sufficient to act as a full predicate in an utterance.

In a Mandarin sentence, the predicate can be a bare verb. In Examples 5 and 6, the bare form of a verb is sufficient to describe its relation to the subject and/or object.

(5) wo3 zhi1dao4 zhe4ge ren2  
I know this person “I know this person.”

(6) zhe4ge bu2 yao4  
this not want “(I) don’t want this.”

However, for some propositions/events, using only a bare verb may result in a semantically incomplete predicate (see Example 7).

(7) \*zhe4ge fang4  
this put “(someone) put this.”

With a bare verb and no other grammatical units, Example 7 sounds unfinished and awkward. To make a semantically complete utterance, the verb *fang4* (to put) in Example 7 must co-occur with other grammatical units. According to the complexity constraint, possible grammatical units with which the verb *fang4* (to put) can co-occur include various complements (e.g., adverb: *hao3*, “well”; *zai4*, “again”; locative complement: *zai4zuo1shang4*, “on the table”) and aspect markers (e.g., perfective: ‘*le*’; durative: ‘*zhe*’).

Of the 25 OV utterances, 21 utterances co-occurred with the verbal complements and/or aspect markers. Examination of these 21 utterances shows that appropriate verbal complements and/or aspect markers were used to make semantically complete and grammatically correct utterances. Examples are presented as follows.

- (8) xiao3chang2    fang4    zhe4bian1                    (verbal complement)  
 little bed            put            here                    “(I) put (the) little bed here.”
- (9) zhe4ge    ba2    bu1    dong4                    (verbal complement)  
 this            pull    not    move                    “(I) can’t pull this.”
- (10) zhe4ge    yong4    kuo4    le                    (aspect markers)  
 this            use            EXP    PFV                    “(I) have used this.”
- (11) da4de    cha1    shang4    qu4    le                    (verbal complement and aspect  
 marker)  
 big one    insert    up            go    PFV                    “(I already) inserted this (up there).”

EXP: experiential aspect    PFV: perfective aspect

The other four utterances did not co-occur with verbal complements and/or aspect markers because the propositions of these four utterances did not require their verbs to follow complexity constraint. Instead, the verbs in these four utterances co-occurred with grammatical units, such as auxiliary, negation and V-not-V form. All these utterances are well-formed and acceptable. They are presented as follows.

- (12) na4ge    bu4nen2    wan2                    (negation & auxiliary; by 26-month-old)  
 that            not can            play                    “(we) cannot play (with) that.”
- (13) zhe4    bu4    zhi1dao4                    (negation; by 26-month-old)  
 this            not    know                    “(I) don’t know this.”
- (14) she2me    dou1    bu4    zhi1dao4                    (negation; by 32-month-old)  
 what            all            not    know                    “(I) don’t know anything.”
- (15) zhe1ge    yao4    bu2    yao4                    (V-not-V form; by 32-month-old)  
 this            want    not    want                    “(Do you) want this or not?”

The results from the above analyses reveal that, when Mandarin learners started to use OV order, they did produce well-formed OV utterances. That is, the objects and verbs that they used follow the definiteness constraint and the complexity constraint.

The third question addressed in the current study is how the variety of verb types changes when Mandarin learners acquire different non-canonical word orders. First, all the verbs used in the OV utterances were divided into two types: Action and Non-action verbs. Action verbs refer to verbs that describe action (e.g., walk) while non-action verbs describe state/situations that do not involve action (e.g., love) (Ross & Ma, 2006). The result is presented in Table 2. Both action and non-action verbs increased with age. Action verbs increased from 26 months on while non-action verbs increased from 32 months on.

Table 2.

Action vs. non-action verbs produced by 20-, 26- and 32-month-olds

<u>Age</u>	<u>Action verbs</u>	<u>Non-action verbs</u>
20m	cha1, 'insert' bai3, 'place'	
26m	cha1, 'insert' fang4, 'put' wan2, 'play' ba2, 'pull' da3, 'hit'	gei3, 'give'
32m	fang4, 'put' kai1, 'open'	gei3, 'give' zhi1dao4, 'know' yao4, 'want' yong4, 'use'

Second, all these verbs were further categorized into semantic classes. Six semantic classes were needed to classify 11 verb types found in these OV utterances. The result is presented in Table 3. All the verbs used by 20-month-olds were from the class of Manipulation. The classes of Motion and Change of Possession were added for 26-month-olds. 32-month-olds extended their verb use to the classes of Cognition, Desire, and Experience. In sum, more semantic classes appeared as children developed, suggesting that their variety of verb types grew with age.

Table 3.

Semantic classes used by 20-, 26-, and 32-month-olds

<u>Age</u>	<u>Semantic class</u>	<u>Verbs</u>
20m	Manipulation	cha1, 'insert'; bai3, 'place'
26m	Manipulation	cha1, 'insert'; fang4, 'put'; wan2, 'play'
	Motion	ba2, 'pull'; da3, 'hit'
	Change of possession	gei3, 'give'
32m	Manipulation	fang4, 'put'
	Motion	kai1, 'open'
	Change of possession	gei3, 'give'
	Cognition	zhi1dao4, 'know'
	Desire	yao4, 'want'
	Experience	yong4, 'use'

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the acquisition of non-canonical word orders in Mandarin Chinese by analyzing spontaneous speech of Mandarin learners of 14, 20, 26, and 32 months of age. The three research questions are addressed: (1) how Mandarin learners' non-SVO orders are distributed as they grow, (2) whether their non-SVO production follows the definiteness constraint and the complexity constraint, and (3) how the variety of verb types changes in their non-SVO utterances. The current study revealed that non-SVO word orders were produced later, less frequently than SVO orders by child Mandarin learners. This finding supports the

previous research (i.e., Cheng, 1986; Erbaugh, 1992) in that Mandarin learners produce VO order quite early when their two-word utterances emerge. This study also found that different non-SVO orders appeared with different frequencies. *BaOV*, OSV, and SOV orders were rarely produced by Mandarin learners under age 3 while OV order increased significantly from 26 months on and reached adult levels before age 3. These OV utterances followed the definiteness constraint, carrying appropriate verbal complements and/or aspect markers, and showed a growing variety of verb types. These findings suggest that the acquisition of OV order is accomplished quickly in young children.

The current study found that OV order appeared earlier and more frequently than other non-canonical orders. Why did this happen? Frequency can be a factor. To investigate whether Mandarin learners acquire non-canonical orders on a purely frequency-related basis, further analyses on input will be needed.

In addition to the role of frequency, there might other possible factors that involved in the acquisition and resulted in the earlier production of OV order. The first possibility could be the meaning of *Ba* marker. Since the meaning of *Ba* marker is vague for young Mandarin learners, it is possible that they have not yet grasped what *Ba* marker means; thus, they did not use *Ba* construction confidently and frequently (Cheung, 1992). On the other hand, OV frame can be the result that the *Ba* marker is dropped in informal conversations for more concise communication (i.e., OV = (*Ba*)OV). Compared to the *Ba* construction, OV order is relatively simple and direct. As a result, using pure OV order would make production easier and more effortless for young children and further facilitate their OV occurrences. To test this possibility, we reviewed all the OV utterances produced by the children and their mothers (from the same transcription), and found that 19%-38% of the mothers' OV utterances have the potential to become *BaOV* utterances. This suggests that Mandarin learners may hear OV utterances for *BaOV* utterances with the *Ba* marker dropped. Our review of the children's OV utterances revealed that more than half of these utterances (55%-67%) have the potential to become *BaOV* utterances. This suggests that Mandarin learners might choose OV order when they intend to use *BaOV*.

The second possibility could be argument ellipsis, a language-specific property in Mandarin. Due to argument ellipsis, Mandarin speaker can drop subjects and/or objects from an utterance if either the subject and/or object can be inferred from the context and so does not need to be expressed overtly. If a conversation only involves the interlocutor as the subject in utterances, then this subject (i.e., either "I" or "you") is very likely to be omitted because the referent of the subject is obvious for both interlocutors. Thus, in a mother-child conversation, subjects such as "I", "you", and "we" would be likely to be dropped by the interlocutors. When an object acts as a topic and introduces new information, then it cannot be dropped in most cases. With these ellipsis properties, Mandarin learners may actually use OV order for their OSV and SOV utterances. This may explain why we found the higher frequency of OV utterances than those of OSV and SOV utterances in Mandarin learners' production.

The current study used the CHILDES Mandarin corpus (MacWhinney, 2000; Zhou, 2000), with the transcription from 10-minute mother-child interaction. The data generated from such a short period could be limited in information that can reveal children's language competence. Thus, it could be that Mandarin learners make more



*BaOV*, *OSV*, and *SOV* utterances than what we found in the current study. To test this possibility, further investigation of other corpus will be needed.

Taken together, we found that Mandarin-speaking children's acquisition of non-SVO word orders occur later compared to their acquisition of SVO orders. Although the total number of non-SVO utterances is much smaller than that of SVO utterances, Mandarin learners still demonstrate well-formed *OV* utterances, suggesting that grammatical competence is accomplished quickly by young children.



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***Bridging The Gap in West African  
Native Language Learning: What Needs to Be Done***

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**Abstract**

This paper examines learning and usage of indigenous languages in speech communities to preserve the languages from endangerment. Threats to West African indigenous multi-lingual nature necessitate the learning and more usage of the languages among larger native speakers. This is because every language encapsulates its realities and models of how the world works differently. Regrettably, there is no strong will on the part of the native speakers to engage their languages in active use, neither have they orthographies that facilitate learning to enable indigenous workforce fully contribute to their societies. Anchoring on the constructive theory of learning and consciousness model developed by Paulo Freire (1973), this paper emphasizes promotion of learning activities to keep the languages alive in their speech communities. By supplying therapeutic measures, this study is optimistic that the speech communities will be reinvigorated to preserve their language as a culture and linguistic identity as well as giving learners life-long personal and civic competences. Bridging the gap efforts include, change in pedagogy, communicative approaches of orthographies that are not distanced from the people, learning motivation and a total overhaul of indigenous language policy and implementation among others.

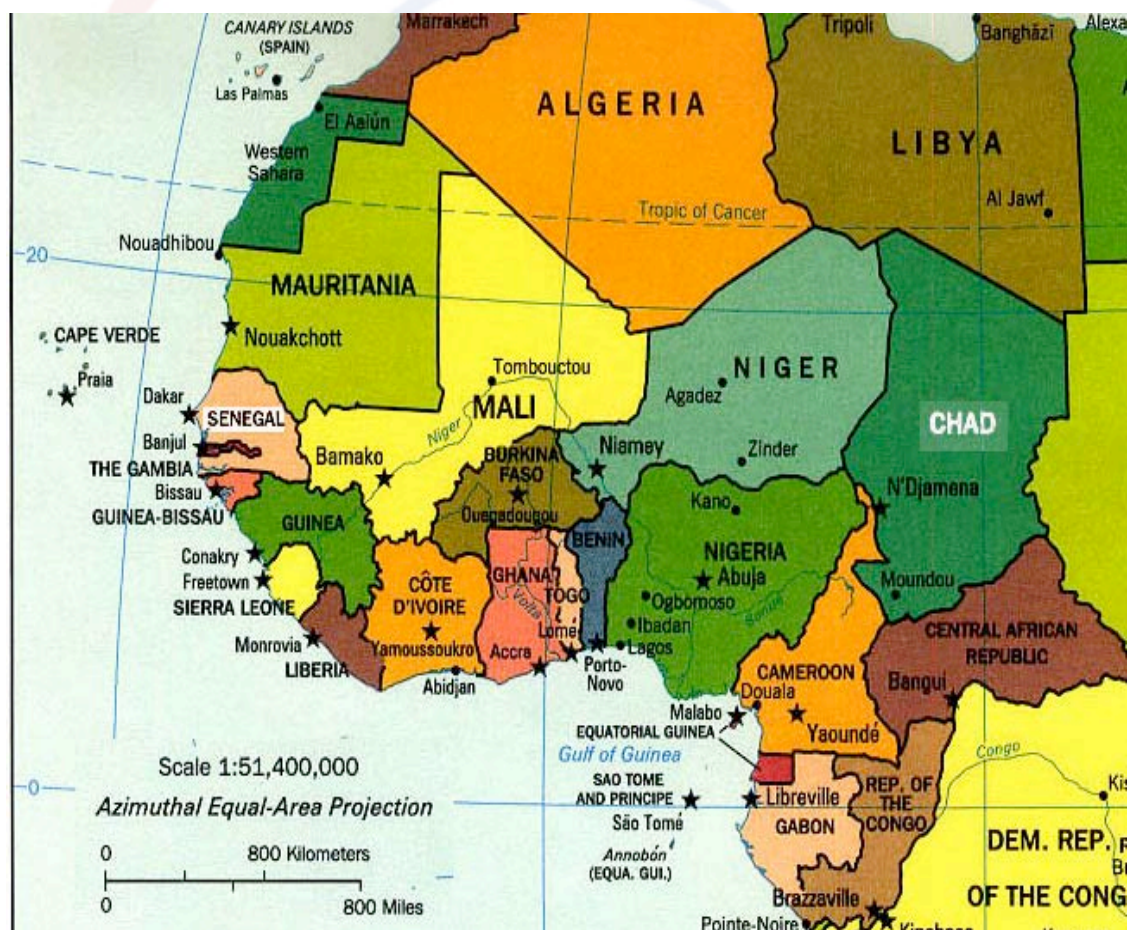
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## Introduction

All aspects of human society are tied to the existence of a particular language and every language is a unique expression of the world. Language as an essential part of our cultural diversity is viewed as the cord that holds any people together. A people's identity and history are expressed through language but when the language is endangered and disappears, it takes away important information about the rooted identity of the speech community, destroys sense of self worth, and leaves behind loss of original ethnic and cultural identity.

The West African sub region is one of the world's leading multi-lingual and multi-cultural countries. The region is richly blessed with multiple native languages and dialects that cuts across different ethnic groups. Languages as an essential part of cultural diversity is viewed as the cord that holds the region together in all ramifications. The people live in the symbolic environment of languages in the fifteen West African countries. These countries are up to the border of Cameroon, including Mauritania but excluding North African countries.



According to Blench (2003), the availability of information of West African native languages is extremely uneven. However the following West African countries have and speak the following number of languages;

Countries	Total Number of Languages
Niger	11
Togo	39
Sierra Leone	21
Mali	26
Senegal	35
Guinea-Bissau	21
Ghana	66
Liberia	32
Mauretania	5
Burkina Faso	68
Cote d' Ivoire	76
Gambia	19
Guinea	27
Benin	50
Nigeria	550
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1050</b>

These languages are classified into many possible and acceptable ways.

These languages can be classified into many possible and acceptable ways. One of these is in terms of their socio linguistic vitality and especially in terms of their readiness for literacy and numeracy. On this score, one can classify these languages into; developed, underdeveloped and minority languages. The developed languages are highest on the sociolinguistic indices because they have;

1. Standard writing system, standardized for use in an entire cultural area.
2. A standard variety of the language used after the QUIRKIAN definition of Standard English.
3. A dynamic and sophisticated meta-language for oracy and literacy.
4. A decimal and digitalizable counting system.
5. A robust literacy tradition.

The developed native West African languages are also called major languages in some West African countries.

However these classifications of the developed languages are detrimental in a way to the growth of the developing and minority languages because of the breeds suspicions of domination. Every evolutionary biologist recognizes the great advantages held by species that maintain the greatest possible diversity. Disaster occur when only one strain of wheat or corn 'a monoculture' is planted everywhere with no variation. A developed language holds the same danger over the developing and minority languages.

On the other hand, underdeveloped and the minority languages themselves neither have orthographies nor standard form of writing for usage and preservation. Most of the native speakers equally have no will to engage their native language in active use nor are they willing to give impetus to their language in order to adopt them to the modern world. These atrophy evidences for understanding patterns in the structures and function of the human languages, human pre-history and the maintenance of the world's diverse ecosystem.

In addition mutual incomprehensibility of West African dialects in companions to natural Comprehensibility of languages of the individual West African State are clearly motivated by political and nationalistic consideration rather than linguistic ones. These are made worse by the fact that complete information of all West African native language is not available. The majority of them are yet to be recorded and analyze by linguists. They are not recognized officially in some of the West African states where are spoken. The information on them are often out of date.

This situation favors the use of English or French languages as official languages of West African states. These languages are valued as the greatest assets of unification left behind by the colonialists be that as it may these unifying languages on their own spread western values, they demonstrate pressure for assimilation into dominant cultures and express conscious policies of repression that are often directed at the native languages. This in turn threatens the cultural and cultural and linguistic diversity of the individual West African states.

This situation favors the use of English and French language as official languages of unification of West African countries. But these colonial languages spread Western values and demonstrate pressures for assimilation which threatens the cultural and linguistic diversity of the individual West African States.

Further complexities are added to the facts that the educational polices of the various West African States do not in any way alleviate the problem o f inconsistency between policy and practice. These are as a result of difficulties in the use of native languages in education because most teachers of the native languages are incompetent to guide learners in the native languages as well as English language or French language.

These issues call for attention in order to value our linguistic and cultural identities. These values on their own enable us to acquire a more fulfilling intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life in our civic contribution to our societies. The endangerment of any languages endangers who we really are.

## **Background**

An endangered language is one that is likely to become extinct in the near future. Many languages are falling out of use and are being replaced by others that are more widely used in the region or nation such as English in Nigeria and Ghana or French in Senegal and Benin Republic.

Endangered languages are spoken by minority communities in most of the West African sub region. The languages exist solely in spoken form and its traditions are

passed on through folktales and story-telling. Yet creating a written version is not as complicated as one might imagine. It requires dialogical approach as advocated by Freire (1973) in creating orthography that is not distanced from the native speakers of the language. Such orthography should be the absolute representation of the way the languages are spoken and lived.

Language endangerment in West Africa generally is through language shift. This reflects the rise of a dominant culture usually military, but often nowadays commercial or religious. This is particularly the case with Islam; conversion to Islam was historically associated with the rise of highly militarized cultures and indeed the slave trade. It followed that Hausa, Arabic, Mandinka, Bambara, Fula and Kanuri are associated with aggressive expansionism and the forcible conversion of enslaved people during the colonial era. The conveniences of these languages were such that they were frequently adopted as secondary languages of communication. Promoted by the French or English administration in West African Countries they became even more the vehicle of assimilatory forces pressing on minority languages.

Causes of the endangered native West African languages include;

- i. National catastrophes, famine, diseases
- ii. War and genocide
- iii. Over repression e.g. for national unity (including forcible resettlement)
- iv. Cultural / political economic dominance. These factors often overlap or occur together

Cultural, political and economic dominance can further be spread into;

1. **Economy:** Rural poverty can lead to migration to an area where majority languages are and this can lead to language shift.
2. Cultural dominance by the majority community. This can be done by the homogenizing effects of mainstream media (All in the form of dominant language on television, radio, and the print media. Education and literature through the majority languages endanger the developing and undeveloped native languages of the region.
3. Political educational policies which ignores or exclude local languages, lacks recognition or political representation and results to the endangerment of the language.
4. **Historical:** The rise of one ethnic group and their language variety leads to political and cultural dominance over other group languages.
5. **Attitudinal:** When a minority language becomes associated with poverty, illiteracy and hardship, while the dominant languages are associated with progress lead to attraction of the dominant language and endangerment of the minority language.

Currently the number of endangered languages in West Africa sub-region according to Blench (2003) which does not include languages that are distinct includes;

COUNTRY	NAME	COMMENT
Nigeria	Bade	Still a large number of speakers but given way rapidly to Hausa. Probably also Duwai
	Bakpinka	
	Defaka	About 200 speakers. Those in direct contact with Nkoroo are losing their language
	Dugusa	Giving way to Hausa
	Dulbu	Giving way to Hausa
	Fyem	Giving way to Hausa
	Gera	Giving way to Hausa
	Gura	Giving way to Hausa
	Gurdunrj	Giving way to Hausa
	Mbaaru	
	Gyem	Giving way to Hausa
	Ilue	Giving way to Efik/Oron
	Jilbe	A single village (Tourneux p.c.)
	Kiong	Giving way to Efik. Moribund
	Kona	
	Kudu-Camo	42 speakerS in early 1990s (Bross p.c.) Giving way to Hausa
	Luri	No information but <200 speakers
	Mvanip	About 100 speakers in 1999.
	Ndunda	<400 speakers in 1999
	Ngwaba	Two villages in 1991
	Odut	Only about 20 speakers in early 1980s
	Polci cluster	Giving way to Hausa
	Reshe	Still a vigorous speech community at present but giving way to Hausa
	Sambe	6 very elderly speakers in February 2001. The language is giving way to Ninzo
	Somyev	About 20 elderly speakers in 1995 (Connel, p.c.)
	Yangkam	About 2-300 Older speakers in 1993 (author)
Cote d'Ivoire	Ega	Est. 1000 speakers in 1999. The population is switching to Dida
	Eotile	200 speakers in 1999. The population is switching to Anyi
	Heri Kuo	Accordin to Kastenholtz (1998:259) there are 1500 speakers from an ethnic population of 20,000. The Muslims are switching to Manding, the non-Muslim to Sienare Senufo. See also Kastenholtz (1992).
Mali	Banka	5,085 ethnic population in 1995, but the population is switching to Bambara
	Nemadi	The Nemadi migrate between Mauretania and Mali. There were 200 in 1977. Their



## **Theoretical framework**

This paper is undergirded by conscientization model developed by Paulo Freire (1973). Freire believes that the goal of Education can be achieved through free dialogue that prioritized on cultural identity, trust and commitment. The ideas of Paulo Freire are relevant to this paper because it emphasizes on encouraging the consciousness of all native West African languages for preservations through usage in the speech communities.

Although some scholars have argued that it will be a mirage for national development to be achieved in education without maintaining the major languages and the colonial languages as the medium of learning, it should also be remembered that languages acquire status overtime and develop in different ways. Latin and Greek were international languages before English and French languages. English and French developed through dynamic human relationship. Patriotic social engineering is said to be used in the development of Chinese, Hebrew and Swahili languages. Endangered West Africa native languages can be preserved through conscientization. Native speakers of West African languages can bridge the language gap by being conscientized to value and use their languages through a combination of strategies. Such strategies include appropriate learning and teaching empowering the languages through planning and implementation of educational policies base on legislations.

## **Bridging the gap in West African Native Language Learning**

A lot of measures can be taken to bridge the gap in West African native language learning and usage for preservation. Some of such measures include the following;

### **i. Services of the Linguists**

Speech communities of endangered languages need to employ the services of linguists who always work with communities to preserve their languages. Such linguists offer both technical and practical help with language teaching, maintenance and revival. Their services also include creating dictionaries and grammar of the given language. The linguists can also help by using their experiences in teaching and studying wide variety of languages. They can use what they have learnt about other endangered languages and help the community preserve their own languages. The linguists can take advantage of the latest technology for recording and studying languages. Video tapes, audio tapes and written records of native languages use in both formal and informal settings can be done along with translators for preservation and use of the language.

### **ii. Language Learning**

Learning a language is an amazing feat which always attracts the attention of linguistics, language educators and psychologists for ages. Learning a language entails the process of optimizing one's exposure to a particular language in a formal context via the guidance of a teacher or instructional resources in accordance to the given curriculum. Such learning process follows appropriate learning objectives, useful learning experiences based on culture of the language to maximize their impact through good organization and carrying out evaluation to assess the objective of the

learning process. The curriculum which is an essential element in the development of the learner should be subject to continuous evaluation (Tyler; 1949).

However, the formal setting may not be enough for all learners to grasp a language to the utmost. As such the families in the speech communities have some roles to play in order to complement what the school has to offer. It would be of interest to underscore the fact that a family's attitude towards the language in questions could enhance or debilitate a learner's performance in a language learning process. Ndu (1990) explains that parents and close relations act as identification models. Children emulate and adapt beliefs and even biases of families. Thus, if a family's attitude towards a language is negative, it would affect the child negatively when it comes to learning the language in questions. In addition, Moore (1998) emphasizes that "success in language education is closely related to parents' interest and support. Where a parent's linguistic status reveals that such parents cannot use a language but the parent has positive interest in the language in question, the parents can support the child to learn the language. The linguistics status of a family can be established by the means of ascertaining the number of languages and dialects mastered and by extension used in that family.

It equally follows that the learner can learn a given language through imitation and practice (Lightbrown and Spada 1997). Language learners can learn languages by imitating the sounds and patterns which they hear around them and receive positive reinforcement. According to this view, the quality and quantity of the language which the learner hears as well as the consistency of the reinforcement offered by others in the environment can have effects on the learner's success in the learning process. However, it is useful to examine the actual language data from the curriculum to see how well this view accounts for the development of more complex aspects of the language. Chomsky (1959) argues that the behaviorists fail to recognize the logical problem of structure from the samples of the language.

The language, the learner is to learn usually based on imitation and practice in the speech community is usually full of confusing information. It does not provide all the language information which the learner needs and neither is the learner adequately corrected in the language usage on the street. This requires both the effort of the formal educational provision of the language and the speech community for the appropriate learning of the language.

Individuals are different in their approaches to learning. For example some people learn orally, others auditory, still others learn experientially. Howard Gardner in his influential theory of multiple intelligence (M.I), argues that human beings possess different types of intelligence that enable them to solve problem differently. Gardner (1999) posits in his reformulated M I. theory that there are at least nine types of human intelligence which undergird how people make meaning of their learning experiences.

Language learning works most effectively when different approaches are optimally used to guide the learners.

### iii. **The teaching Process**

Language teaching is an integral part of a community's total educational provision. The community supplies the general social condition of tolerance, encouragement, facilitation, motivation in order to give the learners life-long personal and civic competences to contribute to the society. The educational provisions also consist of the consensus that a particular language should be learnt within the community. The administration and organization of the public will allocate funds, train teachers, provide the infrastructure and so forth for effective teaching and learning.

iv. The language teacher on the other hand must possess the appropriate qualities, and techniques for promoting effective learning base on given syllabus. A teaching technique that appreciates communicative approaches of orthographies base on dialogues as advocated by Freire (1973) is important for effective teaching of the language. This in a way will enable the learners to construct their usage of the language taking into cognizance the cultural aspect of the speech community as well as English or French languages.

### v. **Language Planning**

Emenanjo (2007) views language planning as strategies to empower languages. Specifically language planning is a veritable tool for language preservation from endangerment. They include;

#### a. **Identity Planning**

Identity planning involves one-on-one correspondence between culture and language. It emphasizes strong positive language attitudes such as awareness, language loyalty, language spread and maintenance as against the debilitating and destabilizing forces of language shift, language endangerment, language death and language change. Identity planning can be used to restore endangered languages.

#### b. **Status Planning**

Status planning examines the degree of mutual intelligibility between the different dialects or varieties of the languages in the West African sub region. Identity in this regard point in the direction of the types of relationship that exists between the Mandarin and Cantonese Chinese which even though are not mutually intelligible constitute one language – Chinese.

West Africans must see the differences between the various forms of the native languages as differences between dialects. In terms of status planning, West African languages are:

1. Indigenous languages
2. Mother tongue
3. A language of the immediate community because there are many different dialects but all speakers can understand each other without much difficulty. Such status planning should promote language unity (glossotomy) over language splitting (glossogamy) and all governments should come out with national language policy and unequivocal policy statement on preservation from endangerment.

### **c. Corpus Planning**

Corpus planning is essentially a linguistic exercise whose thrust is development of a language for literacy and numeracy, to arrive at the optimum level of socio-linguistic readiness a language has to pass processes of treatment of Graphization, Standardization, Codification and Modernization.

#### **i. Graphization**

This process of empowering a language from endangerment involves the design of a script or writing system (orthography) which is acceptable to the native speakers of the language. Although there is no perfect orthography it, should be embraced by all who identify with their language relationship. The standard of any language is the written form that sustains robust popular and universal acceptable literacy, tradition. To empower a language for preservation, involves the selection, promoting and propagation of a variety of a language that becomes the standard written form. This is difficult but possible.

#### **ii. Standardization**

West African native language can be preserved from endangerment if the variety of the language is selected, promoted and propagated to become the standard written form. The written form on its own should gradually influence the spoken form.

#### **iii. Codification**

Languages can be preserved from endangerment if the facts of the language are systematically organized and documented in spelling books, grammar books, dictionaries i.e. encyclopedia books on; enumeration, meta language and style manual to mention but a few. These important documents can serve as standard reference text for what should be said, written, explained, and how and why for the language.

#### **iv. Language Modernization**

Language modernization involves the creation and popularization of new terms as a result of extension to new domains thrown up by cultural contacts, science and technology, the new knowledge industry and globalization. Modernization strategy enables the creation of new works of various origins which enhances intra-translatability between West African native languages and English or French Languages.

### **Acquisition Planning**

Acquisition planning for language preservation is all about language in-education and language education. This can be organized around; material development and capacity building in terms of teaching and teachers.

Material development involves infrastructure and instructional material that creates an enabling environment for learning. Such environment helps teaching and learning that are based on the curriculum which equally takes unto cognizance the cultural realities of the languages learners.

Capacity building for language preservation also has to do with employing teachers with the right professional competences. This deals with recruitment and training for adequate personnel that will carry out the learning and usage of the language within the community as stated in the curriculum. Periodical in-service training also helps to keep training of teachers active in the teaching activities.

### **Recommendations**

The following have been recommended as part of effort in strengthening West African native languages for preservation.

- Intellectual elites of minority native West African languages should promote their mother tongue.
- They should initiate projects that can give new impetus to dying languages and adopt them to the modern world.
- Raising the economic status of the people themselves can in turn elevate the languages for preservation.
- The prestige of the languages should be elevated using the media, community radios stations that broadcast various native languages should be used to provide news, educational programming, health information and traditional music to reinforce the people's pride for language preservation.
- Various governments of West African states should give recognition to the multiple native languages in their locality.

### **Conclusion**

The main thrust of this paper is dire need for learning and usage of West African native languages in their speech communities alongside English language or French language. While the paper tasks the stakeholders in individual speech communities to cultivate strong will to engage their language in active use, it also requires linguistics to create orthographies that adequately represent what the people speak to facilitate learning of the language.

Language teachers on their part need to use pedagogic and communicative approaches that take into cognizance the culture of the individual speech communities. The learners on the other hand can construct their learning experiences of the language in a way that enhance the value of the language as a cultural and linguistic identity.

To achieve revitalization of endangered language, appropriate planning are required. The use of the mass media is equally required for popularization of cultural festivities among West African States. Interesting projects and activities in speech communities, a total overhaul of the various native language policies and implementations among others are therapeutic measures on what need to be done for language preservation from endangerments

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## *Linguistics and L1 Transfer in the Service of Pre-Service L2 Student Teachers*

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, I will establish the unique contribution of integrating two major perspectives into Foreign Language (FL) teacher education, particularly to Student Teachers (STs) who are training to teach a FL that is not their native language. The first is based on insights from modern linguistics; the second adopts the concept of first language transfer as a high-order learning skill.

Based on my experience as a linguist and an English teacher educator, I will show how such an approach develops students' meta-linguistic awareness – of the grammatical differences between the FL and their mother tongue, and of the resulting difficulties and errors. It will be suggested that this approach provides the STs with a thorough understanding of the dynamics of the FL, which makes up for the lack of native speaker intuitions and even establishes a meaningful bond between the ST's and the FL that they are training to teach. Not only does this awareness minimize common language errors among English STs and improve their production and comprehension of English, but it also equips them with effective tools for teaching their future EFL students at school.

Various types of common errors in English – mainly errors related to word classes and tense and aspect – will be analyzed, and their sources will be identified and explained. Through the discussion of these common errors, it will be demonstrated how the perspective proposed here provides an insightful approach to meaningful and effective language education.

Keywords: Foreign Language Education; First Language Transfer; Meta-Linguistic Awareness

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## **Introduction**

English teacher educators often face the significant challenge of finding the optimal balance between improving the English proficiency of their student teachers whose mother tongue is not English, and – at the same time - training them to be foreign language teachers themselves.

I will establish in this paper the unique contribution of integrating two major perspectives into Foreign Language (FL) teacher education, particularly in cases where Student Teachers (STs) whose mother tongue is Hebrew are training to teach English as a Foreign Language. The first perspective is based on insights from modern 20<sup>th</sup> century linguistics; the second adopts the concept of first language (L1) transfer as a high-order thinking skill, in accordance with recent research and theories of second language acquisition (e.g. Ellis 1994 and references therein, Ellis 2006)), combined with error analysis and contrastive analysis.

After establishing the difference between second and foreign language acquisition and the significance of meta-linguistic awareness, various types of common errors in English – mainly in the domain of word classes and tenses – will be analyzed, and their sources will be identified and explained. These errors highlight some areas of importance in English teaching which are somewhat disregarded in elementary and secondary education and therefore cause difficulties with language production and comprehension at the tertiary level (Levenston 1970; Rosenstein; 1993, Swan 2010). The approach that I will outline here equips English student teachers with useful insights and tools for their future practice as English teachers back at the schools. It will be demonstrated throughout the paper how the approach proposed here contributes to meaningful and effective language education at all levels.

## **Meta-linguistic Awareness**

One of the most important factors that should be born in mind is that many English learners at all levels, throughout the world, are mostly learners of English as a foreign language, rather than as a second language. What is often referred to as second language learners are learners who are naturally exposed to a second language on a regular basis, and can thus subconsciously infer the regularities of the new language and internalize them, on the basis of many recurring examples of sentence patterns and word forms. This is similar, in some respects, to the way children acquire their mother tongue. Foreign language learners, on the other hand, are usually not sufficiently exposed to the target language, and their only exposure to the language might be in the English classroom. These learners therefore need more explicit guidelines, which should be based on the development of meta-linguistic awareness among language teachers, and, eventually, among language learners themselves. Unfortunately, these needs are often over-looked or underestimated in the standard practice of English teaching at school.

The acknowledgment of these unique needs of the EFL learner necessarily requires the development of the following types of meta-linguistic awareness:

Awareness of the differences between the learners' mother tongue and the foreign language, and of the effects of these differences, particularly common errors and difficulties; in other words: awareness of L1 transfer, of the factors affecting language transfer, and of the potential consequences of transfer.

Awareness of linguistically valid generalizations underlying basic grammatical rules and categories.

On the basis of many years of experience teaching English grammar, linguistics and language proficiency courses to EFL learners in tertiary education, I will provide examples of common errors that EFL learners make in English, and will present my approach to EFL teaching, which specifically addresses these errors. In this paper, I will focus on two main areas: lexical categories and the tense system.

### Lexical Categories

Consider the bold nonsense words in the following sentences (Adapted from Radford 1988):

1. Jill **glonks** every morning, but right now she is not **glonking**.
2. **Tronks** are very cheap these days, so I bought a beautiful **tronk** last week.
3. He is a **nurgy** boy. He often speaks **nurgily**.

Although there is no way to rely on the meaning in such cases of nonsense words, speakers and learners quite easily determine the grammatical categories of such nonsense words. Hence, it is evident that speakers have subconscious intuitions regarding the structural (syntactic and morphological) properties of words belonging to a given word class, as suggested by modern mentalist linguistics. One of the basic insights of modern linguistics is that there is no one-to-one mapping between linguistic forms and their meanings. More specifically, it is argued that linguistic categories on different language levels (such as tenses, word classes, sentence parts, sentence types) should be defined on the basis of their structural-grammatical properties, rather than on the basis of what they normally (or often) mean. Accordingly, modern linguistics bases lexical classifications to nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. on this structural approach. In what follows, it will be demonstrated how his insight is highly relevant to language teaching.

Let us consider first a problem whose effects are often evident in students' errors, mainly in production but also in comprehension. Sometimes, the same "meaning" is expressed differently in different languages in the sense that it is classified as belonging to different grammatical categories. I would like to propose, then, that the source of the extremely common errors among English learners at all levels – exemplified in the ungrammatical (\*) examples in (4)-(7) below – is the differences between English and certain other languages in the grammatical classification of words and expressions that are perceived as equivalent in meaning.

4. \* *It's depend on the weather; \*It's belong to me; \*It's mean that it's important.*

It can very easily be demonstrated why *depend*, *belong* and *mean* are verbs in the full sense of the term in English, as they display typical verb inflections (e.g. *depends*, *belonged*, *will mean*), whereas in Hebrew and other languages they are not. For

example, the expression corresponding to *depend* is an adjective in Hebrew, so Hebrew speakers tend to transfer this classification from their mother tongue, and impose an adjective behavior on English *depend* when they use it. Hence the common mistake *it's depend*. (Cf.: *It's beautiful; It's important; It's necessary*).

In the same way, the mistake in (2) reflects differences between English and Hebrew in how the concept of being late is codified grammatically – as an adjective in English and as a verb in Hebrew:

5. \**They late to school every day.*

Some additional types of common mistakes that English learners make similarly bear on the relevance of a structural classification of words into categories.

6. \**The cat was died.*

Unlike English, which distinguishes between the verb *to die* and the adjective *dead*, Hebrew and other languages use the same form as an adjective and as a verb, so this distinction is hard for learners to acquire and they sometimes use incorrect structures like (6), which reflect the confusion between verb and adjective forms.

7. \**The girls are beautifuls; \* She call me every morning;*

English teachers are familiar with those mistakes in production among their students, which display over-use and avoidance of the suffix *-s*, respectively (Ellis 1994). I would like to suggest that if the plural rule is not presented explicitly, right from the start, as a rule that pertains only to the category of nouns in English, learners find it very hard to associate the *-s* with singular verbs. Therefore, if their mother tongue uses plural forms for verbs, adjectives etc., learners (especially beginners) tend to add the plural suffix *-s* to adjectives as in (7), or to verbs, e.g. \**They goes*. Moreover, even relatively advanced learners often fail to use it with third person singular verbs, especially given the arbitrary and exceptional nature of this rule. Beginners sometimes even interpret words *like smiles, works, walks*, as plural forms of verbs or nouns, and may consequently lose completely the correct sentence structure. EFL teachers must therefore explicitly discuss the difference between English and other languages in this respect, if their students are native speakers of languages like French, Spanish, Arabic, because speakers of those languages take it for granted that every category – nouns, verb, adjectives – has plural forms. The linguistic generalization that in English, only nouns have grammatically plural forms should be highlighted, and it should be stressed that the suffix *-s* in English is NOT automatically plural.

8. \**The government announced that she will change her policy.*

This is a common type of error among English learners whose native language (e.g. French, Spanish, Hebrew), marks noun with grammatical gender. It should be explicitly taught that English does not have grammatical gender at all, and the pronouns *he* and *she* for example, or words like *actor-actress, prince-princess* are chosen according to biological gender only (Levenston 1970). This difference between English and many other languages in whether there is grammatical gender is not standardly presented in primary or secondary education, and presenting *it*, for

example, as analogous to impersonal pronouns in other languages (e.g. "ça" in French), is sometimes misleading; more emphasis should be put on explaining the differences between English and the students' mother tongue regarding gender, so as to raise their awareness of it.

As we can see, the difference between languages is not just in the way they "choose" to classify words into classes, but also in the categories that they choose – if at all - to mark grammatically as singular-plural, masculine and feminine, etc. Language teachers should therefore be aware of these differences between the foreign language that they teach and the mother tongue of their students.

The following examples focus mainly on comprehension, but their analysis is based on the same kind of insights presented above:

9. *Careful planning can save students from financial straits.*  
(Retrieved from [www.southwesterncollegesun.com](http://www.southwesterncollegesun.com))
10. ... *a clear understanding of the interaction is essential for properly designing the part.*  
(Retrieved from:  
<http://www.freetutes.com/systemanalysis/sa2-design-of-system.html>)

Clearly, to be able to parse and comprehend even these relatively simple sentences, learners must be made aware of the syntactic structure of the NP which constitutes the subject of the sentence. More specifically, if learners understand that *planning* and *understanding* are used as nouns here because of their combination with a preceding adjective (or article+adjective), then they are not going to be misled by their apparent verb morphology. It goes without saying that if learners interpret these words as the verbs of the sentences, they will find it very hard to comprehend it, and are even likely to misunderstand it in certain cases. Note that the analysis proposed here is necessarily based on understanding what an adjective is and what an article (or, more generally, what a determiner) is. This, in turn, should also be based on structural criteria, because explaining, for example, that adjectives modify nouns without making reference to syntactic and morphological criteria will fail to explain the difference between pre-head modifiers NP's (typically adjectives, but also nouns as in *information center, committee members, psychology student*, etc.) and post-head modifiers such as PP's (*a teacher of English*) and relative clauses (*the theory that he developed*). Note that in many languages, including Hebrew, all noun modifiers always follow the head noun in NP's, so that speakers of those languages will have to acquire a new distinction that does not exist in their mother tongue, between pre- and post-head modifiers, according to the grammatical categories of the modifying phrases. It has been established in the SLA literature that new distinctions in a foreign language, i.e. cases in which one category or rule splits into two or more categories in L2, are the most difficult to acquire (e.g. Ellis 1994 and references therein). The distinction between what has to be a pre- or post-head modifier is structural by definition, and is essential for understanding that *psychology students*, for instance, means "students who study psychology", and not "the psychology of students".

The comprehension of the following examples should similarly be based on structural criteria:

11. *Captive whale and dolphin shows are not education, or conservation.*  
(Retrieved from: <http://us.whales.org/issues/captivity>)

Learners should be made aware of the fact that words in English can often belong to more than one lexical category, particularly to the noun and verb categories. This is essential for the comprehension of example (11), in which *shows* functions as the plural head of the subject NP, rather than as a third person singular form of the verb *show* in the present simple – as learners are likely to assume.

### **Tense and Aspect**

Another domain in which it is evident that there is no one straightforward mapping between meanings and grammatical forms is the tense system. Specifically, grammatical tenses do not necessarily match unique time references, as demonstrated in the following examples, in which the expressions in bold do not match the "default" time references associated with the underlined verbal expressions:

12. *She is leaving **tomorrow**.*  
 13. *The train leaves at 8:00 **tonight**.*  
 14. *If she comes here **tomorrow**, I will tell her the news.*  
 15. *When she gets up, she **will call** you.*  
 16. *If you were here with us **now**, you would enjoy the party so much!*

It is evident that clearer distinctions between concepts (tense-time), and between universal categories and their grammatical codifications in different languages are required for valid and insightful language education. English teachers, including English teacher educators, invest considerable time and energy in teaching grammatical tenses, and are, more often than not, disappointed with the results. For example, regardless of how many times the present simple and present progressive are taught and re-taught, still, students often end up not knowing how to use them correctly in natural communication when they graduate high-school. And this difficulty exists even among English student teachers and other relatively advanced learners.

I would like to suggest that the problem results partly from the mere exaggeration in the number of tenses in a foreign language, which is often evident in grammar textbooks and can itself constitute a significant psychological barrier for the average foreign-language learner, thus complicating the process of tense acquisition. As illustrated in the following table, it is often shown in grammar textbooks that English has 12 tenses; some textbooks add the so-called "future-past" (*would* forms), which brings us to 16 tenses in English!

## The 12 Verb Tenses

	Past	Present	Future
Simple	I <i>ate</i> pizza yesterday. S + V <sub>2</sub> + O	I <i>eat</i> pizza everyday. S + V <sub>1</sub> + O	I <i>will eat</i> pizza tomorrow. S + 'will' + V + O
Continuous	I <i>was eating</i> pizza when you arrived. S + 'was/were' + (V+ing) + O	I <i>am eating</i> pizza right now. S + 'am/is/are' + (V+ing) + O	I <i>will be eating</i> pizza when you arrive. S + 'will be' + (V+ing) + O
Perfect	I <i>had eaten</i> all of the pizza when you arrived. S + 'had' + V <sub>3</sub> + O	I <i>have eaten</i> all of the pizza. S + 'have/has' + V <sub>3</sub> + O	I <i>will have eaten</i> all of the pizza by the time you arrive. S + 'will have' + V <sub>3</sub> + O
Perfect Continuous	I <i>had been eating</i> pizza for 2 hours when you arrived. S + 'had been' + (V+ing) + O	I <i>have been eating</i> pizza for 2 hours. S + 'have/has been' + (V+ing) + O	I <i>will have been eating</i> pizza for 2 hours when you arrive. S + 'will have been' + (V+ing) + O

Legend: S = Subject    O = Object    V = Verb (V<sub>1</sub> = present / V<sub>2</sub> = past / V<sub>3</sub> = past participle)

Figure 1: The 12 Verb Tenses

Retrieved from: <http://www.easypacelearning.com/images/verbtenses.jpg>

One principle that can play a crucial role in minimizing this psychological barrier and facilitate the acquisition process is making a clear distinction between TIME, TENSE, and ASPECT. TIME as a universal cognitive concept, is normally perceived as divided into past, present and future. But, crucially, not every language codifies this distinction via grammatical distinctions between verb forms, i.e. not every language has past, present, and future verb forms (Ziv & Rubovitz-Mann 2008). Furthermore, there are languages like English, in which there are additional distinctions codified by different verb forms, such as the perfect and progressive forms. These should NOT be regarded as distinct tenses, but rather as grammatical ways to highlight some additional information or ASPECT of the action denoted by the verb. And these are, indeed, referred to in the linguistic literature as GRAMMATICAL ASPECT. Crucially these aspect distinctions apply to different tenses in very similar ways (e.g. the present progressive and the past progressive). By examining some very common mistakes that English learners often make in tenses, I will show in what follows how adopting the view that I have just outlined helps eliminate, or at least minimize, those mistakes.

**Present simple and present progressive:** Language teachers often come across mistakes like: *I eat pizza now/I'm eating pizza every day*, among others. I would like to suggest that one of the sources of these common problems is that the distinction between English and other languages (i.e. the students' mother tongue) with respect to the present simple and present progressive is sometimes over-stressed. Indeed, many languages do not have present simple and present progressive verb forms, but they do have ways to express this distinction, for example by using different time expression

(Ziv & Rubovitz-Mann 2008). If we tell our students – as I do in my grammar classes – that in order to know which of the two forms is appropriate in a specific case they just have to think of an appropriate time expression in their mother tongue, even the progressive/simple distinction becomes simpler. They have to ask themselves whether what is described by the sentence is true about now (in the broad sense), or is it generally true, in some sense. If we present to them the fact that English and their mother tongue simply have different ways to express or codify the same distinctions, the distinction between simple and progressive forms becomes more accessible to them. I would like to point out, in this context, that it is important not to over-emphasize the idea that the present progressive is used in order to describe things that are being done at this very moment. After all, how often do we describe to people what we, or somebody else, are doing right now? (???*I'm talking to you right now*). The essence of the distinction between present simple and progressive is the distinction between things that are true in general, and things that are not.

**The future:** It is common practice to present the *will+VERB* structure as the most basic future form of English, and it is often presented in grammar textbooks as "the future simple" (as shown on the table above). But, from a linguistic perspective, there is no future tense in English, because there is no future morphological verb form – as there is in other languages such as Hebrew, Arabic, French, Spanish, Italian and many others. In fact, as we can see in the following examples, there are various ways to talk about future time in English – none of which makes use of a form of verb that is future grammatically/morphologically:

17. *I will open the door.*
18. *Be careful – it's going to fall.*
19. *She is leaving tomorrow.*
20. *The bus leaves at 8:00 tonight.*

Crucially, the different ways to talk about the future in English are not always equivalent to one another, and are very often not interchangeable, as evident in the following examples, which are likely to be inappropriate in most contexts:

21. *???Be careful – it will fall!*
22. *??? I leave tomorrow.*
- 23.. *??? I will buy a new car next week.*

But notice that the idea that different tenses can be used in reference to the future is not necessarily strange to speakers of other languages such as Hebrew or French, in which it is common to use present forms to talk about the future, and these are sometimes even more natural than using the future tense. In light of this, it is not difficult to explain to students that English does not have future verb forms, and it uses a variety of other forms, mostly present forms, to express reference to the future. This is how I teach "future" in my grammar courses, and the students accept it easily and naturally. Thus, making reference not only to differences, but also to similarities between languages, is sometimes enlightening and effective. Furthermore, this phenomenon demonstrates again the idea that languages differ in which categories they choose to codify grammatically (as shown above with respect to gender, for example), and this fact should be explicitly acknowledged by language teachers.



The problem is that if we consider *will*-structures as the basic future form, how can we account for the so many cases in which it is inappropriate to use *will* in talking about the future, as shown in the following examples?

24. \* *If it will rain tomorrow, we will cancel the trip.*  
 25. \* *When she will come home, I will tell her the news.*

The grammatical rules underlying the ungrammatical cases in (24)-(25) must be memorized as exceptions unless it is explicitly shown to English learners that there is no future tense in English, and that *will*-forms are just one among other forms that can be used to refer to the future. In fact, taking a linguistic perspective, *will* is grammatically a modal like any other modal, and the only difference is that it may be the most commonly used in reference to the future – probably due to its relatively neutral meaning. But it is clearly not the only modal that refers to the future, as we can see in examples (26)-(29):

26. *I can help you tomorrow.*  
 27. *You should speak to him this evening.*  
 28. *She must call her teacher tomorrow morning.*  
 29. *I might join you.*

Note that classifying *will* as a modal is not a natural classification if we define the class of modals semantically rather than grammatically, but this is how it should be classified if we take a linguistic, structural perspective.

It is always difficult for English learners to use correctly conditional sentences and sentences containing time expressions which do not allow the use of *will* or *would* (Cf. examples (24)-(25) above). This resistance to use the correct English form is very natural, considering the fact that it is highly counter-intuitive to refer to the future and not to be allowed to use what is considered a future form (*will*), especially if the learner's mother tongue does not impose a corresponding restriction. But if, right from the start, learners are taught that English does not have a future tense anyway, it becomes more natural to have to choose the right form among different present forms. And, as stressed above, learners should just be made aware of the fact that using present forms to refer to the future might be highly natural and common in their mother tongue too.

## Conclusion

It is acknowledged in the Second Language Acquisition theory and research that learners' mother tongue, and other languages that they know, affect second language acquisition (in production as well as in comprehension) in intricate ways, and interact with a variety of other factors (Ellis 1994, and references therein). Empirical evidence shows that it is not necessarily the case that learners simply translate or transfer forms from their native language to the foreign language in a one-to-one manner, as it was originally assumed by the Behaviorists in mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. Still first language transfer exists, and is evident in every aspect of language; and sometimes there is more to first language transfer than meets the eye. In this paper, I have focused on a very small sample of simple and basic English grammatical issues; there are more cases and language areas which, according to my experience, benefit from the kind of

treatment that I have proposed here (e.g. additional tense forms, modals, passive, verb BE), but a detailed discussion of these cases is beyond the scope of this paper. Transfer effects are also evident in other aspects of sentence structure, and in completely different aspects of language, such as vocabulary and phonology. In what follows, I will only give some very simple and brief examples. In vocabulary, the respective distinctions in English – but not in every language – between *clock* and *watch*, *hand* and *arm*, *foot* and *leg*, *work*, *job* and *paper*, *table* and *desk*, etc. are responsible for vocabulary mistakes that English learners often make. The same is true for prepositions, in which there are more distinctions in English than there are in Hebrew and in other languages, as in *at 8 o'clock* vs. *on Monday* vs. *in March*; *I'm going to school* vs. *it's difficult for me*. Indeed, as noted above, the most difficult for foreign language learners is to acquire new distinctions or categories that do not exist in their mother tongue. These differences should be presented explicitly and accurately to EFL learners at the stage when they start acquiring English vocabulary.

Furthermore, foreign language teachers are all familiar with pronunciation problems, many of which resulting from the fact that different languages do not make the same phonological distinctions, e.g. distinctions between different vowel sounds. Many English learners not only cannot produce the different sounds, but also cannot even hear the difference between them! Therefore, as I have suggested in this paper, the key to dealing with these problems is raising meta-linguistic awareness.

Given that mother-tongue effects are inevitable, I am proposing to adopt the strategy of “if you can't beat them (i.e. first language effects), join them!” I know from my experience that identifying and defining the source of the problem, and being aware of it, are crucial to a more effective acquisition process. Linguistic differences between a foreign language and the learners' mother tongue, on every language level, and the effects of these differences on learners' language, should be explicitly addressed and discussed. The key word here is **awareness**, language awareness, and what I have shown in this paper can be implemented in every aspect of language. I am not pretending that all errors will be eliminated by adopting the perspective I have outlined here. Indeed, many aspects of language are completely arbitrary (e.g. prepositions), and their acquisition will not benefit directly from adopting a linguistic perspective nor by developing meta-linguistic awareness. But the point is that simplifications – which we always, naturally, look for when it comes to teaching – sometimes turn out to be over-simplistic, even misleading, and may result in misconceptions about the correct rules of the language in the long run. They might achieve little beyond correcting a specific mistake in an ad hoc manner, and miss the valid generalization underlying the rule.

And that is why EFL teachers and student teachers should be made aware of important differences between the learners' mother tongue and English, and of certain relevant structural regularities and linguistic generalizations. After all, at some point, pre-service student teachers will have to explain these rules to their students at primary and secondary schools who have to learn English as a foreign language. Their students will probably face the same difficulties that many of their teachers have faced when they were students, if their teachers have acquired English as a foreign language themselves, or difficulties that teachers might not be familiar with if they are native speakers of English. Interestingly, student teachers who are native speakers of English are often particularly eager to learn those grammatical rules, as they feel that

their native speaker intuitions do not provide them with sufficient tools for teaching the language as a foreign language, nor would they know what the sources of their students' difficulties are. I even dare say that if student teachers are more knowledgeable about the nature and intricacies of language, they might be better teachers, at least in the sense that their students at school would eventually be able to use English more accurately.

It is well known that not everybody understands grammatical (or linguistic) rules, certainly not everybody likes them, but I strongly believe that English teachers should be made aware of them, for their own benefit, and certainly for the benefit of their students.



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The logo for the International Association for Foreign Language Research (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a larger, light blue arc and a smaller, light red arc that overlaps the blue one.

***Rural Basic Education for All:  
The Impact of the Language of Instruction on the Quality***

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**Abstract**

The paper discusses the issues related to the use of English as Language of Instructions (LoI) in rural Twelve-Year Basic Education (12YBE) in Rwanda: Quality questions in education through English as LoI. The use of English, the language of the world and new technology, emerged as an economic and educational solution at improving the quality of education to meet the labour market demand in our region. However, there is an uncertainty related to the contribution of weak skills in English to the quality of education. 12 YBE students have little or no exposure to English. They barely understand the LoI and their teachers also have weak knowledge in LoI. The low standards of LoI are implicated in low quality and examination disadvantages. What can we do to effectively use English as LoI? This research gives the Ministry of Education an overview of the standards of English used as LoI in 12 YBE, and how it affects the quality.

This research is a qualitative study that used the micro-approach to explore the quality in 12 YBE in rural areas. Public and private schools are concerned. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 25 rural schools for classroom observation and interviews. The results show that, at the end of Ordinary Level and Advanced Level of 12 YBE, students' skills in English required to perform their content subjects are weak and create some descent in their participation in learning.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of the Language of Instruction (henceforth LoI) refers to the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system. Depending on the political and educational need one or two languages can be used as LoI. In Rwandan 12 Year Basic Education (Henceforth 12 YBE), Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue, national Language and official Language, is used only in the first three grades of 12 YBE as LoI, English, second language and official language, is used from the fourth grade until the last year of 12 YBE. The particularity for Rwanda is the language shift from French (LoI in educational system of Rwanda from colonial period up to 2008) to English as LoI. All students in 12 YBE follow their studies in English. Despite pedagogical and linguistics problems caused by this shift, it is a step forward in the educational reform. What we have to do for the new system is to analyze and express our constructive suggestions on how to fill in gaps and strengthen the use of English in the aim of making it a suitable tool to the quality of education.

Many Researches comparing classroom processes in lessons taught in English and in African languages show how English impacts on teaching strategies, but also the potential of teacher professional development to address this (Rubagumya, 2003; UNESCO, 2003; Qorro, 2006). These researches suggest the use of African languages in education, especially in basic education, in order to learn effectively. Nowadays, with the globalization times, with the power of English in the world, with the vibrant penetration of new technology in all corners of the world, with the huge demand of English evidenced by earlier introduction of English into the curriculum and the rapid growth in English medium private schooling alongside the state system in Africa, the reality of teaching and learning in mother tongue in the basic education is no longer profitable, it is out of date because English has become the gatekeeper to academic mobility and employment in the public and private sectors.

In Rwanda, despite their difficulties in English, students in 12 YBE prefer English than any other language (Ntawigira, 2011). Parents wish to see and hear their children speaking English not Kinyarwanda (Ntawigira, 2004). Mother-tongue instruction is effective when there is appropriate terminology for education purposes and sufficient resource materials; when there are appropriately trained teachers and when learners, educators and parents are willing. Is there any willing support to teach and learn in Kinyarwanda? Kinyarwanda, only spoken and used in Rwanda, cannot help to resolve the educational problems in Rwanda. It is not an effective means by which the quality of education in 12 YBE, in this globalization time, can be achieved. With the current linguistic situation of Rwanda, its current cooperation with Anglophone communities, with the regional and world competition on the labour market, using another language rather English in Rwandan 12 YBE as LoI should be a long term poison.

## 2. Historical Review and Current Linguistic Situation

### 2.1 Rwanda 's Current Linguistic Situation

The current sociolinguistic situation of Rwanda starts with the end of the Genocide against Tutsis in 1994, and deals with the new population of Rwanda together with its linguistic repertoire. Since June 1994, Rwandese population has comprised people who had been living in Rwanda before 1994 and returnees who had lived in neighbouring countries and other African and European/American countries.

Obviously, the number of foreign languages speakers, especially English, in Rwanda has increased. Within a population of 12,012,589 people, almost 100% of the population speaks Kinyarwanda (D 61) (Maho, 2003) the only one local language that unifies all Rwandans. Unlike most other African nations, virtually all Rwandans, speak the everyday Kinyarwanda. 90% speaks only Kinyarwanda, 6% speaks French, while only 3% fluently uses English. Another group of 10% speaks Kiswahili (Ntawigira, 2011).

The evolution of the present linguistic situation of Rwanda can be divided into 2 main periods: The colonial period (after 1900) and post independence period (after 1962). The latter can also be sub-divided into two sub-periods: From independence (1962) until 7<sup>th</sup> April 1994 (Genocide against Tutsis) and from 1994 until now.

### **2.1.1 Colonial Period**

During this period, Germans introduced German and Kiswahili in Rwanda. It was easier for Rwandans to understand and speak Kiswahili than they could do for German, because Kiswahili and Kinyarwanda are both Bantu languages and Kiswahili enjoys structural and lexical affinities with Kinyarwanda. Germans used Kiswahili and German in all political activities. After the end of the First World War, Belgians took over from the Germans in Rwanda. They came with French language and used it in all their political activities where Germans had used Kiswahili and German. French became official language, LoI in primary (second cycle) and secondary schools, subject matter in primary schools, while Kiswahili was called a language of delinquents. The presence and the official status of French in Rwanda result from the influence of European culture, but especially from Belgian culture (Murebwayire, 1979).

### **2.1.2. Post-independence Period**

#### **2.1.2. 1 Before 1994**

During this period, the linguistic situation of Rwanda did not change very much. New Rwandan authorities continued to use French as the official language and Language of Instruction in secondary schools. In 1962, when the National Radio began to broadcast on short waves, three languages, namely Kinyarwanda, French and Kiswahili were used. Kinyarwanda dominated all programs while French and Kiswahili were mainly used for radio news. The use of English was rare. It was accepted in public education in 1963.

A great effort to promote languages in Rwanda took place in 1979 during the educational reform in primary and secondary schools (MINEPRISEC, 1985). Kinyarwanda became the LoI in both the first and second cycles of primary school, while before the reform French was used in the second cycle. In secondary schools, the number of language hours was augmented. English and Kiswahili were taught in some options but with different frequencies according to the specialty of each option. That reform has been a good opportunity to create schools for languages, whose programs were dominated by Kinyarwanda, French, English and Kiswahili from senior one to senior six. Despite that they were taught in classroom, English and Kiswahili remained without official status. This situation continued until 7<sup>th</sup> April 1994, the date of genocide in Rwanda.

### 2.1.2.2 After 1994

After the Genocide against Tutsis of April 1994, one of the main goals of new Rwandan authorities was to repatriate Rwandan refugees from Anglophone and francophone countries. In attempt to manage Anglophone situation in public administration and education system, Rwandan Government has declared English an official language alongside Kinyarwanda and French in the following terms: *The national language is Kinyarwanda. The official languages are Kinyarwanda, French and English (Official Gazette of Republic of Rwanda, 2003, p. 65)*. From 1994 until 2008, both languages French and English were used as LoI in Francophone and Anglophone schools respectively. English was becoming a powerful and prestigious language because it was a language of some important authorities in new administration and army.

In the November 2008, Rwandan Government decided to use English – as LoI at all levels of education system of Rwanda – instead of French. Rwandan authorities, stakeholders consider English as the main tool of development in all vital sectors of national life. It becomes the panacea for the country's economic and educational problems. Referring to the speech of the ex-State Minister of Education Mutsindashyaka Theoneste held in Lycée Notre Dame de Cîteaux in May 2008 in the parents meeting, he said: *“Rwandans, especially youth, we are in the direct running competition with other countries of the whole world. The preferable shoes in running competition are running shoes not boots. To meet our vision 2020 we need to run in conformity with all ICT's techniques in all domains. So, our running shoes is English language, we have to learn and use it in all domains like other developed countries” (My translation, interview)*. The ex-State Minister highlights the power of English in global competition and recommends all students and parents to use English as the main tool to link us to the developed world.

### 3. The Rationale of the Shift to English as LoI in 12 YBE

In October 2008, the Rwandan government, in line with its goal of achieving universal primary education by 2010 and education for all by 2015, made English the mandatory LoI from primary school to university. The new direction took shape in all levels of education, and somehow directly affecting students' learning. The mandate looked to a bigger picture where the command of English would enable Rwanda to become a major economic player, not only in Africa, but the world over. This came shortly after Rwanda joined the East African Community and before the country became a member of the British Commonwealth in November 2009.

Reasons for choosing English as LoI are fundamentally educational and economic. First, Rwandan authorities emphasize that the eagerness to switch languages is not first choosing the Anglophone world but choosing the path toward a consistent and quality education that will enable new Rwandan generations to compete with their peers in this globalization time characterized by a mushrooming of new ICT's ideas. This decision comes to complete and sustain the existing goal of Rwandan Government “to achieve on universal education for all capable to international competition” (MINEDUC, 2010).



By quality of education, we mean education that transmit new ideas to students but also prepare them to understand how those new ideas relate to those that we already know. The quality of education is that one which opens new doors to students, and it does not disorient or alienate students from their society, but rather gives them a new perspective on it. English language is the preferred means to use for our education to make Rwandan new generation able to know what is happening in the whole world and express themselves around the world. The quality of education we want through the use of English as LoI can be viewed in terms of the correspondence between the goals, or expectations of society and changes that take place in the learners, the education system and the society as a whole. Expectations of society, according to Mmari quoted by Qorro 2006, are expressed in terms of educational goals that can broadly be classified into three categories, namely: (i) Learning goals, which focus on equipping learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as defined in a given curriculum; (ii) System goals, which relate to measurable inputs and outputs that keep the system working; and (iii) Educational goals, which are based on the dominant ideas within society. Since every society has its dominant ideas, it follows that the goals of education between societies will naturally differ; and to that extent the meaning of quality of education will also differ (Qorro, 2006).

The quality of education in Rwanda cannot be divorced from the goals and objectives of education in Rwanda. Hence, as we are discussing quality of education in relation to the LoI in Rwandan rural 12 YBE schools, we need to bring into the picture the goals and objectives of education as mentioned by MINEDUC(Ministry of Education) 2010. The goals and objectives of MINEDUC reflect its national and international aspirations to underpin education sector development as stated in the following words: *The mission of the Ministry of Education is to transform the Rwandan citizen into skilled human capital for socio-economic development of the country by ensuring equitable access to quality education focusing on combating illiteracy, promotion of science and technology, critical thinking and positive values* (ESSP2010, p.1). English language is the main tool for Rwandan to achieve and implement educational sector priorities as stated in ESSP 2010-2015:

1. Ensuring that educational quality continues to improve through closer integration of curriculum development, quality assurance and assessment, improved textbook distribution, improving teaching and learning while introducing English as the medium of instruction, setting up a system of monitoring of learning achievement at school ...
2. Developing a skilled and motivated teaching, training and lecturing workforce through development of comprehensive teacher development and management system... an implementation plan for the use of English as medium of instruction ...
3. Ensuring that the post basic education (PBE) system is better tailored to meet the labor market needs... and introduce of open, distance and e-learning and regional harmonization with the East African Community (EAC).
4. Strengthening the education in Science and technology through specific intervention to address the under- developed skills in all areas of science and technology and the limited resources in teaching institutions to support the teaching of quality science and technology education, and integrating ICT within all subjects areas .

The above mission of MINEDUC shows that the use of English as LoI comes as an attempt to find solution to the educational problems. English as LoI come to remove educational limits in our education and make it international, sustainable and open it to the whole world.

Second, the drive towards English is in part economic. The use of English as LoI comes as a globalization and economic development trend. The main goal was to reform local education and prepare new Rwandan generation to think, react and operate in within economic realm in this globalization time. If Rwandan new generations in 12 YBE, especially in rural areas, are well familiarized with English, the language of the world economy, language of new technology, the backbone of economic development, they will be well equipped with English skills as essential for economic competitiveness, for entry into the knowledge economy, for access to foreign investment and technology.

As the community resources become increasingly linked to the movements of global resources and as opportunities become similarly tied, educational demand also changes. Rwandans have to look at globalization as a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and losing value. Rwandans are becoming aware of the efficacy of globalization and what they are receding. From this perspective, the use of English as LoI is seen as the key to success in the global economy. The goals of schooling become directly related to the world's economic needs. Education and the economy are seen as having an interdependent relationship. Therefore, on one hand, competition in the global economy is dependent on the quality of education while on the other hand; the goals of education are dependent on the economy.

The use of English as a LoI in schools is intended to meet the desired global standard. Globalization immediately evokes the image of privileged people. Rwandans need to live in any part of the world without hindrance. Mastering English is a way of avoiding international isolation that can easily keep many Rwandans in perpetual problems. The use of English as a LoI is the main way to liberate Rwandans to pursue a long-term process of trans-local connectivity that is both economic and educational.

#### **4. Students and English in the Classroom**

Results from my observation, interviews and questionnaires show different levels of English among students in classroom. According to my observation, students in 12 YBE are eager to learn English and use it as LoI (85%) but the linguistic environment and many other pedagogic problems related to English as LoI create a obstacle to improve easily and adequately. Students have a limited English proficiency and they need a regularly, efficient, adequate support and well tailored to their environment. Students use code switching (80%) to express their opinions in classroom and their teachers encourage them to use English and advise them to use it in their everyday experiences. However the big number of students (60%) understands instructions given by the teacher in English and they give immediate feedback in approximate English (10%), in code switching of English and Kinyarwanda (40%), in Kinyarwanda or gestures (10%). The problems most commonly encountered were listening, reading, writing and spelling errors made by learners:

1. Listening: learners did not understand instructions (40%).
2. Speaking: limited vocabulary (45% of learners).
3. Reading: learners were unfamiliar with phonics (50%).
4. Writing: learners had difficulty spelling (30%).

Statistics on the language issues covered in the research clearly indicated that the teachers' limited English proficiency affected their students' master of English and, subsequently, their Learning in other subjects. This was especially highlighted in the qualitative component of the research, where statistics indicated that various forms of English language errors were transferred to students.

### Summary of errors that students make

<b>Listening</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
Poor concentration	Sentences too short	Unfamiliar with phonics	Spelling
Do not understand instructions	Mixes languages	poor word attack skills	Poor handwriting sentences
Unable grasp main idea/crux	Poor pronunciation	Reversals	Word order
Unable discriminate auditory sounds	Limited vocabulary	No comprehension	Incomplete sentences
Other	Other	Other	Other

Throughout the data of our research a weak English proficiency regarding teacher and students emerges. It is axiomatic that LoI acts as the basic communication channel for knowledge transfer and learning from the teacher to the students. If the knowledge communication channel is obscured and hindered by limited English proficiency, both on the side of the students and of the teacher, knowledge transfer cannot be effective. Language issues that the inexperienced teachers have to face include: the LoI, doubtful informal exposure of students to English, teachers' perceptions of their own needs and proficiency in English, and limited English resources availability.

English as LoI is the language preferred by teachers and students despite that their home language is Kinyarwanda. The 12 YBE language policy and the social language environment do not correspond. The discrepancy between LoI and home language of students and teachers contribute to the slow knowledge transfer, consequently to the quality of education.

Concerning the informal exposure of students in rural areas, the results show that it is very low. The only available exposure is the watching television and this also is not available to all students. Only 5% of students can watch television, and have access on some English programs. We can recall that English programs on Rwandan Television are rare and the number of parents who are able to buy parabolic antenna-with the capacity of pick up English programs from UK, USA and other Anglophone countries - in rural areas is limited. A small proportion of students have English reading matter and a small proportion speak English at home. These limitations contribute to the weak English efficiency.

Another problem is that teachers themselves expressed their anxiety about their English proficiency. This was evidenced by errors and weak English observed in teachers' preparation notebooks and students' homework notebooks. We examined the contents of the teachers' notes to identify the teachers' written errors as well as the learners' written errors. These errors were compared and analyzed to determine to what extent the teachers' language transference influenced their learners' written language. Based on the data collected, we identified substantial similarities in notes which led to the conclusion that teachers' LoI forms are many times transferred to their learners' language forms and reflect the teachers' "quality" in English language proficiency.

### **5. How English Affects the Quality in Learning?**

The majority of 12 YBE students use Kinyarwanda as the language of daily communication. However, English has become a language of power in all vital sectors such education, economy, politics etc. In Rwandan society, in our region, English confers a great advantage in securing well-paid posts in the government and the commercial field, and provides the means for social, economic and academic upward mobility. This prestigious status of the English is reflected in 12 YBE which aims at producing students who are proficient in English and Sciences. There is a need in Rwanda to enhance the level of proficiency in both English and Sciences in order to satisfy the economic, political, educational and cultural demands that are being placed on individuals and the community.

Consider that the responsibility of Rwandan education throughout 12 YBE is to produce graduates who are proficiency in English as LoI and in their respective subject matters in order to ensure sustainable development in different domains of our countries, the use of English in 12 YBE has to be strengthened. One of the adequate and suitable ways to strengthen its use is first to know and identify students and teachers problems in classroom. The results show that:

- The classroom is conducted in code switching (Kinyarwanda – English) communication to express their opinion. This means that students are not able to communicate in English only as LoI. They have to mix English and Kinyarwanda to express their opinions.
- When instructions are given in English, three groups are observed:
  1. A small group (under 30%) that give immediate feedback in approximate English;
  2. A big group (above 40%) that give feedback in code switching English Kinyarwanda;
  3. A small group (15%) that give their feedback in Kinyarwanda.

The main cause of the above group creation is the degree of the mastery of English as LoI in Listening, Writing, Speaking and Reading.

- Listening problems affect the concentration of student in classroom: Student is unable to discriminate auditory sounds and he/she cannot understand instructions and he/she is unable to grasp main ideas of what he/she is learning/listening.
- Speaking problems affect the communication between student and teacher: Student produces ungrammatical sentences which lead to no sense sentences

and teacher cannot catch the meaning/opinion expressed by students. Student has a limited vocabulary and this leads to the code switching of Kinyarwanda –English which is not pedagogic in academic communication, especially in advanced levels of 12YBE.

- Reading problems affect the general comprehension of what student must read in order to prepare his/her assignments /homework and exams: Student has a poor word attack skills. Sometimes this problem leads to reversals and student understands the opposite of what he/she was supposed to understand.
- Writing problems affect also the writing communication between student and teacher: Student produces poor handwriting sentences and the teacher gets difficulties to decode student's writing. This writing is many times complicated by incorrect word order and incomplete sentences.

All those problems are obstacles to communication between teacher and student. If we consider LoI as the pipe that transmit knowledge between teacher and student, those problems come to block that pipe.

## 6. Results

English Language proficiency is low for about the half of the students for 25 rural 12 YBE schools visited.

- According to all respondent teachers, students are aware of importance of English in classroom achievement and its importance in social mobility but it is hard for them because they do not have enough exposure to it. But they like it despite some problems of not mastering it! A respondent teacher told me that “Students found science classes hard to understand in English, especially were exams have limited time”. Another one “As myself I use a very little of English, students found my mathematics classes hard to understand...and ask me to translate most of the questions in Kinyarwanda”.
- On the other hand, teachers have slightly different view, according to three of them students like using English but they find it hard to deal with LoI during exams. A teacher reported, “Students like to study in English, and they like to use English in chemistry, biology and physics, but they find it harder in exams”. Teacher stated, “Students prepares themselves to join classes carefully, and because all computer languages are in English, students tries to understand and works hard to learn”. Teacher said that “Students like to communicate in English in classes specially in Mathematics classes that have Math terms and they prefer it better, in exam time students like to explain questions if it is in English in more details”.
- Poor English skills are implicated in poor educational performance in 12 YBE. Little or no exposure to English lead students to barely understand English. 80% of respondent teachers have reported that the use of English has bad impacts on students' scores and overall performance. Almost all the teachers of 25 schools accept that the poor skills in English as LoI lower the performance of students in exams and lower the previous good grades.

Despite all English problems faced by students and teachers in 12YBE, all respondents agreed that to interact with the world and get benefits one has to be proficient in English. Knowing English is an asset for all those who want to excel in

their professional carriers. English is the international language of world and hence one could not neglect its importance. Participants of the survey are also well aware of its importance but they also have concerns related to it. It has been reported that if students have graduated and studied in English, the future is open for them in Rwanda and over the world, and they would also have good opportunities for good job and to get technical training programs abroad.

## 7. What can be done?

The use of English itself “Standards English” does not anything harm to teaching and learning of any subject when the both sides, teachers and students, really master English. But when both sides or one has poor skills in English, this later has bad impacts on students’ scores and overall performance. The reality from 12 YBE schools is that “Students who have better English perform well and then can get good job and they may get more opportunity to have grants from government to study abroad, they still have more opportunity in labour markets in Rwanda, in our region and all around the world”. So what can be done to sustain and strengthen the standards English?

Consider that, English is the main key to open up possibilities for new Rwandan generations to operate in East Africa Region and Beyond; English is the way forward to global fellowship and international competition; English provides means for social, economic and academic upward mobility; There is a need in Rwanda to enhance the level of proficiency in English, and this will lead to improve the quality in sciences and other subject matters. The problem in 12YBE is the weak English skills for both sides students and teachers. If students and teachers were able to use English correctly, any problem should occur!

The use of English as LoI in 12 YBE is an irreversible change. How to manage this change?

- To create prolonged exposure to English language for 12YBE schools. For instance to subscribe to different English Journals/ Media/ Newspapers/ which are incredibly using Standards English in their programs; Motivate ( not punish students who do not use English) student to use English at school when they are not in classroom; Organise conferences /debates/talks regularly in English ; Create English Clubs in schools and strengthen English mini libraries .
- To regularly organize short professional development workshops for teachers
- To intensify the communication between ministry offices and rural schools. Officers from the Ministry of education should come regularly to visit and guide teachers in rural areas.
- To create insensitive means in rural schools areas to attract qualified teachers to go there.
- To Make available enough Textbooks and other teaching materials in rural areas.
- To create cooperation between Anglophone schools (English native speakers) and 12 YBE in Rwanda
- To develop and Strengthen English learning and teaching in high education in order to prepare qualified English teachers.

- To create a vertical consultancy between 12 YBE teachers and Stakeholders/ Policymakers in the Ministry of Education.

## 8. Conclusion

The accessibility of 12 YBE students in rural areas to English language is not equal to that one of 12 YBE in urban areas. If education is supposed to be accessible and optimal for everyone, one prerequisite is that everyone can take part of it. In the case of 12 YBE, the low accessibility to English language is an obstacle for students in rural areas that do not come into contact with it in a natural way in their environment. Hence, many students in rural areas have problems with understanding the instruction because of LoI, and then their performance in classroom is not promising. The majority of 12 YBE students use Kinyarwanda as the language of daily communication. However, English in Rwanda, in our region, in the whole world, has become a language of power in all vital sectors such education, economy, ICT, politics etc. The proficiency in English is now in a panacea for all classroom problems. English guarantees well-paid posts in the government and the commercial field, and provides the means for social, economic and academic upward mobility. There is a need in rural Rwandan 12 YBE to enhance the level of proficiency in both English and Sciences in order to satisfy the economic, political, educational and cultural demands that are being placed on individuals and the community.

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***Case Study of Japanese Learning in Multicultural Learning Environment Where Different Students' Expectations May Exist in Teaching and Learning***

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**Abstract**

The increasing number of international students whose teaching and learning practices are very different from the UK, is studying in the U.K. This study poses the question of whether Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is still the most effective and appropriate approach in today's multicultural society regardless of cultural differences. The Japanese teaching method (Japanisation) was presented as an alternative teaching method to CLT, and the study investigates any impacts on multicultural students in Japanese language teaching at a university in the south of England.

The study was conducted for one semester using two groups (total of 34 students) in 2009/2010. Two teaching methods, Japanisation and CLT, were applied. The concept of Japanisation is drawn from the study of Japanese car manufacturing industries and transferred to the language teaching context. Three tests which provided quantitative data to generate data.

The quantitative results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two teaching methods regarding the attainment in the first two tests. However, Japanisation was associated with significantly higher results in the final test, compared with CLT.

The implication of this study is embedding elements of Japanisation and Japanese educational culture in the Japanese language teaching will possibly enhance students' learning of reading and writing skills. Those who develop the teaching curriculum are encouraged at a strategic level to examine other educational cultures and teaching practices from non-Anglophone countries and assess how they may be combined with CLT to reflect new international characteristics of teaching and learning environments. Key words: CLT; culture; effective language teaching; higher education; Japanese language teaching; multicultural

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## **Introduction**

Globalisation has brought changes to the monoculture societies. The UK is one of the countries which have a diverse ethnic population. The changes also had impact on higher education. British university campuses are filled with international students from all over the world. Japanese language teaching in this study is also a significant part of internationalisation in education.

In a pilot study, less than half of the Japanese class were British and the remainder were Chinese, Egyptian, Latvian, Greek, French, Malaysian, Polish and Russian. This is a typical language classroom where teacher and students do not share the same educational culture. Teaching Japanese using the most popular Anglophone originated Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, I felt that this did not work well for some non-British students as they appeared to react somewhat differently from the British students. This experience made me formulate a hypothesis that CLT is only appropriate and effective for Anglophone students (Anglophone refers to USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (NZ) within this paper). The issues of applying CLT to non-British students were not addressed when studying this teaching method, leaving me unsure on how to handle the challenges experienced in the classroom.

The next section discusses the framework of Anglophone and Japanese educational culture, which will help the understanding of the teaching methods used in the study, i.e. CLT and Japanisation. This is followed by methodology, data collection, data analysis, conclusions and implications.

## **Theoretical framework for analysing Anglophone and Japanese teaching approaches**

### ***Framework of the study***

The two teaching methods used in this study are Japanisation and CLT as representative of two educational cultures. They will be explained based on the framework using Hofstede's five dimensions of culture. Hofstede (1991) identifies culture in five dimensions: power distance; individualism–collectivism; masculinity–femininity; uncertainty avoidance; and long-term–short-term. In this paper, three dimensions will be explained for the relevance of this study, that is, power distance, individualism–collectivism and uncertainty avoidance.

Hofstede summarises power distance as “the relationship to authority” (Hofstede: 1991: 13), and it is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede: 1991: 28). A large Power Distance Index (PDI) in Hofstede's Power Distance (PD) dimension indicates that society accepts an unequal distribution of power. According to Dimmock, “many Asian societies are high PD cultures, while many Western societies have low PD values” (Dimmock: 2000: 47). Japan is ranked at 33rd place among the 50 countries (Hofstede: 1991: 26).

Hofstede defines individualism–collectivism as follows: “Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look

after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede: 1991: 51). Compared with an individualist society, a collectivist society usually has strong group cohesion and loyalty towards the group. Dimmock summarises that "Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are ranked towards the collectivist end... at the individualist end of the spectrum, the USA, Australia and Britain occupy the first three places" (Dimmock: 2000: 47). Generally speaking, Anglophone countries have an individualist society and Asian countries have a collectivist one.

Hofstede defines uncertainty avoidance as "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. This feeling is, among other things, expressed through nervous stress and in a need for predictability: a need for written and unwritten rules" (Hofstede: 1991: 113). High Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) scoring nations try to avoid ambiguous situations whenever possible, whereas low UAI scoring nations are not concerned about unknown situations. According to Hofstede (1991: 113), Japan is ranked at 7th place out of 50 countries, which shows a strong UAI. Generally, Anglophone countries appear to be labelled as weak uncertainty avoidance countries whereas Asian countries appear to be labelled as strong uncertainty avoidance countries.

### ***Anglophone approaches to teaching and learning – CLT***

CLT started in the late 1970s in Europe and gained momentum in the early 1980s. Since then it has taken hold and acquired the status of new dogma" (Hu: 2002: 94). In other words, CLT has been used for the last four decades. Three strengths of CLT are i) student-centred class, making students more proactive in learning, ii) it has "element of entertaining such as various language games" (Hu: 2002: 96) and iii) it is taught by themes and functions, rather than from easy to more difficult stages which is used in the grammar base teaching.

The weakness of CLT in multi-cultural language learning environment is that CLT appears to be based on the assumptions that relate more closely to Western teaching environments (Hu: 2002: 96) characterised by a strong ethos for individualism (Hofstede: 1991). However, some students coming from Confucius or collectivist societies could be considered as directly opposite from the Anglophone educational culture. Therefore, CLT appears to "conflict" (Hu: 2002: 102) or be "incompatible" (Hu: 2002: 102) with a multicultural teaching and learning environment, and thus may not offer a universal optimum language-teaching method.

Related to this study, Campbell and Wales's (1970) raises the question of whether communicative approach refers exclusively to the communicative knowledge or if there is any capability relating to grammatical competence. To answer this question, understanding the two broad theoretical positions existing in communicative approach might be useful (Canale and Swain: 1980). The first position focuses on communication knowledge exclusively and does not include grammatical competence. "Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar, that the ability to use a second language would develop automatically" (Nunan: 1989: 13). On the other hand, the second position allows the inclusion of grammatical competence

within communicative approach: “communication cannot take place in the absence of structure, or grammar... Canale and Swain (1980) did not suggest that grammar was unimportant... Grammar is important” (Savignon: 2002: 7). However, the interpretation of a communicative competence differs among linguists who advocate this position (e.g. Canale and Swain, 1980 and Munby, 1978). Savignon (2002), for example, states that “the principles apply equally to reading and writing... a teacher who has only a grammar-translation manual can certainly teach for communicative competence” (Savignon: 2002: 22). Another example of the different views among the same position can also be found between Munby (1978) and Canale and Swain (1980) with regards to whether grammatical competence should be taught first prior to communicative competence or vice versa. Nunan maintains that “there is a family of approaches, each member of which claims to be ‘communicative’. There is also frequent disagreement between different members of the communicative family” (Nunan: 1989: 23).

This study used communication knowledge exclusively and did not include grammatical competence. This is because this position appeared to be better suited for exploring the educational cultural influences on students without using grammatical competence.

### ***Typical CLT procedures used in this study***

CLT was applied to Group 2 (21 students). CLT adopts the following three of Hofstede’s educational cultural dimensions: small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, and individualism. CLT class was achieved by exposing the sample students to a combination of the following Hofstede’s three dimensions that characterise Anglophone educational culture:

Firstly, with regards to the large versus small power distance dimension, Anglophone educational culture prefers small power distance as “CLT is firmly opposed to teacher dominance in the classroom” (Hu: 2002: 95). This was created by creating a student centred class.

Secondly, with regards to the strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance dimension, Anglophone educational culture takes weak uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance was achieved by encouraging students’ creativity and avoiding linguistic correction: “learners are not being constantly corrected. Errors are regarded with greater tolerance,” (Littlewood: 1981: 94), and CLT “avoid(s) linguistic correction entirely” (Brumfit and Johnson: 1979: 173).

Lastly, with regard to the individualism versus collectivism dimension, Anglophone educational culture adheres to individualism. Individualism was demonstrated through speaking activities with pair work such as a real life related information gap task and problem-solving tasks using a combination of a topic of theme (e.g. time, shopping, etc.). During pair work, students kept their cognitive activity engaged through tailored learning and learned at their own pace. Furthermore, students also have the opportunity to have one-to-one interactions with the tutor during the pair work.

### ***Japanese approaches to teaching and learning – Japanisation***

The concept of Japanisation is drawn from the study of Japanese car manufacturing industries and transferred to the language teaching context for the purpose of this study. There have been reports of non-Japanese car manufacturing industries successfully applying Japanisation all over the world, and there were suggestions to apply the manufacturing concept of Japanisation into educational management around a decade ago (Morley and Rasool: 2000). Japanisation has possibility to wider ramifications that go beyond the manufacturing industry and management. Musgrave claims that “schools can be viewed as organisations in some ways akin to factories” (Musgrave: 1968: 67), pointing out a significant relationship between schools and factories. This is also supported by Hofstede who claimed that “workers’ behaviour is an extension of behaviour acquired at school” (Hofstede: 1991: 235). However, the concept of Japanisation seems to have only been applied to organisational management and not to teaching.

There are some key words in Japanisation. One of them is Quality Control (QC) groups. In Japanese car manufacturing industry, QC groups are used to make use of all staff of very different experience and skills over an extended period of time in order to improve quality. QC groups are also known as Han groups at school. Han group is “only changes the grouping at the beginning of each term” (Benjamin: 1997: 53) which reminds QC group’s “extended period of time”. “Han group comprises a mixture of different academic abilities” (Okano and Tsuchiya: 1999: 59), which reminded QC groups very different experience and skills. Each Han group is responsible for everyone’s achievement within the group rather than just the achievement of each individual. When one person is underperforming, the rest of the members make sure that he/she equally completes the task. This is different from Anglophone group formation as most of the group work in Anglophone classrooms and especially those of language activities for the purpose of oral practice belong to informal groups usually generated through ad hoc formation and tend to include those of similar academic abilities. Lewis (1996) explains Japanese and American groups using terms “familylike” (Rohlen and LeTendre: 1996: 88) and “factorylike” (Rohlen and LeTendre: 1996: 88).

There is a difference in the nature of groups between Anglophone classrooms and Japanese classrooms which depends in part on whether the group characteristic is formal or informal in nature (Brumfit: 1985: 72). Formal groups are explained as “either more or less permanent with defined roles over a long period” (Brumfit: 1985: 72). Informal groups are explained as those which “occur primarily for social purposes whenever people interact” (Brumfit: 1985: 72). In contrast, Japanese Han groups are formal groups where there is usually an unspoken shared understanding among members that everyone should participate in the group activities, sharing their tasks and knowledge to do things together.

This indicates that Japanese groups appear to show one aspect of collectivist culture which underpins both the manufacturing and teaching contexts. Benjamin maintains: “the values and interaction patterns fostered in Han groups in the classroom are among those carried over into adult situations” (Benjamin: 1997: 64).

### ***Typical Japanisation procedures used in this study***

Japanisation was applied to Group 3 (13 students). Japanisation adopts the following three of Hofstede's educational cultural dimensions: large power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism. Japanisation class was achieved by exposing the sample students to a combination of the following Hofstede's three dimensions that characterise Japanese educational culture:

Firstly, with regards to the individualism versus collectivism dimension, Japanese educational culture adheres to collectivism. The value of collectivism was demonstrated by use of turn-taking and Han group. Students practised translation reading tasks within the member of the Han group, ideally using turn taking.

Secondly, with regards to the strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance dimension, Japanese educational culture takes strong uncertainty avoidance. This was achieved by one correct answer and elimination of errors. Therefore, a short reading and grammar substitution exercise worksheet that focused on one correct answer was used to achieve strong uncertainty avoidance. Japanisation intentionally places emphasis on reading and grammar in contrast to CLT's emphasis on speaking. In addition, students' mistakes were corrected.

Finally, with regards to the large versus small power distance dimension, Japanese educational culture takes the large power distance. This was created by a teacher-centred class, where students played a passive role in majority of the class. The strength of teacher-centred class is to provide same education for all. The weakness is that it requires flexibility from students.

### **Methodology**

#### *Research questions*

In order to examine the impact of a native language teacher's educational culture to multicultural students, this study examines if any changes were observed among students quantitatively or qualitatively by comparing the results of Japanisation and CLT. This study addresses the following three Research Questions (RQ):

RQ1: Do students in the Japanese language classes taught using CLT and Japanisation methods show any differences in the performance of the Reading and Written Tests and Assignments?

RQ2: Do students' preferences relate to their ethnicity?

RQ3: How do students in a British university respond to being taught by Japanisation methods compared with being taught by CLT?

#### *Design of the study*

This study uses a mixed method design. The RQ1 was investigated by the test which provided quantitative data. The RQ2 was investigated by questionnaires which

provided quantitative and qualitative data. The RQ3 was investigated by both questionnaire and observation which provided qualitative data.

### *Sample*

The sample is a mixture of undergraduate and postgraduate students who were studying Stage 1 Japanese at a university in the South of England in 2009/2010. The university offers 16 languages between stage 1 (no previous knowledge of Japanese) and stage 7 (near native). Japanese courses were offered as a non-credit bearing modules evening classes between stages 1 and 3 when the study was conducted. The total number was 34 students and the majority of the sample ages were between 18 and 25 years old. However, there are some mature students in the study. These were randomly assigned into two groups (Groups 2 and 3).

**Table 1** Students' ethnicity in Group 2 and Group 3

	Group 2	Group 3
Australian	1	
British	9	2
British Chinese	2	1
British Indian		1
Bulgarian		1
Chinese	3	4
Egyptian	1	
Greek	2	
Hong Kong Chinese	1	
Indonesian		1
Korean	1	
Malaysian	1	2
NZ Chinese		1

A noticeable difference between Groups 2 and 3 is that the dominant ethnic group in Group 2 was British, whereas in Group 3 it was Chinese. Although the Chinese heritage students (Chinese, New Zealand-Chinese, British-Chinese) were the dominant group ethnicity in Group 3, it contained an almost equal number of students of other nationalities which might relate to create the group dynamics. Group 2 had 8 cultures among 13 students whereas Group 3 had 9 cultures among 21 students. These are good examples of multicultural learning environment where teacher and students do not share the same educational cultural background.

There are two limitations to discuss on sample. The first main limitation was the number of participants. The total number of participants in this study was 34 (Japanisation: 13, CLT: 21) which is a relatively small sample size especially for quantitative data purposes. It was not feasible to increase the size of the sample in the empirical study, as this was the maximum number of students in the two classes in the study conducted in 2009/2010. The total number of participants in the study limits the generalisability of the conclusions drawn from the results. Nonetheless, it may be possible to draw some conclusions about the specific sample population.

The second main limitation of this study relates to the difference between the two groups. The ratio of different ethnicities and work/school cultures in Groups 2 and 3 were not similar. Increasing the number of participants and equalising the ratios within the two groups was not feasible and the researcher is aware of limitations in this respect. Therefore, this will also limit the generalisability of this study's conclusions. Nonetheless, two groups constitute variety of nationalities, therefore, considered suitable for multicultural population for this study.

## **Data Collection**

### **Quantitative data**

This study used three tests. They are two pieces of assessed home assignments weighted at 10% each (20% of the total assessment) that are submitted on certain deadlines (submission in week 6 and week 9 of 12, respectively) and a timed and supervised assessment task, known as the Reading and Written Test, weighted at 40%. (Teaching and Assessment Guide: 2009/2010: 7–8). For simplicity, the first two assignments are referred to as Assignment 1 and Assignment 2 in this paper. The remaining 40% consists of communicative skills (listening skills 20% and oral skills 20%). Both listening skills and oral tests are administered within the class.

### *Questionnaire*

Two questionnaires, that is, Researcher Questionnaire and the University's unit evaluation form, were administered and collected during the class on 19/01/2010 in Week 11. The reason for the use of two questionnaires is because students were aware that Researcher questionnaire was about educational culture and teaching, and they might be too cautious to write their opinions freely for sole use on my questionnaire. Researcher questionnaire is constructed specifically to investigate educational culture, whereas the University's questionnaire is constructed to acquire information related to the course. The university questionnaire consists of quantitative rating and general comments.

Two versions of the questionnaires were prepared to reflect the two different teaching methods experienced by each group: One was answered by Group 3 who experienced Japanisation and the other by Group 2, who experienced CLT. However, the majority of questions were duplicated for both groups. The format of the questionnaires mostly consisted of closed questions with some open-ended questions, and respondents were asked to tick the box against the applicable response. Questions asked about educational culture and Japanisation, and questions related to educational culture are based on Hofstede's theories of long-term versus short-term, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism versus individualism.

### *Observation*

It may be difficult for students to answer on what the cause of the change of their behaviour is in the questionnaire because they might not even realise any change in their behaviour. For this reason, the simple observation with informal information gathering was chosen as the most suitable approach for the purpose of the study.



Students were observed to assess whether or not there were any behavioural changes relating to Hofstede's three dimensions during the Han group activity at the beginning compared with the end of the semester. Students' behaviour was observed with regards to changes from individualism to collectivism; from small power distance to large power distance; and from weak uncertainty avoidance to strong uncertainty avoidance. This was achieved by observing the students' behavioural changes in these three dimensions in relation to the key values of the two poles of each dimension. A change towards strong uncertainty avoidance was recorded if the students' attitude changed from the preferred value of creativity to being more conscious of the correct answer and being comfortable in a routinised class environment. A change in the power distance dimension was defined by students becoming more comfortable with a student-centred as opposed to a teacher-centred approach. Changes from an individualist to a collectivist educational culture were assessed by changes in students' preference for pair-work or Han group activity (Japanisation), and preferences for turn taking. Changes in this dimension were also evaluated by observing whether the students found learning under whole class instruction to be more comfortable than one-to-one interaction with the teacher. These key values also function as the baseline for qualitative analysis of the questionnaire. However, the main focus of the observation in this study was to assess any changes from the individualist to collectivist dimension.

There were six teaching observation diary entries/notes taken between Week 3 and Week 8). No observational records were taken before Week 3 or after Week 9 because the required student consent to take part in the research was not received until Week 2. The following four points were noted as a result of the Han group activity: i) if there are any similarities between non-British and British students' behaviours; ii) whether they accept the concept of the Han group or not; iii) if they did, which is closer to those of Japanese students' behaviours working in the Han group, non-British or British students?; iv) what kind of behaviours did they display? These points were recorded during the Han group activity. The researcher was able to do so because the main purpose of the Han group activity is for students to learn from each other by interacting with other group members, and I was monitoring students' activity during the Han group activity and teaching was not required.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics (Groups 2 and 3)

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Assignment1	Equal variances assumed	.012	.913	-.818	33	.419	-.68357	.83592	-2.38425	1.01712
	Equal variances not assumed			-.842	27.611	.407	-.68357	.81211	-2.34815	.98102
Assignment2	Equal variances assumed	.062	.804	-.467	32	.643	-.61832	1.32304	-3.31326	2.07663
	Equal variances not assumed			-.488	29.086	.629	-.61832	1.26615	-3.20755	1.97092
ReadingandWrittenTest	Equal variances assumed	.080	.780	-2.402	29	.023	-6.96930	2.90129	-12.90310	-1.03550
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.423	24.209	.023	-6.96930	2.87626	-12.90289	-1.03571

### *Limitation of the methodology*

Quantitative data cannot answer the research questions on students' perceptions and feelings. Questionnaires were used to compensate this. However, options which were given in the questionnaire might have limited students' responses. Also, students might not give honest opinions. Observation was used to compensate this. However, interpretation of observational data might be culturally biased.

## **5. Data Analysis**

### *Quantitative data*

Within the three sets of quantitative data, three contain both descriptive and statistical analysis of the data: mean, Standard Deviation (SD), minimum score, maximum score, skewness and kurtosis of the two groups, as well as an analysis of the significant differences between the teachings of two groups found with the independent-samples t-test, using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The other two sets of data have only descriptive data.

### *Qualitative data*

The qualitative data was analysed by referring to Miles and Huberman's 13 strategies for generating meaning (1994: 245) as follows: "noting patterns and themes; seeing plausibility; clustering; making metaphors; counting; making contrast/comparisons; partitioning variables; subsuming particulars into the general; factoring; noting relations between variables; finding intervening variables; building a logical chain of evidence; and making conceptual/theoretical coherence" (Miles and Huberman: 1994:

245). When analysing the data from the Researcher questionnaire, the students were grouped by ethnicity, and their perceptions were compared between the two groups. The results are presented with reference to Hofstede's four dimensions of culture. This enables to investigate which end of spectrum of Hofstede's three dimensions the student prefers, but also helps to understand each student's educational cultural preference as well as the understanding of students' preference for CLT or Japanisation.

## Conclusions

The RQ1 asked was whether students in Japanese language classes taught in a British university using both traditional CLT and Japanisation methods show any differences in attainment in Reading and Written tests and assignments. Quantitative data (Appendices 3 and 4) showed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in scores in the first two Assignments. However, there was a significant difference between the two groups in the marks achieved in the Reading and Written Test, where the Japanisation class obtained higher marks than the CLT class.

Furthermore, the distribution of kurtosis of Group 3 was almost as twice as that of Group 2, meaning that the marks in Group 3 were more clustered around the average than the marks in Group 2. In addition, the mean score of Group 3 was 6.97 points higher than that of Group 2. Since Japanisation aims teaching around the average students, this may have been one of the factors contributing to the observed distribution of Group 3 where more students in Reading and Written tests were clustered around the average.

The RQ2 asked whether students' preferences relate to their ethnicity. In this study, if we refer to Hofstede's collectivist-individualist dimensions, the sample population seemed to consist of three types of students. Type 1 consisted of students who came from a collectivist educational cultural background and were now studying in an individualist educational culture. Type 2 covered students from an individualist educational cultural background continuing to study in an individualist educational culture. Type 3 comprised students from an individualist educational cultural background but who were also subject to a degree of collectivist influence (this was often the case where their parents are from a collectivist educational cultural background) studying in an individualist educational culture.

The RQ3 asked how students respond to being taught by Japanisation methods compared with being taught by CLT. The observation confirmed that some students showed a negative response in learning in a Japanisation class. Many occasions were noted during the observation and in the questionnaire where students showed difficulty in understanding the notion of the Han group. It was anticipated that type 1 students preferred Japanisation to CLT and they might have found it easier to acquire the concept of Japanisation. However, all three types of students preferred CLT to Japanisation, although observation records show that type 1 students did seem to understand the concept of Japanisation more easily than the other types. This seems to suggest that students' preference is likely to be influenced by three factors: students' educational cultural background, where they are currently studying and the place that the study was conducted. This study, which aims to examine the impact of the Japanese teaching method, was conducted in the UK. Where the study was conducted

may be an important factor in influencing the result of this study as the non-native students of English had been studying in the British educational culture.

There were two reactions from the students: rejection and acceptance. The results from the university questionnaire showed that students who could not accept a different educational culture expressed their frustrations in several forms: bad university quantitative rating; critical comments; and wishing to change the another class. These are understandable reactions and Byram and Morgan (1994: 43) caution that “Learners are ‘committed’ to their culture and to deny any part of it is to deny something within their own being” (Hinkel: 1999: 7). This could be particularly true for the mature language learners in second-language teaching. Students who accepted the different educational culture took it as a positive experience and tried to adapt to the new circumstances even if they only experienced it in the short-term. Students who accepted the different educational culture, mostly younger learners, took it as a positive experience and tried to adapt to the new circumstance even though it was of short-term duration.

### **Implications**

The implications of the study for wider teaching practice are as important as the data themselves. It appears to have two emerging themes. The first implication raises the question of whether CLT is universally effective for all language students regardless of their educational cultural background. I found that meeting students’ requirement by one teaching method was difficult. The data collected in this study also suggest that using Japanisation only or CLT only did not work well for every student in both groups, which may be a consequence of cultural-cognitive differences between Asian and Western learners (Dimmock and Walker: 2005: 109). This could be explained by the consequence of cultural cognitive differences between Asians and Western learners (Dimmock and Walker: 2005: 109). Previous studies describe the cultural inappropriateness of CLT as follows: “a teaching or learning approach that is taken for granted and regarded as universal and common sense by people from one culture may be seen as idiosyncratic and ineffective in the eyes of people from a different culture” (Gu and Schweisfurth: 2006: 75). Sonaiya also points out that “while shared human values may make certain methods (or certain aspects of specific methods) universally applicable, this should not always be assumed to be the case” (Sonaiya: 2002: 107).

The second implication of the study concerns whether teaching should be focused on the minority of the high-ability and low-ability students or the majority of students who operate at an average level. According to Stevenson and Stiger (1994), individualist educational culture produces “educationally advantaged minority and disadvantaged majority” (Stevenson and Stigler: 1994: 223). CLT is an ideal teaching method for educational culture which prioritises one-to-one interaction and paying attention to the needs of individual students. However, paying attention to individual student’s needs may not necessarily meet the needs of all students as a class or the majority students. CLT has been claimed to be associated with the enhanced students’ communicative skills. The findings of this study suggested that the students in the CLT class struggled to read and write in Japanese, which became apparent when they took the Reading and Written Test. Reviewing what CLT has brought to today’s students, perhaps the area of grammar, reading and writing need more attention in using this method.

On the other hand, Japanisation associated with the enhanced students' reading and written skills from this study. The quantitative data results also showed that this teaching method produced more students clustered around the average. Japanisation pays more attention to the majority students, which is therefore beneficial for the large majority. However, this doesn't necessarily mean to meet the needs of individual or the needs of the minority individuals at either end of the ability spectrum. In order to meet the students' various preferences and expectations in learning, it is suggested to incorporate other teaching practices from non-Anglophone countries, as CLT focuses on individuals due to Anglophone originated theory.

Lastly, it is hoped that this study contributes the awareness and sensitivity of students' diverse preferences and expectations in the higher educational learning environment to the scholastic community, as educational culture is not universal all around the world.

It is also hoped that this study may contribute to the scholastic community to the development of a new theory that integrates some aspect of non-Anglophone teaching methods and making changes in the curriculum in order to reflect the current multicultural teaching and learning environment.

The logo for the International Association for Foreign Language Research (iafor) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by several overlapping, semi-transparent circular arcs in shades of red, orange, and blue, creating a dynamic, circular design.

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***Redesigning Tertiary Level EFL Courses on a National Scale***

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**Abstract**

Despite attempts over the last decade to standardise EFL teaching practices in Israeli Higher Education (HE), no overarching guidelines relating to course design have been imposed, leading to ambiguity and lack of mutual recognition between institutions. For over thirty years, the generally accepted approach to English language studies has been to focus on reading skills, requiring students to answer comprehension questions on unseen texts in order to reach an exemption level. Regardless of global developments and new modes of communication, this approach has not been reviewed or revised on a nationwide level, and institutions decide individually whether or not to include oral and written skills in their curriculum. Dramatic changes in tertiary level EFL education in Europe have resulted from the CEFR and Bologna Process, but there is minimal awareness of these developments in Israel. Even initial attempts with English-Medium Instruction have not been sufficiently planned with the necessary infrastructure in terms of English language support. In light of these challenges, and leveraging experience gained in the TEMPUS EFA project, a new partnership has been forged to develop guidelines which will meet twenty-first century needs. This paper presents the collaboration between Israeli and European partners within the TEMPUS ECOSTAR project and the framework for initiating change, introducing professionalization, and advancing standardization of English teaching in Israeli HE.

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## The need for renewal

Despite global developments focusing on language learning, especially in Europe (The Bologna Declaration, 1999; Council of Europe, 2001), there have been no top-down guidelines relating to course design for tertiary level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programmes, in Israel and there is currently no standardisation between institutions. This neglect is surprising considering that English is extensively used in Israel for international communication, academic research, trade and tourism, enabling this small nation to interact on the wider international stage (Symon, 2012). Even though English has not been officially defined as an official language of Israel, it is considered “the most valuable asset of a plurilingual Israeli citizen” after Hebrew and Arabic (Ministry of Education Israel, 2001). English is spoken at all levels of Israeli society and is the foreign language for which there is the greatest demand, since it is seen as essential for a country with strong economic, military and diplomatic connections with the outside world, yet which is largely politically isolated from its regional neighbours.

English is a prerequisite for tertiary level studies in Israel, with acceptance to higher education institutes (HEIs) based on a minimum score in both the high-school matriculation examinations (Bagrut) and the English section of the national psychometric test. This latter score also serves to stream students into the appropriate course levels so that some students may receive an exemption from English language studies while others may have to take up to three consecutive courses during their first two years of undergraduate studies.

The nature of HEI EFL programmes and their narrow focus on reading comprehension was decided upon in the 1970s before the advent of globalization, when primary sources were not available in Hebrew, and thus the perceived need for English was limited to the reading requirements in each course. Unfortunately, the focus of these EFL programmes has barely changed in the last forty years. Reading skills therefore tend to be the most developed of Israeli students’ academic language skills, despite findings from several studies indicating that at least fifty per cent of students have been found to avoid reading, whether for pleasure or for study purposes, not just in English but also in their first language (Weinberg, 2010; Pundak & Maharshak, 2010). The productive skills of speaking and writing have not generally featured as significant elements in these language courses and as such, students’ abilities in these areas are far less developed. Moreover, while students generally begin their English studies in fourth grade, typically leading to nine years of English at school, there is a considerable gap between the matriculation level and the requirements of higher education. Furthermore, following school, a majority of students from the Jewish and Druze populations have three years of compulsory military service, after which many then take an additional break either to travel abroad or to work. Unfortunately, these years between high school and undergraduate studies serve to widen the gap between actual language proficiency and that required for academia.

Further compounding the challenges in tertiary level English language studies is the lack of a national curriculum resulting in the lack of uniformity in language programmes around the country. Consequently, programmes in one HEI are not

recognised by other HEIs and rather than working to build up collaborative relationships, institutions have developed individual programmes which serve their own student population. The losers in the current situation are obviously the students, not just because the courses that they take do not confer instant acceptance by all Israeli HEIs of a common standard reached, thereby constraining domestic mobility, but also because the lack of modernisation and focus on reading comprehension skills precludes achievement in other areas. In comparison, EU language studies place equal emphasis on achieving proficiency in productive as well as receptive skills, thus enhancing graduates' competitive edge in the global jobs market. Twenty-first century language skills require the ability to share and present ideas and opinions clearly and coherently in both spoken and written contexts. The traditional reading comprehension task focuses on using a text to answer a set of questions but not to produce useful and relevant output. This approach needs to change in order to prepare students for the real use to which they will need to put their language skills. Indeed, for success in work and life, higher education as a whole needs to change in order to allow students to acquire relevant skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and communication, and problem solving (Binkley et al, 2012).

During the last decade, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in Israel has taken measures to try and improve the situation, first with the establishment of a committee within the CHE to examine provisions for English in all HEIs in Israel, leading to the publication of their finalised requirements in 2014, thereby providing the first steps towards uniformity in tertiary English language courses. These regulations stipulate the names of the courses, the number of hours to be taught in each course and the entry score, based on the psychometric test, required for acceptance to each level. The CHE recognises the need to advance from this structural stage to the content stage where learning outcomes and assessment procedures as well as recommended materials can be established. The seemingly straightforward process of setting the entry scores, names and duration of the courses has taken eight years, encountering stiff opposition from some quarters along the way. Thus it can be assumed that the next stage of curriculum renewal will be no less challenging.

In order to create a national curriculum for the teaching of English at tertiary level, steps need to be taken which may at first meet with resistance. However, by using what is already known within the profession, as teachers we can create a learning environment that answers our students' needs, directing change ourselves rather than having it forced upon us by national decision makers who may lack the necessary insight. Revising and redesigning curricula is a long-term process and instead of waiting and trying to predict what the future might bring, it is preferable to be proactive and invent that future (Pellegrino, 2006). By reaching out to the entire body of EFL teachers in HE in Israel, we hope to overcome opposition by promoting debate and by encouraging all to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the process of renewal.

Curriculum development is, of necessity, an iterative process which can respond to changing needs; and while change in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes is inevitable, in order to stay relevant to students' needs, innovation is desirable (Stoller, 2001). Responsibility for innovation must be shared and not left to chance, thus feedback from all interested parties and target populations must be sought during the needs analysis phase. An integrated curriculum policy should

represent “the needs of the learners, the needs of the institution or planning committee, the needs, possibly, of society, or at least specific interest groups within society, and also the needs of the teachers and administrators, the implementers of the curriculum” (Finney, 2002:75).

In the European-funded TEMPUS project “English for All in Academia” (EFA) which ran from 2010-2013, a survey, conducted to analyse the situation of EFL in Israeli HE, investigated students’ attitudes towards their EAP courses and their perceived future English needs. The majority of student respondents felt that their English studies were not preparing them sufficiently for the real world, and many felt that more should be gained from the courses. Both students and graduates reported that English courses over-emphasised preparation for reading comprehension exams at the expense of the productive language skills. Findings that emerged from the EFA project showed that a fundamental change is needed in the system as a whole, to close gaps between what is provided by HEIs and what students actually need. For academic studies and the global work environment, graduates are expected to show some proficiency in writing and speaking English (Symon & Broido, 2014), yet approximately 65% of graduates polled within EFA said their professional English language needs were not provided for by the majority of English language courses taken during their studies. In order to achieve the project’s goals and to implement the necessary changes, a new TEMPUS project, “English as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Technology and Research” (ECOSTAR), which is running from 2013 to 2016, brings together experts in the EFL field in Israel and the EU who are collaborating on bringing these challenges to fruition.

### **The ECOSTAR project**

The ECOSTAR project (<http://ecostar.iucc.ac.il>) seeks to modernise and internationalise the HEI EFL curriculum in order to prepare Israeli students to function effectively in the global economy. By building on the top-down approach of the first stage of the standardisation process, initiated by the Israeli CHE in their requirements as described above, a bottom-up approach working with teachers and students in the field now needs to complement this process by addressing content, skills and assessment procedures. ECOSTAR’s mandate, therefore, is to put flesh on the bare bones of the Israeli CHE’s EFL studies programme.

ECOSTAR’s partners will address the problems of the lack of standardization and the absence of specific guidelines regarding what to teach at each level by applying lessons learnt from the EFA project. The whole framework for EFL in HEIs in Israel will therefore be reformed, starting with the lowest entrance levels and continuing through to the exit level. ECOSTAR will, for the first time in Israeli history, create a standardised national framework for tertiary EFL programmes which will be aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to attain international recognition. There is still minimal formal awareness in Israel of the CEFR since developments in Europe from the Bologna Process have not yet filtered through to local EFL programmes. The project will therefore help to spread knowledge of the CEFR among the EFL teaching body in Israel. To accompany the framework, ECOSTAR will also develop suitable learning packages (LPs) for each of the three main levels to exemplify content and best-practice for achieving the specified learning outcomes. A more balanced focus will be afforded to all communication skills and the

LPs will provide specific guidelines regarding what to teach at each level. This should finally create uniformity and enable inter-institutional recognition both internationally as well as between HEIs in Israel. These aims will be achieved through a series of work packages which run in parallel but progress through learning, connecting and growing as shown below.

## **Learning**

Robust reasons have emerged from the EFA project for the need to replace the existing EFL programme with a new and comprehensive curriculum, and in order to make this happen, suitable options must be explored. While establishing mutual recognition within Israel is a major objective of the ECOSTAR project, aiming for international recognition at the same time is an effective way to leverage the change. Within TEMPUS projects, partner countries such as Israel have the benefit of working with experienced partners from European universities who are able to share their knowledge and expertise in the area, and the first phase of the project has been to learn more about the European approach to language learning. Understanding the Bologna Process, the concepts of the European Language Portfolio, and how this relates to student mobility, together with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), is the starting point for creating the new national framework for EFL studies in Israeli HEIs. However, rather than attempting to create an entirely new framework which would have no connection to the world beyond Israel's borders, the projects' partners agree that the obvious option to explore for its suitability to the Israeli context, is the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001). Being widely used and accepted in many countries, its European provenance no longer limits it to the European context, testament to its ability to undergo localization. This will facilitate the process of standardization for EAP in Israel, allowing at the same time for the alignment of Israeli HEIs with internationally accepted standards. This in turn will facilitate international collaboration and mobility for students, teachers and researchers.

While ECOSTAR adopts a bottom-up approach to curriculum reform, nevertheless, top-down support from the CHE will be required in order to ensure nationwide implementation. Incentives to encourage adoption of change by teachers in the field would be welcome, but the bottom-up approach in ECOSTAR is designed to pique interest among the EFL community in Israel by making extensive use of existing social and professional networks, supplemented with national and regional seminars to further disseminate the changes taking place. By providing a clear and professional rationale for the intended reforms, based on research and the analysis of data collected in a national needs analysis, resistance to change may be reduced. The provision of professional support as well as a repository of Open Educational Resources (OERs) will help teachers cope with the requirements of the new curriculum while the involvement of the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation will facilitate the move towards alternative and comprehensive assessment techniques. Rather than adopting a punitive and threatening top-down method it is hoped that this grassroots approach will achieve the goals of ECOSTAR through consensus and by alleviating the stress normally associated with change.

## **Connecting**

ECOSTAR's fifteen partner consortium combines the skills of academics from six European and six Israeli HEIs, as well as representatives of the Israeli national student body, the national testing institution and the expertise of the inter-university computational centre. This partnership solidifies existing relationships between some of the partners who worked together on the EFA project, and introduces new partners who bring their own know-how to this new collaboration. Together, the flow of information and discussions will ensure that each stage is carefully analysed and each challenge is confronted by a group of willing collaborators, dedicated to ensuring the success of the project. For example, in our search for a suitable existing framework that might be adapted to our local needs, we have learnt that, whilst not perfect, the CEFR has obvious benefits, in that as a tool for curriculum designers, it provides a common language to help promote standardisation and is widely-used and accepted. The experience of our European partners, in adopting this framework in their own settings, is an outstanding advantage in ensuring that the Israeli experience will benefit from the positive elements while avoiding the pitfalls they have already encountered. In a two-way exchange of information, in creating the Israeli version of the CEFR, solutions to some of the known problems may in turn prove adaptable to the European context.

The prime beneficiaries of the new curriculum will be the students, and central to the project is learning from the students themselves. As has been noted, the starting point is a comprehensive needs analysis and this will be based on a nationwide survey of all affiliated students. Their feedback will be used to guide discussions that will lead to the development of the new framework, and with a representative of the national students' union as an equal partner in the project, their perspective will always be taken into account.

## **Growing**

The three year project is constructed to follow the iterative process necessary in any redesigning of a curriculum: needs analysis, syllabus design, teacher training and development, implementation and evaluation (Finney, 2002). These tasks are allocated within work packages, each led by a different institution and with the collaboration of the other partners.

During the first phase, data from a series of questionnaires administered to the Israeli student body, EFL teachers, content teachers and other stakeholders will be analysed in order for a clear picture of current and future language needs to emerge. Based on these findings, a series of focus group meetings will establish the basis for the Israeli framework. The new curriculum and supporting LPs will be accompanied by a repository of OERs compiled with easy access to materials categorised according to the levels of the new framework. In order to facilitate implementation of the new curriculum, EFL teachers from all over the country will be invited to national and regional seminars where they will learn about the new curriculum and the advantages of its adoption. Training in the form of advanced professional development workshops will be offered to the teachers, and a support system will accompany the

introductory phase, thereby serving the additional aim of ECOSTAR in establishing a professional network which can continue to collaborate within the EFL field.

Together with the new curriculum, the updated learning materials and activities will leverage new technologies in the classroom and beyond. Task- and content-based learning, for example, place the student firmly at the centre of the learning process while favouring materials of relevance to the students' fields of study. This combination can lead to heightened interest and to enhanced learner motivation. The introduction of mobile learning, while exploiting the myriad advantages of Smartphone and tablet apps, also taps into modern behaviour patterns and normalises them in the learning process. Thus ECOSTAR will also investigate the integration of mobile elements into the learning packages.

Finally, as the phenomenon of globalization continues to grow, Israeli higher education is not immune to the added demands for a more international curriculum, for which the preparation of students with excellent English language skills is required. The most common element of the international curriculum is the provision of content courses taught in English, often referred to as English Medium Instruction (EMI). However, there is no formal policy governing EMI in Israel, nor is it common to find national frameworks in other countries providing guidelines on best practice for teaching in English in higher education. Symon & Weinberg (2014) have already recognized that if a coherent language policy is to be developed and implemented at institutional and national level in Israel, and if any linguistic objectives are to be achieved from integrating content and language, considerable planning and infrastructure will be required. As Symon & Weinberg (2013) indicate, in order for students to benefit from EMI, a suitable language support framework needs to be in place. Before embarking on EMI courses, students must have reached a minimal threshold proficiency in English, and course instructors must not only speak English fluently, but must participate in training in the pedagogical aspects of EMI in order to develop sensitivity to students' language needs as well as an understanding of the challenges they will face in assessing assignments and exams fairly, particularly with less proficient students, and for those students for whom English is a third language.

ECOSTAR has set as an additional goal the establishment of a national framework of guidelines for the introduction and implementation of EMI in Israel, and will develop a content course to demonstrate best practice as well as providing the basis for training EFL and content teachers.

### **Challenges ahead**

Any process of change is likely to meet with resistance, particularly where that change will require additional effort to be implemented. Innovation in teaching, learning and assessment requires support at both the institutional and national level if academic staff are going to be asked to invest in learning new skills and evaluating their outcomes (Bull, 1999); moreover, mismatched expectations may translate into student resistance to teachers' pedagogical aims (Nunan, 1995). Furthermore, the problem with top-down imposition of pedagogical change is that it engenders suspicion regarding motives, and encounters resistance in teachers who don't see any intrinsic value or benefit in the new approach over those to which they are accustomed (Gun & Brussino, 1997; Whittington & Sclater, 1998; Bronsan, 1999).

To address the challenge of resistance, ECOSTAR has been formulated as a bottom-up process driven by teachers from the field, thus avoiding imposition from above. Embedded in the ECOSTAR project is a strong focus on communication, including regular face-to-face meetings as well as Skype calls and online forum discussions in order for teachers to share their concerns and search together for alternatives and solutions as problems arise. Furthermore, each part of the project is overseen by individual work package leaders who together with their teams endeavour to pre-empt serious setbacks by engaging in risk-analysis brainstorming sessions addressing relevant issues. By adopting a pro-active approach to the redesigning of the curriculum, and working in close collaboration with European colleagues who have already experienced reforms of this nature, it is hoped that the Israeli experience will be smooth. ECOSTAR is promoting a highly professional and inclusive approach to curriculum design, and is predicated on the understanding that Israeli EFL professionals in higher education are already well aware of the need for change and know that if that change does not come from within the teaching body, then an alternative which may be less to our liking will eventually be imposed from above. The incentive therefore is to be involved in this grassroots movement from the earliest possible stage. We believe the benefits will justify the tremendous effort these reforms require.

Resistance from students is also anticipated, but with the National Students Union as a partner in the process, their interests will be represented throughout the project from within. Widespread dissemination of the project's aims and objectives among the student population should promote understanding of the benefits the reforms to the curriculum will bring and this is expected to mitigate their concerns.

Following identification in the EFA project of the specific needs of the different socio-cultural sectors within the Israeli student population, the ECOSTAR project seeks to address and redress these inequalities by including more representative partners in the consortium. It is hoped therefore that all sectors can impact on the development and implementation stages, although the potential challenges of attempting to standardise programmes for students coming from such varied backgrounds are also recognised.

Piloting of the new framework will be conducted in stages, starting within the ECOSTAR partner institutions themselves, while workshops will be held throughout the project to encourage wider participation of EFL teachers from other HEIs. Finally, for the project to succeed, the new curriculum must be recognised by the CHE. A campaign to disseminate project activities and achievements is designed to target the appropriate authorities and institutions and to ensure that they are informed throughout the lifetime of the project of the progress being made. From an early stage, the CHE is being informed of all project developments, in the hope that long-term objectives can be sustained once the project finishes. As ECOSTAR gradually fulfils the content and assessment aspects of the new curriculum, these will sit comfortably on the scaffolding of the CHE's basic requirements for standardization. It is hoped that within three years, the new curriculum will already be active within a large number of institutions.



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## ***The Common Semantic Feature of 'Irregular' Noun Plural Forms in English***

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### **Abstract**

There is only a limited number of Noun Plurals like foot-feet, goose-geese and Past Tense verb forms such as sing-sang, win-won that are produced by Internal Vowel Alternation (IVA) and today these forms are considered to be irregular in Modern English, i.e., they do not follow the rules of Past Tense /+(e)d/ and Noun Plural /+(e)s/ formation. However, historically, these IVA forms were both more numerous and even productive in Old English and those that have remained in the language largely retain the same IVA patterns in Modern English. The recent study of these IVA phonological processes in the nominal and verbal forms revealed, first, two opposed iconic and polar systems consisting of fronting (umlaut) for Plural formation for nouns versus backing (vowel gradation) for Past Tense formation in verbs (Even-Simkin 2012). Second, there are underlying systematic semantic features for these IVA forms, as well. This paper presents a semantic analysis of the IVA Noun Plurals, i.e. a common distinctive semantic feature. Unlike bi- and polysyllabic mass nouns, these IVA forms appear exclusively in monosyllabic words, thus making them ultimately efficient based on short term memory cognitive psychological studies by Ebbinghaus (1885), as well as, other more recent studies by e.g. Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), Crano (1977), Frensch (1994), Healy et al. (2000). This morpho-phonotactic differentiation in structure and distribution of the IVA vs. mass nouns, as well as the semantic and iconic feature of these IVA forms, demonstrates the subtle systematic character of these 'irregular' IVA plural constructions.

Keywords: 'irregular' noun plurals, IVA, distinctive semantic feature, systematic character, English

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*If there's no meaning in it ... that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any. And yet I don't know ... I seem to see some meaning in them, after all. (Lewis Carroll 1961: 100)*

*The patterns assumed by consonant phonemes are usually rather more complicated and considerably less symmetrical than are those of vowels. (Robert A. Hall, 1964: 93)*

## Introduction

There is only a limited number of Noun Plurals like *foot-feet*, *goose-geese* and Past Tense verb forms, such as *sing-sang*, *win-won* that are produced by Internal Vowel Alternation (IVA) and today these forms are considered to be irregular in Modern English, i.e., they do not follow the rules of Past Tense /+(e)d/ and Noun Plural /+(e)s/ formation. However, historically, these IVA forms were both more numerous and even productive in Old English and those that have remained in the language largely retain the same IVA patterns in Modern English. The recent study of these IVA phonological processes in the nominal and verbal forms revealed, first, two opposed iconic and polar systems consisting of *fronting* (umlaut) for Plural formation for nouns versus *backing* (vowel gradation) for Past Tense formation in verbs (Even-Simkin 2012). Second, there are underlying systematic semantic features for these IVA forms, as well. This paper presents a semantic analysis of the IVA Noun Plurals, i.e. a common distinctive semantic feature. Unlike bi- and polysyllabic mass nouns, these IVA forms appear exclusively in monosyllabic words, thus making them ultimately efficient based on short term memory cognitive psychological studies by Ebbinghaus (1885), as well as other more recent studies by e.g., Atkinson & Shiffrin (1968), Crano (1977), Frensch (1994), Healy et al. (2000). The morphophonemic differentiation in structure and distribution of the IVA vs. mass nouns, as well as the semantic and iconic feature of these IVA forms, demonstrate the subtle systematic character of these 'irregular' IVA plural constructions.

## Background

As Hagege (1993:x) notes concerning the contemporary linguistics "the human presence in language building deserves much more attention than it has received so far on the part of linguistics". The rules are formally described rather than explained, whereas the meaningful learning implies the explanation of the phenomena. For example, the nouns, such as: *goose /guuz/ – geese /giis/*; *foot /fʊt/ – feet /fiit/* are called irregular in English. But are they indeed irregular? And if yes, why did they remain in English language and did not enter the so-called regular system (-s/es)? The semiotic linguistic analysis of the Plural Nouns with IVA revealed that beside the phonological systematic feature of IVA, these Nominal IVA formations share a Common Semantic Feature. That is, the Noun Plural IVA forms, as diachronic analysis shows, are not just arbitrary formed, but rather phonologically and semantically systematic.

Following the diachronic studies, Modern and Old English are quite distinct from each other:

- a). morphologically - having no real gender, case and other declension systems versus having complex gender, case and other declension systems. As Baugh (1957: 59) notes, "the period from 450 to 1150 is known as Old English [and]... sometimes described as the period of full inflections";
- b). typologically: whereas "Modern English is an analytic, Old English [is] a synthetic language" (Baugh 1957: 64) as Baugh defines: "[s]ynthetic language is which indicates the relation of words in a sentence largely by means of inflections" and "[l]anguages which make extensive use of prepositions and auxiliary verbs and depend upon word order to show other relationships are known as analytic language" (ibid.).
- c). lexically - approximately 50% Latinate and Germanic versus primarily Germanic. Following Quirk & Wrenn (1955) or Baugh (1957: 63): "A ... feature of Old English ... is the absence of those words derived from Latin and French which form so large a part of our present[Modern English] vocabulary. Such words make up more than half of the words now in common use. The vocabulary of Old English is almost purely Teutonic [West Low Germanic]."

One might even be able to compare and contrast Old and Modern English as if they were two separate and different languages. However, in spite of these multiple distinctions between Old and Modern English, both of them share *Internal Vowel Alternation* (IVA) process, a morphophonemic process, which is found not only in Old English as well as in other Germanic languages, but also in many Indo-European, Semitic and other language families. This actually points to the historical efficiency of the IVA, as being a prevalent and productive process not only in nominal but also in verbal system.

The focus of the current study is to uncover the systematic character of the nominal IVA plural forms, which "through various processes of grammar simplification ... tended to get lost... [s]o that most of the relics of umlaut that are left to us are in contexts like noun/denominative verb pairs (e.g. *food:feed*, *blood:bleed* or the plurals of the old monosyllabic consonant stem nouns (e.g. *foot:feet*, *man:men*)" (Lass & Anderson 2010: 123). The term *Umlaut* for these kinds of vowel mutation in such pairs was introduced by Jacob Grimm and the process of "i-mutation, [that is] shared in varying degrees by all Gmc [Germanic] languages except Gothic, had been completed in OE [Old English] by the time of the earliest written records" (Quirk & Wrenn 1955: 151). Thus, it is one of many reasons, why it is so important to trace the history of the IVA from Old English and even earlier, i.e., to study the etymology of the IVA forms which have still retained in Modern English, in order to understand the underlying rules of and the reasons for modification of these forms.

### Sign-Oriented Theory and Methodology

*Theory dictates which observations of the infinite observations that could be made, should be made. Without theory there would be no indication of what to observe and how to interpret it once observed.* (Ohala & Jaeger 1986: 3)

In this study of the nominal IVA forms, I follow a sign-oriented methodological and theoretical linguistic approach to language. Ferdinand de Saussure, who "was himself a historical linguist" (Beedham 2005: 9), was the founder of the Sign Oriented theory

and he studied how languages work as sign-oriented/semiotic systems. As de Saussure (1959[1916]: 113) claims:

Language can ... be compared with a sheet of paper; thought is the front and sound is the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time; likewise in language; one cannot divide sound from thought nor thought from sound; the division could be accomplished only abstractedly, and the result would be either pure psychology or pure phonology.

That is, he argues in favor of the indivisible nature of the "linguistic sign[, which as he further elaborates] is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern"(Saussure 1983[1916]: 66). As Tobin (1990: 39-40) further elaborates:

de Saussure's concept of the linguistic sign directly reflects his view of language: a unit where the sound (or signal) in the form of concrete morphological forms or more abstract zero morphology or word order (the *signifiant* or 'signifier') is inseparably united with a concept in the form of an invariant meaning (the *signifié* or 'signified'). Thus language should be studied as a system of complex units composed of articulatory-auditory elements – signals – which are further combined with concepts – invariant meanings: i.e. *linguistic signs*. The sign then becomes the theoretical unit of linguistic analysis combining and integrating all of the fundamental physiological and psychological aspects of language within a single unit.

One of the examples of the sign-oriented linguistic theory is the Columbia School, developed by Diver 1975, 1979, 1993; Davis 1987[1984]; Tobin 1989, 1990, 1993, 1995[1994], 1997, 2009; Klein-Andrew 1983; Kirsner 1984, 1987; Reid 1991; Contini-Morava 1989, 2000; Contini-Morava and Sussman Goldberg 1995; Even-Simkin 2012 and other linguists, that includes the phonological aspect that is called the theory of Phonology as Human Behavior (PHB), which explains the behavioral and cognitive aspects of human beings in the creation of the sound systems of languages, the result of which is a linguistic system that is both rich and economical enough to carry out communication in an efficient way (Tobin 1997). The basic principles that underlie the PHB theory may be summarized as the following: language represents a compromise in the struggle to *achieve maximum communication with minimal effort* and, is based on the synergetic principle of: a). cooperation between encoders and decoders to achieve maximum communication with minimal effort; and b). the trade-off between the human and the communication factors of language (Tobin 1997). That is, whereas communication factor, in general, may be defined by communicational oppositions, the human factor is based on the principle: *Human intelligence*, i.e., human beings can draw far-reaching abstract conclusions from minimally salient concrete cues; *Human efficiency*, i.e., human beings invest minimal effort for maximal results in the semiotic communication process; *Memory limitations*, i.e., human beings have but limited memories that can be directly related to human intelligence and human efficiency (Tobin 1997). Thus, according to the sign oriented CS PHB approach, language may be viewed as a symbolic tool whose structure is shaped both by its communicative function and by the characteristics of its users (Tobin 2007, 2009), "where *meaning* is defined as a value relationship between grammatical signals sharing a common semantic domain"(Crupi 2006: 263) and which is able "to explain the distribution of linguistic forms" as Reid (2002: ix) notes. Moreover, following Diver (1995:49), the CS sign-

oriented approach allows the "discovering the motivation for the particular form", and not merely describes and states the different linguistic problems. This study proposes the answer to the earlier introduced question and explains the systematic character of the IVA Noun Plurals with IVA that is phonologically and semantically motivated and not irregular.

### **Analysis: Non-Irregularity Hypothesis**

There are at least five parallel historical subsystems for Nominal class in English in terms of the PHB Theory and each Nominal System may be explained in terms of the communication and the human factors.

(1) *Suppletion system*, i.e., two different lexical items for the singular and plural form of the same noun, such as: "person" (sg.) → "people" (pl.). Following the Sign-Oriented theory and *PHB*, the human factor in this group is "the worst" because of *memory limitations*, since two lexical items have to be learned instead of one. But as far as the lexical items differ entirely, the communication factor is "the best", since in this way we get different words that cannot be misunderstood. It is worth pointing out that in Modern English there is the plural form of "person"(sg.) which is: "persons" (pl.), but just in this case it refers to the individuals in the groups and not to the group itself like in "person" (sg.) → "people"(pl.). This example demonstrates the efficiency of the *suffixation system* *(-e)s*, the most commonly used subsystem, presented in group 5, which is called: a "regular" plural formation in nouns in Modern English.

(2) *IVA system*, internal vowel alternation from singular to plural formation, like in: "goose"(sg.) → "geese"(pl.), "foot"(sg.) → "feet"(pl.). In this group the compromise between the communication and human factor is achieved, albeit not in the most efficient way. That is, the slight oppositions that are easier to produce appear predominantly in the monosyllabic words, thus making the IVA more salient in the word medial position. Furthermore, as in the first group, we may witness the merging effect with the *suffixation system* in the examples such as: 'computer mouse'(sg.) – 'computer mice'(pl.) (metaphorical meaning) versus 'mice'(pl.) (literal meaning) and once again we may point out that the choice of an alternative plural form (with the suffix /-s/) for the noun that metaphorically implies a computer device is motivated semantically.

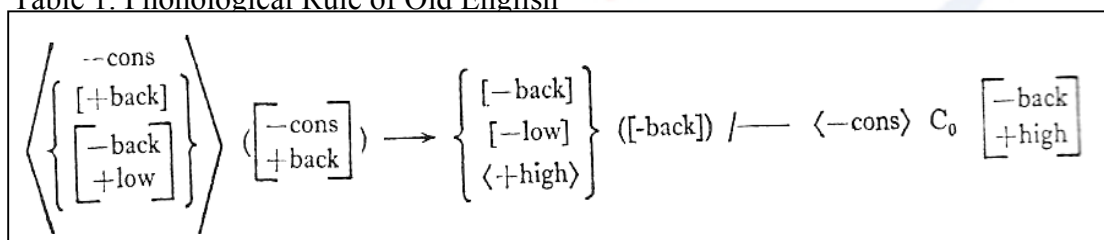
(3) *Adding of the suffix "-(r)en"*, like in "ox"(sg.) → "oxen"(pl.), "child"(sg.) → "children"(pl.). This system has almost totally disappeared in Modern English, probably, because nasal suffix provides less clear-cut communicative oppositions, thus making this system less efficient in terms of the human factor. It is interesting to note the merging effect with the most commonly used system (5) in the example like: historical 'brethren' (referring to spiritual brothers) versus 'brothers' (referring to 'biological brothers') that further supports the semantically motivated character of the particular choice of one system over the other.

(4) *Syncretism system*: the singular and plural forms are identical, like in "sheep"(sg.) = "sheep"(pl.), "deer"(sg.) = "deer"(pl.). Thus, since we have the lack of any change (+zero), the human factor is "the best" because no additional effort is required, while the communication factor is "the worst", since it does not provide any communicative oppositions, consequently it is the worst way to distinguish between plural and singular form. Not surprisingly, in this group we may also see the merging examples with the *suffixation system*, like in 'different moneys' (referring to the different kinds of currency) or 'different fishes' (referring to different species of fish) versus 'different fish' (different groups of fish), thus pointing to the semantically motivated choice of one declension system over the other.

(5) *"Regular" system*: an adding of the apical suffix /-(e)s/, like in "cat"(sg.) → "cats"(pl.). This system is the most productive in Modern English, since the use of the apical sounds, which are the optimal and "the easiest to pronounce and most communicatively salient consonants" (Even-Simkin & Tobin 2013: 27) that are added in word-final position "where ... the least effort is required in the search for a compromise to achieve *maximum communication with minimal effort*" (Even-Simkin & Tobin 2013: 27, Tobin 1997, Diver 1979), reflects the "best" compromise between both: the human and the communication factors out of the five systems discussed above. Thus, it is not by chance that it is the main subgroup that has survived and is the commonly used one in Modern English, leaving outside the rest of the systems (1-4) as merely being the exceptions to this "regular" /+(e)s/ rule.

However, the non-irregularity of the nominal IVA forms may be drawn from their common historical background, i.e., *i-mutation* (umlaut) which evidently points to the systematic phonological process. Paraphrasing Quirk & Wrenn's (1955: 151) words, the IVA Noun Plural forms undergo a fronting or raising of non-front vowels to mid or high front vowels. That is, the Noun Plural IVA nuclei are uniformly fronted and, as the remnants of i-umlaut, follow the phonological rule presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Phonological Rule of Old English



(adapted from Lass & Anderson (2010[1975]: 128))

This phonological process, Lass & Anderson (2010[1975]: 119) in their study of *OE Phonology* describe as a systematic process: "[t]he basic effects of the umlaut may be summed up as follows: in a certain context, back vowels front ... [and] [i]f the vowels undergoing umlaut are nonback and low, they raise". Indeed, in the examples given in Table 2, we may witness different degrees of the phonological *fronting process* of the IVA from singular to plural declension, i.e., from back vowels or diphthongs to different front vowels or diphthongs in Modern English IVA Noun Plurals as well as in their Old English forms.



Table 2. Phonological Fronting Process of IVA

OE Singular Form of Nouns with the Vowels: /ō, ā, a, ū, u, ēō/	OE Plural Form of Nouns with the Vowels: /ē, æ, y, īē/	Phonetically-Phonological Fronting Process of IVA in OE Forms of the Nouns (+)	ModE Singular form with the Following Phonological Representation of the Vowels: [æ, ʊu, au]	ModE Plural form with the Following Phonological Representation of the Vowels: [e, i, ai]	Phonetically-Phonological Fronting Process of IVA in ModE Forms of the Nouns (+)
mann	menn	/a/ → /ē/ = (+)	man	men	[æ] → [e] = (+) <sup>1</sup>
wīfmann	wīfmenn	/a/ → /ē/ = (+)	woman	women	[æ] → [e] = (+)
fōt	fēt	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	foot	feet	[ʊu] → [i] = (+)
tōð	tēð	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	tooth	teeth	[ʊu] → [i] = (+)
gōs	gēs	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	goose	geese	[ʊu] → [i] = (+)
mūs	mys	/ū/ → /y/ = (+)	mouse	mice	[au] → [ai] = (+)
lūs	lys	/ū/ → /y/ = (+)	louse	lice	[au] → [ai] = (+)
brōc	brēc(OE)/brēche(ME)	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	breeches, trousers, pants	Without IVA in ModE	---
bōc	bēc	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	book	Without IVA in ModE	---
fēōnd	fīēnd/fynd	/ēō/ → /īē/ or /y/ = (+)	foe	Without IVA in ModE	---
frēōnd	frīēnd/frynd	/ēō/ → /īē/ or /y/ = (+)	friend	Without IVA in ModE	---
hōnd	hēnd	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	hand	Without IVA in ModE	---
gōte	gēt	/ō/ → /ē/ = (+)	goat	Without IVA in ModE	---
hnute	hnyte	/u/ → /y/ = (+)	nut	Without IVA in ModE	---
burg	byrg	/u/ → /y/ = (+)	fortress	Without IVA in ModE	---
āc	āēc	/ā/ → /æ/ = (+)	oak	Without IVA in ModE	---
cū	cy	/ū/ → /y/ = (+)	cow	Without IVA in ModE	---

Such apparent regularity and consistency in the IVA system clearly points to the non-arbitrariness of the IVA process. Indeed, this phonological *fronting process* in the Singular to Plural declension of the IVA is iconic for metaphoric 'moving forward' because it points to the fronting as a representation for the addition of plural. Furthermore, this kind of phonological consistency in the IVA process is not only

<sup>1</sup> Although both [æ] and [e] are front vowels, the low front vowel [æ] is further back than the mid-front vowel [e]. In the current discussion I refer to any and all relative degrees of the *fronting* process.

iconic, but is also semantically motivated. Beedham (2005: 114) claims that "[a]ll linguistic forms must fit into the system somehow, and they all must have a meaning, it is simply a case of working out how they fit in and what the meaning is". This study depicts that the IVA Noun Plurals do not just share a phonologically iconic *fronting feature* but they are also marked by the same semantic feature of *Semantic Integrity* (SI). The term of Semantic Integrity that was originally introduced in Tobin (1990) and later developed in Tobin (1993, 1995[1994]: 71) may be summarized as:

[t]he marked feature [that]... is based on the assumption that there are two alternative ways of perceiving entities in space, time, or existence either as discrete entities: (a + b = a + b) or as 'potentially discrete entities perceived as part of a continuous set: (a + b = [ab]).

In other words, the semantic analysis of these Noun Plural forms reveals that the IVA forms are marked for SI, i.e., the IVA is also both motivated and systematic not only phonologically, but semantically as well, thus, indicating that differences in form imply differences in meaning.

It is a common knowledge that there is a very small number of the IVA Noun Plurals in Modern English, for example, if to compare them to the thousands of the so-called regular singular-plural formations like: *cat-cats*, *bus-buses*. Moreover, not many records of the Old English forms with the IVA may be found, though following different historical studies, for example, by Quirk & Wrenn, Hulbert, Emerson, Wright, it becomes evident that the number of the IVA forms in Old English was more numerous. For instance, as Table 3 presents, the Old English IVA Plural forms of the nouns: *nut*, *friend* or *oak*, moved to the so-called regular singular-plural declension system, that is, are formed by the adding of the suffix *-s/es* in Modern English. However, these nouns, as well as the other IVA Noun Plurals, still are marked for the same semantic feature of SI.

Table 3. Common Semantic Denominator of IVA

No. Group	Singular OE Forms of Nouns with the Following Vowels: / <i>ō, ā, ū, ēō</i> /	Plural OE Forms of Nouns with the Following Vowels: / <i>ē, æ, y, īē</i> /	ModE forms of these Nouns	Classified Semantic Domains per Group	CSD per Nominal IVA Class
I	mann	menn	man	nouns that generally describe potentially plural <u>two/or more units or sets, which may be either identical or complementary</u>	<i>Semantic Integrity</i>
	womann	womenn	woman		
	fōt	fēt	foot		
	tōð	tēð	tooth		
	brōc	brēc(OE)/brēche(ME)	breeches, trousers, pants		
	bōc	bēc	book		
	fēond	fīend/fynd	foe		
	frēond	frīend/frynd	friend		
hōnd	hēnd	hand			
II	gōs	gēs	goose	nouns that refer to animals that <u>live near human beings communally in groups</u>	
	gōte	gēt	goat		
	mūs	mys	mouse		
	lūs	lys	louse		

	cū	cy	cow	or herds
III	hnute	hnyte	nut	nouns that refer to sturdy entities that usually <u>grow together</u> in <u>groups or clusters</u>
	burg	byrg	borough or fortress	
	āc	æc	oak	

As shown in Table 3, the nouns of the first group are marked for the feature of *Semantic Integrality*, i.e., the semantics of these words entails the existence of another entity or entities that are perceived as being integral to that entity, like in: *man* vs. *woman*; *foe* vs. *friend*; *foot* (as a rule a pair), *hand* (as a rule a pair), *breeches*, *trousers*, *pants* (clothes intended as a rule for the two parts of the body), *tooth* (each tooth has a symmetric pair), *book* (consists of more than one page). That is, these nouns imply a continuous set of potentially discontinuous entities, or, in other words, these nouns generally describe the potentially two/manifold units which may be either identical or complementary. Nouns of the second group also make a claim for *Semantic Integrality*. That is, these words refer to animals that mainly live near the human beings communally in groups or herds, thus, entailing semantically the integral kind of units or entities in the existence in space or in place. The third group of Table 3, includes nouns that are marked for *Semantic Integrality* as well as in other two groups of this Table. Unsurprisingly, the semantics of these nouns implies the entity that consists of or represents extremely sturdy entities that usually grow together in groups, and have to be integrally connected in order to make available this wholeness or strong unity. That is, Table 3 presents three Common Semantic Domains of the IVA Noun Plurals with one main Common Semantic Denominator that encompasses all three of them and which is *Semantic Integrality*.

It is interesting to point out that the fourth system (Syncretism) is also marked by the feature of *Semantic Integrality*. The efficiency of this system that mostly includes bi- and polysyllabic "mass nouns" is, indeed, due to its clearly marked feature for SI, i.e., the less optimal communicative distinctions in phonology are complemented by a more salient semantic feature. It is worth noticing that the first and the third systems also demonstrate the marked feature for SI, which is albeit less obvious than in *mass nouns* (fourth system), however, this should be the subject of the further study.

The above observations indicate the unequivocal function of the IVA as a linguistic sign that is composed of the concrete morphophonemic process in a form of the phonologically iconic *fronting process* 'signifier' that is indivisibly united with its invariant meaning, which is *Semantic Integrality* 'signified'. Another interesting observation is that the IVA systems are named as schemas: "[s]ets of words having similar patterns of semantic and phonological connections reinforce one another and create emergent generalizations describable as schemas" (Bybee 1995: 430), thus once again pointing to the non-arbitrary, i.e., the systematic character of the Noun Plural IVA forms.

## Conclusion

The sign-oriented diachronic analysis of the phenomenon known as "irregular" nouns in Modern English reveals that the IVA displays the features of the linguistic sign, i.e., this study uncovers a concrete phonological IVA process: *fronting process* (significant) that functions as a linguistic signal that is inseparably united with an invariant meaning in the form of a common semantic denominator: *SI* (signifié). Such

complex linguistic unit that links the linguistic signal with its invariant meaning presents an example of an essential tool in the creation of human communication. That is, the IVA functions as a "linguistic sign which does not separate form from meaning and which functions as part of systematic structure" (Tobin 1990: 35), i.e., the Noun Plural forms with the IVA share the fronting feature which is: a). metaphorically iconic, and b). is marked by the distinctive semantic feature of *Semantic Integrality*, thus emphasizing the systematic semantic feature of the IVA.

With regard to the historically important role played by the IVA forms, in teaching English it would be more accurate to mention the so-called irregular Noun Plurals as a parallel system to the suffixation system (noun + *s/es*) and to expose students to the underlying system of the so-called irregular forms in order to make the learning process more meaningful. Indeed, the so-called irregular nouns in English are shown to be systematic not only phonologically, but semantically as well, also maintaining Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985) and Baayen & Martin's (2005: 668) statement that:

It is clear that the Germanic irregular nouns of English, although formally and etymologically highly heterogeneous, pattern along lines of semantic similarity.

The logo for the International Association for Applied Linguistics (iafor) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a red one on the left and a blue one on the right, which together form a partial circle around the text.

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*Place-Name Target Multi-Source Metaphor and Metonymy*

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**Abstract**

The paper considers metaphors and metonymies with a place-name-target correlating with two or more source domains at the same time. They are represented by the structure 'A is B, C...', in which both the target and the sources are explicit.

It is argued that the target and the sources in a multi-source metaphor or metonymy are united by means of some common element, which provides their wholeness. The common element that unites a multi-source metaphor into a single entity is to be abstract, this element reflects some generalized quality inherent to all the sources attached to the same target, and this common feature mostly consists in evaluation. Such metaphors are conspicuous and bright. In a multi-source metonymy the uniting element can consist either in evaluating or in individual perception.

Keywords: metaphor, target domain, source domain, multi-source metaphor, multi-source metonymy, evaluation

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## Introduction

The process of acquiring and accumulating knowledge is based on the information already known. From the psychological point of view a metaphor originates from the memory of past feelings (Arnold 2005), so that metaphor helps to understand new concepts through the old ones.

Metaphor is a complex phenomenon. Metaphorical studies have a long history originating in the works of ancient philosophers (Aristotle, Cicerone, Quintilian and others), and many approaches to metaphor have been worked out since that time (cf. Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics, et al.). From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of cognitive approach to language studies they started considering metaphor not as a purely linguistic phenomenon but as a phenomenon of thought which reflects in language, and it has been argued that ‘metaphor plays a central role in thought, and it is indispensable to both thought and language’ (Deignan 2005). Metaphor is viewed as ‘a phenomenon of cognition encoding worldviews’ (Crystal 2006).

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory which originates in the work of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson ‘Metaphors We Live By’ (1980) remains popular. The fact that metaphor helps to understand new concepts through their analogy with the old ones is presented in this theory through the idea of conceptualization: the new phenomena or things (‘the target domain’) are conceptualized through other phenomena or things, which are more familiar and thus more understandable (‘the source domain’). A correspondence of a certain target domain with a certain source domain can be represented by the formula ‘A is B’. Systematic correspondences between the source domain and the target domain are called metaphorical mappings (Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 246). Metaphorical mappings are the subject to scholarly research. It has often been argued that, as a rule, abstract notions are conceptualized through concrete ones. Though metaphorical mapping is not a one-way process, and a thing can be conceptualized through an abstract notion, as well one thing can be conceptualized through another thing, and one abstract notion – through another abstract notion. The process of metaphorical mapping is considered from many sides. Metaphorical mapping is being studied from the point of view of either the source domain, or the target domain, or the both (Lakoff, Johnson 1980; Deignan 1995; Sommer, Weiss 2001; Kövesces 2005; Goatly 2007), researchers are creating metaphor databases of different languages (such as the Metalude, the Master List of Metaphors at Berkeley, and others).

## Statement of the Problem

The law of asymmetric dualism is applicable to metaphorical mapping. It is evident that there is no strict correlation of a certain target domain with a certain source domain. One source domain is applicable to different target domains and the one and the same target domain can correlate with different source domains. ‘This is typical of target domains. We use not just one but a number of source concepts to comprehend them’ (Kövesces 2010: 96), we need several source domains to understand a target fully ‘because each source can only structure certain aspects of a target; no sources domain can structure, and thus provide full understanding for all aspects of a target’ (Ibid.: 103).

This paper considers the cases of metaphor when one target domain correlates with two or more source domains at a time: ‘A is B, C...’ and it attempts to answer how and why this could be possible to ascribe different qualities to the same object and what element unites all the sources into a whole complete image. It is argued that the uniting element should be inherent both to the target and to all the sources, thus this element should be abstract. Apart from multi-source metaphors multi-source metonymies with a similar structure are considered.

## Material

The material contains 2000 examples of metaphors and metonymies with a place-name representing the target domain. It is a self-collected database the core of which includes metaphors and metonymies from English and American literature of 17-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. From this database I have picked out 28 metaphors and 8 metonymies in which one target correlates with two or more sources at a time, within the same microcontext (the context of a sentence or a supra-phrasal unit). They account for just 1.8% of the research material (36 examples).

## Methods

The method of metaphorical mapping is used. Within each multi-source metaphor separate source-target correspondences are distinguished and considered. The meanings of the nouns constituting the multi-source, as well as the meanings of adjectives-epithets, are considered. When possible the data acquired is compared with of the data of scholar research on basic English metaphors available.

## Research

In metaphors of the type ‘A is B, C, ...’ there should be a certain element which provides the wholeness multi-source metaphors. This common feature should be an abstract one. This idea can be illustrated by the bright examples from the research material. There is an example of a multi-source metaphor, ‘the elaborate panegyric of England’ (Dawson, Yachnin 2011: 26):

*This royal **throne** of kings, this sceptered isle,  
This earth of majesty, this **seat** of Mars,  
This **other Eden, demi-paradise,**  
This **fortress** built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this **little world,**  
This **precious stone** set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a **house**  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This **blessèd plot, this earth, this realm, this England,**  
This **nurse, this teeming womb** of royal kings,  
Feared by their breed and famous by their birth,  
Renownèd for their deeds as far from home  
For Christian service and true chivalry*

*As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;  
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,  
Dear for her reputation through the world,  
Is now leased out—I die pronouncing it—  
Like to a tenement or pelting farm*

(W. Shakespeare, Richard II, Act II, Scene I).

In this description of England (E) one can distinguish the following metaphors: E – THRONE ('*throne of kings*', '*seat of Mars*'), E – PARADISE ('*other Eden*', '*demi-Paradise*'), E – BUILDING ('*fortress*', '*house*'), E – WORLD ('*little world*'), E – JEWELRY ('*precious stone*'), E – HUMAN BEING ('*nurse*'), E – BODY PART ('*teeming womb*'). All the above mentioned metaphors together with a set of ameliorative epithets ('*royal*', '*blessed*', '*dear*', the epithet '*dear*' is repeated four times within the context, three of them it is attributes directly to the description of the land) make a laudable description of England. The many times repeated demonstrative pronoun 'this' underlines the idea of uniqueness.

Each separate metaphor adds some positive quality to the general metaphorical image, which could be considered in more detail:

1. The two metaphorical sources 'royal throne of kings' and 'seat of Mars' of the metaphor E is THRONE imply such qualities as 'royal' and 'celestial', which both represent 'an important status', 'power'. There are metaphors IMPORTANT STATUS is HIGH (Goatly 2007: 35, 85, 343, 375) and POWER = GOOD (Ibid.: 340, 343, 375); and the metaphor IMPROVE STATUS is RAISE (Ibid.: 343) complies with the metaphor GOOD is HIGH (Goatly 2007: 375), and with the orientational metaphor GOOD is UP (Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 17, 19).
2. The two synonymic metaphorical sources '*this other Eden*', '*demi-Paradise*' represent the metaphor E – PARADISE. Paradise is defined a perfect place (Hornby 2000: 918), 'perfect' means 'excellent', 'very good' (Ibid.: 939), which implies positive evaluation.
3. Then comes the metaphor E – WORLD ('*little world*'), implying the qualities 'particular', 'special', 'independent', which are also traditionally considered positive.
4. The ameliorative metaphor E – PRECIOUS STONE conceptualizes England as a stone used in jewelry – rare, valuable, valued (cf. Hornby 2000: 992), which are positive qualities.
5. There are two building-metaphors: E – FORTRESS and E – HOUSE, both implying safety which is also a good feature.
6. England is personified: E – HUMAN BEING, in particular E – NURSE, the metaphor implying the positive qualities 'support' and 'care' which implies 'doing good'.
7. Metaphor of a body part E – WOMB ('*this teeming womb*') implies the qualities 'fertile' and 'abundant' which means MORE, and MORE = GOOD (cf. Goatly 2007: 165).

Thus there is a whole set of source domains ascribing different qualities to the target domain, and all these qualities are united by the idea of positive evaluating.

Within the same context one comes across two metaphors: E – TENEMENT and E – FARM. The source domain TENEMENT implies such negative features as ‘another’s’, ‘alien’, while the source domain FARM, together with the pejorative epithet ‘pelting’, implies such negative qualities as ‘trashy’, ‘worthless’, as the archaic adjective is probably derived from the dialectal word ‘pelt’, which means ‘trash’ (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/pelting>), ‘mean, misery, paltry’ (<http://www.yourdictionary.com/pelting>), ‘Shakespeare may mean a farm subject to the rot of sheep, so call’d, because of skins, or pelts, were the greatest part of the owner’s profit’ (Grey 1754: 59).

Thus the above mentioned Shakespearean metaphor contains 10 conceptualizations of England: one target [England] correlates with 13 sources (one conceptualization can be represented by two sources (such as ‘*other Eden*’, ‘*demi-paradise*’). It appears that by means of the multi-source metaphor of England Shakespeare underlines a contrast between what is the essence of the place, which is good, and what is the current state of affairs, which is bad.

On the whole it is evident that the set of qualities attributed to the same geographical object through making one target [England] correlate with a whole set of sources is united by the idea of evaluation. This metaphor is made very expressive through the diversity of good, positive qualities ascribed to the object. The uniting element of the whole complex metaphor is an abstract quality, namely, positive evaluation.

One more example of a multi-source metaphor:

*... A dismal swamp, on which the half-built houses rot away: cleared here and there for the space of a few yards; and teeming, then, with rank unwholesome vegetation, in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers who are tempted hither, droop, and die, and lay their bones; the hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course a slimy **monster** hideous to behold; a **hotbed of disease**, **an ugly sepulchre**, **a grave** uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without one single quality, in earth or air or water, to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo (Dickens, Ch. American Notes).*

Within the metaphor the target Cairo (the town situated in Illinois, the USA) correlates with four sources which represent three conceptualizations: C – MONSTER (‘*slimy monster hideous to behold*’), C – HOTBED (‘*hotbed of disease*’), C – GRAVE (‘*ugly sepulchre*’; ‘*a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise*’). The conceptualizations comply with a whole set of pejorative epithets. Each noun within the context is derived by a derogatory epithet: *dismal* (1. *swamp*; 2. *Cairo*), *unwholesome* (*vegetation*), *baleful* (*shade*), *wretched* (*wanderer*), *hateful* (*Mississippi*), including the elements of the metaphor in question: MONSTER (*slimy*, *hideous*), HOTBED (*of disease*), SEPULCHRE (*ugly*), GRAVE (*uncheered*). The epithets seem to make a kind of a gradation, crowned with the description ‘*without one single quality, in earth, or air or water*’, and the gradation goes well with the framing formed by the epithet ‘*dismal*’.

Each metaphor adds its hues to the gloomy picture of the place painted by Dickens:

1. The metaphor C – MONSTER implies the qualities ‘large’ and ‘ugly’ (cf. Hornby, 824), the negative effect is strengthened with the epithet ‘*hideous*’.

2. The metaphor C – HOTBED is also a pejorative one, as the noun ‘hotbed’ has a negative connotation (cf. Hornby, 629) which is intensified by the definition ‘of disease’.
3. Two metaphors with the source GRAVE (*sepulchre; grave*) implying the idea of death add to the negative effect.

Thus it is evident that negative qualities are attributed to the same object through making one target [Cairo] correlate with the sources united by the idea of negative evaluation.

The two bright examples considered above illustrate the evaluative nature of multi-source metaphor. The abstract element uniting, linking the target and all the sources into a single whole consists in evaluation which can be either positive, or negative, or even contrastive. As is stated above such metaphors are not common, they account for 1.4% of the research material (28 cases), still they are very bright, expressive. They can consist of conventional conceptual metaphors still on the whole each multi-source metaphor is novel and original, as it represents a whole set of qualities at the same time.

Multi-source metonymies are very scarce, they account for 0.4% (8 cases) of the research material. The examples considered have shown that the amount of evaluation can be presented not only in a multi-source metaphor, but also in a multi-source metonymy:

*What’s **Broadway** today? **Pimps, whores, drug-pushers, muggers**. I don’t blame you for running away from it all (Shaw, I. Evening in Byzantium).*

The target domain is represented by the place-name ‘Broadway’ and the source domain – by the nouns naming doubtful occupations of people who are common there according to the narrator. All the named occupations are connected with unlawful activities, and so have a negative connotation (*‘pimps, whores, drug-pushers, muggers’*), thus these names adhere negative evaluation to the place-name-target. In this case the elements of metonymy are united by the idea of negative evaluation.

Still even a small amount of research material has shown that a multi-source metonymy is not always evaluative:

*The cars streamed past him, or stood parked in rows. **America** was **all cars and newspapers** (Galsworthy, J. A Modern Comedy. The White Monkey).*

Here the impression of a personage, an Englishman, of visiting America is shown. For him America seems saturated with cars and newspapers. Thus the double-source of the metonymy is presented by names of objects which seem to be excessive, though there is no direct evaluation as there are no evaluative words. This double-source metonymy is united into a single whole not by the idea of evaluation but by the idea of an individual’s impression.

## Conclusion

Thus the research has shown the following: 1) multi-source metaphors and metonymies give a complex characteristics of the target, 2) multi-source metaphors, as well as multi-source metonymies, are rare; 3) multi-source metaphors and metonymies are very expressive, they intensify of a certain quality or idea; 4) there should be a uniting element in a multi-source metaphor or metonymy which would 'gather' the target and all the sources into a single whole; 5) in a multi-source metaphor the uniting element is abstract, it consists in evaluating; 6) in a multi-source metonymy the uniting element does not necessarily consist in evaluating, it can also consist in expressing individual perception.



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***How Far Does The Influence of Cultural Differences Go on the Implementation and Outcome of A Pedagogical Approach: Implications from Two ESL Classrooms***

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**Abstract**

Culture shapes beliefs, and beliefs about teaching and learning shape teachers' practices and learners' expectations. To investigate how far cultural differences may affect the implementation and impact of a pedagogical approach, a study was conducted in the naturalistic settings of two ESL writing classrooms at the same grade level in a single-sex girls' secondary school in Hong Kong, with one of the classes being taught by a local English teacher (LET) and the other by a native English-speaking teacher (NET) from the UK. The study aimed to find out whether teachers from different cultural backgrounds would implement the same pedagogical approach differently, and how such differences, if any, affect the outcomes of the approach.

Both teachers were asked to teach their classes English writing using the same multiple-draft process writing approach over a semester. The two classes' changes in terms of their autonomous skills and attitudes in writing, which the process approach was believed to have the potential to foster, were compared after the writing programme. Data from the classes were collected quantitatively through a questionnaire and qualitatively through learner journals, self-assessment forms and case studies. Data from the teachers about their teaching beliefs and actual practices were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The results suggest that while the cultural background and teaching beliefs of the implementer may have important mediating effects on the overall outcomes of a pedagogical approach, the approach may still have some similar effects on learners of similar sociocultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Cultural differences, pedagogical approach, process writing, learner autonomy

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## **I. Introduction**

### **The role of cultural factors in teaching and learning**

An individual's beliefs are the assumptions the person holds about the world and self (Athos & Gabarro, 1978); the beliefs a teacher holds play a central role in structuring classroom activities, which influences learning input and interaction with learners (Woods, 1996). As beliefs are shaped by life experiences, which are largely influenced by context, context is a key factor in understanding a teacher's beliefs and therefore actions (Kulinna, Silverman, & Keating, 2000; Nespor, 1985). Contextual factors may include the more immediate ones, such as those related to the classroom environment, the school and the students; however, more macro contextual influences, such as nationality and cultural factors, may have more fundamental bearing on beliefs about teaching and learning, and have received more scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. Hinkel, 1999; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Zhou & Pedersen, 2011). While it is generally agreed that teacher beliefs are powerful forces in affecting teaching and learning, it is not clear how far such influences could go.

The reported study therefore aimed to explore the extent to which different teacher beliefs, particularly those shaped by different cultural backgrounds, affect the outcome of a pedagogical approach. The study focused on how two teachers from very different cultural backgrounds implemented the same pedagogical approach, which was the process writing approach, and how far their differences in beliefs and teaching practices affected the outcome of the approach in terms of students' development of autonomous skills and attitudes in writing.

### **The importance of learner autonomy in writing**

Autonomy is essential for second language learners, and writing is an area where the development of learner autonomy is especially desirable because of its important role in language learning. Research has shown that the ability to write is often accompanied by enhanced acquisition of the language (e.g. Cumming, 1990; Smoke, 1994), and literate second language learners may also tend to introduce new syntactic forms more often in writing than in speaking (Weissberg, 2000). In other words, writing is an important modality for the development of language competence; autonomy in learning to write, therefore, could bring about development not only in writing skills but also in overall language competence. The question is: how can we foster autonomy in terms of students' writing development?

### **The potential of the process approach in fostering learner autonomy**

Among various approaches to teaching and learning writing, the process approach theoretically holds the greatest potential in encouraging the development in learner autonomy. In practice, the process approach brings the student writer through the process of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing. Peer feedback, teacher feedback and self-evaluation are integral aspects of the composing process and may play an important part in developing autonomous writers (Hyland, F., 2000). At the heart of the process approach is a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983). Advocates of process pedagogy therefore emphasize the importance of

teaching writing not as a product but as process of helping students discover their own voice and of encouraging feedback and revision (Matsuda, 2003). While some may argue that there is little hard evidence that process pedagogies actually lead to significantly better writing in L2 contexts (e.g. Hyland, K. 2002, 2003), the strength of process pedagogy may lie in its acknowledgement of the cognitive dimensions of writing and the potential it has for fostering such autonomous attitudes and skills as self-discovery, self-reflection and inner-directed exploration.

This view about the strength of the process approach has found some support in research. For example, Curtis (2001) found that student teachers benefited from the approach in terms of their self-confidence as writers, and Cresswell's (2000) study showed that university students trained to self-monitor their writing in a multiple-draft process writing programme could self-articulate their concerns in composing and paid more attention to content and organization. These studies, however, were mainly conducted among more proficient learners at university level or above; more importantly, they did not set out to focus on the development of learner autonomy in learners. The present study therefore adapted this approach for young ESL learners and explored its potential effects fully from the perspective of learner autonomy development.

### **Defining learner autonomy**

There have been diverse approaches to the conceptualization and different views on the components of learner autonomy (e.g., Holec, 1981; Wenden, 1991; Scharle and Szabó, 2000; Little, 1991; Benson, 1996). For the purposes of this study, a theoretical framework of learner autonomy was developed with reference to Oxford's (2003) taxonomy. Using an approach which Benson (2007) metaphorically called the "kaleidoscopic strategy", Oxford's (2003) taxonomy amalgamates various definitions and perspectives of learner autonomy into a "macro-definition", incorporating technical, psychological, sociocultural and political-critical perspectives on autonomy. Four important themes, namely context, agency, motivation, and learning strategies run through each of these perspectives. By embracing these various perspectives and themes, the taxonomy acknowledges learner autonomy as a multi-dimensional construct.

Taking reference from the psychological perspective of Oxford's (2003) taxonomy, which sees autonomy as a combination of characteristics of the individual, learner autonomy in writing was proposed as a construct embracing factors that constitute autonomous attitudes, including motivation, self-confidence and independence from the teacher, as well as those that constitute autonomous skills, including strategy use, particularly metacognitive strategy use, and its prerequisite of metacognitive knowledge. This general framework was used for the development of a questionnaire and the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Learning strategies are considered to be autonomous skills as they are often viewed as a psychological gateway to L2 learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1992; Oxford, 1990, 2003; Wenden, 1991). For the purpose of this study, mainly use of strategies for writing and the learning of writing, such as planning for writing and making self-initiated revisions, were considered. Since metacognitive knowledge has been increasingly acknowledged to be fundamentally important in self-regulated learning

(e.g. Wenden, 1998; Little, 2004; 2007), it was also incorporated in the construct even though they are not highlighted in Oxford's (2003) taxonomy.

Another major component in the construct which is not directly addressed in Oxford's (2003) taxonomy is independence from the teacher. In the literature on learner autonomy, the role of the teacher is often debated. Although it is agreed that learner autonomy does not mean total independence from the teacher, there is little dispute that in order to foster the development of learner autonomy in the classroom, teachers have to learn to relinquish control to their students and "wean" their students away from teacher dependence (Sheerin, 1997, p. 63). Independence from the teacher was therefore incorporated in the framework as an attitudinal component.

## **II. Methods**

### **Research question**

Putting together the literature reviewed above, the present study was designed to answer the following question:

*To what extent do cultural differences affect the outcome of the process approach in terms of learners' development of autonomous skills and attitudes in writing?*

### **The study design**

The study was conducted in the naturalistic settings of two ESL classes (the NET Group and the LET Group) in a Chinese medium girls' school in Hong Kong using a simultaneously mixed method pretest-posttest (pre-experimental) design. The two groups were taught by two teachers with different cultural backgrounds as described below. The two teachers taught their respective groups English writing using the process writing approach over a semester (three and a half months) during which data collection was carried out. The researcher briefed both teachers on the procedure and provided them with the same peer review form, editing checklist and self-assessment form for use in writing instruction.

### **The participants**

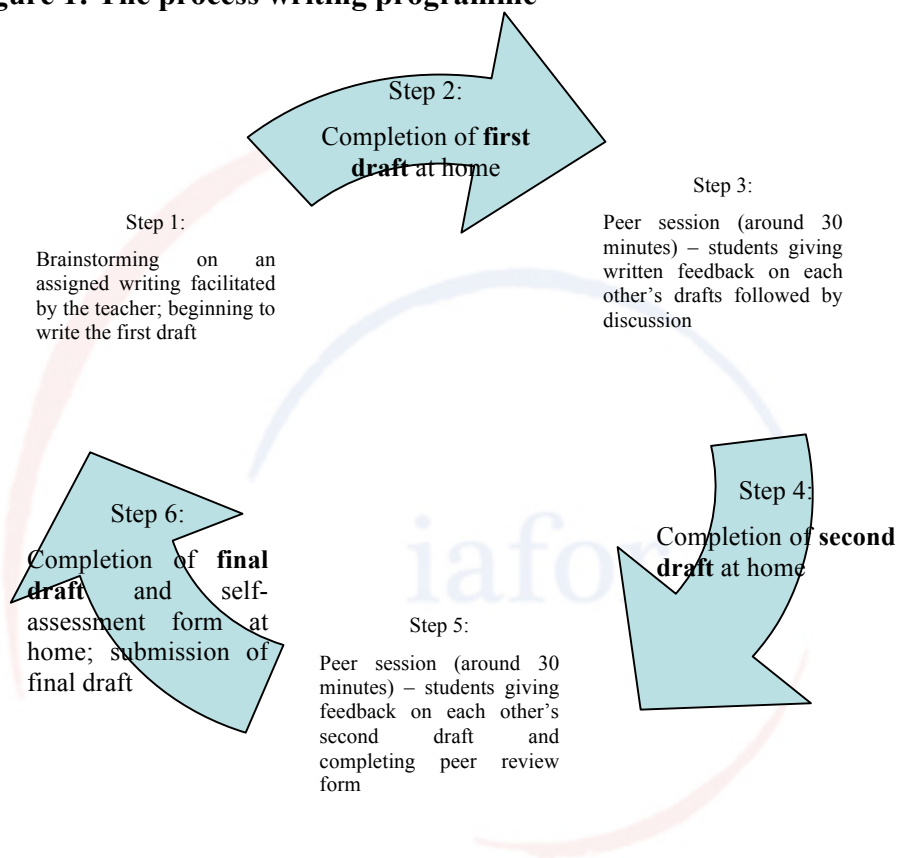
The NET Group and the LET Group had 19 and 21 students respectively. All the student participants of this study were local ethnic Chinese aged between 12 and 13 speaking Cantonese as their mother tongue. The student participants were therefore largely homogenous regarding their gender, age and sociocultural background.

The NET Group was taught by a male native English-speaking teacher (NET) identified here as Sam, while the LET Group was taught by a female local English teacher (LET) identified as Jessica. Sam was born and brought up in the United Kingdom and a native speaker of English, while Jessica was born and educated locally in Hong Kong speaking Cantonese as her mother tongue. Both teachers were master degree holders with English teaching qualifications and two to three years' experience in mainstream teaching. As they were comparable in terms of qualifications and teaching experience, the major differences between them lay in their places of origin and education and the resulting cultural differences.

## The writing programme

Both groups completed three writing tasks on the same topics over the semester. Each writing task was completed in three drafts within around a month's time. There were peer sessions between drafts, and the students were allowed to complete the drafts at home. The writing cycle is shown in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: The process writing programme**



## Data collection

### *Quantitative data*

Quantitative data were collected from the student participants using a questionnaire, which was administered twice in each group, once before the programme (as the pre-test) and once after (as the post-test). The questionnaire was developed based on the conceptualization of learner autonomy in the area of writing with reference to the instrument developed by Cottrell (1995) investigating learners' readiness for autonomous learning and Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). As the participants of this study were young learners with limited linguistic competence in their L2, the questionnaire was translated into their L1 (Chinese) with the length of the questionnaire kept short and level of complexity kept simple.

The questionnaire was designed with writing as the focus and included three sections with a total of 66 five-point Likert-scale questions (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Factor analysis identified the following nine factors: Self-

directedness, Motivation, Degree of Dependence on the Teacher, Peer Help and Feedback, Revision, Planning, Direct Strategies for Learning Writing, Metacognitive Strategies and Knowledge, and Social Strategy Use. After factor analysis, a paired-sample t-test was conducted on the data from each class, by which the pre-test and post-test mean scores of all the nine factors were compared to find out if any significant changes had taken place after the writing programme.

### ***Qualitative data***

In addition to the quantitative data collected with the questionnaires, qualitative data were also collected from the student participants from the following sources:

- Open-ended questions that follow the Likert-scale questions in the questionnaire;
- Self-assessment forms from the three writing tasks;
- Writing journals from individual students in each group.

The open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the self-assessment forms were designed to elicit information corresponding to the various aspects of learner autonomy in the theoretical framework, such as whether they learnt to write on their own (reflecting motivation), whether they planned and revised their writing (reflecting use of writing strategies), and how they evaluated their writing (reflecting metacognitive knowledge).

Qualitative data collected via the open-ended questions in both the questionnaire and the self-assessment forms were categorized and counted for comparison within groups and between groups. Data collected from the writing journals were analyzed qualitatively to provide evidence for triangulation with other data sources.

Data from the teachers were collected through in-depth interviews (once before the programme, once after the programme and once after each writing task). The teachers were asked questions about their beliefs in teaching English and English writing, their perceptions of the process approach and their reflections on their own teaching and learning. All their writing lessons and a few other non-writing lessons were observed to find out about their general approaches to teaching and the actual implementation of the process approach in their classes.

### ***Case studies***

Five students, two from the NET Group and three from the LET Group, were invited to participate in the case studies. In the case studies, semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the writing programme to find out about the participants' approaches to writing and their reflections on their learning of writing.

All the drafts of the three writing tasks completed by each case study participant were collected for analysis. The revisions, particularly the quantity and quality of the self-initiated revisions on the drafts were examined as they were considered to be an indicator of the student writer's effort to take charge of the writing process, thus suggesting writer autonomy.

### III. Findings and discussion

#### Similar changes in both groups

Both qualitative and quantitative data suggested that the two groups underwent some similar changes after the writing programmes as follows.

#### 1. Decrease in dependence on the teacher after the programme

There was evidence to suggest that the process writing programme had the effect of reducing the students' dependence on the teacher in both groups. The mean scores of the factor of Degree of Dependence on the Teacher in the NET Group and LET Group decreased by 0.34 and 0.47 respectively in the post-test at 0.05 level of significance (Table 1). This factor included three items that reflect heavy reliance on the teacher, such as "I like the teacher to tell me what to write", so the decrease in the mean score certainly indicated a step in the direction away from spoon-feeding.

**Table 1 Changes in the mean scores of the factor of Degree of Dependence on the Teacher in the two groups**

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Change in Mean (Post-Pre)	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
<b>NET Group</b> (n=19)	-.34	.64	.15	.03	.65	2.33	18	.032
<b>LET Group</b> (n=21)	-.47	.81	.18	.09	.85	2.57	19	.019

We can see this growing independence from the teacher in the case of one of the case studies, Kelly from the LET Group. Before the implementation of the process approach, Kelly said that she needed the teacher's language input:

*..... my standard may not be high enough. If the teacher doesn't give me vocabulary items for reference, I may find it difficult to write.*

However, she started to enjoy the freedom she had in the writing process. In her last writing journal entry, she actually expressed her dislike of the teacher's "control":

*In fact, I don't quite like the teacher to give us hints on a writing topic. This would limit my thoughts, making me unable to rely on my own ideas in writing. I realize I am the master of my own writing, and the content of my writing is mine, so I can write whatever I like.*

Kelly's changes suggested that the writing programme had developed her self-confidence in writing as well as her sense of ownership of her writing.

## 2. Greater self-sufficiency in writing

In addition to becoming less dependent on the teacher, the students' responses to the question about what they would do when faced with difficulties in writing suggested a decrease in the tendency to seek help from others among both groups (Table 2). This indicates that after the programme, instead of seeking help from others, particularly the teacher, students were slightly more self-sufficient in completing writing tasks.

**Table 2** Counts of mentions of sources of help in face of difficulties in writing (In response to open-ended Question 2 of the questionnaire - *When you come across difficulties while writing, what do you do?*)

Source of help	NET Group			LET Group		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
The teacher	13	8	-5 (38.5%)	13	6	-7 (53.8%)
Peers	14	11	-3 (21.4%)	14	13	-1 (7.1%)
Specific family members or friends	8	2	-6 (75%)	5	2	-3 (60%)
Others (anyone who can help)	0	2	+2	0	2	+2
Total	35	23	-12 (34%)	32	23	-9 (28%)

This growing self-sufficiency was also revealed by some students' self-initiated revisions over the tasks. For example, Polly from the NET group made progressively more self-revision attempts over the three tasks. In Task 1, she only added one sentence to her writing; in Task 3, she made three attempts to improve the content, modifying ideas and adding necessary details. She also made seven attempts to refine the language, all being alternative ways of expression or modifications for variety, clarity or style except one, which was an actual grammar correction. Below are some examples of her self-initiated revisions:

Adding an opinion:

First version: *My school start at 8:15a.m. so everyday I woke up at 6:00a.m.*

Revised version: *My school start at 8:15a.m. so everyday I woke up at 6:00a.m. I think it is so early.*

Filling in necessary details:

First version: *(No party details were given.)*

Revised version: *My birthday party start at 11:00 am and 9:00pm finish. And the party is holding at my place.*



Modifications of language use:

First version: *If you're free at that day, can you go to my birthday party? I think you can...*

Revised version: *If you're free on next Sunday, may you go to my birthday party? I hope you may...*

Although some of Polly's self-revisions contained errors, it was evident from the overall quality and quantity of her self-initiated revisions that she was becoming more self-motivated to improve her own writing and was confident enough to do so.

### 3. Development in metacognitive knowledge

Evidence of growth in metacognitive knowledge was found in both groups. The following entries in the writing journal by a participant from the NET Group, identified as Jane here, illustrate the gradual development of metacognitive knowledge over the course of the writing programme:

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> entry

*I feel my writing contains many mistakes. I feel the ending is very bad. I think I can be good at writing the ending. I should work more on writing the ending.*

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> entry

*My writing is very boring. I don't know how to make my writing fun, how to make it good. I think I need to read others' writings to make my writing good. I need to make a real effort!*

#### 4<sup>th</sup> entry

*My writing has not been good. Sometimes I think of words to use but I don't know how to put them in sentences, so I can't express my ideas. I hope I can increase my understanding of English sentences.*

#### 5<sup>th</sup> entry

*I will read more articles and books, and even the lyrics of English songs. I have liked listening to songs ever since I was a child, including Chinese, English and Japanese songs, and I would be able to sing them after a while, but I seldom read the lyrics. Even though I may not learn much about sentences through lyrics, I would at least learn more words from them.*

#### 6<sup>th</sup> entry

*I need to use more conjunctions and new words in my writing. Some sentences need to be presented better for better expression, and I need to check the dictionary more often and read to increase my vocabulary.*

From the general comments about her own writing in the initial entries to the more detailed and specific remarks about how to improve her English in the latter ones, Jane's reflections evidenced the development of her metacognitive knowledge of writing and of herself as a writer.

## Different degrees of change

While the above common changes suggest that the process approach helped these two groups of young learners develop into more autonomous writers, the data also revealed some changes that mainly occurred in the LET Group as follows:

First, more than half of the students in the LET Group appeared to have become more used to writing in multiple drafts by the end of the writing programme. After the programme completed, 13 out of the 21 students opted to carry on with the multiple-draft writing approach even though they were told that they no longer had to. This suggested the development of a more sophisticated approach to writing, which did not seem to have taken place in the NET Group.

Second, the LET Group showed more conspicuous development in some aspects, such as their reflectivity. Students in the LET Group were generally more persistent in reflecting upon their writing, and their reflections tended to be more elaborate revealing more metacognitive knowledge development than their counterparts in the NET Group. This could be illustrated with their responses to some open-ended questions in the questionnaire as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3 Comparison of responses to the questions “Do you have a clear goal in learning to write” and “Do you have any plans to improve your writing” before and after the writing programme:**

	NET Group	LET Group
<b>Having a clear goal in learning to write</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3 changed from “No” to “Yes”;</li> <li>- Positive responses remained generic: e.g. “write well/better”, “do my best”, “get higher marks”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 changed from “No” to “Yes”;</li> <li>- Development of more specific goals in some cases (e.g. “To write well enough to be understood by native speakers”; “Be able to write error-free on my own devices”)</li> </ul>
<b>Having plans to improve writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Those who responded “No” before the course kept responding “No” after;</li> <li>- Positive responses remained generic: e.g. “read more”, “write more”, “write drafts”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 changed from “No” to “Yes”;</li> <li>- Development of more specific plans in some cases (e.g. “Revise till it is best”; “To read more good articles and story books”)</li> </ul>

Furthermore, the LET Group also showed more obvious development than the NET Group towards self-reliance in writing. In addition to the evidence discussed earlier, the LET Group’s decrease in tendency to ask for help from others was further supported by the decrease of 0.45 at 0.05 level of significance in the mean score of the factor of Social Strategy Use. This factor included two items about asking others questions related to writing and having others read their writing; the decrease in tendency to do these suggested their desire and confidence to take charge of their own writing, which concurred with findings from other sources of data. While both groups

became less dependent on others' help, this tendency was more noticeable in the LET Group.

### **Possible reasons for the differences in outcomes in the two classes**

The LET Group's greater degree of change in certain aspects suggested that the process approach may have been more effective in fostering learner autonomy in the LET Group than in the NET Group. This could be attributed to cultural and teaching differences as illustrated below.

#### **1. Negative perceptions arising from the clash between teaching style and learner expectations in the NET Group**

The implementation of the approach in the NET Group could have been affected by the students' increasingly negative feelings about Sam's teaching. Their general dissatisfaction may have affected their perceptions of the process approach and feedback, as revealed by the fact that the positive views about the approach expressed by about one-third of the students at the beginning of the programme were replaced by a few rather negative remarks at the end of it.

This was largely caused by the clash between Sam's teaching style and the expectations of his students. As teachers' teaching approaches are shaped by cultural backgrounds and past learning experiences, so are learners' expectations; when the teacher and the students are from different cultural backgrounds, there may be mismatch between the two, which would inevitably affect the learning outcome (Kern, 1995). Sam's students had conflicting feelings about him as their teacher as illustrated by one student's change of attitude. In the second writing task, "My school", this student described Sam in a very favourable light:

*Mr Sam is our English teacher...He is so cute and handsome! In English he is always plays tricks on ours. But he makes us happy. I think he is a good teacher because he is very kind. After he has touch us some new things and then he will make a dictation and some listening for us. It is good for us! [...] In the school I feel very happy when I have English lessons because Mr Sam makes me happy! When we feel boring and then he will sing some songs for us. It is very funny! I like him very much!*

However, in a later entry in her writing journal written after a major test near the end of the semester, she blamed her poor performance in English on Sam:

*Mr Sam spent extremely little time in the first semester on teaching English. This makes me very angry! My English has got worse, a lot worse since the beginning of secondary school (i.e. since Sam became her English teacher). Perhaps it is because Mr Sam seldom teaches!! I don't like him!! I want to change classes!!*

Similar dissatisfactions were expressed by a few other students in the writing journals. One student brought up the need for grammar instruction, and she commented that Sam did not address grammar teaching sufficiently.

These students' comments and responses reflected that the students generally expected the teacher to teach them English grammar and help them prepare for tests

and examinations. These expectations are not uncommon among Hong Kong students, and Chinese students in general, who attach high importance to the learning of grammar in the learning of a foreign or second language (Fan, 2008); this is however contrary to Sam's own beliefs.

Sam's beliefs about effective teaching and learning could be summarized in three words: motivation, interaction and production. His idea of motivating students was to let them have fun so that they would be interested in learning; he liked the students to talk in class and would not mind the noises. As he believed that students would naturally acquire the language through using the language in context and in production activities, he did not like teaching grammar explicitly; he did not like "over-explaining things", in his own words. He was much keener on demonstrating ideas than explaining them in words or in handouts. Applying the same principle in teaching writing, he would not provide a lot of input for the students as he liked the students to "generate things themselves".

It is quite clear that most of the beliefs that Sam held about teaching and learning were rather cognitivist and typically "western". His style of teaching was however not very well received by some of his students as discussed above; for these students, he was simply not "teaching properly".

## **2. Different learning environments created by different teaching approaches**

The variations in outcomes could also be explained by the differences in the two teachers' overall approaches to teaching and their input into the writing process. While the two groups essentially followed the same programme, the teachers created rather different environments for it to take place because of their underlining beliefs about teaching and learning.

Jessica managed to cultivate a more effective classroom environment for many reasons, but her consonance with and understanding of the local culture was probably the major one. Being a local herself, Jessica naturally met the expectations of most of the students. She believed in the role of practice in learning, and her idea of language learning was closely tied to grammar learning. In addition, although Jessica also considered motivation to be of prime importance for learning, her way to foster it was different from Sam's. Instead of cultivating a fun-filled environment, she believed in helping her students to achieve a sense of satisfaction by setting immediate achievable goals and giving students little awards for good performance, in the hope that they would gradually grow to like learning English. In view of her students' general positive perceptions of her teaching, her overall teaching approach was probably more acceptable to the students.

Another obvious difference between Jessica and Sam, which may or may not be caused by cultural differences, was Jessica's belief in modelling. She believed that modelling was an effective way to demonstrate her thinking process to her students:

*I want them to know what I know, and take it from there. I tend to demonstrate to the students how to select and organize ideas, and then how to flesh them out... I can't tell the students what it is like, so I need to show them, hoping that they will gradually get the idea.*

Jessica did make some effort to model students on the writing process, particularly in the brainstorming sessions. In other words, while essentially using the process approach, Jessica blended in some strategy instruction in her delivery; strategy-focused instruction could arouse learners' awareness of text structure and help improve writing quality (Fidalgo, Torrance, & Garcia, 2008), and Jessica's emphasis on modelling in her teaching may have been one of the reasons why her class showed more growth in reflectivity and development in their metacognitive knowledge of writing.

#### **IV Conclusion**

It is interesting that despite having different teachers, both classes demonstrated similar changes through the writing programme. These changes suggest that, subsequent to the writing instruction using the process approach, students may become less dependent on the teacher and more self-sufficient in writing. In addition, the process approach may foster the development of metacognitive knowledge, which indicates greater reflectivity and use of metacognitive strategies. These could all be signs of development of learner autonomy in writing. Findings from this study therefore provide further evidence in support of the strength of the process writing as pedagogy for fostering learner autonomy. They also suggest that some general effects of a pedagogical approach may transcend cultural differences and manifest themselves in different contexts.

However, as teaching does not take place in a vacuum, cultural and contextual differences may have important intervening effects on the actual implementation and therefore outcomes of a teaching method. Differences in beliefs about teaching could lead to the creation of rather different classroom environments for a pedagogical approach to take place and thus differences in its effects. This study illustrates some of the ways in which cultural differences could affect learning outcomes. First, cultural differences between teachers and students may lead to mismatch of teaching approaches and learner expectations, which may be a source of tension and inevitably undermine the overall effects of any teaching efforts. Second, teachers from different cultural backgrounds may interpret and apply key concepts, such as motivation, rather differently. The decisions made accordingly will in turn affect the overall learning environment.

Overall, the study shows that cultural differences may affect the outcomes of a pedagogical approach to a certain extent, but not to the point of offsetting all its benefits. The outcomes of a pedagogical approach may also be attributed to some idiosyncratic beliefs held by the teacher, which may or may not be cultural specific. Whatever differences may exist, as long as teachers can attend to students' affective and cognitive learning needs and develop suitable pedagogical techniques, they may still be able to increase both the students' commitment to learning and their chances of success in it (Mantle-Bromley, 1995). Although the generalizability of the findings may be compromised by the small sample size and the contextualized settings, the study has pointed out that pedagogical research could aim for greater universality while recognizing the intervening effects of cultural and individual differences. This should warrant further investigation of larger scale across different cultural contexts.

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## **Ongoing Project: Curricular Design for the English Extension Courses at Universidad Libre, Bogotá - Colombia**

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### **Abstract**

This article describes an ongoing research project at the School of Education at Universidad Libre in Bogotá. It presents a proposal of a curriculum design for the English Extension Courses. The proposal intends to fulfill some pedagogical and didactic needs the research group found in the learning and teaching processes in the courses mentioned, and to contribute to the professional development of the future teachers who are following their pedagogical research practice in that context.



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## Introduction

This article is based on the presentation made at the European Conference on Language Learning that took place in Brighton on July 2014.

The research works on the three main functions of a university: teaching, research and extension to the community. The project is developed by the research group “Investigación, Aprendizaje y Comunicación IAC”, from the Languages Department at the School of Education - Universidad Libre.

The Pedagogical Research Practicum started with the beginning of the School of Education in 1961 and it has evolved according to the needs of students, future teachers, the university and the Colombian society. Foreign Languages Extension Courses is one of the ways Universidad Libre in Bogotá offers university extension to the community. This program began in 2004 and most of its teachers are pre-service teachers going through their Pedagogical Practicum who have not acquired the necessary competences for teaching yet.

Future teachers of the Languages Department develop their teaching practice in some nearby schools and also in the English Extension Courses. Students attending these courses come from different backgrounds: technicians and professionals from diverse fields, university students, high school students, stay-at-home parents, and other people belonging to the local community who do not have any academic degree and/or any occupation. There are not requirements to enter the courses.

The researchers and their research auxiliaries, who are teachers at the Extension Courses, through some instruments like direct observation, interviews, and surveys applied to students, teachers and administrators of the courses, found the following:

### The English Program:

- Does not take into account students's needs and interests or the context they live in.
- It is based only on the contents of a commercial international book. Future teachers and students said that this material is very complex and sometimes do not reflect their reality.

### Pre-service teachers:

- Are in the process of acquiring pedagogical competences and need experienced teachers's feedback.

### Classes:

- Diversity of ages, academic level and socio-cultural background in the same group.
- Classes meet only two hours weekly. An academic semester covers 14 weeks, that is 28 hours of classes during an academic term.

### Administration:

- Lack of meaningful communication between the directors of the Extension Courses and the Languages Department.

To sum up, the following needs were found: 1) to have a curriculum that takes into account student's characteristics, needs and wants and future teachers's pedagogical needs, 2) articulation among the research activity, teaching practice and university

extension to the community and, 3) research must be a process linked to the curriculum. Based on these findings, the research group established the following research question: **How can the design and implementation of a curricular proposal guide the learning and teaching processes at the English Extension Courses and enrich their quality?**

To answer the research question, the following objectives were pointed out.

**General:** Contributing to the betterment of the teaching and learning processes at the English Extension Courses at the School of Education of Universidad Libre, through a curricular design proposal.

**Specific:**

- Designing, applying, systematizing and analyzing the data that support the research project.
- Inquiring about theoretical foundations for the project.
- Designing a curriculum proposal and didactic materials for the English learning and teaching processes to address some of the needs of the Extension Courses population.
- Promoting a reflective, analytic and continuous learning attitude of future teachers that leads them to a permanent transformation of their teaching practice.
- Contributing to the consolidation of the materials design research field.

The **Object of study** is the English learning and teaching processes. The **Field of study** is Curriculum Design.

This is an **Action Research** that intends to address the three functions University Education has: teaching, research and extension.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework deals with the following concepts: curriculum design (planning and content, methodology, evaluation), learning a foreign language, teaching languages, intercultural competence, communicative competence, material design and teachers's development.

The researchers agree with Sacristan (2011), Berstein (1998) and Tyler (1998), who state that a curriculum gives a logical order to the sequence of contents of learning and teaching, and guides those processes. They also coincide in seeing education as the best way to develop the person as a human being: his mind, body and sensibility, and as a citizen. The Universidad Libre (2002) states that the curriculum reflects a pedagogical and didactic culture and it is integrated by classroom learning projects where characteristics, values, techniques and experiences are selected and contextualized.

In the field of teaching and learning languages, Stern (1990) remarks that the curriculum can be defined as the study programs of an institution or, in a restricted way, the syllabus of a specific subject, for example, the English curriculum. For Stern, a curriculum must consider the conceptualization of its three main components: objectives and contents, methodology and evaluation.

For Nunan (1996) a curriculum must be learner-centered; it will need to be modified during the course of program as the learners's skills develop. This view tends to see language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) states that the curriculum construction must be done from the perspective of the following principles: 1) the promotion of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, 2) this diversification is only possible if the cost efficiency of the system is considered. 3) the considerations and measures relating to curricula should be approached in terms of their role in a general language education, in which linguistic knowledge and skills, along with the ability to learn, play not only a specific role in a given language but also a transversal or transferable role across languages.

Nation and Macalister (2011) point out that curriculum is largely a "how to do it" activity. They provide a curriculum design model that has three general divisions. The first two are related to principles, environment and needs and they represent the curriculum. The other one represents the syllabus; it has goals and deals with three parts: content and sequencing, format and presentation and monitoring and assessing. Evaluation is in the entire model.

For Brown (2007) a curriculum should have the following factors: 1) situation analysis (educational setting, class characteristics, school characteristics, governance of course content and assessment and evaluation requirements), 2) needs analysis, 3) problematizing, 4) specifying goals, conceptualizing a course syllabus, 5) selecting textbooks, materials, and resources, 6) assessment, and 7) program evaluation.

In Colombia, the Lineamientos Curriculares para Lenguas Extranjeras (1999) point out that most of the teaching foreign languages programs emphasize on the How (grammar) to say What (vocabulary). Nevertheless the main principle of the study of a language is communication that points out the Why, Who, and Where (socio-linguistic and cultural aspects of language). This approach makes easy a genuine interaction with others, even though they are in other continent, country or city.

To build the proposal, the research group takes into consideration the three main curriculum components: 1) planning and contents, 2) methodology and 3) evaluation. The focus of this proposal is mainly on contents and methodology.

Planning and contents. As Nunan points out (1996), content should be derived through a process of teachers's consultation and negotiation with the learners, the information given by experienced expert colleagues, and revision of course books for ideas on content. The starting point for the curriculum must be: 1) the learners's goals, 2) the communicative goals students need to reach, and 3) the functions, structures, lexis that have to be a result of the previous two. That is to say, curriculum designers need to focus on output, on performance, instead of input, on what the student would be able to do at the end of a course.

Based on the above theories, the researchers started to specify the communicative tasks and skills the students would be able to perform in order to reach their language goals. The curriculum would be organized in a book series of four students's books,

audio cds and a teacher's book, having in mind that language learning is a process of learning to do things with language.

Methodology. It is considered the "how" to learn and teach. The researchers follow Gagne's ideas who says that the environment where the student lives in has a great influence in his learning process.

In relation to affective considerations, the researchers follow Spolsky (1989), Brown (2007) and Oxford (1990), who agreed on the importance of emotion when teaching and learning, and pointed out the factors of the affective domain as important elements in the learning and teaching processes.

Talking about cognitive considerations, Vigotsky (2007) and Ellis (1991) are revised when they established that learners need to be prepared for interaction in the real world. They need to be aware of the intentions as well as the meanings of the speakers and writers they interact with.

The intercultural competence underlies general competences and communicative language competences. It includes the regional and social diversity that is enriched by the knowledge of other cultures different from the own. All of these incorporate in the students new ways to see the world that lead them to be more aware of themselves and their place in the globalized world.

Referring to the Communicative competence, it is understood as a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use them appropriately.

The language learning process turns around the development of communicative skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each one of them helps the others in their learning and use. However, each one is developed in different ways and they require different strategies to be learnt.

Moving to didactic material design, Tomlinson (2011) states that "...material writing is as its most effective when it is turned to the needs of a particular group of learners". Many writers agree that a home-grown textbook, if it is well written, stands a much greater chance of success, simply because the authors are more aware of the needs of the learners, and are thus able to design the materials to fit own learning and teaching styles while keeping in mind the knowledge and world-view their students bring to the classroom. Tomlinson also sees the need for teachers to write their own materials in order to reduce their dependency on publisher materials and a means of professional development.

On the other hand, Masuhara in Tomlinson (2013:236) points out that "global course books from English-speaking countries seemed impressive with more fashionable approaches promising success, but their contents are too alien to be imported directly into my classrooms". Those texts do not have into consideration students and their contexts, needs and interests.

In the same perspective, Nunan (1996) states that "materials are the tangible manifestation of the curriculum in action; they are omnipresent in the language

classroom and it is difficult to imagine a class without books... good materials also provide models for teachers to follow in developing their own materials". This research project at Universidad Libre started because there was a lack of a curriculum that took into consideration the needs and wants of the students and their context.

In the field of teacher's development, the researchers considered Simpson and others (2005) who spread Dewey's ideas. He believed that critical reflection is the most important quality a teacher may have and that it has big impact on the quality of schools and instruction. Reflective teaching is not simply doing what you are being told to do. The teacher should really dig and investigate the why something is wrong to make changes to teaching procedures.

Research is an important means of professional development for teachers. In his Reflective Model Wallace (1991), states that "teachers have demanding expectations for themselves and their colleagues because they regard professional development as an ongoing process". Discussion with colleagues about classroom situations is one of the most valuable experiences. The use of wide variety of formal and informal strategies like reading professional journals, attending conferences and daily reflection, are also considered to be very important.

This research follows Wallace's theories (1998) establishing that the key to effective teaching is definitely a balance between theory and practice. Theory is important not only to perform well, but also to be able to answer students's questions. Wallace says that "there is a continuous relationship between reflection and practice". Moreover, this cycle allows for reflection both before and after practice. Knowledge makes sense when it can be related to immediate and or past experience. He also points out that the teacher brings to class personal beliefs about and personal styles for teaching, personal perceptions of students's needs and even personal assumptions of what good teaching is.

Schon (1995) states that "an inexperienced teacher might need more detailed instructions and suggestions on teaching methods in the teachers's guide to supply a lot of different optional activities or interesting raw materials to be exploited". Besides, he considers that one of the crucial factors in the success of learning anything depends on what the learners themselves bring to the learning situation. Learners need to start learning what is simple; they need rules and also need to be prepared for interaction in the real world. They need materials which are designed to facilitate systematic progress but which at the same time, provide them with encounters with the reality of target language use.

About Critical Pedagogy, Wink (2005:26) and McLaren (2010) were considered in this research. Wink defines it as "a prism that reflects the complexities between teaching and learning. It is a prism which sheds light on the hidden subtleties that might have escaped our view previously. The prism has a tendency to focus on shades of social, cultural, political, and even economic conditions, and it does all of this under the broad view of history". McLaren believes that critical pedagogy is "a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state". From those authors, it is understood that critical pedagogy is a change in the way of

thinking that leads to asking about the how and the why knowledge is built in the way it is. Critical pedagogy calls to action to the actors involved in education. It is about the real world; it is about transforming it. It gives people the courage to challenge the current ways society forces them to live.

Evaluation. As Nunan (1996) stated, "evaluation is intimately tied to the rest of the curriculum". It is a wide term that includes assessment and decision-making process. It is done during the whole learning process and the questions: Who, What, When and How, should be considered for determining the efficacy of the curriculum. In the same way, Nation and Mcalister (2010), state that evaluation looks at all aspects of curriculum design to see if the course is the best possible. It requires looking at the results of the course and the planning and running of it.

Assessment, on the other hand, deals with the processes of what a student achieves as a result of a course. It generally involves the use of tests. Self-evaluation provides a very important way of developing critical self-awareness of what to be a student means.

### **Proposal**

The findings described in the problem statement, allowed the researchers to work on a curriculum design proposal for the Extension Courses at Elementary and Pre-Intermediate levels, and design, pilot and evaluate a set of four students's books, audio materials and a teacher's book rich in explanations and information for future teachers. The series is called **Go Beyond the Limit**.

The current proposal is done from a perspective where the linguistic knowledge, the linguistic skills and the capacity to learn are incorporated and transferable among languages. The curriculum should: 1) develop cognitive skills (thinking development) and learning to learn a foreign language, 2) be oriented to students's interests and 3) take into account the social relevance of learning and individual differences.

The series shows a simple structure that helps future teachers to begin their professional practice as English teachers using a textbook to follow in the classroom, different from the commercial ones that are not design with the special characteristics of the Extension Courses.

The textbook *Go Beyond the Limit* adopts the comprehensive or "integrated" approach. It follows an informal syllabus where the focus is on language use and skill development: students work in a growing sequence from reception to production. Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and structures of discourse are worked upon progressively following their mastery by the learner. Thus students complete the circle: reception, production, reception, growing their language learning in a cyclical way. Content Learning Integrating Language CLIL is another approach that is used as it encompasses any activity in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non- language subject, in which both language and subject have a joint role. (Coyle and Marsh, 2010)

Some linguistic concepts were taken into consideration on the development of the series. From the "Notional-Functional" syllabus: the cyclical nature of language

acquisition as it moves from the particular to the general to the particular in a spiral of growing complexity, and its use as a means for interaction. Conveying meaning is as important as fluency and accuracy. These concepts are applied in the books as it is described: Students begin with a listening exercise where they perform very concrete activities (particular), and then they go to the speaking section where they think and analyze their personal reality (particular). The grammar section makes them reflect about general rules of language and apply them in specific circumstances (general and particular). Finally they have the writing section where they express their own ideas about a particular subject (particular).

Regarding language as interaction, the speaking section and, in some cases, the reading section, are designed for students to interact according to the collaborative approach, applying the following basic principles when fulfilling the tasks : 1) two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together, 2) people benefit from one another's resources and skills, 3) learners engage in a common task where each individual depends on and is accountable to each other, 4) groups of students work together to search for understanding, meaning, or building knowledge as a product of their learning, 5) individuals are actively immersed in a context in which learning takes place through collaborative efforts, 6) activities can include group projects, joint problem solving, debates, etc.

From the "Task-Based syllabus", *Go Beyond the Limit* selects the ability to interpret and express meaning and the need to constantly develop new language. Students are asked to work actively in individual and/or collaborative ways, developing concrete tasks which demand the acquisition of new language to express their own reality, share and interpret their ideas. Sometimes they have to interact creating new situations that spring from the proposed tasks.

Following the "Communicative Approach", this series draws on the notion that meaningful communication promotes true learning. As such, it focuses on activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks. By making real sense students can communicate among themselves. The series also adheres to the belief of the "Post Communicative Approach" that the classroom is an artificial setting in which the communicative environment the teacher attempts to create is, in fact, a pre-communicative one, where students rehearse in order to later apply their knowledge in a real context.

From the "Cultural Studies Approach", this series encourages students to use the cultural and linguistic knowledge they possess in their native language to add in their acquisition of a second one. The series also follows the "Intercultural Approach" that considers that intercultural communicative competence includes the ability to understand the language and behavior of native people. The cultural tips provided in the series, give students some insights of British and American cultures, according to personal experiences of natives or foreigners who have lived in these contexts for many years.

The approaches briefly described above, are clearly evident in the development of the proposed tasks in each unit. The series *Go Beyond The Limit* prepares students for the interconnected world they will be living in, making emphasis on the understanding of life and culture in English speaking countries.



Finally, evaluation is considered to be a continuous process in which students are given constant feedback about their achievements. This process includes the assessment of students' performance and communicative competency level through a variety of activities and tasks. Students are expected to master the specific elements of the foreign language required for communication and interaction. Their achievements are evaluated through oral activities, written assignments, listening exercises, reading comprehension activities and class work.

Self-evaluation is an important part of the learning process. The students are required to reflect on their knowledge, attitude towards learning, learning strategies, and personal responsibility. This process of diagnosis and revision is made explicit in the student's book self-evaluation section at the end of each unit, which results in promoting autonomous learning.

### Stages for planning the curriculum and designing materials

Planning and content: A need analysis was done by collecting information from students, teachers and administrators. Students were asked about their needs and likes. Teachers answered questions related to their teaching preferences, current proficiency level, methodology and materials used. On the other hand, administrators were asked about their point of view about the way the courses are conceived, organized, and developed.

Results of data collection: The books Elementary A, Elementary B, Preintermediate A and the teachers' book for them were piloted during 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The evaluation process was done in different times. Students did it formally at the end of each course but during the classes they gave feedback to their teachers. Teachers did the evaluation in three different ways: 1) formally they answered a format, twice per semester, 2) they gave suggestions and comments weekly to the research auxiliaries, and 3) they attended a meeting to give face to face feedback to the researchers once per semester.

Content selection: The contents of the curriculum design were established from the results of the data collection, linguistics and pedagogical theories, researchers's experience, revision of some curriculums and materials for teaching English.

Methodology: The curriculum was designed taking in to consideration the information stated in the theoretical framework.

Evaluation: "Any element within the curriculum may be evaluated" (Nunan, 1996). The validation of the research project has been done by experts inside and outside Universidad Libre, teachers and students of the English Extension Courses.

### **Conclusions**

So far, the research team can conclude that:

1. To have the research auxiliaries as teachers of the Extension English Courses was very valuable for the project. They were an excellent bridge of communication between researchers, teachers, students and administrators. They gave direct and constant feed-back as they were both part of the research, part of the piloting and teachers at the same time. In that way, they made a process of meta-research.
2. Participating in a research team promotes a reflective, analytic and continuous learning attitude in future teachers, leading them to a permanent transformation of their teaching practice.
3. Curriculum design makes the connection between research, theory and practice and it implies change or innovation in the learning and teaching processes.
4. The most common aspects about the series stated by teachers and students were:
  - ✓ The material provides balance in the communicative skills and variety of activities.
  - ✓ Contents and activities are according to students's English level.
  - ✓ The photos help to understand the texts and complement them.
  - ✓ To include information about Colombia is a good way to increase and/or reinforce identity and own values, and provides opportunities to compare native language and culture with foreign ones.
  - ✓ The information presented in the Cultural Tip provided by English native speakers and Colombians living in an English environment for many years, enlarges the students's knowledge and vision of the world.
  - ✓ The self-evaluation section is a very good way to reflect about how much each student has reached his own learning objectives.

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***English Language Vocabulary Usage of Indigenes of Ede:  
A Predominantly Yoruba Speech Community***

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**Abstract**

The presence of an institution of higher learning in an indigenous town has impact on the social, political and economic lives of the people of such a community. More importantly, the language use of the people is very much impacted upon since one of the linguistic outcomes of the sustained contact of a target language (L<sub>2</sub>) with a source language (L<sub>1</sub>) in the course of history is the adaptation and integration of words from the former into the lexicon of the latter. The predominantly Yoruba language speech community which also has educated people who are bilingual in Yoruba and English Languages has witnessed and is still experiencing introduction of words such as Poly, Lecturer, Rector and other terms adapted into it. The paper discusses the impact a higher institution of learning, the Federal Polytechnic, Ede has on the language of the small community of Ede, the way the second language grows and gets adapted and adopted into the day to day language use, the factors that are responsible for borrowing and convergence as well as the linguistic consequences of loanwords in the Yoruba expanded vocabulary of this community. The paper considers the implication of the study for English language teaching and learning in Ede environment.

**Keywords:** indigenous, target language, source language, vocabulary, Yoruba, second language, speech community, bilingual

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## **Introduction**

Ede town is an ancient and largely indigenous Yoruba community situated in Osun State, South West of Nigeria in West Africa. It is one of the older towns of the Yoruba people and is situated on the banks of Osun River near Ibadan. It is one of the towns that uphold the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people. Traditionally, it is said to have been founded about 1500 by Timi Agbale, a hunter and warlord sent by the King of old Oyo "Alaafin Kori" (Katunga), of the then Oyo empire, to establish a settlement that was to protect the Oyo caravan route to Benin. Historically, Ede was an important town in Yorubaland and is still very relevant in upholding the Yoruba culture. As a result the people speak predominantly the Yoruba language. The Yoruba language is mainly spoken in West Africa with millions of speakers mainly in Nigeria and Benin with some in other parts of Africa. The traditional ruler is known as the Timi Agbale, the most prominent Timi in recent history is Oba John Adetoyese Laoye who made the "talking drum" popular. He was reputed to have entertained the Queen of England with his group of skilled drummers and poets when she first visited Nigeria and thereafter in her palace in England before he died in 1975. The present King of the town is Oba Munirudeen Adesola Lawal (Laminisa 1).

The Ede speech community being a largely indigenous Yoruba community uses the Standard Yoruba dialect which is also known as the Oyo dialect. The Yoruba language has been classified as one of the major languages in Nigeria simply because of the population that speaks it. In recent times certain factors such as the economy and location of schools has brought the people in contact with other languages.

The town of Ede parades an array of Elementary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, a Federal Polytechnic and two universities. One of them Adeleke University already has members of staff and students in the various faculties while the second university, The Redeemers University is under construction and when completed will become the permanent campus for the university which is presently situated at the Redemption camp Ground on the Lagos-Ibadan express way, South West Nigeria. With the myriad of educational institutions in Ede town the indigenes who predominantly speak Yoruba language are having frequent contact with students and staff of the various institutions who are mostly bilinguals of Yoruba and English.

A situation of language contact is presented and the impact is more on the indigenes as they have had to use English words and expressions in order to sell their goods and services to the staff and students of the various institutions highlighted above. Language as defined by Oluga (2006) is a systemic means of expressing ideas, facts, views, thoughts, opinions or a means of passing meaningful messages or information by the use of appropriate signs, sounds, symbols and gestures generally understood by all the users within a speech community.

## **Statement of the Problems**

Nigeria being a multilingual society has adopted English Language as its official language with the resultant effect of bilingualism and multilingualism even in a predominantly indigenous community like Ede. It is of a fact that when more than one language is in regular use in a community certain things happen linguistically, sociologically, educationally, politically in that society. Thus the co-existence of



English and Yoruba languages in Ede community has produced various hybrid forms in terms of nativized or domesticated variety of English, characterized by interference, code-mixing and code-switching, on the part of the second language speakers (L2). This paper therefore aims to find solutions to the following research problems:

- a. What influence does the adoption of English language as the second language have on the people of Nigeria and Ede people in particular?
- b. What are some of the obvious issues posed by the co-existence of English and Yoruba languages in Ede?
- c. Do the differences, pose any learning problem?
- d. How are these learning problems solved?

### **Language and the Society**

Language is a social phenomenon which is closely tied up with the social structure and value system of society. Society is a term that is used to cover a whole network of human relationships which results from individuals coming together in response to their basic urges towards self-preservation. Language is the basis of this network of human relationships and the vital force which holds society together. Thus we can reasonably conclude that language and society are inseparable. To study language without reference to the society that uses it is not only an incomplete exercise, but also an exercise that would yield little or no dividend according to Adeyanju (1998). Since Linguistics is merely interested in accounting for the structure of language at various levels such as lexis, syntax, phonology, etc without taking into consideration the social contexts in which such linguistic structures are used such a study cannot be complete, hence the relevance of sociolinguistics. In Nigeria, many language communities have had to master another language in addition to their mother tongue for their day to day interaction and official purposes.

There is a double relationship between language and society in the sense that society has an influence on language and at the same time language has an influence on society. That language and culture are inseparably linked is widely recognized. Since each language is a vehicle for expressing a particular culture, cultural influences and presuppositions can be observed in Nigerian English which are not found in the native English environment. As a dynamic phenomenon, language is readily adaptable to encode new experiences and cultural developments. Sapir (1929) explored the relationship between language, culture and personality and his submission is that language interpenetrates society and also a guide to social reality. He observed further that language powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes and that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language group. For instance the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria have an elaborate greeting system which the educated elite among them carry into their use of English Language. To an English man "Good morning" is a formal impersonal way of greeting each other while to a Yoruba man "Good morning" only initiates greetings. He then goes on to ask of the well-being of the individual's wife or husband, the children and other members of the household. Greetings can also extend to official duties performed the previous day and if it is a festive period like Christmas or 'Ramadan' there are greetings for those too. In essence the L1 greetings pattern of the Yoruba educated elite who has English language as L2 is carried over to his use of

English language. The greeting pattern above is practiced among the staff and students of The Federal polytechnic and other educational institutions in Ede town. From the foregoing on the influence of language on the society and the influence of society on language we can summarize that language and society are mutually indispensable.

### **The Status of English in the Nigerian Multilingual Setup**

The fact that bilingualism is widespread among Nigerians is not unusual for a country with over four hundred indigenous languages. The number of languages in Nigeria has been variously classified (Hansford, et al, 1976; Adekunle, 1976; Agheyisi, 1989; among others). Although the number varies from one to another, it is obviously clear from the different classifications that Nigeria is extremely linguistically diverse. Elugbe (1991) puts the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria between 394 to 400 while Bamgbose (1982) puts it at 513. It was because of this multilingual set up there was the need to adopt English as an official language through which tribes could interact.

Its status as the official language in Nigeria contributes to the promotion of the language in Nigeria. Today, in Nigeria as in other countries where English was implanted as a colonial legacy, it has become the language of politics, judiciary, mass-media, trade and economic transactions. It is indeed a prestigious language in Nigeria (Bamgbose et al 1995). As the official language it is used by government functionaries in carrying out instructions and functions in government offices. Indeed it is the language of internal communication among Nigerians of differing language backgrounds and the language of international communication. English also plays a key role in the educational system. A credit pass is necessary in the subject for transition from one level of education to another. It is the medium of instruction. Its importance as a medium of instruction is inevitable in a multilingual set up as ours.

### **Bilingualism in Nigeria and in Ede Community**

Akindele and Adegbite (1999) describe bilingualism as a situation where two languages constitute the speech repertoire of members of a society and where the two languages are assigned similar or different functions within the society. Agbedo (2007) notes that, language contact occur when people from different linguistic backgrounds converge at a particular place for whatever reason or reasons to interact. In Nigeria several bilingual communities exist because of the over four hundred indigenous languages that the country is blessed with and when two languages meet, two cultures also meet resulting in lots of changes in that society. Such changes will necessarily affect the culture and the language of the speech community, and the entire recipients' society and this happens to be the case in Nigeria. Where there is bilingualism or language contact the result usually involves lexical borrowings and mixture of English and mother tongue expression. Akere (1977), Ayoola (1998) affirms this in their investigation of the causes, functions, characteristics and effects of code-switching and code-mixing. The investigations on the causes of the phenomena revealed sociolinguistic and psycholinguistics factors such as bilingualism. We have Yoruba and English bilingual communities as in the case of Ede, Hausa and English bilingual communities, Igbo and English bilingual communities and so on. With this type of scenario some of the types of bilingualism

identified by linguists are observed in the Nigerian linguistic environment in various patterns and in varying degrees. Types of bilingualism referred to here are:

- i. Societal bilingualism- This is a situation whereby two languages exist and function within the society. In many bilingual communities in Nigeria, English Language and at least one indigenous language are assigned similar roles in some contexts and also distinct roles in other contexts.
- ii. Individual bilingual- In this situation the bilingual individual has knowledge of and makes use of two languages though his competence in this two languages may be in varying degrees. The varying degrees of individual bilingualism has been described as
  - (a) Coordinate bilingual- This is the notion of an individual having equal proficiency in two languages across a range of contexts such that if the need arises for him to use any of his two languages in different situations he can effectively coordinate the two languages well. This is the case of ability to master the use of two languages. Fromkin, et al. (2003) and Afolayan, A. (1968). There are a handful of such bilinguals among lecturers and students in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria in general and in Ede town in particular.
  - (b) Compound bilingualism- For the compound bilingual he learnt his two languages at the same time under similar circumstances and he uses them in the same situations. The compound bilingual is not very common in Nigeria.
  - (c) Subordinate bilingualism- The subordinate bilingual is proficient in one of his languages and he therefore uses it more often and operates with it more effectively than his other language. In Nigeria, subordinate bilingualism is in various scales. Some illiterate bilinguals have the knowledge of the spoken forms of two indigenous languages.

Ede town, our focus for this study was predominantly a Yoruba speaking town until its contact with English. Thus, English and Yoruba, as languages, have co-existed in the discourse of the bilinguals in the town for some time now but not without its problems. Language contact in the broad sense should be seen as contact between two cultures that can be as a result of conquests, wars, migration, colonization, etc.’ Whenever two languages come in contact within an individual or a community such an individual or host community inevitably becomes bilingual. Yusuf (1999). The growth of Yoruba - English bilingualism has not been without problems being a contact language in Nigeria, and in a situation such as this, the point of contact is usually the bilingual who code-mixes and code-switches in his utterances with some other language learning difficulties. The term *code* refers to a language or a variety of a language (Wardhaugh, 1992). Code-switching has been an interesting area of discussion in relation to bilingual or multilingual speech communities with various definitions by experts. Some have defined it as the alternating use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation (Milroy and Musyken, 1995; Gardner-Chloros,(1997). Oyetade (2001) exploring Code-Switching, Code-Mixing and Borrowing adopts the label “mixed speech” for a conversation that involves the use of two codes or languages. Interference is another issue due to the differences in the two languages.

## **The Federal Polytechnic, Ede and its Impact on the Community**

The Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun state, Nigeria is a technological institution engaged in education, research and training targeted at sustainable development of the nation. The institution was established as a tertiary educational institution for the provision of courses of instruction, training and research in areas of science, technology, management and other fields of applied learning relevant to the human resource needs of the nation. The institution came into existence in February 1992 via Decree No. 33 of 25th July, 1979 as amended by Decree 5 of 1993. With the arrival of the Pioneer Rector, Chief Jimi Bamgbose from the United States of America, the Polytechnic took off properly in January, 1993 and this subsequently paved way for the admission of 847 Students (pioneer students) on 13th April, 1993. The differences in language are tied to so many factors like education, class, age sex, ethnic, background, culture and perhaps style which Yule (2006) calls 'social dialects'. The factor of education came into Ede environment with the establishment of the Polytechnic because the atmosphere of Ede changed. The otherwise sleeping town came alive and one of the effects of the academic community on the town is contact of the people with the academicians in the use of English in addition to Yoruba Language.

The linguistic inclination of the institution therefore began to impact its environment and still is. Some of the effects on the society is demonstrated in the fact that speakers of Yoruba Language in Ede town borrow words like "lecturer", omo poly" (meaning a student of the Federal Polytechnic Ede), "Baba security" (meaning a male security officer in the service of the Federal Polytechnic), "Iya casual" (meaning a female casual employee of the Federal Polytechnic) in their speech when they make reference to such individuals. The second aspect is the influence of language which being flexible has the capacity to describe both the natural and social environment of a community. It is not unusual to see elderly students attending the part-time programmes because they are challenged to enjoy a better life style as ability to speak English is a status symbol and opportunity to get white collar jobs which invariably is expected to lead to a better lifestyle.

### **Method of Data Collection**

This paper investigates the influence of an academic environment in Ede, the issues arising from its bilingual setup and the effect on teaching and learning. The first set of subjects who participated in the case study were made up of forty five (45) market women and skilled workers such as drivers, most of whom had little or no education. It was not easy getting more of these people because many were skeptical as to the reason for so much questioning. They are mostly people that work or trade within The Federal Polytechnic, Ede or in the town. The second set of subjects who participated in the case study were made up of one hundred and twenty (120) ND 1 students of the Department of Office Technology Management and Quantity Surveying of The Federal Polytechnic, Ede in their natural school setting. The choice was ND 1 because these were still fresh from the environment and not yet properly groomed in the correct usage of the language. This is expected to help quickly identify the problems. Data was collected through observations, interviews and recording of discourse with the market women and through questionnaires and observations for the students. The data generated were subsequently analyzed and discussed. The analysis is limited to

selected aspects of issues affecting English language in Nigeria interference and code variation.

### Discussion

The results of the study showed that there were lots of code –alternation and borrowing in the speeches of the respondents. As mentioned earlier, speakers of Yoruba Language in Ede town borrow words like “lecturer”, omo poly” (student of the Polytechnic), “Baba security” (male security officer), “Iya casual” (a female casual employee) etc. in their speech. The second aspect is the influence of language which being flexible has the capacity to describe both the natural and social environment of the community. The use of conjunctions such as ‘*but*’, ‘*and*’ etc within Yoruba texts to portray the ability to speak in English is observed. This is because of the value placed on the language.

#### EXAMPLE 1: Researcher and a Driver

Researcher \_\_\_ E melo ni e man hun rin l’ojo jumo? (How many trips do you make a day?)

Driver \_\_\_ A man nlo bi e meji abi meta **but** ojo ti business ba wa, o to emarun.

#### EXAMPLE 2: Researcher and a Waiter

Researcher \_\_\_ Ohun je wo lowa loni? (What is the menu for today.)

Waiter \_\_\_ **We have ‘Amala’ and ‘Gbegiri’ soup**

#### EXAMPLE 3: Observation of a customer and a Salesgirl

Customer \_\_\_ E lo ni noodles (How much is noodles?)

Sales girl \_\_\_ Muri meta ni Indomie *sugbon* fifty naira ni Chiki (Sixty naira

for Indomie noodles but Chiki noodles is fifty naira)

Customer \_\_\_ *Se eni* Nescafe

Sales lady \_\_\_ O wa

Customer \_\_\_ E lo ni

Sales lady \_\_\_ Twenty twenty naira (instead of saying twenty naira each).

Customer \_\_\_ Bring three and change

Sales lady \_\_\_ E se o mama *lecturer* (thank you madam lecturer)

In the discussions we note that there are lots of indigenous names in their responses such as *amala*, *ogunfe*, *oga*, *nama* etc taken from the Yoruba vocabulary. Nonetheless the indigenous language also impacts on the use of English language as a lot of words are borrowed from the native language when a suitable replacement is not found by the user or in a bid to express oneself more appropriately as we see in some of the examples.

When asked when they learnt English, most of the respondents said it was after the acquisition of the mother tongue. Thus, there was linguistic interference of the forms and meanings of structure of the native language to the target language. ‘Soup’ for instance has been adopted from English language but Nigeria soup has a broader semantic meaning than the British English of same. Rather than an appetizer, in

Nigeria it is used as an accomplishment to eat the main meal such as eba, amala, fufu, iyan etc. Nigeria English words have been influenced by sociocultural elements in the Nigeria environment, which have brought about innovations in its forms such as (a) borrowing, i.e. direct transfer of it from indigenous languages to English structures, (b) semantic extension (the extension of meaning of English words used to express various aspects of the Nigerian indigenous culture) etc. Several previous studies have observed some of these innovations (e.g. Bamgbose, 1971, 1982, 1995; Akere, 1977; Banjo, 1970).

### The ESL Learner/User

Some notable areas of differences between Yoruba and English languages such as sounds, words, and grammar which results in the transfer of the features from one language to another were noticed. The ESL learners and users face certain communication problems in English because of this. Learners and users may find it difficult to express their thoughts because of gaps in their linguistic repertoire and cultural differences between English and their mother tongues. In their bid to cope with such communicative situation, they resort to alternative ways of getting the message across. Hence new lexical innovations, borrowing, code-switching and code-mixing, syntactic devices, discourse/ pragmatic transfer from mother tongue to second language.

#### Borrowing

A number of Yoruba words appear in the speech of Ede people and indeed Nigerians which can be termed as Nigeria English in the form of borrowings:

We have such words as *akara* 'beancake', *egusi* 'a type of soup', *bolekaja* 'bus with tightly packed seats', *amala* 'yam flour' etc. Learners feel comfortable with these words because it is closer to what they originally know. Also it makes communication easier at all levels.

#### Code Alternation

Students in The Polytechnic, Ede like other Nigerian speakers of English as a second language code - switch or code - mix at intervals when engaged in discourse even in the classroom. Different terms have been used like interlarding, code alternation, loans and borrowings. The students use the two codes in communication interchangeably and at times moving from one language to another and yet at others substituting words in one language for another in the same stretch of speech. Here are some examples of code -switching:

#### EXAMPLE 1:

Student A \_\_\_ Is the lecturer on the coming today?

Student B \_\_\_ Lecturer '*ti mbo*'.

#### EXAMPLE 2:

Student A \_\_\_ Assignment '*wa nko*'?

Student B \_\_\_ 'Oga' said I should come with the assignment

The students code – switch in the above examples from English to Yoruba: (1) Lecturer ‘*ti mbo*’ (The lecturer is on the way and from Yoruba to English in (2) ‘*Oga*’ said I should come with the assignment (The Lecturer sent for the assignment).

Also, some words from Yoruba make appearance in Nigeria English, in form of code mixing especially the borrowed words. For example:

EXAMPLE 3:

Student A \_\_\_ Let’s go and eat

Student B \_\_\_ I already ate *akara* and bread this morning.

EXAMPLE 4:

Student A \_\_\_ How do I get to your place in the evening?

Student B \_\_\_ ‘You either take *okada* or board *tuketuke*’

‘*Akara*’ is a type of food made from beans while *okada* is a motorbike and *tuketuke* is a bus –both are forms of transportation.

#### Semantic Extension

Certain words take on new meaning in relation to the culture and environment of the people. For instance:

‘*wrapper*’ – refers to a cloth that a woman wraps round her body and not necessarily wrapping paper for gifts.

‘*Father*’ – denotes a range of kinship terms of an older male relative such as uncles, in-laws not just one’s biological father.

‘*sorry*’ - expressions of sympathy or politeness for someone’s misfortune or discomfort without a sense of blame on the part of the speaker.

#### Lexical Innovations

Compounding is a major process of creating new words which involves combining two or more free morphemes. For example, medicine-apron, medicine-girdle, medicine-broom, horse-tail, and mother-witch. These are culturally influenced. There are others found in various contexts —such as yam-paste, cash-madam, town-crier, long-leg, bride-price, bean-cake and yam-flour.

### Implications for Language Teaching

Teachers are encouraged to carry out a comparative study the languages involved and to effectively teach any language to a non-native speaker the teacher himself must be a bilingual so as to spot the areas of differences and address them.

The teacher of English requires thorough grasp of the principle of Contrastive Analysis. Language teachers should draw the attention of the students to the areas of differences and spend more time teaching learners of second language the correct usage so that they can become more proficient in the language.

It is suggested that the knowledge and principles of contrastive analysis can be used in planning and designing teaching materials.

Since culture in the language classroom is an area of ESL pedagogy, it should be explored in addressing the problem of culture in the classroom. The teacher must be a good model who displays no cultural biases or is ethnocentric. In handling the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and meaning in English, he should take into cognizance the areas of cultural differences using the principles and practices of Contrastive analysis.

### **Conclusion**

The findings in this study have shown that the academic environment in Ede has changed the linguistic situation of Ede. The issues arising from its bilingual setup such as new lexical innovations, borrowing, code-switching and code-mixing, syntactic devices, etc has been looked at and the effect on teaching and learning. Also the need for the teacher to do a comparative study of English and Yoruba so as know the similarities and differences between the two languages in order to help solve his students' learning problems.

The logo for 'iafor' is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a light blue arc on the right and a light red arc on the left, which together form a partial circle around the text.



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***Implementing Incidental or Intentional Vocabulary Learning Strategies:  
Estimating The Receptive Vocabulary Size of University Level  
English Language Learners in Malaysia***

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**Abstract**

The notion that we can acquire most of our vocabulary – a core component upon which language proficiency is reliant – through extensive reading (ER) is now entrenched within second/foreign language teaching. The reported benefits of ER are encouraging, specifically in the areas of reading comprehension, grammatical competence, and vocabulary knowledge development. ER on its own mainly draws upon incidental learning, but the claim that ER alone is adequate for vocabulary learning has been challenged. Admittedly, although some lexical gains are certainly acquired incidentally via extensive reading, there are researchers who believe it to be insufficient and even suggest the method to be unsuitable for those with a vocabulary size of below 3,000 word families. According to Davidson, Atkinson and Spring (2011) for instance, it seems fairly conclusive that 3,000 word families are the minimum that a learner needs in order to be able to read effectively in a language other than their mother tongue, and that the first 2,000-3,000 most frequent words may be best dealt with through explicit teaching (Nation and Meara, 2010). The present study focuses on estimating the vocabulary size of English language learners at Universiti Sains Malaysia, and hopes to provide better direction for educators with regards to the implementation of incidental (ER) or intentional vocabulary learning strategies in their respective classrooms/literacy courses.

Keywords: Second/foreign language, extensive reading (ER), incidental vocabulary learning, explicit vocabulary instruction, lexical gains, tertiary students

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Vocabulary in Language Competence, Literacy Development and Academic Achievement**

The vital role that vocabulary plays in language learning has long been acknowledged in language acquisition research. Hunt and Beglar (2005) stated that the heart of language comprehension and use is the lexicon, in tandem with Singleton (1999) who pointed out that the major challenge of learning and using a language – whether as L1 or L2 – lies not in the area of broad syntactic principles but in the nitty-gritty of the lexicon.

Yuksel and Kavanoz (2010) noted that existing studies in the field have revealed vocabulary size and overall language proficiency to be significantly correlated. Indeed, various correlation studies have documented the reciprocal relationship between vocabulary size and proficiency in specific language skills. For instance, between vocabulary size and reading comprehension (Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2002), and writing ability (Llach and Gallego, 2009), and spoken communication (Oya, Manolo and Greenwood, 2009), and listening comprehension (Milton, Wade and Hopkins, 2010).

Furthermore, Carlisle (2002) observed that vocabulary knowledge is not only significantly related to language competence and literacy development, but also overall school achievement. Studies on academic achievement done over the years have repeatedly shown that vocabulary plays an important role in many aspects of schooling and in the world beyond school. In effect, it has an impact throughout one's lifespan. Students with inadequate vocabulary knowledge have been found to be at a much higher risk of performing poorly in high school, community college or university (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997; Hazenberg and Hulstijn, 1996).

### **1.2 Incidentals and Intentional Vocabulary Learning**

Within the framework of vocabulary acquisition, researchers concur with two major foci, that vocabulary gains are attained through explicit vocabulary instruction/study (intentional learning) and via exposure to context (incidental learning) (Shahrzad and Derakhshan, 2011; Hulstijn, 2001; Nation, 2001). Exposure to context typically occurs during independent reading and listening activities, whereby available contextual clues assist in the learning of unknown words.

The difference between intentional and incidental learning, as highlighted by Ellis (1999), is based on the distinction between focal and peripheral attention. Ellis explained that “intentional learning requires focal attention to be placed deliberately on the linguistic code (i.e., on form or form-meaning connections)” whereas “incidental learning requires attention to be placed on meaning (i.e., message content) but allows peripheral attention to be directed at form” (pp. 45-46).

Incidental vocabulary learning via extensive reading has been an area of interest for many researchers over the years, and is believed to occur as a natural consequence to being exposed to large amounts of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1989). The concept of inferring word meanings through the use of contextual clues has its share

of advocates among researchers as well as its share of critics, with suggestions that the method may be unsuitable for those with a vocabulary size of less than 3,000 word families and that the first 2,000 to 3,000 word families may be best learnt through explicit vocabulary instruction/study.

### **1.3 Research Problem and Objective**

A lack of vocabulary knowledge has been repeatedly shown to contribute to learners' inability to cope with the four language skills, which does not only hinder them from achieving a higher level of proficiency in the target language but also adversely affects their literacy development and overall academic achievements.

It is disturbing that, despite years of compulsory English language learning during formal schooling, Malaysian tertiary learners are still lacking with regards to English vocabulary knowledge. In their study involving Malaysian tertiary students enrolled in various academic programmes, Ahmad Azman et al. (2010) found that a majority of them failed to achieve the passing scores, even at the lowest level, of the Passive Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation, 1990) as well as the Controlled Active Vocabulary Test (Laufer and Nation, 1995).

According to a Bloomberg News report in 2006, a lack of proficiency in English is causing unemployment among Malaysian graduates; the MEF's (Malaysian Employers Federation) 2011 survey found that both local and foreign employers based in the nation have specified competence in the English language as top in their hiring priorities (Human Resources Online, 11 April 2011).

Malaysian tertiary students evidently lack English vocabulary knowledge and are confronted with English proficiency woes, a disability that becomes especially paralysing when they enrol in tertiary studies and when they attempt to enter the workforce. Although preliminary, it is hoped that the findings of this study will provide better direction for educators with regards to the implementation of incidental (extensive reading) or intentional vocabulary learning strategies in their respective classrooms/literacy courses.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Extensive Reading and Lexical Inferencing**

Simply put, extensive reading (ER) is reading – a lot. To read extensively is to read independently, broadly and in quantity, and to read for pleasure over a continual period of time (see Day and Bamford, 1998, for the specific features of ER). Reading is essentially a cognitive process which involves deep processing (see Craik and Lockhart, 1972, for more on depth/levels of processing) and is likely to result in long-term retention of information strands, including vocabulary knowledge.

One primary reason contributing to failed attempts at inferring word meanings through the use of contextual clues is a learner's poor mastery of the target language's vocabulary. According to Prichard (2008) and Laufer (1992), research has shown that learners should possess a vocabulary size of at least 3,000 word families in order to

comfortably attempt lexical inferencing, a process often impacted by the following (Hunt and Beglar, 2005):

- 1) The availability of clues in the immediate or global context
- 2) The possibility of more than one plausible inference
- 3) Deceptive transparency
- 4) The explicitness and concreteness of the clues, as well as their presence and proximity of recurrence

It has been observed that the first 3,000 word families should be learnt via intentional means for second/foreign language learners to master a working reading lexicon, assuming then that lexical inferencing during reading will become less challenging and potentially result in more significant lexical gains.

## **2.2 Explicit Vocabulary Instruction/Study**

Schmitt (2002) noted the three main strategies of intentional vocabulary learning: studying word cards, using word parts, and dictionary use. While relatively time-consuming and impractical for prolonged learning, intentional vocabulary learning can be very useful for vocabulary knowledge development among second/foreign language learners, particularly at the initial stages; isolating and studying lexical items minimises possible word-meaning confusion and largely ensures the uptake of correct meanings.

Similar to implicit learning via ER, explicit – and comprehensive – attention to word features constitutes elaborate cognitive effort (i.e., deep processing, see Laufer and Hill, 2000) and is likely to result in long-term vocabulary knowledge retention.

Pertaining to the importance of helping learners gain control of the first 3,000 word families and the premise that effective vocabulary learning is dependent upon deep cognitive processing, strategies employed should not only channel attention to targeted words but also have provisions for learners to provide elaborations of these words.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Sample**

The study was conducted at the main campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, Malaysia, and involved 106 Malaysian tertiary students from different academic programmes. The participants were remedial English language learners undertaking an English proficiency course, coded LMT 100, reserved for those of the lower proficiency MUET (Malaysian University English Test) bands of 1 to 3.

### **3.2 Instruments and Procedures**

Nation and Beglar's (2007) Vocabulary Size/Recognition Test was employed in the present study. The test, originally developed by Paul Nation (1983), was designed to

provide a reliable and comprehensive measure of a learner's receptive vocabulary size, and was validated by Beglar (2010) using a Rasch-based validation procedure.

The test is to some extent more demanding than Nation's (1990, 1983) Vocabulary Levels Test as the correct answer and distractors share elements of meaning; in order for the test-taker to select the correct answer, he/she would need to have a moderately developed knowledge of the word's meaning. Below is a sample item from the test:

1. SEE: They **saw** it.
- a. cut
  - b. waited for
  - c. looked at
  - d. started

The test was administered prior to the start of LMT 100's teaching-learning period. Although the creators of the test did not specify a time frame, the limit was set at 60 minutes (all the participants were able to complete the test within the imposed time limit). The tests were then scored and the raw data computed and analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, version 22.

The test covers the most frequent 14,000 word families of the English language and features ten items from each 1,000 word level. In terms of scoring, each correct answer is awarded one point whereas incorrect answers (or items left unanswered) are awarded none. The total score is then multiplied by 100 for the total receptive vocabulary size.

#### 4. Results

With regards to the participants' vocabulary size, the results are as follows:

*Table 1: Total Score and Mean*

Number of participants	Total score	Mean
N=106	358,700	3,384

Table 1 indicates that on average, the receptive vocabulary size of the participants is approximately 3,400 word families with the mean at 3,384 word families. This is well below the recommended level of 10,000 word families, a magnitude which may be necessary for students to cope with the complexities of tertiary study in a second/foreign language (Hazenburg and Hulstijn, 1996).

*Table 2: Mean Breakdown*

MUET Band	Mean
1	3,155
2	3,275
3	3,509

The breakdown in Table 2 shows the average receptive vocabulary size of the participants according to their MUET bands. The mean for those with MUET Band 1 is 3,155 word families and for those of the Band 2 cohort, 3,275. The mean for those of the Band 3 cohort is approximately 3,500 word families.

## 5. Conclusion

On the whole, the study affords us useful insights into the broad field of vocabulary learning, one of the most essential areas of language acquisition – be it L1 or L2. The findings of this study have practical implications for more effective vocabulary learning, especially within the ESL/EFL context, in offering better direction for language instructors and course planners with regards to the implementation of incidental or intentional vocabulary learning strategies in their respective classrooms and literacy programmes.

Apart from considering the implementation of extensive reading only when learners possess at least 3,000 word families (and considering explicit vocabulary instruction/study for learners with smaller vocabulary sizes), another feasible option is an integrated approach using simpler texts. For instance, learners can be introduced to less complex reading materials, which will facilitate lexical inferencing, and instructed to note down encountered words that are unfamiliar or unknown to them. These words can then be explicitly and comprehensively taught or independently studied (e.g., through dictionary consultation).

Lastly, words are the very tools that we call upon to access knowledge, to communicate, and to elucidate our thoughts and opinions. It is perhaps impossible to overemphasise the significance of vocabulary knowledge; as put forth succinctly by Ludwig Wittgenstein, “All I know is what I have words for.”



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## *Asking Effective Referential Questions in an EFL Classroom*

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### **Abstract**

Through language interaction in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, the teacher and students co-construct the activity of teacher questioning and student responding as a source for negotiation, construction, and assessment of language knowledge. Referential questions have been referred to as one of the effective language tools to help develop complexity of learner output and the use of the target language for genuine communication. This study aims to critically examine the extent to which the referential questions are actually and pedagogically used in the language classroom. The research applied Conversation Analysis (CA) to analyze interactions recorded from sixteen EFL classroom lessons. The results reveal that the goal of using referential questions to develop genuine communication in English is rarely achieved in this particular EFL classroom context. The characteristics of the teacher's practice which cause deterioration of the effective use of the referential forms of question will be discussed in details. The implications for research into teacher questions and language pedagogy will be provided.

Keyword: Referential Questions, Classroom Research, Conversation Analysis

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## Introduction

### *Research Background*

Teachers' questioning is one of the most familiar forms of teacher talk in the language classroom which has been the focus of research attention in language classrooms for many years (Brock, 1986). Most of the previous research has the main focus on the functional categorisation of *English as a second language* (ESL) teachers' questions (Long & Sato, 1983), counting the frequency of use of different question types (White & Lightbown, 1984), and describing the functions of different types of teacher questions (Brock, 1986; Nunan, 1987). Particular attention has been paid to the categories of 'display questions' and 'referential questions' (Long & Sato, 1983). Comparing the two categories, a number of previous studies have endeavoured to show which type of question is more conducive, and similar to the communicative characteristics of regular conversation outside classrooms.

These functional categorisation studies have provided some important ideas about teacher questioning which are relevant to the development of language pedagogy. However, the categorisation results are too static. They cannot provide an adequate explanation of the more complex interactional characteristics and the actual functions of teacher questions in the language classroom. Moreover, most of the previous works were conducted from an *etic* perspective which interprets the meanings of the teacher's utterances from the analyst's viewpoint. It does not describe the functions of the questions as products of contingent and intersubjective communication between teacher and students, and fails to uncover the complex functions of questions which contingently change according to the contexts of interaction.

This article presents classroom research which emically study the Thai English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher's use of referential questions. *Emic* analysis is based on an examination of the understandings and orientations of the participants themselves. The sensitivity of an emic approach to what is going on in the interaction makes it more useful in the study of classroom interaction than an etic approach because 'the understandings that matter are those that are incarnate in the interaction being examined' (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In order to examine referential questions used in EFL classroom in a Thai public school without having pre-evaluation or judgement of particular types of classroom behaviour as being of interest, *classroom ethnography* and *conversation analysis* (CA) were applied. Schegloff states that CA is concerned, among other things, with 'the detailed analysis of how talk-in-interaction is conducted as an activity in its own right and as the instrument for the full range of social action and practice...' (Schegloff, 1991, p. 47). In EFL classroom research, it is also important to understand how teacher and students engage in various activities of question and response in order to identify the characteristics of questions which may develop or hamper language development.

### *The English Language Teaching (ELT) Situation in Thailand*

At the present time, the Thai government institutes changes in the education policy to improve the abilities of local people to be more independent and creative. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Thai Ministry of Education, set out the National Education Curriculum for 2001-2010, adopting globally-disseminated

educational practices such as *school-based management*, *parental involvement* and *cooperative learning* (OBEC, 2002). The purpose of the new educational curriculum is to counteract rote learning and to foster the development of active learners who can think creatively and be responsible for their own learning (Jantrasakul, 2004, p.2).

However, most of the studies on the Thai EFL classroom revealed the patterns of interaction in the classroom to follow the traditional rather than the modern communicative language teaching (CLT) or creative thinking development methods. Littlewood (2000) suggests that, if Asian students do indeed adopt the passive classroom attitudes that are often claimed, this is more likely to be a consequence of the educational contexts that have been or are now provided for them, than of any inherent disposition of the students themselves. One of that educational contexts is the teacher's use of questions which is the basic form of conversation in the classroom. To understand how referential questions is used to develop CLT in the context of Thai EFL classrooms, the researcher developed the main research objective which is to study the different language forms and functions of teacher's referential question in a Thai EFL classroom. The research results, obtained from a detailed analysis of the classroom discourse, will enable us to understand the structure of the interaction in terms of teacher's use of referential question, and will provide a naturalistic basis for the discussion of the significance of referential question in ELT in Thai EFL classrooms.

### **Literature Review**

Questioning is one of the elicitation forms, or the act of initiating a reply. According to Long (1981), question – response is the most dominant interaction used by both non-native speakers (NNSs) and native speakers (NSs) of the target language to develop the topic of a conversation because questions provide the topics for the respondent and imply an obligation to reply. In language classrooms, questioning is one of the methods teachers use to initiate classroom interaction.

As mentioned earlier, the classification of 'display questions' and 'referential questions' was one of the most widely known classifications of teacher questions. *Display questions* seek answers in which the information is already known by the teacher. This type of elicitation has been criticised for its lack of authenticity since it is not commonly used in conversation outside the classroom. Some researchers suggest that extensive use of display questions could be a waste of time (Nunan, 1991; Brown, 1994). However, some authors (Markee, 1995; Lee, 2006) suggests that display questions can potentially be central resources which language teachers and students use to organise language lessons and produce language pedagogy.

*Referential questions* require answers which contain information unknown by the teacher, and they are frequently used to call for evaluation or judgment (e.g. 'What do you think about this topic?'). They are commonly used in regular conversation outside the classroom, hence are believed to encourage students' higher-order thinking skills and authentic use of the second language in the classroom (Brock, 1986). Many researchers (Brock, 1986; Nunan, 1987; Suter, 2001; Morell, 2007) agree that teachers' use of referential questions could prompt students to provide significantly longer and syntactically more complex responses than the use of display questions.

Although, a number of classifications of different types of teacher question have been developed, it should be noted that no single conclusion has been reached regarding which question type is more effective for language teaching and learning. Every question type has its own pros and cons. As Suter (2001) notes, teachers have choices either to ask simple display questions and keep control of the lesson, or to give up the control and allow referential questions to encourage more complex but less predictable learner responses. The classifications of teacher questions are undoubtedly valuable, in terms of giving pictures of different types of question and suggesting a possible linkage between these and the development of language teaching and learning, and of thinking skills. However, classification cannot provide a moving picture of the process of teacher question and student reply, nor does it allow a close investigation of which types of question and language use actually influence what students do in the classroom. The results from most of the functional categorisation studies are presented in a static form, thus limiting the opportunities to study the complex nature of teachers' and students' practices and the variety of goals and roles to be achieved and established in classrooms.

Teachers' practice of questioning is a much more complex process than a static sequence of a specific type of question coupled with the co-occurrent type of response. For instance, there are cases where teachers use a question to achieve more than one goal, or the teacher's question receives no response from the students and the teacher needs to work until the expected response is achieved. The process by means of which an elicitation is actually used and accomplished has been examined using CA methodologies to analyse the sequential structure and the turn-taking system of the elicitation. The CA approach has been applied to the study of structures and functions of questions across various institutional settings, including CA studies of questioning in media interviews (Clayman, 1992), job interviews (Button, 1992), medical consultations (Heath, 1992) and classroom teaching (Mehan, 1979a, 1979b; Morell, 2007; Lee, 2008). CA views questioning as a contingent activity which is achieved through interaction and which need to be studied in interaction. That means, for CA, the functions of questions can only be interpreted upon the micro-context in which this question occurs (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and on how it is interpreted and understood by the participants in an interaction. Hence, CA aims to uncover the process through which questions are accomplished in real-time interactions and to demonstrate the characteristics and functions of questions through the participants' orientation to them.

## **Research Method**

### ***Data Collection***

Naturally occurring classroom interactions constructed by a Thai teacher and EFL learners at a secondary school in Thailand are the unit of analysis of this research. EFL lessons from this classroom were observed and videotaped for further analysis inductively based on the framework of CA and language classroom ethnographic research. The teacher is a female Thai teacher of English who has an undergraduate degree in Education from a university in Thailand. She has more than ten years' experience in teaching English to students at primary and secondary school levels. During the data collection process, the teacher was asked for permission to record her teaching and asked to teach the classes as she usually does when there is no camera

operating. The students were 37 Thai students in Mattayom 2 (Grade 7). There were 25 female and 12 male students, all around 14-15 years old. Like the teacher, the students were informed of the video recording, and asked to ignore the camera and to perform as usual. The researcher used pseudonyms for the teacher and the students in the data presentation. The corpus of sixteen Thai EFL classroom lessons is analyzed in detail to describe the organization of teacher elicitations and the process through which these organizations were accomplished

### ***Data Analysis***

The procedure for the detailed analysis of the classroom interaction, which is shown below, is adapted from Seedhouse's (2004) stages of CA research.

- 1) Locate the acts of referential questions.
- 2) Characterize referential questions by looking at the nature of students' responses to the questions.
- 3) Characterize language form in the question performed.
- 4) In each sequence of teacher question–student response:
  - a) describe it in terms of: (1) turn-taking, (2) sequence of actions or adjacency pairs, (3) preference, (4) use of L1, and wait-time;
  - b) uncover the emic logic underlying each turn of interaction by following Sacks et al.'s (1974, p.729) *next-turn proof procedure*; to describe the subsequent turn as an interpretation of the previous turn, and how it creates an action and interpretational template for subsequent actions;
  - c) examine the process through which the organizations of teacher questions–student responses are co-constructed through interaction;
  - d) examine what teachers try to accomplish through referential questions;
  - e) uncover any roles, identities or relationships which are evident in the data.

### **Results**

#### ***Referential Questions which Call for Limited Answers***

Nunan (1987, 1991) believes that referential questions can develop more complex responses from students. However, not all referential questions require responses in the form of complex sentences. Extract 1 is taken from the teaching of 'can' questions. It shows an example of teacher question which asks for the students' own information with limited choices of answer of either yes or no. It also shows how the use of referential questions can enact the teacher's role of interactional controller and language assessor, and the students' role as followers.

**Extract 1**

1. T: → Can you swim?
2. Ss: Ye:s I ca:n
3. T: → Can you dance? ((dancing))
4. Ss: Ye:s I ca:n=
5. T: → =Can you play piano?
6. Ss: N[o:↑ I ca:n not
7. T: [No↑ I (1.5) no↑ I cannot *ru:* no I can't  
(No, I cannot *or* no I can't.)

In lines 1, 3 and 5 the teacher asks questions in L2 without any L1 translation, followed by the students' responses in lines 2, 4 and 6. Hence, L2 is used by the teacher and perceived by the students as a real language of questioning. The exchange of questions–responses in this extract may not commonly occur in regular conversation in L2. Nunan (1987) suggested that 'genuine communication is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning, topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not' (p. 135). In this classroom, on the other hand, the teacher holds the monopoly in eliciting a series of responses from the students, and the students perceive their roles as followers who only provide answers to the questions asked. The act of teacher question in L2 accomplishes the aim of initiating yes/no responses from the students, and the possible aims of assessing their L2 comprehension and production skills, rather than encouraging the authentic use of L2 for communication similar to regular L2 interaction. This can be seen from the follow-up turn in line 7 which focuses on the form of the students' response, rather than on its content. This exchange of questions–responses in this extract may not commonly occur in regular conversation in L2.

***Other Characteristics of Referential Questions***

This sections provide the forms of teacher question which look as though they are calling for information unknown to the teacher, but are actually followed by (1) the teacher's own responses, (2) student choral responses, and (3) the teacher's expected responses. At first sight, the interactions seem like genuine conversation, but as the interaction unfolds, the acts of student choral responses and the act of the teacher's working to achieve expected responses turn the interactions into contextualised drills.

***The forms of referential question which are not followed by students' responses***

In Extract 2 the teacher is teaching English vocabulary. The point to note here is that the form of referential question which is often used to elicit students' opinions does not always call for students' responses.



**Extract 2**

1. T:           *ma: du: jô: nâ: thî: sǎ:ŋ (.) ná kʰá (.) bantʰát rê:k* ((pointing on  
(*Look at the second paragraph, the first line*  
the board)) *mi: kʰam nǎj mǎj sâ:p mǎj (.) mǎj mi: ná kʰá (.) bantʰát tʰî:*  
(*Is there any word that you don't know? No. The second line,*  
3.           *kʰam ní: lâ kʰá*) ((underlining the word))  
(*What about this word?*)
4.           (2.0)
5. T: →       Do you know? *ru: teàk mǎj kʰá*  
(*Do you know it?*)
6. S1:         ness=
7. T:         =Kind↑ness
8. Ss:        Kind↑ness

In lines 2-3 the teacher checks whether there is any word in the first line on the board that the students do not know. She leaves a pause, and receiving no response from the students, assumes that there is no problem and moves to check if there is any word that the students do not know on the next line on the board. This time she leaves two seconds in line 4, but there is no response from the students. The teacher repeats the question in L2 followed by the L1 equivalent meaning in line 5 'Do you know? *ru: teàk mǎj kʰá*'. S1 just begins to respond in line 6, but latches with the teacher's turn in line 7. The teacher rushes to provide the response herself without providing any length of time for the students to reply.

There are two referential questions in this extract which seem to call for an affirmative response from the students. However, in the first question, the teacher makes no attempt to prompt students' replies but assumes that there is no word in the first paragraph that the students do not know. In the second question, the teacher focuses on the word 'kindness' and provides prompts for students' replies. There is no consistency regarding how the questions are accomplished. This depends on how the elicitation is oriented to by the students, how the students respond and how the teacher reacts to the students' actions. The data reveal that, after her attempts to obtain responses, the students start to reply. The students may have interpreted the teacher's attempts to mean that they are really required to participate in order to allow the interaction to move on. If the teacher regularly provides the answer after a pause, the students may learn that they do not have to reply since the teacher will provide the answer. As a result of providing the answer herself, the teacher makes an assumption about what the students know and don't know, from her own judgment.

***The forms of referential question which are followed by whole class responses***

Extracts 3 demonstrates this type of referential question which is followed by whole class responses.

**Extract 3**

((The students are preparing their learning materials such as books and pencils))

1. T: Are you exciting? (.) *tù:n tèn májk<sup>h</sup>á*  
(*Are you nervous?*)
2. Ss: → Y::es ((some students are still preparing their learning materials))
3. T: ((laughing)) *mâj tôj tù:n téná pen ka:n fùk...*((Continues talking in
4. Thai) (*Don't be nervous. This is practice...*)

In Extract 3 the students are going to present their work from the last lesson. In line 1 the teacher asks 'Are you exciting?' followed by the question in L1 which means 'are you nervous?' in English. The students answer in chorus in line 2. The answer in L2 shows that they understand that the teacher's elicitation in L1 is used as a translation tool, and that they are required to answer in L2. The form of this question inquires about the students' own feelings. The students' answering in chorus implies that the students perceive the elicitation as asking for the feelings of the whole class, rather than those of individuals.

***Some forms of referential questions which are used to call for expected responses***

The teacher sometimes uses the question as though she is calling for unknown information when she is in fact calling for an answer which she has in mind and leading the students to answer in that way, as shown in Extract 4.

**Extract 4**

1. T: Are you happy?
2. Ss: Ye::s
3. T: Do you have lunch?
4. Ss: (2.0)
5. T: Do you have lunch?
6. S1: N[o
7. Ss: [no
8. T: → *No↑ (.) t<sup>h</sup>ə:jaŋ mâj t<sup>h</sup>a:n a:hă:n kla:ŋ wan rǎ:*  
(*Haven't you had lunch?*)
9. S2: [jaŋ  
(*I haven't*)
10. S3: [jaŋ mâj dâj kin  
(*I haven't had lunch.*)
11. T: → Do you have lunch?
12. Ss1: N[o
13. Ss2: [Ye[s
14. T: [Yes

Extract 4 comes from an English lesson which took place in the afternoon, and the students are supposed already to have had lunch. The pattern of the teacher's asking 'Are you happy?' followed by the choral answer 'yes' occurring in lines 1-2 is similar to the pattern analysed in Extract 3. The teacher starts the new elicitation 'Do you have lunch?' in line 3. After a two-second pause, the teacher repeats the question in

line 5. S1 begins her reply ‘no’ in line 6, followed by ‘no’ answers from the others in line 7. Notice that the individual response to the referential question is again preceded by a delay.

This example provides evidence that the students do not always answer ‘yes’ in chorus to all Y/N questions in English. The students’ replies of ‘no’ at different paces imply that they perceive the question as asking for real information, that they have not had lunch yet. Her utterance in line 8 indicates that the teacher does not accept the students’ ‘No’ response. The teacher repeats the students’ responses with a rising intonation which indicates that the response is unacceptable (Cullen, 2002). She repeats the question, but this time in L1 to re-elicite the students’ confirmation of the fact that they have still not had lunch. The question in L1 shows that the teacher actually wants to ask ‘Have you had lunch?’ rather than ‘Do you have lunch?’ In line 9 the students confirm their previous answer, but this time they switch to L1. This suggests that the students have understood the meaning of the question asked in L2, and insist on giving the same answer when they are asked the same question in L1. The teacher still does not accept the response, however. In line 11 she repeats the question in L2 ‘Do you have lunch?’ This time some students may realise what the teacher expects, and that she is repeating the question in order to elicit a different response. They answer ‘yes’ in line 13. The teacher repeats this response in the form of accepting the answer (Hellermann, 2003, p. 92). In this case, the teacher uses questions which seem to ask for personal information, but work to acquire expected answers in a similar way to when she asks display questions.

For the other form of referential question which seems to ask for the students’ creative ideas or opinions rather than testing the students’ knowledge. In this case there should be no right or wrong answer, and no single answer expected. This can be seen from the way the students provide many answers to one question asked. In Extract 5, the teacher and students are working on answering questions in an English worksheet.

### Extract 5

1. T: → *lɔːŋ pʰuːt pen pʰaːsǎː tʰaj sí tʰammaj tʰuŋ rák mǎː*  
(Tell me in Thai why you love your mom)
2. Ss: *mǎː pen pʰuː hǎj tɛʰiːwít*  
(Mom is the person who gives birth to us.)
3. T: → *àː [mǎː duːlǎː raw maː tɛʰáj máj*  
(Yes, mom takes care of us, right.)
4. S1: *[pʰrɔ́ mǎː rák tɛʰǎn*  
(Because mom loves me.)
5. T: → *kʰam wáː duːlǎː nǎː tɛʰáj kʰam wáː àraj*  
(To take care, what is the English vocabulary for to take care?)
6. Ss: Take care
7. T: Take care ((writing on the board))

In line 1 the teacher explicitly asks the students to provide answers in L1 to ‘why they love their mothers’. The elicitation for reply in L1 infers the teacher’s focus on encouraging the students to provide their ideas using the L1, which may be the language that they feel comfortable with. The first response in L1 is produced by S1 in line 2. In line 3 the teacher provides a positive evaluation and adds the answer that

she has in mind ‘*mâ: du:læ: raw ma: tɛ<sup>h</sup>âj máj*’ (Yes, mom takes care of us, right.). S2 understands that the opportunity for responding is still open and shares her idea in line 4. However, the teacher does not give any feedback to S2’s idea. Instead, she starts the new elicitation in line 5 to elicit the L2 equivalent meaning of her answer provided in line 3. This shows that the teacher is asking the students to provide answers in Thai before then getting them to translate these answers into English. Instead of using the students’ answers, however, the teacher uses and asks the students to provide the translation of her own answer. The data reveal that when the forms of elicitation which call for opinions or ideas are used, the students are encouraged to produce more than one answer. However, after the students’ reply, the teacher provides feedback (a form of modification of the student’s answer), which shows that although the answer is not incorrect she is trying to lead them to produce the answer she expects. The students’ responses show how they interpret the meaning of the elicitation as calling for creative ideas, but the teacher’s follow-up move shows that the actual meaning of the elicitation is to call for an expected answer.

## Discussion

The data reveal that the goal of using referential elicitations to develop genuine communication in English is rarely achieved in this EFL classroom. There are three main characteristics of the teacher’s practice in this classroom which constrain the effectiveness of the use of the referential form of questioning in this respect.

*First*, the process through which the teacher asks referential questions and moves on to the next action without waiting for the students’ reply shows how the meaning of the form of question is not negotiated or made intelligible between the teacher and students. Nunan (1991) listed many advantages of teachers providing enough wait-time, which are significant in the accomplishment of the teacher’s question. However, in the Thai EFL classroom context the opportunity for the students to complete the referential question sequence is not provided by the teacher. The teacher often makes assumptions about the students’ competences and never asks for the students’ clarifications. This is similar to McHoul’s (1990) finding, that the teacher rarely provides sufficient wait-time for the students to initiate and correct their own answer.

*Second*, the referential question followed by the students’ answer in chorus is another distinctive feature of the Thai EFL classroom questions, which does not usually occur in regular conversation. The fact that the students answer in chorus may be a result of the way the teacher gazes around the class and addresses the elicitation to the whole class, rather than to individuals or groups of students, as recipients of the elicitation who all have an equal right to reply (Schegloff, 2007). However, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason why the students choose the same answer for the referential question and provide it at the same pace. What can be observed and described from the data is that the students do not always provide choral answers to all referential questions. The students seem to answer individually to those referential questions where it is clear why they are being asked. They perceive these questions as calling for personal information, such as questions about their homework or about activities they have done at the weekend.

*Third*, the teacher appears to have the answer in mind when asking referential questions and works to accomplish the answer she is expecting by not accepting the

students' reply but rather prompting for students' repairs. One possible reason why the students often provide the same answer in chorus is that they know what the teacher expects. These are characteristics of referential questions which seem genuine, but which are actually negotiated and socially-accomplished by teacher and students as little more than contextualised drilling.

## **Conclusion**

Various structures and functions of referential questions in a Thai EFL classroom were identified from an *emic* perspective based on a micro-analysis of the classroom interaction. Although Morell (2007) suggests that the teacher's use of referential questions in language classrooms can promote the opportunity for negotiation of meaning between teacher and learners, this phenomenon does not occur in the Thai classroom context under study here. The research findings have broadened our knowledge of EFL teacher questions by discovering the forms of questions that are used, presenting a moving picture of the social construction of the teacher elicitation processes, and by providing empirically-based evidence of the meanings or functions which are actually accomplished through the use of questions. However, there are some classroom behaviours which cannot be discovered through the analysis of interaction. Future research may overcome this limitation by using CA in conjunction with other research methods, such as asking subjects to keep journals, interviews with the teacher or students, or showing the video recording of the interaction to the students and asking them to reflect on what they did and why they did it.

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The logo for the International Association for Language Acquisition (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a light blue arc at the bottom and a light red arc at the top, which together form a partial circle around the text.





***Meaning for Meaning: Applying The Theories of Dynamic Equivalence and Contextual Correspondence in Language Translation***

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**Abstract**

The effectiveness of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence” as theories/approaches in language translation was tested in two translation contexts: (1) applying and testing the theories in translating scientific articles on food biotechnology, and (2) using the theories to analyze the cultural meanings of “storm surge” in the context of the super typhoon “Haiyan” (“Yolanda”). For the first translation context: three scientific articles on food biotechnology which were originally written in English, as Source Language (SL), were translated into Filipino, as Target Language (TL). Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to test and evaluate the translations, according to Larson (1984). Based on the results of the tests and evaluations, primarily involving comprehension tests administered among target readers, revisions as well as a final translation for each scientific article were made and a final reader comprehension test was administered. In the second test to analyze the effectiveness of the theories, the meanings of “storm surge” were analyzed in terms of scientific and cultural contexts. Texts/reports (both English and Filipino) were analyzed and interviews were conducted to assess various interpretations of meanings. This study proved that applying the theories of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence” in translating scientific articles and technical terms, is effective in targeting meaning-based translations. This further affirms that cultural translation leads to a higher level of comprehension among target readers/listeners.

Keywords: Translation, Dynamic Equivalence, Contextual Correspondence

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## Introduction

“Translate or die!”-- powerful words by Paul Engle. This is how he sums up the “socially active, politically urgent cause of translation in the contemporary world” according to Edwin Gentzler (1993). To some, this may sound like an “academic expression” but it somehow had a literal meaning when the ferocious Typhoon “Haiyan,” local name, “Yolanda” hit full force the province of Leyte, Philippines in the early morning of November 8, 2013. According to various information sources, what the media generally termed as “storm surge” was not really understood by the local residents of the affected areas in these parts of Western, Visayas. Some reports said that the locals thought it was just one of those typhoons that usually visit their place every year. That there was no clear “translation into their language” of the kind of magnitude and strength Typhoon “Yolanda” had; and that part of the devastating aftermath is the depressive narrative in terms of “if only,” “could have,” “would have.” Sentiments such as: “Had there been a clearer description or translation into the local dialect of the intensity of “Yolanda,” there could have been better, more serious efforts for preparation or evacuation. To describe it as a “super typhoon,” “tropical cyclone,” or even like a “category 5 hurricane” does not quite capture the contextual or cultural meaning of the message as far as the local residents of Leyte are concerned. Once again, this reminds us that in the midst of global messaging, it is always important to find the local meaning.

## Significance of the Study

In this research work, the primary aim was to test the effectiveness of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence,” as theories/approaches in language translation. Two translation areas/contextuals were chosen: Food Biotechnology and Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda).

### *Food Biotechnology*

Three scientific articles on food biotechnology originally written in English as Source Language (SL), were translated into Filipino as the Target Language (TL):

1.) *What You Should Know About Food Biotechnology*, 2.) *Food Biotechnology (Science and Farming Working Hand-in-Hand)*, and 3.) *Biotechnology: Solutions For Tomorrow's World*.

Biotechnology is one of the relatively “new sciences” in the Philippines. Particularly significant is the introduction of the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in the field of Agricultural Sciences. The Filipino farmers are the main targets of this “new technological information” specifically in terms of farming technology, practices and the use GM seeds, plants, etc. Big multinational agriculture-based corporations introducing new farming methods and plant seeds, with the promise of increased production and farming efficiency are the strong advocates for these new technologies. There may be a great advantage for learning new technologies, such as biotechnology, but the question is: Are the target receivers/recipients ready to learn, understand, and apply or use these new technologies?

### *Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)*

The strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines, Typhoon Haiyan, local name: Yolanda, had a sustained wind speed at landfall at 195 miles per hour, wind gusts of up to 235 miles per hour, and surge in sea level during the storm at 13 feet high. All these technical descriptions pointed to a “storm surge,” a “tsunami,” a “tropical cyclone.” However, none of these terms or names deeply described to the locals the magnitude of this storm. They apparently had a “sense” of its “strength” but in terms of the contextual or cultural meaning – there seemed to have no dynamic equivalence to them, based on their personal experience, because it was not translated into their local language or dialect.

### *Importance of Language Translation*

Language translation is obviously, extremely important for the transfer of information and exchanges in knowledge between and among cultures in the world. Since the beginning of human existence, language has been the main vehicle for communication. Living in a highly globalized society in the present times, challenges us to use the art and science of language translation, to help us make sense of what is happening in the different environments that we live in. Through language translation our diverse communities can come together in a universe of common meanings.

With all the different techniques and approaches in translation, the prevailing question is: What kind of translation would best “capture the meaning” of a message from SL to TL? It is important to remind ourselves that the whole purpose of translation - is communication...the transfer of meaning from one language to another.

### **Dynamic Equivalence**

The theory of Dynamic Equivalence was first introduced by Eugene Nida (1964). This theory gives utmost importance to “response” or “reaction” of the receiver of the message in the TL and SL. For Nida, the reaction or response of the message receiver in the SL must be equivalent to the reaction or response of the message receiver in the TL. The overall impact of the message for both the receivers of the message in the SL and TL is very important. It is not enough that the message is understood. There must be an appropriate reaction for both the receivers in the SL and TL (Nida and Taber, 1969). According to Nida (1964), in language translation, it is important to reproduce the message; find the natural and closest meaningful equivalence; and prioritize the meaning of the message. These are more important than the grammatical form which he refers to as “formal correspondence.” Thus, the key features of Dynamic Equivalence include:

1. Finding the closest meaningful equivalence;
2. meaning of the message is more important than the structure of language;
3. “concept-for-concept” not “word-for-word;” and
4. audience/reader reaction or response is extremely essential.

Peter Newmark (1988) finds “dynamic equivalence” as a fine principle in translation. He refers to this as “equivalent effect.” However, he considers “equivalent effect” as a good result and not a goal in translation. He also believes that it is difficult to get “equivalent” results if there is a wide difference in the cultures involved in translation.

Moreover, he finds “equivalent effect” as an important intuitive principle that must be tested.

### **Contextual Correspondence**

Contextual Correspondence is closely related to dynamic equivalence. According to this theory, finding the nearest contextual equivalence in the TL, is the main objective of translation. This often involves correspondence in cultural and situational contexts. The key features of this approach include:

1. Finding the meaning of the SL based on the context of the TL, i.e. what best matches its meaning; and
2. must include cultural and situational aspects

### **The Translation Process**

#### *Preparation*

In any language translation, the most important part of preparation is reading and understanding the text of the SL. It is necessary for the translator to read the article or text several times to truly understand its content.

#### A. Analysis of the Text

Analysis of the text involves understanding the message of the SL and the culture that uses the particular language. Reading the SL text several times helps the translator to understand the message more clearly. Words which may be difficult to comprehend must be underlined and given a closer study. Determine if the particular text is informative, vocative, or expressive. Informative texts include knowledge, ideas, theories or factual events. Vocative texts call for readers to think, feel, react, decide, or act upon the objective of the text. Expressive texts involve expressions of emotions, typical of imaginative, literary texts such as poetry, short story, drama, novels, etc. Overall it is important to comprehend the meaning of the written text – the subject matter, the objective of the message, the “cultural meanings,” etc.

For this translation work, based on close analysis of these texts in Food Biotechnology, these are clearly classified as *informative*: 1.) *What You Should Know About Food Biotechnology*, 2.) *Food Biotechnology (Science and Farming Working Hand-in-Hand)*, and 3.) *Biotechnology: Solutions For Tomorrow’s World*. These texts contain basic information on Biotechnology, in general, and Food Biotechnology, in particular.

The term “storm surge” is a technical term for Typhoon Haiyan, with local name Typhoon Yolanda. The Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) used the term “storm surge” in their public announcements and warnings prior to the onslaught of the typhoon. It was also referred to as category 5 super typhoon.

## B. Analysis of the Target Audience/Readers

To whom is the message intended? Who are the target readers? What are the demographic profiles in terms of: Age, education, gender, occupation, interests, economic status, and others?

The intended readers for the translation of the texts in Biotechnology were students, farmers, and professionals. Age group is 15-70 years old. Education is from elementary to post-graduate level; both males and females with varied interests, and from low-income to upper-middle income levels.

### *Actual Translation*

In the actual translation process, the translator may want to use the different ways of finding the contextual, cultural equivalences between the SL and TL texts. The following are some of the ways:

1. Find the equivalent words or concepts in the TL and other languages/dialects spoken in that given culture.
2. Borrow from another language that is part of the cultural history of the TL. For example, in the Philippines, some Hispanic or Hispanized terms are still widely used and incorporated in the local dialects, e.g., SL: *biotechnology* TL: *bioteknolohiya*.
3. Borrow from English language, the terms which are commonly used in communication, e.g., SL: *molecule* TL: *molekyul*. Note that sometimes borrowing the word itself without changing the spelling is also acceptable.
4. Create new terms or words.

Other translation techniques may also be used, such as: Transposition, modulation, adaptation, descriptive equivalence or amplification, addition, subtraction, and others. Each translator, has his/her own style of making the actual translation. There is no specific formula to be followed for the actual task of translation. Some translators, make a first rough draft of the translation, then a second translation (revisions of the first draft), and a final polished copy. It is important to keep in mind that the essence of dynamic equivalence and contextual correspondence is “capturing the meaning” of the SL message in the TL. Cultural and social contexts play an important role in this translation approach. For example, when some agriculture scientists and farming technologists first introduced the concept of “conservation tillage” to the Filipino farmers, they have observed that these farmers did not quite understand the concept – until they tried to utilize the idea of “saving/budgeting” or “conservation” which is translated as “tipid” in Tagalog, and “tillage” which means “bungkal.” However, a combination of these Tagalog terms “tipid-bungkal” does not really capture the real meaning of “conservation tillage.” So when they used the term “saka” which means “farming” or “to farm” instead of “bungkal,” and they coined the term “tipid-saka” to translate the concept of “conservation tillage,” a better equivalence and contextual correspondence was found.

In the process of actual translation, making a “raw” translation of the SL text or first draft of translation is usually the beginning. Then a revision or editing is made until a final copy is completed.

## **Applying The Theories of Dynamic Equivalence and Contextual Correspondence**

### *Translating Articles on Food Biotechnology*

The articles translated contained basic information on biotechnology, specifically food biotechnology. These are semi-technical articles in the form of brochure, booklet, and review paper. The fundamental objective of the translations was to capture the meaning of the concepts based on cultural/contextual equivalence or correspondence in the TL. The following techniques/types of translation were utilized: Transcription, transliteration, borrowing, transposition, modulation, adaptation, and description. The entire translation process was guided by the essence of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence.” In order to capture the meaning of the message from SL to TL, it is important to consider the cultural/social practices of the people in TL.

### *Finding the Equivalence of “Storm Surge” (Typhoon Haiyan)*

Storm surge is technically defined as a “rising of the sea as a result of wind and atmospheric pressure changes associated with a storm.” It is similar to “tsunami” in effect. In Tagalog language, according to Virgilio Almario, the term “daluyong” may be its equivalent meaning. However, to the people of Leyte and Tacloban, this term does not really capture the meaning of “storm surge.” So what could have been the best equivalent of the term “storm surge” based on the personal experience of the people in Leyte? According to many of them, if they were informed and warned that Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) was a much stronger version of “Typhoon Undang” (Typhoon Agnes) in 1984, they would have had a better idea/picture of the strength and magnitude of Typhoon Haiyan. This would have been a “dynamic equivalent” in meaning of this super typhoon. There could have been a much better preparedness for this super storm. Of course, there are other reasons that have made it more catastrophic – stubborn attitude of some people who did not want to listen and act upon the directives of the people in authority; inefficiencies in the government, lack of needed resources, etc. It is now a known fact that part of the tragic aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda was the realization that more could have been done in explaining to the public the magnitude and gravity of a storm surge. Translating the meaning of the term into the mother tongue or dialect such as Waray and Cebuano, and more importantly in the context of these people’s own personal experiences with previous typhoons, would have made a real big difference.

### *Testing the Translation*

Testing the translation is a very important part of the whole process of translation. According to Mildred Larson (1984), translation evaluations help determine the effectiveness of the translation made. Three kinds of test need to be done:

1. Test of Comprehension – ask the target reader to read the translation and explain its meaning.
2. Test of Readability – ask the target reader to read the translation silently at first, then ask to read it aloud afterwards. Check if the reader has difficulty in reading certain words or if there are hesitations or unusual pauses.

3. Test of Naturalness (easy flow of communication) – ask a professional translator to check if the translation communicated the message with ease and that it follows an appropriate style of translation.

When these tests were applied to the translations made for the abovementioned articles in Biotechnology, the effectiveness of applying the theories of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence” were proven.

### **Conclusion**

Meanings are always in people, and therefore, personal or cultural. Applying the theories of “dynamic equivalence” and “contextual correspondence” are effective approaches in the art and science of translation.

Translation is not only the “transfer of meaning” through the use of language. It is a task that includes an intimate consideration of culture and an entire way of life. It may be a difficult process...but it is always worth the effort...because it could mean saving and improving the lives of people.

The logo for iafor (International Association for Applied Linguistics) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a light blue arc at the bottom and a light red arc at the top, creating a partial circular frame around the text.





## *Constructing a Democratic English Language Classroom*

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### **Abstract**

Teaching English to immigrant students is a trending issue in the US as well as in other English-speaking countries. This paper examines how the language of an ESL teacher functions in classroom interactions. The data came from an ESL class for immigrant students in the United State. The analytical framework of the paper is based on Rymes's (2009) notion of classroom discourse analysis. Based on detailed analysis of teacher-student interactions, this paper suggests that a democratic and beneficial learning environment can be created through teacher's talk in the following ways: using open-ended questions, providing multiple choices for multicultural students, as well as selecting inclusive pronouns such as "we." These pedagogical practices secure an open and democratic intellectual environment where each student's perspective is welcomed, valued and respected.

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## Introduction

In culturally diversified American classrooms, the construction of a beneficial learning condition for every student is a daunting task. At the macro level, school and society exercise influence on both the teacher and students' learning; at the micro level, the teacher's as well as students' language also tend to considerably affect educational results in multicultural classrooms.

The purpose of this final paper is two-fold: first, to explore how teachers can create a beneficial learning condition through their language; second, to propose tentative suggestions for improving pedagogical practices in classrooms where the teacher and students share different sociocultural backgrounds. The research question of this paper is to examine how the language of the teacher functions in classroom interactions. According to the view of social constructionism, language does not simply portray individuals and the world; rather, it serves as a significant place for the construction of identities (Burr, 2003). As a result, teachers' language, such as the types of questions they ask, can construct their own identities as well as the roles of students. Moreover, based on the perspectives of critical discourse analysis, one's selection of words provides linguists with an indispensable resource to investigate how language functions in social processes (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). Likewise, the teacher's word choice can influence students since school serves as a major site for students' socialization. To be more specific, this paper will focus on three categories of the teacher's language: teacher's questions, and choice of words and use of pronouns.

### Literature review: teacher's language

The teacher's language plays an influential role in classroom interactions in multilingual and multicultural learning environment. A number of scholars have explored the issue of teachers' talk. In *Choice words* (2004), Johnston maintains that a teacher's selection of utterances affects the relationship between teacher and students. For instance, by asking a question for which the instructor has already formed a correct answer and then commenting on the student's response, the teacher constructs himself or herself as the judge. Additionally, not only what the teacher says but also he or she does not say carries significant consequences on students' learning and development of literacy (Johnston, 2004). In *Transformation of knowledge through classroom interaction*, scholars identify various talk moves that teachers can adopt to generate productive dialogues. For instance, teachers may request students to explain their reasons by including "why" and "how" in the question (Schwarz, Dreyfus, & Hershkowitz, 2009). Cazden (2001) also focuses on the language of instruction by examining teachers' questions. She argues that in nontraditional classrooms, teachers should raise questions that encourage students to illustrate their own thinking as well as to reflect on previous students' perspectives. Miletta (2006) analyzes how a teacher's talk and body gestures help to build a morally agreeable learning environment. In particular, the teacher and her students have cooperatively constructed a beneficial classroom community through both verbal and nonverbal interactions (Miletta, 2006). Furthermore, instead of framing one correct answer, the teacher emphasizes the clarification of ideas by providing multiple explanations for an elementary school boy who fails to understand codes (Miletta, 2006). Moreover, teacher's language in terms of the preference for pronouns also exerts impact on

teacher-student relationship. Rymes (2009) states that the awareness of choosing pronouns helps teachers to perceive how the teacher-student rapport can be framed. As noted by Christie (2002), teachers use “I” to establish authority and “we” to foster a solid relationship with students. For example, the utterance “I want you to listen” serves as a remarkable indicator of authoritativeness whereas the sentence “we’ve got another simple story” demonstrates the close relationship between the teacher and students (Christie, 2002).

### The construction of a beneficial learning condition through teacher’s language

First, the teacher may frame multiple choices for students to answer questions and invite everyone to participate in classroom activities. This strategy creates an open and democratic condition that benefits students’ learning, as demonstrated by the table below.

*Table 1: Mr. Z’s wrap up speech after the whole presentation event*

No	Speaker	Verbal and nonverbal
1	Mr. Z	<b>Can anybody tell me</b> <u>where or how</u> it was like when you started trying to make sense out of it <u>or what point</u> did you start realizing that these words can mean that "I can make them mean something?" ((looking at the whole class))
2	Mr. Z	That's a hard question...the point from where it went being like, "These are just a bunch of words, I don't know what to do with them" to like "Now I know what I want to say." ((waving hands))
3	Mr. Z	<b>Can anybody explain when you thought</b> "Ok, I'm going to make a love poem <u>or</u> I'm going to talk about terrorism <u>or</u> I'm going to talk about cancer." Cinto?
4	Cinto	As you read the words you actually like make up--make up your own stories in your mind ((waving hands)) and then, cut them, or you can make um (.) more sentences.
5	Mr. Z	Okay, so put them together in groups?
6	Cinto	Yeah.

In line 1 and 3, Mr. Z’s two utterances starting with “Can anybody tell me” and “Can anybody explain” frame the learning opportunity as open to everyone in the class. Mr. Z does not select a specific student to respond to his questions; instead, he uses “anyone” to reveal that each student is welcomed to participate. In addition, in line 1, the underlined phrases “where or how” and “or what point” show that students have more than one choices to answer the question. Rather than providing students with one definite choice, the teacher frames multiple possibilities for students to respond to his question. Likewise, in line 3, Mr. Z also uses “or” twice to connect three probable rather than one exact choice for students to think about how they composed their poems. What is more, the choices—“a love poem”, “talk about terrorism” and “talk about cancer”, are all related to the themes of students’ presentations, which denotes that the teacher acknowledges and values their perspectives. It is also notable that Mr. Z’s selection of students’ previous ideas also resonances Cazden’s (2001) notion that in nontraditional classrooms, teachers raise questions which promote students to contemplate what other students have said. Furthermore, Mr. Z constantly looks

around the class and gestures with his hands when interacting with students, intending to invite them to learn. In line 4, Cinto takes the floor to explain his process of writing poems, and Mr. Z acknowledges his personal perspective in line 5. In summary, Mr. Z provides students with multiple choices to be involved in critical thinking, and valued each student's viewpoint, both of which assure an open and democratic learning condition.

Second, teachers may construct a beneficial learning environment in multicultural classrooms by raising open-ended questions. As Rymes (2009) points out, genuine questions seek the answer from the students, which promotes them to think critically. The following analysis illustrates this approach.

Table 2: Dalia's presentation about a person's life choice

No	Speaker	Utterance	Move
1	Dalia	Life choice. Start something authentic, original, magical, intelligent, curious, brilliant, happy, free. Learn how to behave because enough is enough.	Explanation
2	Mr. Z	Good I like how you read that. Good. <i>Can we see it?</i>	Evaluation Initiation
3	Dalia	((showing the poster to the whole class))	
4	Mr. Z	Nice. <i>Can you tell me a little bit about the list of words you have at the end there?</i> You kind of tell us in the beginning about life and decisions and then all these words just together. <i>Why did you pick a couple of those words?</i>	Evaluation Initiation Comment Initiation
5	Dalia	I picked those words <i>because</i> (.) when people, um (.) start something new. There are something that they have to know. They have to do.	Explanation
6	Mr. Z	Good.	Evaluation
7	Dalia	With intelligent, something original.	Explanation
8	Mr. Z	Good. So these are all the things that a person might need (.) to begin something new or to make a new decision. Excellent. Good. <i>I didn't think about that one.</i> Very good.	Evaluation <i>Comment</i>
9	Dalia	For a good future.	Explanation
10	Mr. Z	A good future, nice. Nice job. Thank you. ((claps))	Evaluation

In line 1, Dalia introduces her poem about life choice. In turn 2, Mr. Z acknowledges Dalia's ideas and then encourages her to show the poster to the whole class. In line 4, the teacher raises two open-ended questions to elicit the Dalia's reasons for choosing the words on her poster. As Vaish observes (2008), genuine conversations between the teacher and students as well as open-ended questions improve learning. Mr. Z's two questions are not based on the presumed answers that he had in mind; rather, they are related to Dalia's own preferences because he uses the pronoun "you" in the utterances "can you tell me" and "why did you."

In *Choice words*, Johnston (2004) proposes a myriad of strategies to raise questions that stimulate learners to be engaged in intellectual activities. Mr. Z's second question

in turn 4, starting with “why,” testifies Johnston’s (2004) finding that “why” questions are essential for argumentative training and logical development. As demonstrated in the data, Dalia develops her chain of logic in turn 5 by expressing the reasons for her choice. Moreover, in line 8, Mr. Z’s italic sentence “I didn’t think about that one” reveals that Dalia’s answer is valued as a contribution to the class that the teacher cannot offer. It is worth mentioning that this utterance also verifies that the teacher does not hold all the answers, and students’ diverse perspectives are welcomed and acknowledged (Johnston, 2004).

Besides framing multiple choices and asking authentic questions, a third way to create a beneficial learning environment is to reframe the participant structure to include more voices. Participant structure refers to the “ways of arranging verbal interaction with students” (Philips, 1972, p. 377). The table below displays how Mr. Z and his students collaboratively reframe the participant structure to make it open to multiple students. In particular, Mr. Z’s language use plays an influential part in welcoming more students to take turns.

Table 3: Students defining “rebel” towards the end of Jorge’s presentation

No	Speaker	Utterance	Move
1	Mr. Z	What is it, Tarik?	Initiation
2	Tarik	Like (.) like a group of soldiers.	Response
3	Mr. Z	Well sometimes a group of soldiers are called “rebels” <i>but only when they are doing a specific //thing</i> ((looks at the whole class))	Evaluation <i>Cue</i>
5	Gregorio	//He got it]	Response
6	Cinto	They think they’re fighting over their rights. ((looks at Mr. Z))	Response
7	Mr. Z	Yeah fighting for their rights/ Usually going against the government. ((looks at Cinto and nods, and then looks at the whole class))	Evaluation Complement
8	Cinto	Yeah. ((nodding))	Response
9	Mr. Z	If you're against the government, you're the rebels. If you're against the people in power, you're rebelling. To rebel, right? Or "rebellion" is another kind of word (.) <i>So if we call someone a "rebel" it doesn't mean they're soldiers. You don't have to be a soldier. What do they do in their life, sometimes?</i> ((looks at the whole class))	Explanation <i>Correction</i> Initiation
10	Tarik	Fight.	response

At first, the participant structure is teacher to a single student, because in turn 1 Mr. Z mentions Tarik’s name to answer the question. In turn 3, despite the fact that Tarik’s response is inappropriate, Mr. Z does not shut down the conversation by offering his own definition or immediately stating that Tarik’s answer is wrong. Instead, his utterance “but only when they are doing a specific thing” serves as a cue according to Verplaetse’s finding (2000) of a feedback act, because students may further explain their interpretations of rebels’ behaviors. Moreover, by looking at the whole class and

not specifying Tarik to continue as the next speaker, Mr. Z opens the structure to every student. In turns 5 and 6, both Gregorio and Cinto take turns, possibly because they notice Mr. Z's invitation for everyone to participate. It is also important to note that although Mr. Z does not necessarily ask a question in line 3, his utterance combined with body gestures serve as the similar function of a question because two students take turns to present their answers. Consequently, the participant structure changes from teacher addressing one student, to teacher addressing multiple students. In turn 7, Mr. Z does not say that Cinto cannot take the floor because it is still Tarik's turn; instead, by first nodding at Cinto and then looking at the whole class, he encourages each learner to be involved in discussion. It is also remarkable that in turn 9, Mr. Z corrects Tarik's previous turn 2 by maintaining that rebels are not always soldiers. He corrects later rather than hastily closing Tarik's utterance; therefore, Tarik and other students can take more turns to discuss "rebel."

At the same time, not all the students in Mr. Z's class may feel comfortable when the participant structure has been changed. Philips (1972) recognizes that Indian students in the Warm Spring school demonstrate a propensity for participating in the format where teacher interact with students, whereas they are not willing to participate when required to do individual projects and group works. Similarly, in Mr. Z's class as well as other multicultural classrooms, students have previously been socialized in different educational systems where they might have been accustomed to a particular format of interaction. As a result, when altering the participant structure to include more voices, teachers should at the same time pay attention to those who do not take turns because one possible factor could be that they are not familiar with the newly altered participant structure.

In summary, the map of the above discussion is T-S1-T-S2-S3-T-S3-T-S1. This interaction also reflects Nystrand's finding (1997) that classroom discourse tends to be unpredictable and non-repeatable if collaboratively negotiated. Mr. Z and the students jointly determined the meaning of rebel in a conversational interaction. Moreover, this discussion emerges towards the end of Jorge's presentation, which confirms Rymes' observation (2009) that the border of an event can serve as a productive territory for more interactions.

Fourth, the appropriate use of both inclusive pronoun and exclusive pronoun can also create a beneficial learning condition, as verified by the following analysis.

*Table 4: Jorge's presentation about himself*

No	Speaker	Utterance	Reference	Addressee
1	Jorge	It says "Great thinking. Friendly. Smile. Change styles of color and making full noise (.) Expect the biggest spectacle. A unique idea. Giving the perfect opportunity of hope" I talk about myself (.) I am friendly (2). I like to make full noise.	first single	Jorge
2	Mr. Z	Good.		
3	Jorge	I. (.) ((laughs)) (4)	first single	Jorge

4	Mr. Z	That's all?	third single	Jorge's presentation
5	Jorge	((laughs))		
6	Mr. Z	<b>Let's</b> see it again. <b>Let's</b> see what you did (.) Hold it up.	second plural	Mr. Z and all the students
7	Alim	Let <b>me</b> see.	first single	Alim
8	Jorge	((shows his poster to the whole class))		
9	Mr. Z	Good.		
10	Gregorio	Hope? Hope.		
11	Mr. Z	So it's (.) a lot of music. It's about, um, hope. So these are all words <b>you</b> feel have <b>you</b> . (.) Now <b>you</b> have //"energy"] and "rebel" on there. Why did <b>you</b> pick those words?	second single	Jorge
12	Gregorio	//energy]		
13	Jorge	(4). <b>I</b> have a lot of energy.	first single	Jorge

In line 1, Jorge expresses what he thinks about himself. In line 2, Mr. Z acknowledges his presentation. Jorge utters “I” in line 3, but does not continue to produce extended responses. Mr. Z first says, “that’s all” with a rising tone so as to elicit his explanation, but it seems that Jorge still cannot further illustrate his ideas. In line 6, Mr. Z uses inclusive pronoun “us” twice to encourage Jorge to show his poster to the whole class. By saying, “let’s see” instead of “let me see”, Mr. Z frames the learning environment to include every student in the classroom. According to Johnston (2004), the “let’s” framework indicates collaborative efforts in problem-solving tasks. In lines 7 and 10, both Alim and Gregorio participate in learning. It is likely that Mr.Z’s invitation of all the students to participate has led to Alim and Jorge’s involvements. My assumption is that other students, although they remain silent, are still probably being engaged in learning by observing Jorge’s poster because Jorge shows his poem to the whole class for a few seconds. In line 11, Mr. Z changes the use of pronoun from an inclusive one to an exclusive one to achieve another pedagogical purpose. Mr. Z selects “you” four times to particularly choose Jorge to describe more about his poem. This change of pronoun tends to indicate that it is time for Jorge to come up with his own explanation. In line 13, Jorge maintains that the reason for his choice for words such as “hope”, “energy”, and “rebel” can be attributed to the fact that he has a lot of energies. It is also remarkable that in line 13, Gregorio utters “energy” simultaneously with Mr. z, which indicates his involvement.

In short, by using inclusive pronoun “us”, Mr. Z encourages all the students to participate in Jorge’s presentation; by choosing exclusive pronoun “you”, Mr. Z elicits one student’s personal perspective of an issue. As a consequence, the teacher’s choice of both inclusive and exclusive pronouns depends on the context, and his usage of these two types of pronouns promotes a beneficial learning condition for each student.

## Conclusion

It is fairly evident that a beneficial learning environment can be created through teacher's talk in the following ways: the use of open-ended questions; the multiple and possible choices for multicultural students, as well as the appropriate selection of pronouns. In Mr. Z's class, these pedagogical practices secure an open and democratic intellectual environment where each student's perspective is welcomed, valued and respected. Similarly, other teachers may also adopt the above strategies through language, the powerful instructional tool, to create a beneficial learning environment.

At the same time, teachers should also be aware of the fact that in multicultural classrooms, students' previous educational and social backgrounds may affect their classroom comportments in the US. For some students who are accustomed to listening without speaking, or who are familiar with teacher-centered educational systems, the teacher's expectation of their verbal participation may not be a workable criterion to gauge the learning results of those students. In Mr. Z's class, for example, it seems that girls seldom take turns either during or after the presentation event. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that they are not learning by merely observing their oral engagement; they can learn from listening to other students' presentations and Mr. Z's comments. Moreover, the teacher's language may also silence students if it fails to include their shared experience. Accordingly, instructors should be cautious of their language use and be open-minded in evaluating students' classroom behaviors.

From my personal perspective, to incorporate students' shared experience as immigrants or second language learners of English through teachers' selection of questions can be workable to invite everyone to learn. Moreover, teachers can also use universally accepted gestures such as looking around, making eye contact, and smiling to acknowledge students' behavior. In addition, the problem of social inequity is a recurrent issue that has been mentioned in students from Mr. Z's class. My hypothesis is that students in other multicultural classes may also raise similar topics. Classroom discourse analysts can observe both Mr. Z's and others' classes to see if recurrent issues exist or not with the aim of providing suggestions on teachers' choice of words to address students' common concerns. Finally, the construction of democratic and open classroom required the joint efforts of individuals both at the micro and macro levels, which indicates that teacher's language should be combined with other agents to guarantee a beneficial learning condition in the long term.



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## *South Algerian EFL Learners' Errors*

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### **Abstract**

In higher education, particularly in departments of English, EFL students write essays, and research papers in the target language. Arab learners of English, however, face several difficulties at the morphological, phonetic and phonological, stylistic and syntactic levels. This paper reports on the findings of a corpus study, which analyses the wrong use of the English verb *to exist* as *\*to be exist* as *\*is exists*, *\*are existed*, *\*does not exist*, and *\*existness*. The corpus consists of more than two thousand exam copies of mid-term, make-up and remedial exams for the academic years ranging between 2003 and 2013. The exams papers concern the fields of Discourse Typology, Linguistics and Sociolinguistics, Phonetics and Phonology. The analysis of the results obtained from the data shows that, although the wrong verb is not used by the majority of students, it is nevertheless significantly found in a number of exam sheets (s=78).

Keywords: Error Analysis, Algerian learners, EFL, errors, Intralingual interference, interlanguage, Interlingual interference, linguistic transfer.

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## Introduction

At university level, EFL students submit essays, research papers and final projects in English to show accuracy and performance in the target language. They need to master the language and the genres that characterise the various subjects such as civilisation, literature and linguistics. Yet, writing and speaking in English is a complex process for foreign language learners who, unavoidably, make a lot of errors. As part of the learning process (Hyland 2003, Ferris 2002), errors are regular and consistent (Reid, 1993) even if students learn the rules of English grammar (Lalande 1982)

Arab EFL learners, on the other side, find difficulties at the phonetic/phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. Several causes are at the origin of this fact, among which the curricula, the learners' motivations, the instrumentality of the language, and finally the lack of suitable language environment for practicing the language.

The actual research falls within the scope of Error Analysis (EA); it reports a pedagogical shortcoming whereby the English verb 'to exist' is used as \*to be exist with various grammatical structures. The corpus of study consists of more than two thousand five hundred exam papers of both new and classical systems. The surveyed exams start from the academic year 2003 to 2013 in the fields of Discourse, Linguistics, Phonetics and Phonology.

Results and analyses show that the wrong form is significantly found in a number of exam sheets. Not only is the verb to exist misused, but others too such as to depend as \*is depended and to belong as \*is belonged, to happen as \*is happened. In the next lines, a review of the literature on error analysis and its concepts is introduced.

### 1. Error Analysis

Conversely to Contrastive Analysis that compares between L1 and L2 and tries to predict errors, Error Analysis (EA) highlights actual classroom errors, which enable the teachers to assess the learners' progress. EA manages to find appropriate language learning strategies that promote the acquisition of foreign languages the way mother-tongues are acquired.

EA's principal standpoint is that learners inevitably make errors. As such, both its theoretical and practical branches aim at discovering the mental processes that trigger the learners' tactics to acquire language such as analogy, overgeneralization, and simplification. EA tries also to find out similarities and differences between language learning and language acquisition procedures so as to set exhaustive theories about their development and progress (Keshavarz 1997; Erdogan 2005).

EA seeks to measure the language performance of learners through the various errors they commit. It has become an important part of EFL teaching and learning, since it examines actual language performance of learners as part of contrastive analysis (Heydari and Bagheri, 2012 cited in Kaweera 2013:10). As far as the methodology of EA is concerned, one can classify it in the following order:

-Collecting and Identifying errors

- Classifying errors into types
- reporting frequency of errors
- Identifying areas of difficulty in L2
- Determining sources and seriousness of errors
- Finding remedies by the instructor in the classroom

At this level of description, defining ‘error’ and ‘mistake’ is essential.

### 1.1 Defining Error

An *error* has several definitions, among these is that it is part of the system of interlanguage rules and is not considered wrong by the learners (Corder, 1967). It is an unwanted linguistic form (George, 1972), or a rejected and unexpected one (Fanselow, 1977). According to Ellis (1994 and 1997)<sup>1</sup>, an error is a gap in the learner’s knowledge because he does not know if it is correct or not. Gass and Selinker (1994) assert that an error is frequent and is not corrected by the learner but by the teacher. An error, then, is “...a linguistic form which deviates from the correct form...This is called the ‘native speaker norm’” (Allwright and Bailey, 2004:84).

However, the native speaker norm may not be available in countries where non-native English teachers prevail. This is the case in Algeria where the majority of EFL teachers are local natives. In other words, the learners’ deviation from the native speaker norm is also a consequence of the non-native teacher who may not master the language, its grammar and phonology.

The notion *error* fluctuates according to changes in pedagogy and, most particularly, changes in teachers’ attitudes towards and treatment of errors and mistakes. After Hymes’ (1971) concept of Communicative Competence, communicative approaches to language teaching give more importance to communicative effectiveness than to formal accuracy. The concern, then, is with the learners’ ability to clearly communicate ideas than to grammatically produce correct sentences (Canale and Swain, 1980).

### 1.2 Error or mistake

Corder (1967) considers errors as “regular patterns in the learners’ speech which consistently differ from the target language model. These patterns reveal the learner’s underlying competence, i.e. the system of rules that govern his speech” (in Allwright and Bailey, 2004:91). For Chaudron (1986:66), errors are 1) linguistic forms or content that differed from native speech norms or facts, and 2) any other behavior signaled by the teacher as needing improvement. The learners do not perceive errors as wrong forms, since they are part of their system of interlanguage rules.

A *mistake*, in contrast, is due to the learner’s occasional lapse; it happens when the learner does not know how to put his knowledge into practice. In general, second language learners correct their mistakes, but not their errors.

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<sup>1</sup> For Ellis (1997: 51) a ‘transfer’ is ‘the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2’.

Ellis (1997) stresses that there are two possible ways to verify whether a form is a mistake or an error. The first is through consistency of performance, i.e. frequency of repetition on the part of the learner. If this last uses the wrong form a few times, it is a mistake. If he persists to use it and does not consider it incorrect, it is an error. The other way is to ask the learner to correct the deviant word. If he succeeds, it is a mistake; but if he fails, it is therefore an error.

Generally, a mistake is a fault due to inattention, fatigue, or carelessness on the part of the learner. Whereas, the error is perceived by native speakers as the proof of incomplete learning of the target language. Moreover, the mistake can be self-corrected, while the error is not (Richards et al., 1992). In foreign language learning, making a mistake/error shows the learner's trial to reproduce or reconstruct the target language forms.

### **1.3 Error or Fossilisation**

Fossilisation is a unique phenomenon in second language learning (Ellis, 1997). It is often used to refer to the learners' persistence in using wrong forms. Brown (1987) states that: "the internalization of incorrect forms takes place by means of the same learning process as the internalization of correct forms, but we refer to the latter...as "learning"" (1987:186) while the former is called fossilisation. In a few words, fossilisation is the regular and constant use of 'erroneous' forms by second language learners.

Various hypotheses are proposed to account for the question 'why do second language learners make errors? Among the most important are: negative interference of mother tongue, intralingual and interlingual errors. These are developed in the next lines.

### **1.4 Written Errors**

Hyland (2003) points out to the difficulties that L2 learners stumble upon in writing English. In particular, he stresses on the "burden of acquiring English and learning to write simultaneously" (in Kaweera, 2013:9). Both Ferris (2002) and Hyland (2003) agree that EFL written compositions are short, lack cohesion and fluency, and are full of errors. Lalande (1982:140) states that: "some students exhibit remarkable consistency: they commit the same type of errors from one essay to the next". In other words, written errors are a source of frustration for both instructors and learners because of their undesirable consistency.

### **1.5 Types of Error**

Stenson (1983) explains that an error can be 'induced', i.e.: it is "...resulting from the classroom situation; teacher explanation and practice" (cited in Karra, 2006). As for James (1998:1991), induced errors are material-induced errors, teacher-talk induced errors, and exercise-based induced errors. All of which belong to the category of classroom-based errors.

Moreover, Corder (1973) asserts that the learner may face several kinds of errors. These are:

1-omission of some element,

- 2-addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element,
- 3-selection of an incorrect element, and
- 4-misordering of the element

There are several causes to the latter kinds of error, the system of interlanguage and the linguistic transfer.

## 2. Sources of Interference

The most probable sources of influence on the learning of foreign languages are the 'Interlanguage' and the linguistic transfer. Interlanguage was first coined by Selinker (1972) to refer to the fluctuating stages that any second language learner goes through. It is, in other words, the learners' linguistic development between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). It is characterised by various types of errors made by the learners who do not consider errors as *errors*, and do not consider them as wrong. The system of interlanguage rules accounts for this fact.

Other researchers refer the sources of error to the negative interference of the mother-tongue on L2 acquisition. They label it as 'First language interference' (Reid 1993), or as 'Interference error' (Richards, 1971). On the other hand, two types of language transfer are acknowledged as sources of errors; interlingual and intralingual interference.

### 2.1 Intra- and Interlingual Interference

Intralingual transfer is a universal characteristic of the learners' attempts to simplify the learning process (Ellis, 1997). As an instance, most learners use the suffix of regular past forms, {-ed}, with all verbs. They simplify and overgeneralise the pattern. Intralingual interference can be defined as the incorrect generalisation of the rules within TL, such as false analogy, misanalysis, incomplete rule application, redundancy exploitation, overlooking cooccurrence, hypercorrection and overgeneralization.

Interlingual transfer, on the other side, is the influence that the learners' first language phonological, syntactic and lexic-semantic levels exert on foreign language learning. Interlingual interference, also referred to as developmental error occurs when students hypothesise about TL based on their limited knowledge. In opposition to the behaviouristic approach to language acquisition, interlingual errors are not old habits that the learners cannot get rid of; rather, they are the evidence that the learner is 'learning' the new language patterns.

The interference of L1 on the learning of L2 is apparent when the two languages are structurally different, for instance Arabic and English. The learners show a high frequency of errors both in speaking and writing to the point that some researchers (Bhela, 1999) ask the question: "what kinds of language do second language learners produce in speaking and writing? Interference is defined as 'errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue' (Lott, 1983:256). Consequently, errors are found both in spoken and written forms.

The present research illustrates that the learners' misuse of the verb to exist is at the level of Corder's (1973) second type of error, i.e.: addition of some unnecessary or incorrect element. The added elements are the auxiliaries to be and to do, the bound morphemes {-s} and {-ed} for present and past tense, respectively. The other syntactic elements are the modals must and should, as well as the adverbs already, also, never, and still. The misused verb is found in the affirmative, interrogative, and negative forms.

On the other hand, it is the researcher's contention that the misused form is teacher-induced and that it is not the result of L1 negative interference on the learning of L2. Rather, the wrong verb \*to be exist illustrates the complexity of L2 learning process in a context where both teachers and learners are non native speakers, and where practice inside and outside the classroom is questionable.

### 3. Theoretical Background

Writing academic papers is time-consuming and necessitates students' personal involvement, attentiveness, knowledge, and savoir-faire. To achieve that aim, the students need a lot of training, particularly in grammar, written expression and semantics.

Kambal (1980) asserts that Sudanese students of English have troubles with verb formation and tense. In 1983, Mukattash's study of Jordanian EFL students of English concluded that the learners have difficulties in pronunciation, spelling, morphology and syntax. More than that, the students do not communicate in the target language neither about 'academic topics' nor about 'common everyday topics' (Mukattash, 1983:169). Lack of the necessary knowledge makes them unable to talk fluently in English.

Zughoul and Taminian (1984), report that Jordanian learners of English have tremendous problems at the lexical level. Abbad (1988) describes the low level of Yemeni learners who are admitted to the department of English. He refers this problem to the inappropriate methods of teaching and the social environment which does not help in the English teaching/learning process. For instance, English is not found outside schools and universities. It is restricted to classroom activities and the reading of few books (Bhela 1999:22).

According to Rabab'ah (2003), the main problem of EFL learning /teaching is due to the teachers who are non-native English speakers. Most EFL teachers in the Arab world are Arabic native speakers.<sup>2</sup> Hisham's (2008) research on Arab students of business at University Utara Malaysia, reports that they face difficulties with the vocabulary register, grammar and referencing. Tahaineh (2010) conclusion about Jordanian EFL learners faulty use of English prepositions is that "MT [mother-tongue] is the major source of EFL learners' errors (58%=1323). However, transfer strategies of the TL [target language] itself are also detected and constituted a major part of the errors too (42%=967)".

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<sup>2</sup> This point is well commented on by Widdowson (1994) who says: "the native speaker teachers are generally equipped with knowledge only in a privileged intuitive sense, and with pedagogic competence only to a rudimentary degree... the nonnative speaker teachers know the "subject", English, in an explicit rather than intuitive sense, by virtue of having themselves learnt it as a foreign language."



In Algeria, several academic papers dealt with the learning of English at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Among these are Benrabah (1999, and 2002), Lakehal-Ayat Bermati (2008), Cherouana (2010), and Rezig (2011). The difficulties reported concern English sounds and phonemes, syntactic constructions and meanings.

Benrabah (2002) describes Arabisation in Algeria and the gradual introduction of English as part of the new reform (in Lakehal-Ayat Bermati, 2008:139). For Benrabah, the introduction of English in the sixth grade of primary school is a political decision; he says: “Et, à partir de 1996, le ministre de l’Education de l’époque décide de favoriser l’anglais au dépens du français.” (p:76)<sup>3</sup>

As for Rezig (2011), the difficulties are not only linguistic, but also human. She asserts that the implementation of Arabisation entailed the teaching of Arabic at the expense of English and French, and that the teachers “were not formed to cope with such alterations [reforms] as it is the case of university teachers with the application of the LMD system” (p:1328). She also stresses the fact that, although they are taught English since the age of 13, many young university students are ill-oriented towards the study of English at a higher level. Many have chosen other domains and specialties, but did not receive a favorable answer from the orientation services of higher education after succeeding in the baccalaureate exam.

Moreover, Rezig (2011) points to the problem faced by the students who have negative attitudes towards the culture of the target language. She says: “The students’ reaction to the English culture is one of the elements that affects much their motivation since some students who develop a negative attitude to the foreign language culture have learning differences because of the striking cultural differences between the Algerian and the English societies.” (p: 1330)<sup>4</sup>

Learners’ attitude towards the target language impacts on their success or failure in learning the foreign language. In 1969, Spolsky noted that the environment around the learner is a factor influencing and “controlling the learner’s motivation to acquire the language” (p: 237). He also adds that the main actors in that situation are the learner, the teacher, the learner’s peers and parents, and the speakers of the language.

Spolsky (1989) asserts that the social context has a direct influence on the learning of a second language. He says that the social context: “...plays a major role in developing in the learner the set of attitudes towards the language being learned, its speakers, and the language learning situation that...are hypothesized to influence motivation directly.” (p: 131)

Cherouana (2010) affirms that, for Algerian learners of English, the main hindrance is at the level of speech intelligibility, recognition, and production. Both pupils and students have difficulties to reproduce the English *accent*; they pronounce it approximately. Most of the time, they rely on their own L1 phonology to realise the

<sup>3</sup> And, starting from 1996, the minister of education at that time decides to promote English at the expense of French.”

<sup>4</sup> According to Gardner and Lambert (1959) there are two types of motivations, Integrative and Instrumental. Integrative motivation characterizes the foreign language learner who shows a real interest in the culture of the target language, and who would like to be part of it. The instrumental, on the other hand, is a feature of those who learn foreign languages for utilitarian aims, such as getting a job, communicating with foreigners or chatting, etc.

foreign sounds, particularly the interdental, the short vowels, the diphthongs and triphthongs.

At higher education level, Lakehal-Ayat Bermati sees that the most important drawback related to the teaching of foreign languages is the “Haste to recruit teachers who did not have yet the right qualifications.” (2008:126). Rezig (2011) confirms her conclusions, and adds that the level of the teachers of English is decreasing more than it is improving. In general, the various studies of Arab learners of English report the same hindrances; these can be summed up as follows:

- impact of the mother-tongue (phonology and syntax) on the learning process,
- inconsistent curricula and teaching methodologies,
- instrumentality of the foreign language (job seeking, chatting, tourism, etc.)
- lack of the target language’s environment (summer linguistic village, language immersion),
- lack of motivation for both pupils and students, and
- low quality of teaching at intermediate, secondary and university levels
- low level of competence of pupils and undergraduate students,

The above-cited causes are serious issues in the field of applied linguistics, particularly in non-native English speaking countries. Comparing the phonetic/phonological and syntactic patterns of the mother-tongue to those of the target language would permit to explain the errors made by the learners.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. Research Methodology

For more than ten years, present researcher noticed the recurrence of the verb to exist as *\*is exist-is existed, was existed* in exam papers at the department of English of the university of Adrar, southern Algeria. At first, it seemed to be individual mistakes, but after a closer examination, it happened to be a frequent error committed by several students from different graduation levels. In light of this observed phenomenon, the research questions that arise and that the present study seeks to answer are:

- are these occurrences errors or mistakes?
- what types of errors do we have?
- what is their frequency of occurrence?
- Is there any geographical distribution of this error at the level of formal schools?

The research survey consists of 2525 exam sheets in the fields of discourse, linguistics, sociolinguistics, and phonology starting from the academic years 2003 to 2013. Exam papers of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 are not surveyed, since they are missing at the university archives. It is also worth noting that the module of discourse typology is taught in the first semester of 1<sup>st</sup> year LMD (new system) starting from 2011 onward.

The subject matters chosen are the researcher’s main pedagogical units of teaching. As such, having access to papers already corrected, and on which the wrong forms are already notated is time saving.

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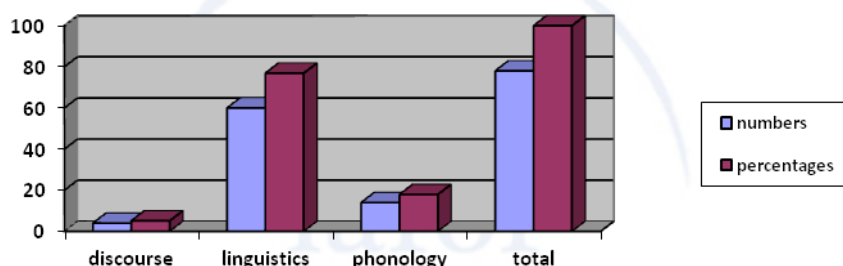
<sup>5</sup> Vecide Erdoğan, *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, December 2005, pp. 261-270. He says that: “Error analysis enables teachers to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them. Thus, the analysis of learner language has become an essential need to overcome some questions and propose solutions regarding different aspects.” (p. 263)

## 4.1 The Results

Various results are obtained:

1. Out of 2525 exam sheets , only 67 papers (=2.65%) contain the wrong verb form
2. The number of token is 78
3. 47 students have used the wrong form in their exam papers
4. 5 students repeated the error more than once and throughout the years
5. Students who misuse the verb are both males (n=09) and females (n=58)
6. The misused word is found in the exams of linguistics (n=60, or 76.92%) phonology (n=14, or 17.94%), and discourse typology (n=4, or 5.12%)(cf. Graph n°1)
7. The academic years 2009 and 2010 record the highest use of the wrong form.
8. Students who misuse the verb to exist belong to the four classical and the 1<sup>st</sup> year LMD academic levels
9. Students who make use of the wrong verb come from all areas of Adrar district.
10. Some students who make use of the wrong verb come from other administrative and geographical districts.

Graph n°1: number and percentage of tokens by fields



## 4.2 Grammatical Forms of the Wrong Verb

The next lines illustrate the grammatical structures used with the wrong verb and their frequency in the exam papers:

The grammatical forms	examples	Frequency
aux. + vs sing	Is exist(e)	17
aux. + ved sing	Is existed	09
aux + neg. part. + vs sing.	Is not exist(e)	07
aux. + vs sing	Is exists	06
aux. + ved plur.	Are existed	05
aux + neg. part. + vs sing.	Is no exist	04
aux. + ved plur	Was existed	02
aux + adv + vs sing.	Is already exist(s)	02
aux + neg.part. + Vs plur.	Are not exist	02
aux. + neg.part + Ved plur	Were not existed	01
aux. + neg.part + Ved sing	Was not existed	01
aux. + neg.part + Ved plur	Was not exist	01
Aux. + part+ Ved	Should be existed	01
neg.part + Vs	Not exists	01
neg.part + adv. + Ved	Not already existed	01

modal+ Vs	Must be exist	01
modal + Ved	May be existed	01
aux + adv + Vs sing.	Is still exists	01
aux + adv.neg + Vs sing.	Is never exist	01
aux + adv + Vs sing.	Is also exists	01
Aux. + neg.part+ Ved	Doesn't existed	01
aux + neg. part. + Vs sing.	Doesn't exist(e)	01
aux + adv. neg + Vs sing.	Does never exist	01
aux. + Vs sing.	Does (it) exists	01
Conj. + aux.ing+ neg. +Ved	As being non existed	01
aux + neg. part. + Ved plur.	Are not existed	01
aux + neg. part. + Vs plur.	Are not exist	01
aux. + Ving plur.	Are existing	01
Aux. +Ved plur	Are existed	01
miscellaneous	existness	01
	Total	<b>78</b>

As the table shows, there are two types of wrong uses; those which occur once (n=24 or 30.76%), and those which have more than one occurrence (n=54 or 69.23%). Those belonging to the first set can be labelled mistakes; whereas, those that are frequently repeated exemplify errors.

#### 4.4 Geographical Distribution of the Wrong Form

An important finding is that the students who misuse the verb to exist come from different geographical backgrounds. This leads to the conclusion that the misused verb is widely spread throughout the area. The following table illustrates the spatial distribution of the token according to students' place of birth and education:

Locations	Students using the wrong form
Adrar	21
Aougrouit	01
Aoulef	01
Bouali	01
Bouda	01
Fenoughil	01
Inzegmir	02
Oufrane	01
Reggane	02
Sali	02
Timimoun	06
Zagloul	02
Zaouiet-kounta	06
Total	47

The same form is found in the written papers of some students, who were born in other districts. For instance:

Districts	Students using the wrong form
Bechar	01
Ghardaia	01
Meniaa	01
Tlemcen	01
Total	04

The results of the latter table point to other questions: did students from the other districts learn the wrong form in Adrar? Or did they bring it with them from other schools? To answer these questions, an exhaustive and quantitative field-research is necessary. It needs to involve researchers and informants from different regions and districts, not only in the south but also in the north of the country.

### 4.3 Examples of Individual Errors

As far as EA is concerned, five (i.e.: 10.63%) students repeat the same error more than once. They do not seem to consider it as wrong, for they misuse the verb sometimes twice in the same exam paper. They also do not *consciously* correct it, since they repeat the errors in the same year and in different exam sessions. Their wrong use of the verb to exist is significant, for it represents 31.91% of the whole data.

Other students use the wrong form throughout various years and exams. The next table reports the evolution of the use of the wrong verb by some students, represented as ST1, ST2, etc.:

	1 <sup>st</sup> exam	2 <sup>nd</sup> exam	Make-up exam	Remedial exam	years	Total occurrences of and years
ST1			Phon3		2008-2009	05 4 years
				Ling3 (x 02)	2009-2010	
			Ling3		2010-2011	
				Ling4	2012-2013	
ST2		Ling3			2007-2008	03 2 years
	Ling3				2008-2009	
		Ling3			2008-2009	
ST3		Phon3			2011-2012	02 2 years
	Ling4				2012-2013	
ST4		Phon3			2011-2012	02 2 years
				Ling4	2012-2013	
ST5		Ling3			2008-2009	02 2 years
	Ling4				2009-2010	
Total	03	04	02	04	6 years	

## Conclusion

This study shows that the verb to exist, misused as *\*to be exist* is frequently found in the exam papers. It is significantly present in students' written compositions (s=78). This wrong form could be considered as a mistake, but in regard to its repetition, it is an error. In some instances, the wrong form is repeated more than once in the same paper, or throughout the years.

The fact that the students who make this error and mistake come from the various areas of Adrar and other districts is puzzling on itself. It shows that this ill-written item is more widespread than it seems. It also shows that the students brought it from either secondary or intermediate schools. In other words, the present research is just a tentative answer to a phenomenon which is deeply rooted in the educational system. It also means that the research needs not to stop at this stage, but has to go further by taking into consideration not only the learners but also the teachers of the three educational levels, the intermediate, the secondary, and the higher.

As far as language transfer from L1 to L2 is concerned, one can say that there is no clear-cut evidence that this is the case for the learners. The interlingual transfer from the mother-tongue to the target language is not probable, for the construction *\*to be exist* does not exist in 'Arabic'. Intralingual transfer is more probable than the interlingual. As evidence for this assertion are the frequent ill-uses like *\*are belong*, *\*are disappear*, and *\*is differed*, *\*is differ*, *\*are differing* with the meaning is different from, or *\*is dependent on*, *\*is depended on* for it depends on, *\*is finded* for is found, *\*is happened* instead of has happened, or else *\*can identified*, *\*should be know*, *\*can used it*, *\*can defines*, *\*do/did not born*, *\*can says/said that*, *\*could not appeared*, etc.

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## *Done with the Do's in a Venn*

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### **Abstract**

Taking the challenge to engage ESL (English as a Second Language) learners in settling a confusing language structure in English language teaching, the researcher applied the set theory in the Venn Diagram. With college students in two (2) ESL classes as participants in the study, the uses and correct usage of the *do-support* verbs in sentences were presented in standard and radial Venn diagrams. The visual scaffolding utilized in the week-long sessions yielded remarkable results to disambiguate the syntactic concerns on the grammatical issue in focus. Pre-tests and post-tests administered in the experimental research indicated comparatively significant scores showing the effectiveness of Venn diagrams in distinguishing the *do*, *does*, and *did* as do-support verbs in terms of uses and correct usage. In conclusion, using the Venn indeed had learning the do's done.

Keywords: Venn Diagram, visual scaffolding, do-support verbs

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## Introduction

Addressing the recommendation presented in a previous study on “Verbals in a Venn” using the Venn Diagram in settling language issues that apply the set theory, the researcher used the same visual scaffold in handling the *do-support* verbs in teaching ESL classes in the tertiary level. In the same paper was stressed that simple and familiar visuals can be effective teaching-learning aids in confusing language structures in the target second language.

Though digital technology has eclipsed traditional English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign language (EFL) teaching methodologies in terms of production of quality instructional materials and immediate access of the language learners to these, it may still be worthy to determine if optimum learning in the present educational setting can best be acquired only through the sophistication that online videos and clips, digital games, interactive software, social network simulations offer (Klopfer et al., 2009). In principled eclecticism (Freeman & Anderson, 2011), language teaching stresses meeting the needs of learners and the exigencies of their particular contexts for a ‘method in action.’

It is in the preceding reality to English language teachers and practitioners that partly the research veers its direction and that the Venn Diagram, a linear graphic organizer, may well still be as functional in teaching *do-support* verbs, a confusing grammatical structure to ESL/EFL learners in statements and questions.

## Statement of the Problem

As an extension to the research undertaking on “Verbals in a Venn,” the research aimed to answer the following:

Does the Venn Diagram have a significant effect on the students’ comprehension on the uses and correct usage of the *do-support* verbs in statements and in yes-no questions?

## Significance of the Study

The study, highlighting the use of a Venn Diagram as a linear graphic organizer in discussing a language dilemma to English language learners, is a leveling up for Venn diagram users exclusively for mathematics, logic, and statistics. Language courses are mostly confined to concept maps, tree diagrams, pictures, tables, charts, and graphs for visual or graphic organizers in print media and recently made available likewise in digital technology. The simplicity and clarity of explaining the application of the set theory in a problematic syntactical concern, the *do-support* verbs in verbal and written communication in English through the Venn, may well be both helpful to the language teacher and the ESL/EFL learners.

## Literature Review

Krashen’s Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (1985) considering the comprehensible input as the primary goal of every language teacher in second language acquisition sets the need for comparisons and contrasts between two or more concepts which

exist in dealing with the *do-support* verbs in statements and questions. The *do*, *does*, and *did*, which commonly are termed auxiliary verbs take on a new dimension when their uses and correct usage are clarified to the second language learners. The complexity in distinguishing one from the other to attain grammatical correctness has to be fully explained taking into account the current level of competence of the learner and the next structure in the natural order of learning to prepare the learner.

VanPatten's Input Processing (IP) Model (2002), an innovation of Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, regards the fundamental role of the given input and processing it to better acquire the underlying grammar. The cognitive process is activated when input is understood and integrated into inter-languages. Lindsay and Knight (2006) in their CRISP Framework advocating Clear, Relevant, Interesting, Short, and Productive teaching of grammar seem to agree with VanPatten in facilitating successful second language acquisition and learning.

An ESL/EFL teacher who is open to accepting challenges of teaching probabilistic 'grammar rules' similarly realizes that there are many aspects of spoken grammar which are not yet well-enough understood to be taught systematically (Tilbury, 2011). The *do-support* verbs taken as a group can be categorized so and in addition not merely in verbal but as well as in the written mode.

The use of Venn Diagram to explore the possibility of teaching the *do*, *does*, and *did* as support or auxiliary in statements and in questions might be as effective as a visual scaffold (in untangling the infinitives, gerunds, and participles as verbals) in another research undertaking. Vygotsky's Scaffolding Theory (1983) where the teacher or an adult learner assists in the learning process is thus justified.

### **Methodology**

Sixty-one (61) ESL learners in two (2) classes in the tertiary level, one consisting of freshmen, and the other comprising sophomores, participated in the study. The first class of thirty-five (35) students belongs to the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), while the second class of twenty-six (26) students comes from the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management (CITHM)

The experimental design was used with a pretest and posttest administered for the two groups, the CAS group of thirty-five with the intervention, and the CITHM group of twenty-six without intervention, after thorough discussions. A couple of Venn diagrams had to be used as the visual scaffold for intervention. Both the ten-item teacher-designed pretest and posttest were parallel in content with the use of the *do*, *does*, and *did* as support verbs in statements and yes-no questions.

The Venn Diagram showed how the *do-support* verbs qualify in the application of the set theory used by John Venn (1880) in his math, logic, and statistics classes. Comparisons and contrasts were pinpointed with corresponding statements and yes-no questions for examples.

Prior to the pretest and posttest, the issue on the use of *do-support* verbs in sentences was resolved. How *do* as main verbs differ from *do* as auxiliary verbs was eventually settled, with the latter's role in statements and questions made clearer.

The researcher, as in her previous study, was a participant-observer, being the main discussant and lecturer in the process. Venn diagrams personally-constructed were based on the Venn diagrams used in her “Verbals in a Venn” which yielded significant results.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Results and Findings**

The demonstration of the concept in finding the similarities and differences in the uses and correct usage of the *do-support* verbs in the Venn Diagram triggered in the participants familiarity with a visual scaffold to render ease in comprehension of the language structure presented. How *do*, *does*, and *did* are accompanied with main verbs and their respective positions in a statement or a question were shown supported by sample sentences. In addition, interest in the discussion was sustained from beginning to end.

On the other hand, a longer period of time was used for the discussion of the same structure in the class without the intervention. The teacher-researcher had to provide more sentences as examples to process the learning of the students. Eliciting sentences using the *do*, *does*, and *did* was quite a struggle.

Using the Fischer Test (z-test) for a sample greater than thirty (30) for the group with intervention, the Stepwise Method was used getting 8 as the highest score for the pretest, and 10 for the posttest. The lowest score obtained for the pretest and posttest was 1. With the Level of Significance set at 0.05,  $N = 35$  and since computed  $Z = 4.37$  is higher than  $Z_{critical} 1.96$ , the null hypothesis is then rejected. This means that the Venn Diagram has a significant effect on the students' comprehension on the uses and correct usage of *do-support* verbs in statements and in *yes-no* questions.

### **Conclusion**

Subscribing to Lindsay and Knight's CRISP Framework, Puchta, Stranks and Jones (2013) stated that teenagers' impatience for complicated list of rules and exceptions would have them wanting what is short and sweet. The Venn Diagram seems to fit this need in learning and teaching grammar.

The ESL/EFL teacher serious in simplifying things to get things done in the classroom certainly knows that good teaching is being able to transmit information effectively as well as explain and clarify difficult concepts (Rogers, 2013).

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*If at First You Don't Succeed ...*

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Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

This research focusses on how errors are generally regarded in the process of language learning, and more specifically in the written production. The starting point of the present work is the existing debate on the subject between John Truscott and Dana Ferris. While the former defends the necessity of abandoning all grammatical correction, the latter stands for quite the opposite enhancing the benefits that derive from such practice. The controversy generated by both authors on the matter raised the question of where language learners actually stand on the issue. This paper documents pertinent research conducted with a mixed group of English language learners at the *Sección de EOI* (Official School of Languages) in Laguna de Duero (Valladolid, Spain). Generally speaking, the findings seem to be unmistakably favourable to Ferris.

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“If at first you don’t succeed,...” is the beginning of a saying, part of our lore, which makes reference to the need of making mistakes in order to learn. In fact, the importance that mistakes and errors have always been bestowed cannot be denied, with independence of the methodological perspective they have been studied under. Moreover, one of the main changes regarding error consideration has been closely related to its value within the process of acquiring a language rather than as an indicator of the rate of achievement obtained, as had been traditionally regarded, considering error as a deviation of the linguistic system of the language studied.

However, despite regarding the error as a guiding element of the learning process, not all scholars, teachers and learners agree on the idea of correcting it. The choice that the educational community faces does not only refer to whether errors should be corrected or not, but also to how and why they should be corrected. It is from this dilemma that Truscott-Ferris’ debate issues forth.

Since it is undeniable that learners play a key role in the teaching/learning process, the main aim of the present article is to address their position before errors and their correction. For that purpose, a study has been carried out based on a survey conducted with a mixed group of English language learners at the EOI Laguna de Duero (Sección de EOI Valladolid, Spain).<sup>1</sup>

### **Truscott-Ferris’ Debate**

When John Truscott published his article “The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes” (1996) describing grammar correction not only as an unnecessary but also harmful practice, an interesting debate arose on the beneficial and detrimental effects derived from grammar correction. In 1999, Dana Ferris took up the gauntlet and responded Truscott with her article “The Case for Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes: A Response to Truscott”, countering his position. Soon other voices would join in a debate that still prevails.

### **Truscott’s Thesis**

Truscott asserts that researches have failed to analyse the process of correction from a critical perspective, paying little attention to the effect this has on learners’ attitudes or to how much time and effort consuming such practice in writing lessons is.

Truscott focuses on *interlanguage* studies, highlighting the underlying psychological processes inherent to that of acquiring a language. He adds that the syntactical, morphological and lexical knowledge are acquired in different ways and, therefore, different ways of correction should be applied to each of them.

When analysing the effects of different pedagogical approaches, he asserts that researches should take into account not only whether something has been learnt but also what type of learning has been generated in order to check to what extent the teaching/learning process has been effective.

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<sup>1</sup> EOI stands for *Escuela oficial de idiomas* (Official School of Languages) in Spanish.

Truscott defends that an effective correction involves several requirements, among them the teacher's ability to recognise errors which are relevant in the learner's development and to give a satisfactory answer to them in a consistent and systematic manner.

Likewise, not only does John Truscott stress learners' negative attitude towards writing but he also concludes that grammar correction significantly harms the complexity of learners' production as a consequence of the unpleasantness associated to correction.

Before the defence of grammar correction as a practice required by the learner, Truscott asserts that, in most cases, the latter is only replicating some beliefs instilled by the teacher. He goes on to point out the great dependence learners have on teachers regarding the different pedagogical approaches and, thus, error correction.

### **Ferris' Thesis**

As a response to Truscott's article, Ferris (1999) states that the error correction practice in writing is and has always been a worrying matter within the teaching/learning process of a language. In her revision of Truscott, Ferris claims problems of precision in the definition of grammar correction and adds that, since some learners benefit from it to some extent, grammar correction may be considered efficient.

However, she agrees with Truscott on considering that there are reasons to believe that the acquisition of syntactic, morphological and lexical knowledge is achieved in different ways and, thus, should be subject to different ways of correction. Ferris uses this coincidence, though, to defend that learners can be taught to self-correct. And, in doing so, Ferris expresses her preference for the indirect grammar correction (error identification) to direct grammar correction (the teacher's correction of the learner's errors).

Clearly, teachers need a good linguistic, syntactic and pragmatic theoretical base of how to teach grammar to second language learners and have to establish a priority of errors to correct, always bearing in mind that learners respond differently to grammar correction.

Dana Ferris concludes that, instead of fostering the neglect of grammar correction as proposed by Truscott, it would be more suitable to search for new and more effective ways of correction. The reasons she alleges are based on the studies on learners' opinion regarding feedback, which support the relevance of such information (Cohen 1987; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994, Leki, 1991; Radecki and Swales, 1988) and on the reflection of many teachers who claim that no grammar correction can frustrate learners to such an extent that it may interfere with their motivation and self-confidence when writing. This issue gains relevance when such errors may prevent learners from achieving their academic goals.

## **Other considerations**

Although Truscott does not make any explicit reference to any pedagogical approach, he is inferred to defend the position that in order to control the writing skills, it is necessary to master the process of writing besides having a good grammatical knowledge. He seems to take for granted that all learners have fully developed their writing skills in their first language and are just seeking for a personal way of expression in the second one. However, what happens to those learners who are acquiring a second language at the same time as they are developing their writing skills in their first language?

Truscott seems to speak in absolute terms when analysing results, not taking into consideration the different variables present in the teaching/learning process of a language (cultural background, motivation, context,...) He also ignores learners' cognitive styles as he does not provide differentiated responses for any of them, which contradicts his argument that the different pedagogical approaches should respond to the different learning procedures. Besides, he obviates essential elements of the teaching/learning process when he rejects Ferris' reasons in favour of grammar correction, namely, learners' and teachers' attitudes towards it and the development of the skill to self-correct.

In spite of basing his thesis on the interlanguage theories, Truscott does not show any interest in analysing nor describing the idiosyncrasy of the learner's idiolect, which is where the true difficulty relies when trying to understand the stage a learner is at. He simply presumes that there are certain types of errors that learners are not able to self-correct without giving any reasons for such occurrence, clearly contradicting his thesis of abandoning grammar correction. For her part, Ferris acknowledges the limitations grammar correction still has but insists on searching for new ways so as to make it more efficient.

In any case, both authors pay special attention to the learner as the focal point of the teaching/learning process, however, their positions differ when they analyse the figure of the teacher. Whereas Ferris defends that the teacher should help and guide the learner with all the difficulties that may arise, Truscott rejects such relationship, arguing that such disposition only generates a relationship of dependence between the learner and the teacher.

## **The educational context**

Before proceeding, it is relevant to analyse the institution where this teaching/learning process takes place as it plays an important role in the development of such process since the institution establishes a syllabus with very clear objectives, which have a direct impact on the teaching/learning process.

In this particular case, the Official School of Languages, the institution in which the present study has been carried out, is guided by the criteria described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which takes into account the development of communicative strategies, namely, avoidance strategies and compensation strategies. The former, which means a downward readjustment of the message, contradicts Truscott's thesis; the latter is a more positive approach since the

learner proposes solutions to their deficiencies. Interestingly, the CEFR also accepts error making as an intrinsic part of the process of writing.

However, the Official School of Languages does not only work as a teaching entity but also as a certifying one and here it also follows the guidelines indicated by the CEFR. In this respect, special attention should be paid to the disparity existing between the type of evaluation tool preferred by the teachers, on one side, and the educational administration and students, on the other side. While teachers opt for an evaluation method that focuses on the progress made, educational institutions and students tend to prefer one where results prevail. As teachers, we should ask ourselves where we stand regarding assessment criteria and the tools used when assessing.

What is the connection between the teaching and assessing roles the EOI has and, hence, of the teacher working there? Unfortunately, the teaching role is not as closely related to the assessing role as expected. In fact, there is a clear division of the teacher's roles that is evident in the dissociation between the teaching/learning process that occurs along the academic year and the evaluation one at the end of it.

We can conclude, therefore, that assessment is not included within the teaching/learning process as it should be and that it is simply considered as a certifying tool. Independently from the fact that there are placement tests as well as progress and summative tests, all of them take place at a certain moment and analyse limited linguistic samples, which might not prove to be so reliable in regards to reflecting the progress made by the learner along the teaching/learning process.

### **What is the learner's attitude before error correction?**

A survey was carried out at the EOI in Laguna de Duero (Valladolid, Spain) in May of the present academic year (2013-2014) with the objective of analysing the learner's position before error correction. A total of 94 ESL learners took part in it, representing all the levels taught at the institution (A1-A2, B1-B2)<sup>2</sup> and having Truscott-Ferris' debate in the background.

In order to determine the learners' profile several factors were taken into consideration, such as age, knowledge background, motivation, language competence and prior experience in the learning of a language.

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<sup>2</sup> A1-A2 levels of competence make reference to a basic user and B1 and B2 to an independent user, according to the CEFR.

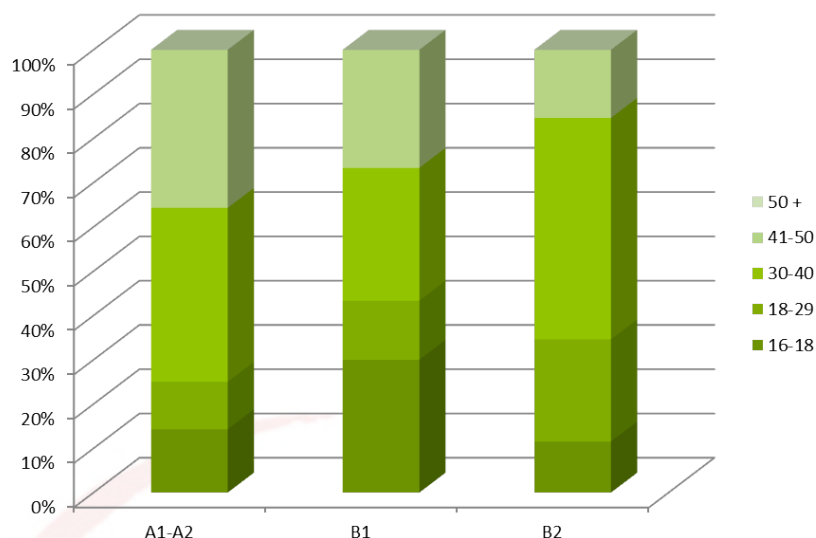


Fig. 1 – Age

As seen in Fig.1, there is a great disparity as far as age is concerned depending on the levels of language competence – the basic learner being the older, followed by B2 and B1, respectively.

As for their knowledge background, whereas the basic learner’s profile shows a wider diversity of studies, ranging from primary school to university studies, as the learner progresses in language competence, this scope becomes more limited with a clear prevalence of university studies.

Although over 50% of the learners surveyed claim to have prior experience in learning another language, this is not equal for all levels: 50% in the basic stages and B2 level, whereas 65% of the B1 learners surveyed indicated that they had prior experience in language learning. This is a direct consequence of the generalisation of language teaching and learning in the Spanish education system, which reflects on the younger generations having direct access to the intermediate stages at the EOI.

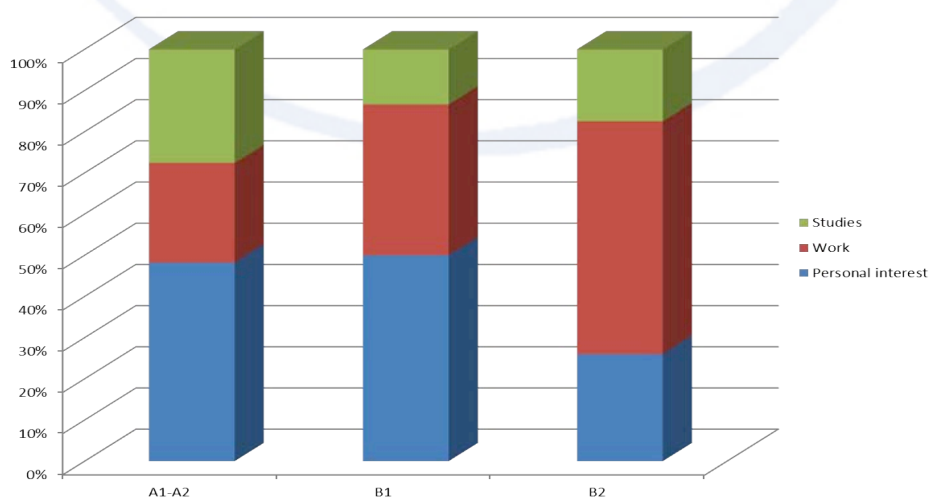


Fig. 2 - Motivation

Another essential factor is learners' motivation to study another language, in this case, English. Once again there is a clear difference between levels: basic learners tend to study another language out of personal interest whereas the independent user is guided by the need to complete their studies or to improve their chances of obtaining a better job. This is a direct consequence of the socio-economic situation Spain is currently undergoing.

**How do you feel when corrected?**

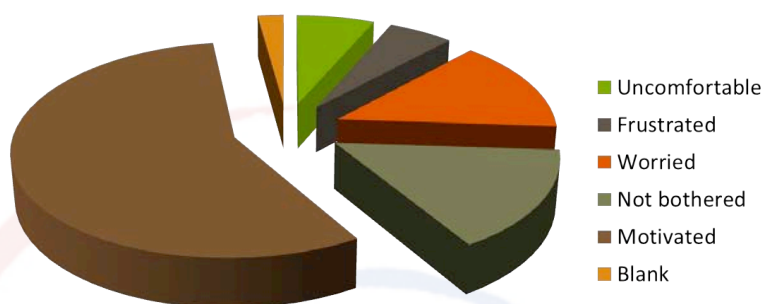


Fig. 3 – Feelings when corrected

Interestingly, 97% of the learners surveyed perceive error correction not only as positive but also as necessary in the learning process, considering it motivating. In fact, just a minority claims to feel uncomfortable or frustrated, represented by a 7% and 5%, respectively (See Fig. 3).

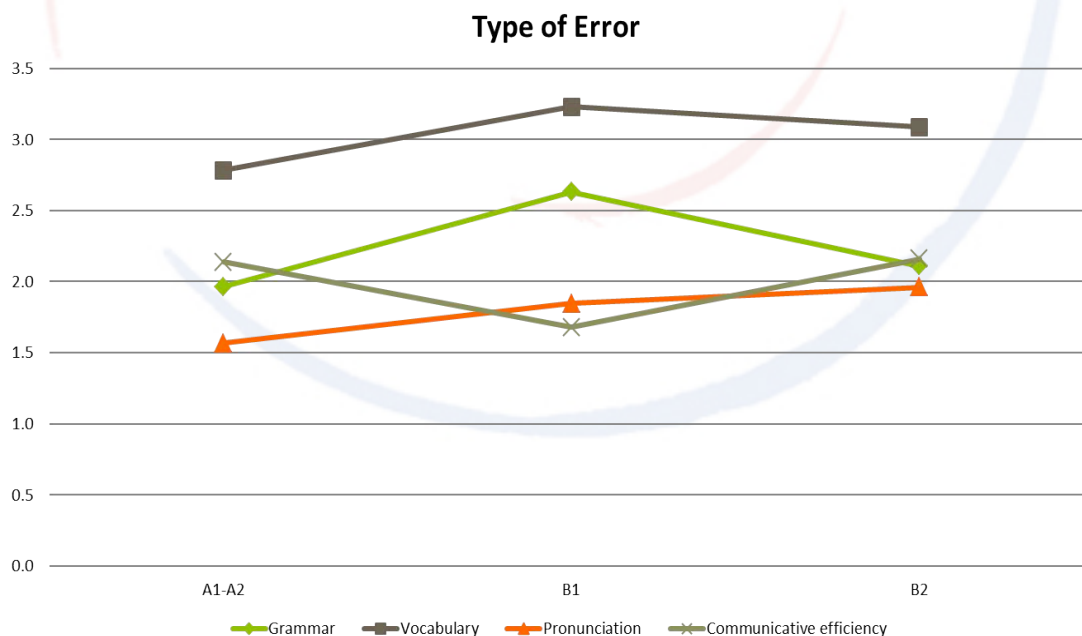


Fig. 4 – Types of error

As for the type of error to correct, generally speaking and regardless the levels of language competence, there is an agreement on granting more relevance to grammar and vocabulary versus pronunciation and communicative efficiency. However, just a

minority of the students surveyed considers it necessary to correct those errors which do not interfere with communication.

### Preferred correction method

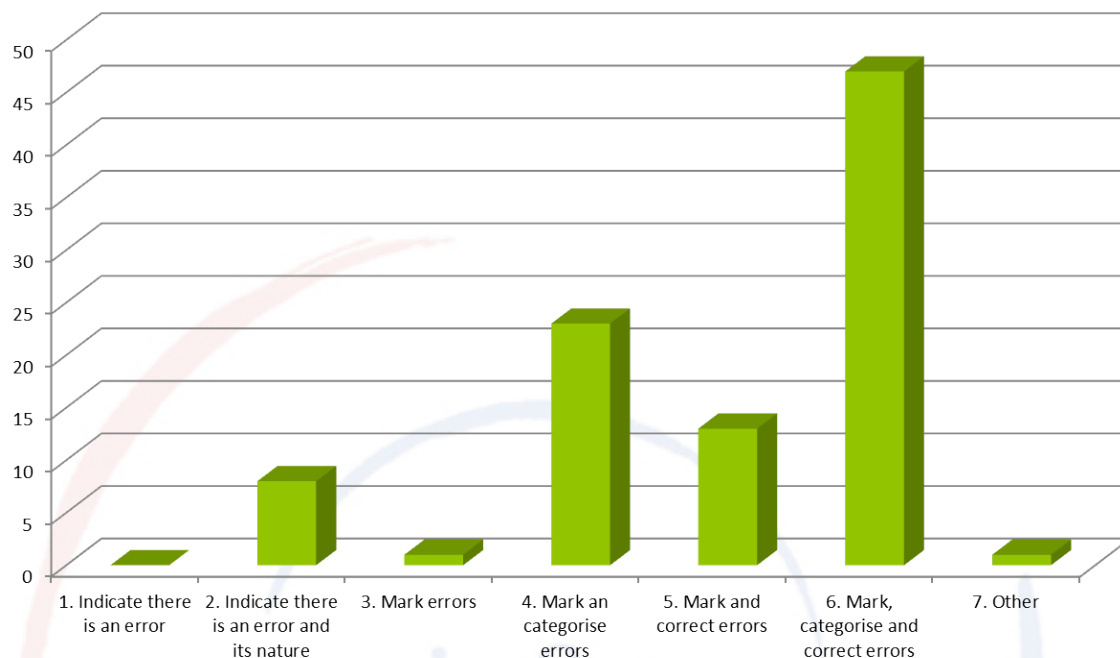


Fig. 5 – Preferred correction method

### Preferred feedback method

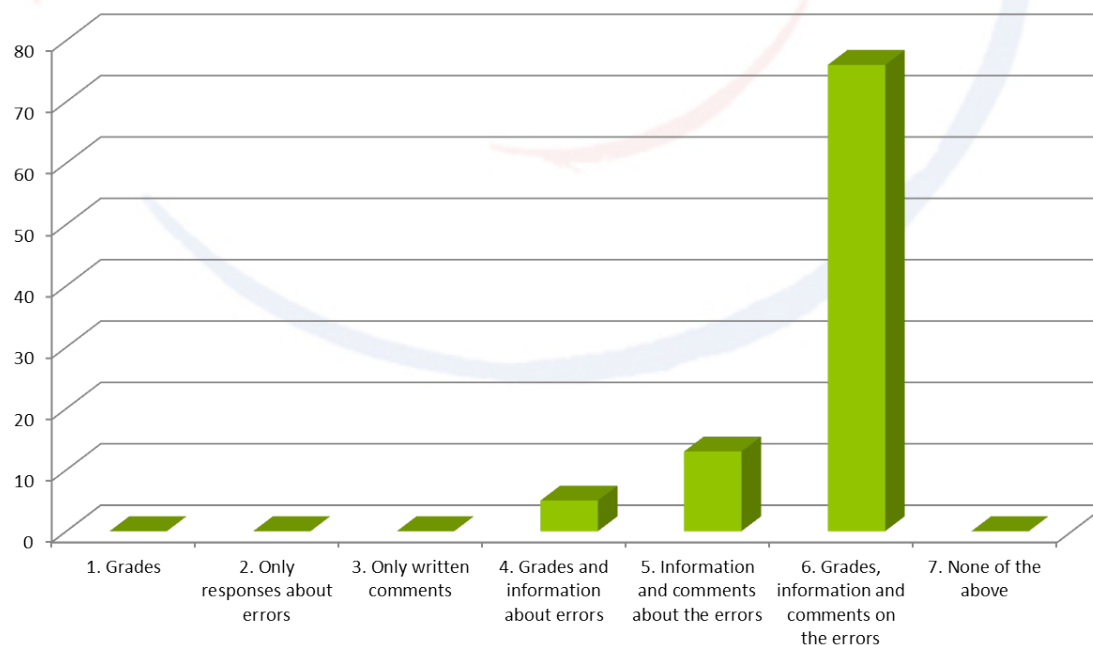


Fig. 6 – Preferred feedback method

Both in the preferred feedback method and that of error correction (see figures 5 and 6, respectively), there is a tendency to depend on the teacher as most students support



the option of having the teacher mark, categorise and correct errors as well as report and give advice for improvement. In any case, the learner's language competence should be taken into account when analysing this aspect since the degree of independence the learner has in the use of a language is in accordance with their knowledge of the language and how comfortable they feel when using it.

With regards to the learner's position before error correction methods, it is advisable to highlight that, independently from identifying, categorising and correcting errors, there prevails in learners the need to be qualified as an indication of the learning point they are at. Obviously, the way learners are assessed at the Official School of Languages underlies in the learner's subconscious, that is, assessment has a direct impact on the teaching/learning process.

It is interesting to see how learners confirm the criteria described by the CEFR when they highlight the need for self-assessment and peer assessment as complements of the external assessment performed by the teacher. In fact, those learners who have had some experience in self-checking (levels B1 and B2) defend the need of a more independent learner, claiming that it is the latter's responsibility to try to amend errors once marked and categorised as "that is the best way to learn from them".

Finally, a large majority has indicated that they have not participated in an error correction free context but declared themselves decisively against the idea, asserting that such occurrence would only generate confusion. There are, however, some learners who pinpoint some positive aspects of not being corrected:

"Es positiva porque te permite participar más libremente, aunque también **te hace trabajar más lo escrito para intentar ser concreto y conseguir que se te entienda bien.**"<sup>3</sup>

"Es posible que cometa más errores de los que pienso. Creo ayuda a buscar formas de expresión por nuestra cuenta aunque en ocasiones puede que lo hagamos de forma incorrecta. Lo considero positivo. **Ayuda a crear nuestro propio idioma, de forma personal.**"<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the previous comments, learners are making reference to a blended-learning experience in which they took part and in which not all the tasks were subject to such control.

## Conclusions

In light of the aforesaid, what may be concluded? There are several aspects to take into account when developing the teaching and assessing process.

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<sup>3</sup> Translation: "It is positive because it allows you to participate more freely, although **it makes you work a bit more on what you write in order to be more precise and make sure you are understood.**"

<sup>4</sup> Translation: "It is possible that I make more errors than I think. I believe this environment helps me look for new ways of expressing myself although sometimes I might make mistakes. I consider it positive. **It helps me to create my own language, in a more personal way.**"

First of all, since the learners' profile is so varied depending on their level of language competence, the same methodological approach cannot be used indistinctly for each, as the different learning styles and cognitive processes should be addressed properly. It is interesting to note that learners consider grammar and vocabulary more important than communicative efficiency. Does this mean that Truscott was right when he stated that learners merely reflect their teachers' beliefs? More than likely so, which is not necessarily negative since all along their learning process learners will be exposed to different ways of understanding such process and will have to discern which ones meet their needs best. If we consider that a teacher should be a guide for the learner, their beliefs are part of that guidance.

As regards to Truscott-Ferris' debate, the findings of the survey seem to support Ferris' position rather than Truscott's as learners defend not only external assessment, but also self- assessment and peer assessment. Furthermore, in agreement with Ferris, learners defend that the lack of error correction may lead to confusion and hence frustrate learners depriving them of self-confidence. This becomes especially relevant if the error made interferes with the learner's academic goals as it is the case in the education context we have been analysing.

Nonetheless, Truscott's position is present as well in some of the answers obtained in the survey. More specifically, in the answer of some of the learners who had participated in a blended-learning experience mentioned before, since they agree with Truscott in the idea of searching for new ways of expression in the L2.

However, one specification should be made: whereas the findings defending Ferris' position are supported by all students, regardless their level of competence, Truscott's is supported by learners who have quite a high command of the language and are considered independent users, as he himself had anticipated.

In the blended-learning experience referred to, learners were exposed to both controlled and control free situations, therefore the participants' comments cannot be analysed in absolute terms since such learners benefitted from both correction and the lack thereof. Therefore, it may be concluded that a balance between correction and correction free situations should be sought in any teaching/learning process.

All things considered, we should reflect upon what our attitude before errors is. When teaching/assessing, what factors do we take into consideration? Do we take into account learners' communicative strategies? To what extent? Do we, as teachers, reflect together with the learners upon the teaching/learning process? Do we guide them in such reflections? Do learners have a clear idea of their progress independently from the certificate of a certain level of language competence attained? How can we contribute to their enlightenment?

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## *Encouraging Young Learners to Speak and Write*

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Second European Conference of Language Learning 2014  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

Language production is not easy for beginners, because their vocabulary, grammar and general knowledge about the language is very limited. Especially for children it can be a great challenge. They still have problems expressing themselves in their mother tongue and have only started to learn how to read and write. In German primary schools, the children learn English mainly by imitation and repetition. English is only taught two or three lessons per week. Therefore, the progress is very slow and independent production is unlikely. Toys can be helpful material to encourage speaking and writing and to give room for creative language use. They are emotionally appealing to children and playing with them creates a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

The first part of this paper consists of theoretical considerations on language production in the English as a foreign language classroom and the use of toys as teaching material. In the second part, practical applications are shown from a project which has been carried out in primary schools in Germany.

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## 1 Introduction

Speaking in a foreign language isn't always easy for children who have only just started to learn it. Some quickly use English whenever possible, whereas some are very shy at the beginning and don't want to speak alone in front of the class. However, what they can say at the beginning is limited due to the lack of word knowledge, grammar and practice.

Writing in English can be even harder for children, because they have only started to learn how to write in their mother tongue. Empty lines in front of them can be frightful, especially for those who have problems with writing in general.

Teachers are role models and can demonstrate how to speak and write in English, but eventually, the children only learn how to produce the language by doing it themselves. They are responsible for giving them a variety of opportunities to develop further. When doing this, they need to make sure that the children are motivated. The following section shows examples of approaches to encourage speaking and writing.

## 2 How is Speaking Taught to Young Learners?

In the beginning, English lessons are often teacher-centred. The teacher has to give input, so that the children get used to the sound of English and learn through listening. At the same time, opportunities need to be provided for speaking. Some children might not want to use the foreign language right away. Therefore, speaking might often happen in a chorus. Some children will already feel confident enough to speak English alone, however, their speaking needs to be supported by the teacher. "The first building blocks that allow children to move from listening to speaking and to begin to participate in interactions with others are so-called 'unanalysed chunks'. This means that children can remember phrases from previously heard input and use them without conscious analysis" (Pinter, 2006, p. 56). At first, children imitate and repeat chunks used by the teacher. This can be for example a greeting such as "Good morning!", a sentence that is used during a game like "Close your eyes!" or simply words that indicate what can be seen on a flashcard, such as "black cat". Chunks help the children to produce the foreign language faster without having to think of every individual word (cf. *ibid*, p. 56). Thornbury (2009, p. 38) talks about "assisted-performance". The teacher provides a supportive framework within which the learners can extend their proficiency. Most common in the early stages of language learning are conversations in which the teacher asks a question, the children answer it and the teacher evaluates the response. This pattern is called IRE (Initiation – Response – Evaluation) (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006, p. 112). An example of this could be the questions "Which colour is the apple?", the answer of the child "Red" and the reaction of the teacher "Yes".

At some point, the teacher has to "proceed from activities that prepare communication to communicative activities" (Legutke et al., 2009, p. 55). It is necessary to guide children to independence and help them to construct their own utterances. Repetition and imitation neither require free and creative production nor the transfer of what the children have learned to a new context (cf. Mindt & Schlüter, 2007, p. 29). They are dependent on their role model and probably can't react without it in unfamiliar and authentic conversations. It is important to keep in mind that not only chunks help the

children to become proficient speakers. “In order to make a foreign language really work for learners, we have to go beyond lists of vocabulary (nouns, adjectives, etc.) or lists of structures or functions. We have to teach the language as a dynamic system, one that enables the learner to create language rather than reproduce it and provide a learning context which is congenial to risk-taking, uncertainty, problematic situations and a real sense of purpose” (Hurrell, 1999, p. 75). A convenient activity is to ask learners to use a certain word in a whole sentence with the words they already know. This can of course only be done when they know basic vocabulary, including some adjectives, nouns and verbs. Simple sentences such as “The apple is big” or “The tiger is angry” can make them clear that they can say something without the teacher’s help.

Some children might start to bring in spontaneous utterances and try to speak English with the teacher when they want to say something personal or react to statements of the teacher. To give an example, the teacher could say “I can’t find the magnets” and a child might want to help by showing where they are and comment this by saying “Here”. It is important to give room for these spontaneous contributions and show the children that they are welcome to do that. Teachers should provide an appropriate support in situations in which children express something that is relevant and meaningful to them, and in which they might mix the foreign language and the mother tongue (Legutke et al., 2009, p. 56). Teachers can tell the children the words which they need in English, because the children often lack the language which is necessary to express what they want to say.

Current research from Germany shows that more possibilities should be provided for creative language production. Within the EVENING study (*Evaluation Englisch in der Grundschule – Evaluation English in Primary School*), only a quarter of the tested children came up with own utterances in dialogues. The majority used chunks only (Groot-Wilken & Paulick, 2009, p. 173). Another study called TAPS (*Testing and Assessing Spoken English in Primary School*) showed that when the teacher prepared the children to tell a story intensively within the lessons, they were able produce more complex sentences, not only utterances consisting of one or two words (Diehr et al., 2007, pp. 99-100). To sum up, teachers should enable more situations in which the children get the chance to develop their fluency.

It is important for the teacher to create a classroom atmosphere in which the children feel comfortable. Activities need to be chosen in which the children don’t feel too self-conscious about speaking, feel less under pressure and are willing to try things out (Scrivener, 2011, p. 213). “Children will speak up and contribute to the lesson if they feel happy and secure. It is also crucial that children understand that they can speak up even when they are not sure about their contributions or have only a fragmented answer or idea to offer. This principle has important implications for careful error corrections and plenty of encouragement” (Pinter, 2006, p. 60).

### **3 How is Writing Taught to Young Learners?**

When children start writing in a foreign language, they copy single words and simple sentences from the blackboard or textbook. They do different easy exercises, such as cloze activities or matching words with pictures. These exercises slowly introduce them to the written English language, so that they become familiar with its characteristics and differences to their mother tongue. After a while, short texts can be

produced. “At lower levels, we may give them clear models to follow, and they will write something that looks very much like the original. Such **guided writing** will help students produce appropriate texts even with fairly limited English” (Harmer, 2008, p. 113, emphasis in original). An example for a text can be provided which the children can then adapt to their liking. They might choose from different words to change the model text, or simply choose what they would like to say. To give an example, a text with a short biography of a fictive child can animate the children to write about themselves, using the structures provided, such as “I live in...” and “My hobby is...”.

When the children reach a higher level, activities are important that slowly lead them to writing which is more creative and enables them to communicate personal meanings (cf. Gerngross, 2007; as cited by Legutke et al., 2009, p. 60). When encouraging writing without a model as an orientation, it is best to start with single sentences and then move towards short texts, consisting of only a couple of sentences, rather than asking them to write a half or whole page. The tasks should always be relevant to the learners. They should write for a purpose and not only to please the teacher (cf. Scrivener, 2011, p. 243). It is necessary to provide a stimulus for writing, such as pictures or a collection of objects (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008, p. 119). For children who have a limited vocabulary, it is important to make sure that they can say something with the vocabulary they have already learned. In addition, words and structures can be collected together beforehand through a brainstorming session. Furthermore, they should write for an audience. The audience is crucial, so the children are not just writing for themselves, but can actually show the results to others. The idea behind that is to achieve a “product pride” (Harmer, 2007, p. 328), which motivates the children to write again and maybe even write more when they see that others have written a longer text or were more creative. To encourage extended writing and to sustain the motivation, it is recommended not to correct the texts all the time. This is to ensure that the children aren’t worried about correct spelling and grammar (Cameron, 2001, p. 155). However, writing cannot provide an opportunity to work on your fluency, but also to practice the use of a certain aspect, such as a tense or personal pronouns.

#### **4 What are Reasons for Using Toys?**

It has been shown that children “are interested in the meaning and function of new language [...] holistically, in order to play a game, sing a song, or act out a story” (Pinter, 2006, p. 84). A research project by Biricik and Özkan (2001) highlights exactly that point. In addition, they note that young learners like hands-on and physical activities. Another project by Bechler (2014, p. 217) demonstrates that children remembered aspects of lessons best that they enjoyed. Again, mostly hands-on activities were named. These findings can be explained by the fact that children learn by seeing, hearing, touching and interacting (cf. Harmer, 2007, p. 82). Toys enable this and are also ideal for holistic learning because they are emotionally appealing to children. They allow children to play while using their minds and hands, and can be used in several ways, giving children opportunities to speak and write. Young children might not be motivated to learn English, because they haven’t got any purpose for it yet. “Children may not see the point of English. But they do see the point of doing interesting tasks, games and activities” (Scrivener, 2011, p. 321). As playing with toys always makes sense for the children and are connected with fun, they are perfect as teaching material.



In English lessons, learners collect experiences through trying out, so that they can later on, in their real life, act with native speakers or use English as a lingua franca with other non-native speakers. This procedure of transferring what they have acquired from a practice-situation to another actual situation, even though not conscious, is familiar to children through playing and the use of toys. “Certain types of games (such as: role playing [...]) make for excellent training for participating in situations that are complex and that the children will come across in everyday life. [...] When they play, children do what they have not done before, they take the risk consisting of trials and experimentation under different roles and actions [...]. Therefore, playing is a dialogue between reality and imagination” (Šagud & Petrović Sočo, 2014, p. 281). What they learn through play is important. Maybe it is not relevant at the time, but will definitely be in the future. “[...] the skills needed for survival in adult life [...] are perhaps learnt best in a game where they are broken down into manageable components and can be perfected without damaging consequences” (Cook, 2000, p. 43). When enabling playing time with toys in English lessons, children can do the same as they do at home in their mother tongue: they can try out and learn something in a secure framework without being afraid of making mistakes or someone laughing at them. The only differences are that the playing is directed by the teacher and the language is English.

Interesting, surprising, unusual, exaggerated and funny contents are important for young learners to activate and motivate them to get involved (Legutke et al. 2009, p. 51). Toys and playing enable that, because they leave room for imagination and creation. Every new setting can be different from the last, so there are numerous activities which can be done and topics that can be dealt with. Funny contexts with special characters can be given. A playing situation is something created by the children and therefore something of their own. This can motivate them a lot. Furthermore, the foreign language should be introduced in a real context and should be lifelike (ibid, p. 52). To play with toy figures and to let them speak is a common situation for children and takes place in their mother tongue on a daily basis. Therefore, a close link is drawn to their life. For example, a dialogue with a shop assistant is something that the children come across in their life, although to some extent supported or handled by adults. Toys cannot only be used for actual play, but also to introduce and learn vocabulary. They can provide a concrete context which supports the teacher’s input and provide motivation to write about them.

It is not only toys and playing that can motivate children to speak and write English. “Success in the task” (Fisher, 1990) is important for learning in general. When we do something well, we are more likely to do it again and put in more effort (Littlejohn, 2001, p. 6). The task doesn’t have to be very easy, as long as the children feel pleasure. “[...] if students perceive that a task is difficult but experience feelings of joy, relief or pride while doing it, they tend to adjust their perceptions and become willing to try new activities [...]” (Méndez López, 2011, p. 44). Although the children might not have many experiences in writing and speaking, they can be confronted with it quite early. Scaffolding is of great importance. Teachers can help their learners to communicate by encouraging them and providing possible element of the conversation as well as support them to create own utterances (Scrivener, 2011, p. 227). Language structures can be given to the children in advance so they can use them during play and quickly get the feeling they can contribute actively. Especially

for incommunicative and cautious learners, toys can help to overcome fears. For more advanced and courageous children, there is a chance given to react and interact spontaneously, for example in an open-ended role-play. When playing, children focus on the toys and learn English by using it. Nevertheless it needs to be made clear to young learners that playing with toys is about reaching an aim, for example to use the foreign language in a dialogue. Within English lessons, children not only play for fun, they “play with a purpose” (Mateos Rodilla, 2012, p. 40).

## **5 Which Toys can be used?**

*Playmobil* and *Sylvanian Families* are ideal toys. Children love them and playing with them sets no limits to imagination and creativity. Whereas *Playmobil* can often be bought as a whole set with figures and equipment, e.g. a hotel or police station, the animal figures of *Sylvanian Families* can be bought separately, e.g. a cat mother, father, sister, and brother. Other things available include e.g. houses, shops, cars, furniture and little objects (e.g. food and clothes).

All of the below described activities have been attempted with learners between seven and ten years old (grade 2 until grade 4) within a project carried out in primary schools. They had started to learn English in the first grade; the written language, however, was introduced in the second half of the second school year. They all knew *Playmobil* beforehand. *Sylvanian Families* were only familiar to some children.

## **6 Which Speaking Activities can be done?**

The children cannot only carry out dialogues and role-plays when acting themselves, but also by using toy figures. When playing with the figures, they can practice interacting with others.

### **6.1 Making a Date**

After the teacher has introduced how to make a date and what to do in your free time, the children can carry out dialogues with *Sylvanian* figures. Two figures, played by two children, can meet and talk about what they want to do together in their free time. The dialogue can include suggesting what to do, reacting to the suggestion and asking for the date and time. A worksheet should be provided which helps the children to structure their dialogue and supports them in case they don't know what to say. This activity works best when the children sit in a circle on the floor or around a table so that everybody can see.



Monkey: "Hello! Let's go cycling."

Kangaroo: "No, I don't like cycling. Let's play tennis."

## 6.2 At the Animal Clinic

To practice dialogues, a *Playmobil* set such as the *Animal Clinic* can be used. The teacher first of all introduces dialogues which are usually carried out between a vet or receptionist and the owner of a pet. Important aspects are e.g. making an appointment, telling the vet about what's wrong with the pet (e.g. leg hurts, doesn't eat), and the treatment (e.g. putting on a bandage, giving medicine). Then the children act out a role-play with the *Playmobil* figures. The teacher can support them by narrating what happens and the children play according to what is told and add direct speech to it. For example, the teacher can say "The farmer goes to the clinic with his horse. He tells the vet about the problem". The farmer can say something like "Good morning. My horse is ill. He doesn't eat" and the vet can say "I will examine him".



## 6.3 Bringing Down the Moon

In the story *Bringing down the moon* by Emmett (2009) the mole is fascinated by the moon and tries to get it down, e.g. by jumping up or throwing a stone at it. He meets the rabbit, the squirrel and the hedgehog who tell him that the moon is not as near as it looks, but he keeps trying. At the end, he falls from a tree and lands in a puddle. He

sees the moon blurring in it and starts to cry because he thinks he has broken the moon. The other animals come by and show him that the beautiful moon is still in the sky.

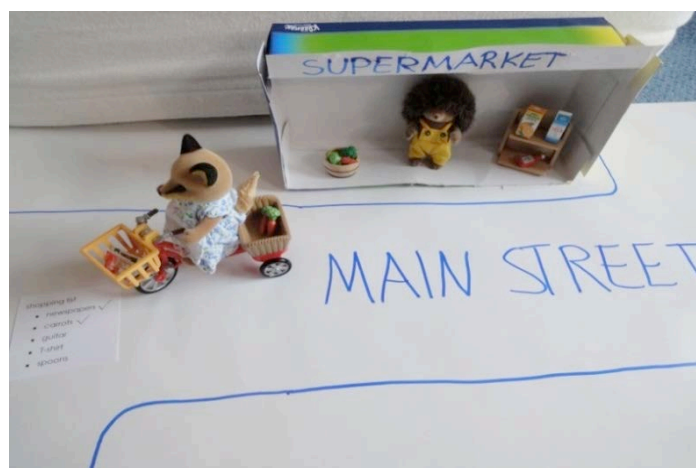
After the story has been told to the children (and maybe watched as a film), the children first learn the dialogue and later act it out with the *Sylvanian* figures. Requisites such as the tree and the moon can be created by the children. Like in the other examples, the children should have access to a worksheet which helps them to speak if they don't know the dialogue by heart yet. Again, it is recommendable to sit in a circle.



Rabbit: "What's wrong?"  
Mole: "I've broken the moon!"

#### 6.4 In the City

A big map with streets allows practice with giving directions, naming shops (e.g. toy shop, clothes shop) and products available in the shops (e.g. teddy bear, T-shirt). While cycling with a *Sylvanian* figure on a bicycle through the streets of the map, the children can collect items from different shops. The shops can either be drawn on the map or empty (shoe) boxes can be used as houses. One child gets a figure, a bicycle and a shopping list (which can be written by the child) and asks the group members which way to go, for example: "I would like to buy carrots. How can I get to the supermarket?" The other group members then give directions on how to get to the shop, using the expressions "Go straight on/ go across the bridge, turn around/ turn left/ turn right into Main street...". The shopkeepers can also be played by children, and a shopping dialogue can be practiced. At the end, roles are switched. This activity needs a lot of preparation through the teacher so that the children know in advance the products on the list, what to say when buying something and how to ask for and give directions.



### 6.5 Moving into a New House

A *Playmobil* take along *Doll House* can be set up by a group of children according to their wishes, and used to practice describing. Afterwards, they present the family, the house and the family life, using the vocabulary for rooms, furniture and hobbies. They can say sentences such as “Dad is in the bathroom. He takes a bath”. Alternatively, a child can give instructions to another child who then sets up the situation according to what has been said, e.g. “Mum is in the living room. She sits on the armchair and gives milk to the baby”. In addition, questions can be practiced, e.g. “Is the dog on the table?”. The other children then have to answer with “Yes, it is” or “No, it isn’t/ it is in the basket.” Another option could be to use imperatives when playing that the family moves in the new house. For example, the father could give instructions to the mother, such as “Put the baby bed in the bedroom”.



### 7 Which Writing Activities can be done?

For writing situations, it makes sense to let the children set up a quiescent scene, write something about it and to take a photo of it to hang up in the classroom or to put in their English folders.

## 7.1 Santa's Grotto

Sentences can be constructed matching a *Playmobil* set such as Santa's Grotto (originally a Christmas advent calendar). A group of children can place all items of the set to their liking. Beginners can then create sentences with given word cards according to their setting. As a support, the word cards can show a translation in the mother tongue on the back. At the end, they write down the sentences in their exercise book and they can put a photo of Santa's Grotto next to it. Advanced learners can write down their own sentences after necessary vocabulary has been introduced. Another option is to take several photos and print them out. Afterwards the children add speech bubbles. An alternative could be to write a description of the picture using there is and there are.



## 7.2 Family Life

For this task, the children freely chose a setting and arrange a family and items. Then they write sentences about their setting, using the most common prepositions such as on, in, and under. The text is either photographed with the setting, so that the children can write in groups, or the photo of the setting can first be printed out and the children write down a text alone. Stronger learners might want to create a little story out of it and add other details, e.g. "The baby is funny. She is under the table".



### 7.3 On the Weekend

To practice the present continuous, the children can choose some figures and items and set up a scene. Then they write a sentence that gives information matching the setting. Afterwards, they add more sentences to give details. The teacher can provide different requisites or material from which the children can make own objects. A collection of different photos can tell a whole story (photo story). They can also practice using the personal pronouns *he*, *she*, *it* and *they*, instead of writing the names of the animals.



### 8 What can be Expected?

The children showed a lot of interest in the toys, and so were highly motivated to speak and write English. Even those children who usually don't want to speak or contribute in role-plays began participating excitedly. The children stuck to the structures suggested by the teacher, but also often creatively phrased their own sentences without fear. In writing, the children overcame their concerns that they wouldn't be able to write and started without hesitation. They asked for words which they didn't know and were proud of their results. They were eager to create more sentences, some being longer than before. Several children even took photos of settings they had created and wrote sentences about them at home on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, the children wanted to bring their own toys to the lessons to be used. The toys the teacher brought were shown to other children at school to explain how English can be learned with them.

Ideally, the long term effect is that when the playing led by the teacher ends, the children continue to play freely (at home or at school) and go on to use the learned language (cf. Mourão, 2014, p. 115). It has been observed by other teachers that when the children played alone with the *Sylvanian Families*, they spoke in English.

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### **Children's book**

Emmett, J. 2009. *Bringing down the moon* (with DVD). London: Walker Books.

### **Toys**

*Playmobil*: [www.playmobil.com](http://www.playmobil.com)

*Sylvanian Families*: [www.sylvanianfamilies.com](http://www.sylvanianfamilies.com)



## *A Preliminary Report of the Use of Piazza for a Language Class*

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents a preliminary report of the project that investigates the impact of using an online forum for language teaching. The online forum used for this project is "Piazza" (<https://piazza.com/>). The goal of the project is to learn how digital natives behave and collaborate on the online forum, so that we can move forward towards blended learning. First, I provide the motivation of using Piazza for my Japanese language class. Second, I discuss the types of benefits anticipated from using the forum for my students. Third, I address the issue of teacher's reluctance to use a discussion forum for language classes. Fourth, I present the design and methodology of this project. I will provide some details about the platform Piazza and describe how Piazza was used in my class. Also, I will present the types of analytics that Piazza automatically provides. Next, I will present the results. Here, I will start with the quantitative analyses of my students' activities on the forum, which are provided by Piazza. Then, I will present my qualitative analyses of the data. Lastly, I will present my concluding remarks while sharing my future plans.

This project gave me an opportunity to reflect on the strength and on areas that can be improved of my teaching and language curriculum. I am confident that the paper can give us some insights on how to utilize an online discussion forum for language teaching.

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## 1. Project Goals

This paper presents a preliminary report of the project that examines the impact of using an online forum for language teaching. The forum platform used for this project is called "Piazza" (<https://piazza.com/>). I used Piazza as it is widely used in science and engineering courses at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

I had several goals in mind for this project. First, I wanted to find out how our students (digital natives) behave and collaborate in a virtual space such as an online discussion forum outside the classroom (Prensky (2001)). Second, I wanted to find out pros and cons of using a discussion forum for a language class (Gao, et al (2013), Hammond (2005), Yang (2008), Wu, et al (2012), Loncar, et al (2014), among others). As just mentioned above, Piazza has been used for many engineering and science courses at MIT,<sup>1</sup> but not many language courses have been using this type of online discussion forum. Is this simply a coincidence? Or, are there any difficulties in adopting a discussion forum for language classes? Third, I wanted to conduct qualitative data analyses as well as quantitative ones. Piazza provides analytics of students' activities of our forum site(s) automatically, but such data cannot address questions such as: (i) "What types of postings are most commonly made?"; (ii) "Is there any correlation between students' grades and their participations in the forum?"; and (iii) "How do students help each other on the forum?". I wanted to examine these questions by looking at the data closely in qualitative terms. Last, I wanted to use an online discussion forum for my Japanese language class and share my experiences with other language teachers.

Many parts of the paper are anecdotal, and more data needs to be gathered to make any definitive remarks on what would be the best way to utilize an online discussion forum for language classes. However, I hope that this paper can inspire language teachers to utilize a virtual space such as an online discussion forum in an innovative way, so that we can step more forward towards blended teaching.

## 2. Benefits from an Online Discussion Forum

The benefits of using online forums for education purposes have been discussed extensively in the literature over the last decade (Gao, et al (2013), Lauron (2008), Pavlina (2005), Teine (2000), among others). Most commonly addressed benefits include: (i) the flexibility to participate anytime and anywhere; (ii) the ability to gain knowledge collectively via sharing; and (iii) the ability to foster collaboration among students. Table 1 below describes types of benefits that students would gain from using an online discussion forum.

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion forum platform such as Moodle (<https://moodle.org/>) is also popular at MIT.

Table 1: Students' Benefits

<b>Types of Benefits</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Anytime & Anywhere	Students can reach out to teachers or peer students anytime and anywhere.
Collective Knowledge via Sharing	Students can gain new knowledge collectively via sharing.
Collaboration	Students can collaborate among themselves.

Teachers can also get benefits from using an online discussion forum. Table 2 lists some of such benefits.

Table 2: Teachers' Benefits

<b>Types of Benefits</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
Better Communication with Students	A discussion forum-based communication is more efficient and transparent than an e-mail-based communication.
Better Detection about Students' Problems	A discussion forum can serve as a tool to gauge what issues or problems that students are facing.
Better Reflection of Our Teaching	A discussion forum can serve as a tool to reflect the strength and/or the weakness of our teaching.
Better Analytics	A discussion forum can collect various types of analytics of students' activities.

Here, let us look at the teachers' benefits one by one. First, a discussion forum-based communication is more efficient and transparent than an email-based one when interacting with students as a class or when dealing with their questions. A teacher can share her answer(s) or comment(s) with her students collectively and transparently through a discussion forum-based communication, whereas an email-based communication is restricted only between a teacher and particular student(s).

In addition, a discussion forum allows a teacher to avoid answering repetitious questions, whereas an email does not; students often raise the same or similar questions. Answering such repetitious questions each time can be time-consuming. In this respect, a discussion forum-based communication is much more efficient as well.

The second point in Table 2 (i.e., Better Detection about Students' Problems) refers to the situation where a teacher can use a discussion forum to identify and diagnose what kind of problems or difficulties her students are facing. This, in turn, is related to the third point (i.e., Better Reflection of Our Teaching). For instance, during this project, I ran into several cases where the questions posted on my discussion forum site made me realize how poorly I presented particular grammar points in class. Without having the discussion forum, I would have overlooked such weakness in my teaching.

Last but not least, a discussion forum can provide us all sorts of analytics of students' activities on a forum site (see, for instance, Section 4.2 for the types of analytics that

Piazza can provide automatically). Such data definitely helps teachers to assess their students' performances from different angles. It has become evident that a discussion forum can make communications between a teacher and her students much more interactive, transparent, and effective, while bringing a wide variety of benefits both for students and for teachers.

### 3. Resistance

Despite all the benefits discussed above, some teachers still have some resistance towards the use of an online discussion forum for a language class. Why is there such a resistance?

I contend that such resistance derives from several concerns that some teachers might have. One of them is the concern of getting more work. As mentioned above, students can post questions anytime and anywhere, which is one of the great advantages of using an online discussion forum. But from the teacher's point of view, this great feature can be interpreted in such a way that a teacher would have to check the forum site 24/7 to respond to her students' questions promptly. If that were the case, then the use of a discussion forum would put a huge burden on teacher's side.<sup>2</sup>

Another concern is the concern of learning new technology. Some teachers might think that the use of a discussion forum requires them to learn new technology. Learning new technology can be cumbersome and often time-consuming and thus, resulting in the hesitation to use of a discussion forum.

Also, some teachers may have the concern of bringing in changes. They may argue that email is sufficient to handle students' problems and/or questions and that we do not need yet another technology to communicate with students. Table 3 summarizes the three types of concerns that teachers might have in adopting an online discussion forum.

Table 3: Teacher's Concerns

Getting more work	Do we have to check the forum site 24/7?
Learning new technology	Do we have to learn new technology?
Bringing in changes	Why do we have to bring in changes?

I contend that these concerns need to be addressed properly prior to integrating a discussion forum into a curriculum. In fact, I had these concerns prior to starting this project. However, the project made me realize that these concerns are in fact all "unnecessary". Let me explain what I mean by this while providing my own experiences.

Let us start with the concern of getting more work. Prior to the project, I thought that I would have to stay up late to respond to my students' questions promptly everyday during the semester. But the truth is that a teacher does not have to respond to her

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<sup>2</sup> The task of designing a language curriculum with an online discussion forum and that of moderating a discussion forum are also considered to put a big burden on teachers (Berge (1995), Heuer & King (2004), Al-Shalchi (2009), Wolff & Dossall (2010), Baker (2011)).

students' questions all the time. In some cases, I actually purposely delayed my response, so that my students could have an opportunity to respond to postings from their peer students. As far as a teacher can set the right expectation for her response time to the class, she does not have to worry about checking the forum site constantly 24/7. Besides, interacting with my students outside the classroom was a lot of fun and quite instructive, and I never felt that this project gave me any additional work.

The second concern (i.e., Learning new technology) seems to be a valid concern as well. New technology is often cumbersome to learn, and we always have to go through some sort of learning curve in learning new technology. However, online forum sites these days are very easy to use or learn, and they are all user-friendly.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, teachers should not have such concern.

The last concern is a challenging one to overcome; when things are working fine as is, who would like to bring in changes? However, we need to recognize that the way our students learn is rapidly changing and that we cannot keep doing the same thing simply because we (digital immigrants) think that changes are not necessary. Besides, we would never know what benefits we would get from new technology until we actually use it. Though my arguments above are all anecdotal, I contend that teachers do not have to worry much about the concerns mentioned in Table 3.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Piazza

As mentioned at the outset of the paper, the platform that I used for this project is called "Piazza" (<https://piazza.com>). I had a slight reservation in using this platform for my Japanese language classes as Piazza is designed to target science and engineering courses, and I thought there might be some features or functionalities missing in Piazza critical for language classes. However, this reservation was alleviated by the following reasons. First, Piazza has been used for many science and engineering courses at MIT, and it has gained good credentials among MIT faculty members as well as MIT students.<sup>4</sup> Second, most of the students at MIT are familiar with how to use Piazza and its features. Hence, no learning curve is involved on students' side. Third, Piazza has rich interfaces that can facilitate interactions among students and teachers in an intuitive manner. Fourth, it can provide different types of analytics automatically for our class, which I will discuss in the next subsection. Lastly, it is free and is well-maintained and supported.<sup>5</sup> For these reasons, I decided to use Piazza for this project.

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<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are lots of videos and support online forums to teach you how to use a platform of an online discussion forum.

<sup>4</sup> According to this website (<https://piazza.com/school/mit/13>), 307 instructors and 4,857 students at MIT use Piazza in 362 classes.

<sup>5</sup> During the project period, I interacted with Piazza's support team. They were always prompt and very supportive.

## 4.2. Analytics from Piazza

As just mentioned above, Piazza provides us different types of analytics for class activities automatically. Table 4 below provides a brief description of each of these analytics. These analytics are helpful for us to do quantitative analyses of our students' activities on the forum site, and they may provide us different perspectives in assessing our students' performances. Such data can help us to reflect our teaching style and class pace as well.

Table 4: Descriptions of Analytics Provided by Piazza

Analytics Type	Description
Usage Trend	Usage trend provides: (i) the number of unique users per day and (ii) the number of posts per day. <sup>6</sup>
Class at a Glance	List of the numbers of: (i) total posts; (ii) total contributions; (iii) instructors' responses; (iv) students' responses; and (v) average response time
Top Student Contributors	List of the students who contributed most
Top Student Askers	List of the students who posted questions most
Top Student Answerers	List of the students who answered questions posted on the forum most
Top Student Listeners	List of the students who were on the forum site most
Student Participation Report	List of the number of the days online; the number of the post viewed; and the number of contributions for each of the students

These analytics are helpful for us to do quantitative analyses of our students' activities on the forum site, and they may provide us different perspectives in assessing our students' performances. Such data can help us to reflect our teaching style and class pace as well.

## 4.3. Class Description

The class that I taught was the second semester of beginning Japanese,<sup>7</sup> and the project was conducted during the Spring semester of 2014 at MIT. The total number of my students participated in this discussion forum was 34 (17 x 2 sections).

The class consists of two types of activities: (i) grammar session (one day/each lesson) and (ii) drill sessions (6~7 days/each lesson). At the beginning of each lesson, I introduced the grammar in class, and then proceeded to conduct drill sessions to enhance students' communicative skills using new grammar patterns and vocabularies. The grammar session was conducted mainly in English, whereas all the drill sessions were conducted entirely in Japanese. The written homework was given

<sup>6</sup> The unique "users" here refer to the users who are on the forum site and that the number of the posts per day refer to the total number of posts made on a particular date.

<sup>7</sup> My students have been exposed to about 50 hours of learning Japanese prior to taking this class.



3~4 times for each lesson, and at the end of each lesson, a lesson quiz was given. Table 5 below summarizes the workflow of my class for each lesson.<sup>8</sup>

Table 5: Work Flow of My Class Per Each Lesson

1 <sup>st</sup> Day	6~7 Days	Last Day
Grammar	Oral Drills and Reading Session (Japanese)	Review and Lesson Quiz

#### 4.4. Workflow on Piazza

During this project, besides using Piazza as an asynchronous discussion forum site for my Japanese class, I used Piazza as a vehicle to deliver my grammar notes and grammar video clips. These grammar notes and video clips were created beforehand, and I posted them on Piazza before each grammar day, so that my students could study the grammar points prior to coming to each grammar session. Also, I used Piazza to deliver my feedback and comments on my students' written homework and lesson quizzes. This was quite a useful and effective way of using Piazza as students often make similar or the same mistakes on their homework or quizzes.

The students could post questions or comments related to any materials learned outside my class as well as during my class. Also, students could post visual materials (e.g., pictures or videos) or websites related to the Japanese culture and the language. For instance, during this project, I saw one student posting a vocabulary-learning tool called "Quizlet" (<http://quizlet.com/>) on our discussion forum site. Another case involves the case where a student shared his favorite YouTube videos related to the Japanese culture with his classmates. I will discuss such cases later in Section 5.2.1. The only thing that I asked my students not to post is a question related to their grades.

#### 4.5. Participation as a Part of the Grade or Not

The question of whether students' participation in the discussion forum should be counted towards their grades was a challenging question to me as I was not clear about how to define the notion of "participation in a discussion forum" and how to gauge it in quantitative and qualitative terms. To address this question, there are lots of discussion forum rubrics available online. For instance, Table 6 below lists some of such sample rubrics.

Table 6: Sample Rubrics

PBS Discussion Forum Participation Rubrics	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/courses/common_documents/disc_assess.htm">http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/courses/common_documents/disc_assess.htm</a>
Discussion Rubrics – Pedagogical Report	<a href="http://topr.online.ucf.edu/index.php/Discussion_Rubrics">http://topr.online.ucf.edu/index.php/Discussion_Rubrics</a>
Sample Rubrics for Discussion Forums: Blended Learning @ Simmons	<a href="http://at.simmons.edu/blendedlearning/learnhow/casestudies/haavind/documents/pdfs/sample_rubrics_for_discussions.pdf">http://at.simmons.edu/blendedlearning/learnhow/casestudies/haavind/documents/pdfs/sample_rubrics_for_discussions.pdf</a>

<sup>8</sup> My Japanese classes met 4 times a week during the semester, and each class was 50 minutes.

College	
Sample Rubrics for Discussion Forums at Texas Women's University	<a href="http://www.twu.edu/downloads/TLT/discussion-board-rubrics.pdf">http://www.twu.edu/downloads/TLT/discussion-board-rubrics.pdf</a>

However, the criteria of these rubrics did not apply quite properly to my language class settings, and I could not figuring out how to use these for my class. Thus, I decided not to count the forum participation towards my students' grades this time.<sup>9</sup>

## 5. Results

In this section, I first provide the results from Piazza's analytics. The results that I present here include: (i) Class at a Glance data and (ii) Usage Trends (see Table 4 above). Second, I provide some qualitative analyses about the postings in my discussion forum.

### 5.1. Analytics: Class at a Glance Data and Usage Trends

Table 7 below provides the statistics for the overall class activities.

Table 7: Class at a Glance

Total posts <sup>10</sup>	95
Total contributions <sup>11</sup>	221
Instructors' responses	46
Students' responses	43
Average response time	1.3 hour

Graph 1 and Graph 2 below show the distribution of the unique users per day and that of the posts per day for my class respectively.

Graph 1: Unique Users per Day



Graph 2: Posts per Day



<sup>9</sup> Many courses at MIT seem to include the forum participation as a part of their student's grades.

<sup>10</sup> Posts are questions and notes.

<sup>11</sup> Contributions are posts, responses, edits, follow-ups, and comments to follow-ups (i.e., everything).

It should be noted here that the class started at the beginning of February and ended mid-May, and the actual project period is defined between the two lines in Graph 1 and Graph 2. The sharp drop in March in Graph 1 is due to the spring break.

The total number of the days for this project is about 98 days. The number of the total contributions was 221 and so, we had about 2.25 postings, follow-ups, edits, etc. per day on average. The average number of the unique users during the project was 16.5, which means that the half of my students were checking or participating in the discussion forum in some fashion every day. Given the fact that I did not include the forum participation as a part of the student's grade, I find these numbers quite satisfactory.

The average response time (1.3 hour) was not bad at all, given the fact that I was the only instructor who was monitoring this forum site. I am also very happy about the number of the students' responses, which was almost the same number of the responses that I made as an instructor.<sup>12</sup>

Piazza provides other types of analytics as seen in Table 4 above. The data from the categories of Top Student Contributors, Top Student Askers, and Top Student Answerers are most instructive to identify which students contributed most to the forum discussions. When examining these data, I observed one clear pattern; that is, the students who helped or answered other students' questions tend to be the same students.<sup>13</sup>

## 5.2. Qualitative Analyses

This subsection provides qualitative analyses of the postings on my Piazza class, addressing the following three questions.

Table 8: Qualitative Analyses

Types of Postings	What types of questions or comments are most commonly posted on the forum?
Correlation between Participation and Grade	Is there any correlation between students' grades and their participations in the forum?
Collaboration	How do students help each other on the forum?

### 5.2.1. Types of Postings

Most of the postings on my Piazza class were grammar-related questions. This is probably so as I was using Piazza as a vehicle to deliver my grammar notes, instructional videos of the grammar points, and homework/quiz feedback. There are other types of postings, however. One interesting case involves the posting where one of my students shared the information of the application that she has been using for

<sup>12</sup> The number of the instructor's responses (=my responses) was 46 and that of the students' responses was 43. So the ratio between the two would be roughly 52% vs. 48%.

<sup>13</sup> In my forum class, several students were proactively and constantly helping other students.

memorizing vocabularies (called “Quizlet” <http://quizlet.com/>). She created a new site for my class on Quizlet using her vocabulary files and let other students practice new vocabularies.

Another case involves the situation where students posted YouTube video sites that they think would be useful for the class. For instance, one student collected YouTube videos related to the Japanese culture and shared his video list with other students. All in all, however, the types of questions posted on my forum were skewed towards grammar-related questions.

### **5.2.2. Correlation between Participation and Grade**

There seem to be certain patterns between students’ grades and their participations in the forum. The patterns that I found are: (i) the students who contributed most had the grade of A or above; (ii) the students who raised questions range from B to A students; and (iii) the students whose grades are below B did not participate in any activities on the forum site.

### **5.2.3. Collaboration**

Initially, I was skeptical about whether MIT students would spend extra time volunteering to help their peer students without having any extra credit; MIT students are extremely busy with their course work and they are often overwhelmed with the amount of work that they have to do. I assumed that anything that does not count towards their grades would get their least priority. Also, their focus tends to go to science and engineering courses, not as much to humanity courses. Thus, prior to this project, I was not sure whether I could get volunteer participation and collaboration from my students.

However, it has become clear to me that students are by nature willing to help each other outside the classroom despite their busy schedules and heavy workload. This has been proven by the students-instructor response ratio provided above (see Footnote 12 above).

I would like to note here that my students helped each other in an amicable way. For instance, when answering other students’ questions, they usually looked for information on the Web relevant to the posted questions, first. Then, they formulated their answer(s) based on that information and put the resource links in their answers. Figure 1 and Figure 2 below illustrate such type of students’ responses.

Figure 1: Sample Student's Response 1

**S** the students' answer, where students collectively construct a single answer

I found many webpages explaining the difference on the internet. From what I have read it seems that the (agent/subject implied/required) and 始まる is intransitive (agent/subject not implied/required).

例:  
I will start the class = 私はクラスを始めます  
The class will start = クラスが始まります

In the first sentence we use 始める because there is an explicit agent "I". The sentence conveys the meaning. The second sentence doesn't have the same effect as it omitted the agent completely. So literally it means

So for example when you are making a request, the agent is automatically implied to be the other person 始める.

However, I noted that there is an important exception to the above transitive and intransitive distinction!

例:  
1) 雪(ゆき)が降(ふ)り始めました  
2) 降雪(こうせつ)が始まりました

They both mean that "It began to snow" and it seems that both are intransitive since there is no agent to "c". One way to think about this is to actually look into their English counterparts.

1) It began to snow.  
2) Precipitation began.

Hence, for (1), you can think of "it" as being the agent/subject" thus we use 始める. For (2), there is no agent

A usage from Anime, just for fun (w) :  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUT8hkJbmEM&iist=PL022E00507D66183C>

Please correct me if I am wrong.

Sources:  
<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090523193443AAyoNOS>  
<http://questionbox.jp.msn.com/qa2730791.html>  
<http://www.rocketlanguages.com/your-community/japanese-vocab/hajimeru-vs-hajimaru/>

Figure 2: Sample Student's Response 2

**S** the students' answer, where students collectively construct a single answer

according to this <http://www.learn-japanese-adventure.com/teki-in-japanese.html>,

Verb dict-form	とき	Main sentence
Verb ない-form	とき	Main sentence
Verb た-form	とき	Main sentence
い-adjective	とき	Main sentence
な-adjective + な	とき	Main sentence
Noun + の	とき	Main sentence

it will be 'blah, blah' のとき when that 'blah, blah' is a noun と思います... hehe

## 6. Concluding Remarks

This was my first time to use an online discussion forum for my Japanese class, and there were a couple of glitches that I ran into during the project. First, I struggled with the question of how to engage my students in the discussion forum. Although several students actively participated in the forum discussion and helped other students, many of the students were passive and/or never participated in the discussion thread. I did not know how to break this pattern. Second, some students mentioned to me that questions posted on the forum were not good questions (either too easy or irrelevant ones), and therefore, they stopped checking postings from other

students. Again, I did not know how to do the quality control of students' questions or postings.

However, I truly enjoyed interacting with my students in the discussion forum and enjoyed reading their questions or comments. Also, I can use my forum site to reflect my teaching in the future; all the posted questions and comments are searchable by keywords and accessible anytime.

To move forward, I plan to keep using Piazza for my Japanese classes as many students told me that they would like to keep having it. Perhaps next time, I would like to include students' participation as a part of their grade to see what kind of boost I can get in their participation.

The logo for the International Association for Foreign Language Research (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by two large, overlapping, semi-transparent circular arcs. The outer arc is a light blue color, and the inner arc is a light red color. The arcs are positioned such that they appear to be part of a larger, incomplete circle.

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*Language, Culture and International Communication*

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**Abstract**

We start by reviewing the relevant literature on World Englishes which proposed any form of English for international/global communication, considering it as the contact language with the broader level of meaning of all speakers irrespective of their English language acquisition history. Based on that input we first bring evidence of the cultural aspect of language acquisition. To this respect we define culture as language dependent and therefore mirroring the specialized, individual aspect of communication. This means that students need English for special purposes and they use the language as the cultural environment requires. In this context we try to see what would be the “getting through” strategies to meet native speaker acceptance and international communication. The second aspect we need to deal with is teacher’s approach to teaching language. This kind of approach has to be two folded as the teacher has his own history of language acquisition which he/she has to double by developing language insight which should help in choosing the most efficient and adequate teaching strategies. Culturally and linguistically the teacher is a mediator and he is also an evaluator of what is to be expected as (International) Standard English (ISE). We still consider debatable the issue of ISE as it is difficult to decide what the standard should be and how to make it globally acknowledged; even so the teacher has to define, based on purpose and the expected cultural environment, what is the standard to be achieved, the paper presenting such an attempt.

Keywords: international communication, interculturality, teaching strategies, standard English

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## **English for International Communication (EIC)**

### ***A paradigm of thinking***

English as an International Language (EIL) refers to a paradigm for thinking, research and practice. It marks a paradigm shift in TESOL, SLA and the applied linguistics of English, partly in response to the complexities that are associated with the tremendously rapid spread of English around the globe in recent decades.

### ***EIL – methodological perspectives***

In order to understand the impact and range of English for International Communication we have to document the state of the art of both theoretical and applied approaches considering EIL

#### *The Sociolinguistic approach*

The EIL paradigm is based on research approaches specific for sociolinguistics and applied linguistics with fresh inputs from qualitative new approaches in social sciences such as narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and ethno-methodologically-oriented interviews (Seidman, 2006) including auto-ethnography (Ellis, 2004) or cyber-ethnography (Hine, 2000). Such methods best capture peoples' complex relationship with the language which reveals significant links between language, culture and identity. Even if such methods are currently under-utilized, such methodologies which build on speakers'/learners'/teachers' lived experiences and the meanings that they make out of these in relation to English are used on an larger scale.

#### *World Englishes*

The role and use of English around the world has been described by Kachru (1986, 1992) or Bolton (2004) using a model that has three concentric circles: Inner-Circle, Outer-Circle and Expanding-Circle countries. In the Inner-Circle countries ( the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada) English is used as the primary language, in the Outer Circle, countries (e.g. India and Singapore) are multilingual and use English as a second language. In the Expanding-Circle, the largest circle including countries like China, Argentina, Italy or Egypt, English is learned as a foreign language.

World Englishes make a significant contribution to the EIL paradigm through established sociolinguistic approaches as well as more recent approaches such as those from cultural linguistics and cognitive linguistics (Polzenhagen & Wolf, 2007; Sharifian, 2006). These approaches can provide deeper insights not only into the nature of World Englishes but also about communication *across* Englishes, an issue which is bias to EIL.

#### *Intercultural communication - critical cultural awareness*

EIL has started to develop a close affinity with research in the area of intercultural communication acknowledging that the language widely used for intercultural communication at the global level today is English. Taking that into consideration,

‘proficiency’ in English, when used for international communication, is increasingly based on ‘intercultural competence’ also known as *meta-cultural competence*.

As shown by Byram (1997) intercultural communication is based on critical cultural awareness/political education and it has impacted upon very recent European policy expressed in the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

“Complementary tools should be developed to encourage students to exercise independent critical faculties including to reflect critically on their own responses and attitudes to experiences of other cultures.” (Byram et al, 2009: 25).

Moreover, the use of English as a lingua franca can allow speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to express themselves directly, without using translating or interpreting. Still, there is an expressed need to protect linguistic diversity in recognition of the fact that language carries culture-specific meanings that have roots in specific cultural life (Byram et al, 2009).

To conclude on the close interaction of cultural awareness and intercultural communication, we would like to emphasize that many theoreticians as well as practitioners have reached the conclusion that considerable overlap exists between the fields of World Englishes and Intercultural Communicative Competence as, basically, both reject the native-speaker, building on a strong cultural knowledge base from which the intercultural speaker can draw in communication, helping him solve prejudice and misunderstandings based on sound, reasonable critical cultural awareness.

#### *Native Speaker (NS) – Non-Native Speaker (NNS)*

The NS-NNS dichotomy has a specific link to identity and is important for choosing the adequate pedagogy. The acceptance of one model or other mainly springs from the way accent is considered important for defining language variety, ignoring the diversity that characterizes the so-called NS varieties of English. The assumption in this kind of approach is that all NSs have no difficulty in understanding each other. Still, there is ELF research, such as Roberts and Canagarajah’s, which attempts to understand how English is used as a contact language, regardless of whether or not it is an L1 or L2.

By drawing on data from Roberts (2005), Roberts and Canagarajah (2009) attempt to clear away some of the stereotypes that have often been held about communication between native and non-native speakers. In general, they observe that ‘grammatical forms are negotiated by individuals within ELF processes and are not shared by all interacting users’ (p. 225). They maintain that success in the international use of English does not so much hinge upon a particular variety or lexico-grammar, but is instead tied to the nature of the negotiation skills and strategies interlocutors adopt.

#### *Cultural conceptualizations*

English as an International Language can be explored using the approach of *cultural conceptualizations* (Sharifian, 2003, 2008) which views conceptual units such as schemas, categories and metaphors as existing both at the level of individual minds and cultural groups and emerging from the interactions between the members of the

group across time and space. Successful communication in EIL settings is achieved by acquiring *meta-cultural competence* which is represented by the speakers'/learners' familiarity with a variety of systems of cultural conceptualizations which are communicated by language and its components, significantly enhancing their intercultural communication skills.

#### *Dissemination of knowledge*

One of the themes that has received some but as yet insufficient attention, in the context of English as an International Language, is the impact on the language by the dissemination of knowledge and scholarship through English. Disseminating scientific knowledge in English means that that kind of knowledge comes into contact with Western knowledge traditions suffering thus a sort of 'reshaping'. Further research in this area could provide interesting insights into varieties of English and their interaction with various knowledge systems. (Kirkpatrick, 2007)

#### *Pluricentricity vs standard*

If EIL is to be understood as a variety of English then its definition should consider as its most important characteristics 'pluricentricity' rather than an 'international monochrome standard'

“if English as an international language has to maintain its currency and vitality then it will have to be spoken by different voices yet understood by different ears.” ( Anchimbe , 2009 : 284).

Anchimbe (2009) also shows that the notion of 'standard' tends to be considered as established by the rules observed by native speakers. He argues that 'standards' naturally develop according to the needs of communities of speakers. They should not be imposed upon them by speakers of other varieties. These observations may have important implications for the teaching of English as an International Language.

#### ***EIC – a working definition***

This overview of some of the most important theoretical approaches on EIL has brought forward some important ideas to shape the domain of research but what we think should be considered is a terminological shift from EIL to EIC.

Starting from the recognition of World Englishes, EIL emphasizes that English is a language of international and therefore intercultural communication (Bolton, 2004; Kachru, 1986, 1992). It is our opinion that within this maize of concepts and approaches there must be established a standard to be the reference of *adequate* and *intelligible* communication in English that takes place in international context. To cover this aspect we use the concept of English for International Communication (EIC) as any variety of language exists to fulfill a communicational purpose.

Therefore, we provide the following ***working definition of EIC – English used for communication in a multicultural setting for various purposes, aiming at achieving intercultural communication.***

Overemphasizing the diversity of varieties might create a Babel of Englishes which could not help the purpose of communication in international context. On the other

hand, language outside culture is a nonsense and it has no viability as proved by the invented international languages such as Esperanto which could not impose itself as a feasible means of communication. There are differences and varieties in the Englishes used in the world but what can bridge the miscommunication gaps is an increased attempt to keep as reference the native speaker's language, as described by grammar and the lexicon, and improve the intercultural perspective. These are aspects that influence the teaching and learning approaches nowadays and should be taken seriously into consideration by the teachers, the students and researchers of EFL, ESL, SLA, or applied linguistics of English.

## **Culture/s and Language Acquisition**

### ***Language - culture – pedagogy***

To capture the very complex relations between language and culture entailed by a language used for international communication, we need to think more about practice models of both language and culture.

For this, we need Bourdieu's (1991) characterization of practice as a kind of embodied convergence between action, the social conventions by which an action is conditioned, and the individual use that is made of the same. Such practices create communities from how they share skills and discourses. A language to be used for international communication is like any other, in that it will be used by these communities in ways that advance their activities. What is different is the range of communities involved, how they exist in a new concept of space and time.

The pedagogical challenge is to understand such a language as emerging from a local culture and to rework our concept of what a culture can be. The goal should be to produce learners who do not learn to live in one monolithic target language culture so much as to negotiate their way through numerous communities of practice that international communication create. Such a goal requires pedagogies that turn the minds of their learners into areas of convergence between custom, gesture, meaning, and form.

### ***Second Language Acquisition/Applied Linguistics – the basis of teacher's culture in teaching foreign languages***

The acquisition of various aspects of language is subject to various debates touching aspects such as the notion of critical age and the relationship between accent and social and emotional identity in language learning, the production of grammatical and lexical structures according to the rules of learner's interlanguage vs. 'emergent grammars', focus on form and meaning within communicative tasks vs. maintaining the dichotomy between acquisition and learning. Other issues with immediate relevance to foreign language study include: motivation to learn and attitude toward the foreign language and its speakers (Spolsky, 2000); cross-cultural misunderstandings experienced during study abroad (Freed, 1995) or issues of contextual variability when testing language performance (McNamara, 1996; Spolsky, 1995).

SLA/Applied Linguistics research is characterized by diversity, interdisciplinarity, and complexity. The purpose and utility of this theoretical support in foreign language teachers' culture is not to find the ultimate theory that will explain and predict the acquisition of any nonnative language at any age, in any context of use, but to illuminate, in all its complexity, the multiple dimensions of the study of one particular language as an alternative to one's own mode of expression, communication, and thought.

### ***The intercultural perspective***

Intercultural communication education is not a new field. It has a history which dates back to the 1950s. The field as such is complex as it is represented by "multiple strands of research" and practice worldwide being found in such contexts as general education, applied linguistics, language education, business, health education and also the field of intercultural communication itself.

The intercultural perspective is currently sustained by the four directions presented below.

1. The urge to put an end to a *strong differentialist bias* based mostly on the use of a worn out empty and uncritical concept of culture. The risk in continuing using the concept of culture in a loose way is that it leads "easily and sometimes innocently to the reduction of the foreign Other as culturally deficient" (Holliday, 2010: ix).
2. Another aspect, which is increasingly debated, is the *individualist bias*. Researchers and practitioners working in interculturality often ignore the fact that interculturality is a construct of people, researchers and practitioners included, who have stereotypes, representations and ideologies which inform their work and of which they need to be aware (Holliday 2010: 2).
3. Cultural truths and identities are the realities of interculturality. For A. Holliday (2010: 27), this leads to "a change in the way we research and teach the intercultural". He lists the following alternative aims: to put aside established descriptions, to seek a broader picture, to look for the hidden and the unexpressed.
4. *Intersectionality*, "the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination" (Davis, 2008) is also interesting for intercultural communication education. It is not "culture" that guides interactions but the co-construction of various identities such as gender, age, profession, social class but also moods, emotions and power.

### ***Conceptualization***

Cognitive linguistics is centered on two concepts: conceptualization, i.e. the process of fashioning meanings, and the assumption that language, culture and meaning are bound up with each other. If culture and language relate closely, then linguistic meaning will not only be culturally shaped, but will also have a role in shaping culture. Language learning success entails a degree of integration into the target language culture, and language learning failure could also presuppose a failure to acquire that culture's modes of conceptualization.

Of course, we are all endowed with the same cognitive architecture and therefore perceive the physical world in a similar way. However, meaning builds quickly towards abstraction, establishing grammars to represent abstract relationships in space and time. Abstraction posits modes of conceptualization that are less well secured by a world of objects and therefore it affords room for greater differences among the meanings that we use. The entailment is that cultures, as the archives of these shared modes of grasping the world, could operate with different abstract worlds, conventionalizing these into different grammatical and lexical meanings.

Therefore, there is a sense in which learning a language involves acquiring new modes of common conceptualization. When teaching or learning a foreign language there is the need to understand the respective culture along with the culture of the specific context of communication. The intercultural approach must be sustained by the adequate pedagogy based on findings and experience provided by SLA and applied linguistics mixed with the philosophy provided by cognitive linguistics.

### **“Getting Through Strategies” to Achieve International Communication**

The goal of learning or teaching a language for international communication is daunting in the sense that interculturality is a construct and a matter to be conceived by the teacher and the students based on rather subjective needs analysis, theories and philosophies that are gaining practical experience only now. Nevertheless, one thing is certain, i.e. teaching or learning a language needs strategizing, and international communication needs specific strategies. We are reviewing below some strategies that are of help in this undertaking.

#### ***To learn new meanings, sometimes we have to conceptualize the world differently***

It is well known that second language learners will generally operate with the meanings of their first language. Based on the basic hypothesis that first language meanings will affect our conceptualization of a given phenomenon, we have grounds to speculate that the successful acquisition of another language entails acquiring a somewhat different conceptual system, and that the difficulty of this task is very much dependent on the degree of similarity between the modes of conceptualization implicit in the meanings of the languages concerned.

#### ***There must be a shift from teacher centered approaches to learner’s active role in language learning***

With pedagogic focus shifting from teacher-centered approaches in foreign language instruction to the learner’s active role in language learning, a significant amount of research on language learning strategies has been done contributing to or stemming from the development of strategy taxonomies (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987) based on the theory of cognition.

O’Malley and Chamot (1990) view language learning strategies as skills that are acquired as declarative knowledge, which would subsequently become procedural as a result of extensive practice. Strategies would then lead to actions aiming to retrieve and store new information until this information is automatized. Because they are

automatic and declarative such strategies contribute to a lesser degree to language learning in a dynamic setting.

Oxford (1990) seems more interested in the ‘mental action’ aspect of strategies rather than their knowledge basis when she defines them as ‘specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations’ (Oxford, 1990: 8).

Oxford’s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) divides strategies into two major categories: direct and indirect. Each category comprises three subcategories. Direct strategies consist of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Their common denominator lies in their involving the target language. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, are those that support and manage language learning without necessarily involving the target language directly. They consist of metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. SILL has undergone significant revisions and has been translated into numerous languages, with multiple reliability and validity checks performed thus becoming a suitable instrument to measure the strategy preferences of all language learners, whether the target language is learned as a second or foreign language, or acquired in a naturalistic or instructed context.

### ***The student is an L2 user***

The logical consequence of the arguments raised above is that language teaching should place more emphasis on the student as a potential and actual L2 user and be less concerned with the monolingual native speaker. Abandoning the native speaker totally may be unrealistic because this model is quite entrenched in teachers and students’ minds, yet some steps in the right direction can be taken as presented below.

#### *Set Goals Appropriate to L2 Users*

A practical way of moving towards an L2 user model is to present students with examples of the language of L2 users and of the language addressed to L2.

#### *Include L2 User Situations and Roles*

The basic need is to present situations in which L2 users take part. Teaching and learning materials simply need to demonstrate that L2 users exist in the world as role models for students to emulate. Making some parts of language teaching reflect an L2 user target would at least show the students that successful L2 users exist in their own right and are not just pale shadows of native speakers

#### *Use Teaching Methods That Acknowledge the Students’ L1*

Grammar translation should continue to be used together with other methods like reciprocal language teaching or controlled code switching. ”These activities above all see the student as an *intercultural speaker* (Byram & Zarate, 1994), not an imitation L1 user. The use of such activities in teaching may go some way towards developing the student as a multicompetent speaker rather than an imitation native speaker.”

#### *Base Teaching on Descriptions of L2 Users*

Syllabuses and teaching materials could suggest intermediate goals for the students on their way to becoming successful L2 users. For example, the European Science Foundation project (Klein & Perdue, 1997) discovered that L2 learners of European languages acquired a basic grammar consisting of three rules: A sentence may be (a)



subject-verb-object (e.g., *Jane drinks beer*), (b) subject-copula-adjective (e.g., *Beer is good*), or (c) verb-object (e.g., *Drinking beer*). This L2 grammar is valid not just for L2 English but also for L2 German, Dutch, French, and Spanish, almost regardless of the learner's L1. Although these rules represent an interim stage of L2 learning, they nevertheless provide a useful description of an L2 target for the beginner stage. An additional claim made in SLA, concerning syntax stipulates that the initial stages of language acquisition depend upon word order rather than inflection (Klein & Perdue, 1997; Pienemann, 1985), a finding of major importance for the teaching of English, which traditionally spends considerable effort on the plural *-s*, past tense *-ed*, and so on at early stages.

### ***A systemic functional perspective should be adopted***

The systemic functional model developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985a, 1985b, 1985c) allows us to relate the context in which language is used to the text which operates in the context. The SFM interprets functional variation not just in *register* - variation in the use of language - but also in *lexicogrammar* - the coding of language.

Here are some strategic actions streaming from this model and its implications:

- stimulate the encoding and decoding of text with an emphasis on the communication of meaning in context;
- identify which methods of development, which choices of thematic, mood, ideational, information structures and cohesive devices warrant our students' attention.
- ensure the text-context relation so that students can learn spoken and written language more effectively.
- devise ESP syllabuses based on the fact that vocabulary is field restricted, and grammatical structures are chosen to reflect those most frequently encountered in the profession or area of study.
- Devise EAP task oriented syllabuses making sure that the students are encouraged to work on tasks similar to those of the disciplines they will encounter outside their language classes

### **International Standard English**

Coming a long way through various theoretical and strategic approaches of the issues raised by language learning and teaching and the international context of language use, we need to establish some reference points. The older literature deals with two concepts referring to the context of communication: *English as an International Language* and *English as an Intranational Language*. English as an *International Language* is English "which is used by people of different nations to communicate with one another," while English as an *Intranational Language* is English used by nationals of the same country for communication" (Smith 1978: 5).

Taking into account the two definitions, EIL has the following distinctive features: (1) the purpose of learning is international communication, (2) the medium of communication is in spoken and written form, (3) the student population consists of both native and non-native speakers, (4) language interactions take place between (a) native speakers of different nations', (b) native speakers and non-native speakers, and (c) non-native speakers of different nations, (5) the cultural emphasis is on cultures of

specified countries, (6) the language model is any "educated English," native or non-native, and (7) the performance target is "intelligible English" and "appropriate English." (Smith,1978). All these features shape the concept of EIL correctly.

Nevertheless, we would like to emphasize one empiric fact that was mentioned at the beginning of the present paper: communication in the international context should not become a modern Babel. Variety and differences should be carefully assessed and used only as far as they do not impede intelligibility, adequacy and correct understanding. To achieve that language learning formally needs a standard that, in our opinion, is to be established by the educated norms of native speakers. This should be the reference point in any attempt to learn and use language in international communication. Official language norms are the most adequate inputs for language standards. We need them as reference point not to get chaotic in one of the most important human powers: communication.

### **Conclusion**

The English language is now used most frequently as a medium of international communication, and advocates that native speakers as well as non-native speakers should be taught to interact effectively with one another.

Noting that English is used for the following interactions: between (1) native speakers of different nations, (2) native speakers and non-native speakers, and (3) non-native speakers of different nations, the cultural emphasis should be placed on the cultures of specified countries in which the students are interested, or about which they have developed specific needs.

The language model, the spoken and written text which is used in the classroom, is "educated English," and the ultimate performance target should be intelligible, appropriate, correct English.

Varieties of English exist but they seem to matter very little to native speakers of English, and the best grammars and dictionaries are based on that Standard English that is freely current throughout the world. Native speakers all over the world respect the standard and non-native speakers should respect and recognize that as well, to make the international context the locus of true, correct, intelligible and adequate communication.

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***Implementing Environmental Sustainability Issues in  
English Language Teaching for Schools***

Laura de Almeida, Universidade Estadual de Santa Cruz, Brasil

The European Conference on Language Learning 2014  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

This paper outlines the ongoing development of a teaching project entitled *English Language, School and Sustainability – Consciousness and Citizenship Relationship*. The program underpinning this project is the Institutional Program of Initiation to Teaching Service - Programa Institucional de Iniciação à Docência (PIBID) and sponsored by the Co-ordination of Staff Improvement at University Level (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – CAPES). The aim here is for undergraduate students to exchange learning experiences with a university lecturer and a classroom teacher at a public school in order to help them grow as classroom practitioners and researchers in a public school setting. This Project is based mainly on the assumptions of Freire's pedagogical theory (2001) about mutable reality depending on the participation of people around it. Also on Chaves' research (2011) which deals with the experience of environmental issues in a public school and community attitudes about it. By doing this we tend to develop not only the skills of all involved, but also help them to interact with environmental issues. As an outcome, this project tends to promote studies and debates on problematic environmental issues under the multi, inter and trans-disciplinary perspective. In regards to the community public school participation and the university, we aim to promote not only language acquisition, but also to make the project participants search for a change in behavior that denotes the formation of a better operating citizen.

Keywords: Learning, Acquisition, Environmental issues

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## Introduction

This article aims to show the actions of the teaching project entitled *English Language, School and Sustainability – Consciousness and Citizenship Relationship* (*Língua Inglesa, Escola e sustentabilidade relação de consciência e de cidadania*) sponsored by the Co-ordination of Staff Improvement at University Level (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - CAPES). This Project, part of the Institutional Program of Initiation to Teaching Service - Programa Institucional de Iniciação à Docência (PIBID), involves a university lecturer who operates as the co-ordinator, a public school English teacher as a supervisor and ten undergraduate students operating as the ones who put the project's activities into action in the public school classrooms during the English lessons. PIBID began in 2014 and will extend to 2016. In the first year of the project, the participants were in charge of five different class groups composed of around 170 students in total. This number does not include the whole number of students, but we aim to get a sample of the whole and work with it. The students are around 14 to 16 years old and study in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at a public school in Ilhéus (Bahia/Brazil).

Developing a project in a public school is justified and necessary if one takes into account the social conditions where foreign languages are included in the formal curricula in Brazil. English is taught as a foreign language and only twice a week. There are about thirty to forty students in each class or more. Classes are conducted mostly using the mother tongue (Portuguese) and usually English is not connected with the other subjects and to the outside world.

Considering that the University has a very narrow institutional involvement with the issues of the world inside and outside the institution of higher education, and the current proposal for the training of teachers, that is, to prepare them for the current world problems and situations and find solutions or ways to deal with them, we believe that there is an institutional link to the development of this proposal. The research question that drove the initiative was: *How can we relate sustainable issues in the teaching of English as a foreign language in order to enhance motivation and learning for students as well as teachers in Brazil?*

Summing up, this proposal is interdisciplinary and aims to address the problem of the environment that has occupied a prominent place in the media and at conferences related to the theme. Besides, we visualize a curriculum approach of the language degree course with the scientific, technological, artistic and cultural to propose the development of this theme in the basic education teaching networks.

## Theoretical foundation

Among the many studies conducted on environmental education, our common thread runs through discussions about the subject addressed by a number of researchers such as Reigota (1994), who emphasizes that environmental education as an educational perspective may be present in all disciplines; Chaves (2011) who presents the environmental problems experienced in a public school in Itanhém (Bahia) and others. Regarding the necessity of preservation, we emphasize the reflections of Leonardo Boff (1999) which alert us to the need for a new paradigm of coexistence that fuses a close relationship with the Earth and



inaugurates a new social pact between peoples in the sense of respect and preservation of everything that exists and lives.

We have adopted the definition of environmental education by Reigota (1994, 10), because according to the author, "the environmental education should be understood as political education, in the sense that it claims and prepares citizens to demand social justice, national and planetary citizenship, self-management and ethics in social relations and with nature". From the concepts raised by the author cited and others which we may encounter, we build our theoretical framework for addressing environmental issues in schools.

After a theoretical introduction to the subject we move for a practical part of the ideas presented by the theoretical framework.

In this way, we observe the important role of the school in relation to environmental education. In addition, we emphasize the question of inter-disciplinarily presented in the premises of the EA (environmental education) for Dias (1998, p. 126), among which we highlight:

b) "Environmental problems are always complex and require the intervention of specialists from various disciplines for their solutions, in an interdisciplinary approach"

The question of the garbage generated in cities is undoubtedly one of the major problems in most Brazilian municipalities. Participation in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Congress on Education of the State of Bahia (CIDEB) in the town of Porto Seguro/BA in 2011, with the theme "Education for a State without borders: From theory to practice", provided ways to tackle the problem, that is, the situation in which some municipalities like Ilhéus and Itabuna are in, also experienced by other cities, but it is possible to overcome the problem through transformative actions. This Congress met the ideas propagated by Cilene Chaves in her book on daily practices in environmental education. According to Chaves (2011), environmental problems affects everyone becoming a global challenge to all inhabitants of the planet. In the meantime there is the school that, following recommendations from the National Environmental Policy (Law 6,938/81), seeks work from the guidelines of the National Curricular Parameters (PCNs), incorporating environmental discussions in its teaching matrices.

The proposal of work with the theme of sustainability in teaching a foreign language covers other interdisciplinary issues and cross-cutting themes, as well as ethical issues, since it aims at contributing to the formation of the citizen by means of awareness of environmental problems faced by residents of the region of UESC, such as in Ilhéus and Itabuna. So, we chose a transformative education as put by Paulo Freire (2001, p. 36) when he says that being in the world means "transform and re-transform the world, and do not adapt to it". The present research is justified as arousing the political consciousness of educators can intervene in reality. Still, according to Freire, education can give people greater clarity to "read the world" and this clearly opens up the possibility of political intervention in reality so that it can rapidly evolve into a better world.

Finally, we will build our theoretical model by means of joint concepts, definitions about environmental education and the transforming role of the school in this context. We develop goals and apply the following items:

- 1) Work the reading and writing competence in the English language, with texts referring to sustainability
- 2) Promote studies and discussions on environmental issues under the multi, inter and trans-disciplinary perspective, aiming at efficient and effective development of programs and projects on environmental education in the English language
- 3) Analyze other resources in the English language such as movies and songs that deal with the subject of sustainable development
- 4) With regard to work in the community, public school and the University by sensitizing and educating participants to seek a behavioral change that fosters the formation of a more active citizen
- 5) Produce teaching material that deals with the theme of sustainable development in the English language

### Method - Application of design and data collection

The method is based on a self-assessment questionnaire to check what students from the public school are aware about on the topic of sustainability. With the implementation of the project, we first performed a diagnosis to know the reality of the school. With this knowledge we researched what students knew about the theme of sustainability. The following graphs are a result of the questionnaire applied by university students at the public school in Ilhéus on May 13, 2014. We note that:

1-Do you know what sustainability is?

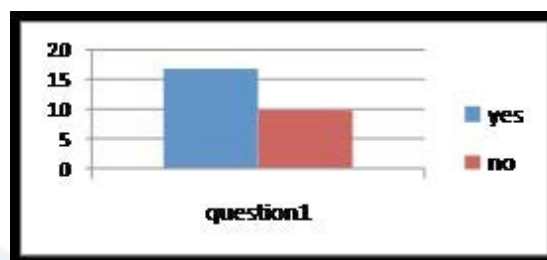


Figure 1. Graphic about the results of question1

The majority of the students from the public school claim to know about sustainability.

2 – Does your school develop activities on sustainable development?

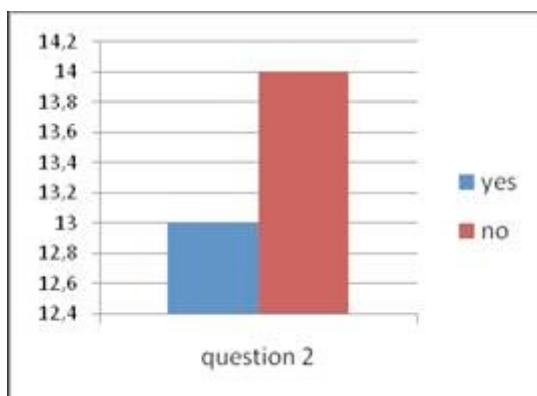


Figure 2. Graphic about the results of question 2

In this case, more students answer negatively about this topic being discussed in the school.

3 – Do you know any song in the English language that deals with this theme? (environment /sustainable development)

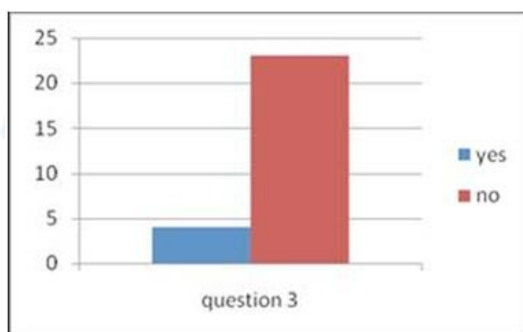


Figure 3. Graphic about the results of question 3

Above, many students answer that they do not know songs about this topic.

4- What do you do with the trash in your home?

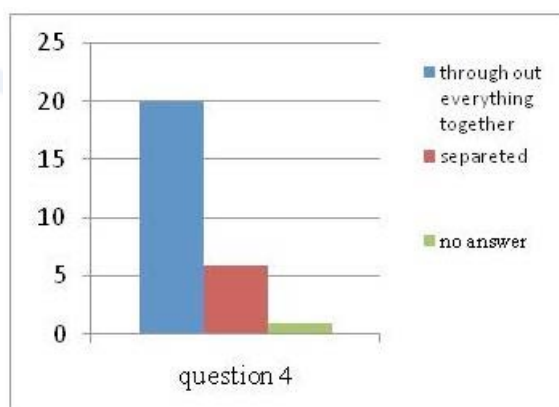


Figure 4. Graphic about the results of question 4

In the graph above, many students answer that they throw the trash out without separating it for recycling.

5-Do you have recycling in your city/neighborhood/school/ supermarket/shop/ somewhere you know?

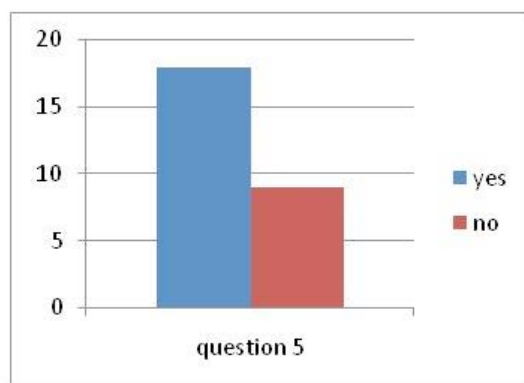


Figure 5. Graphic about the results of question 5

Now, there is a contradiction in the response to question 5 in relation to that of question 4: If there is recycling, why then do they not bother about separating the trash?

6-Do you contribute to preserving the environment?

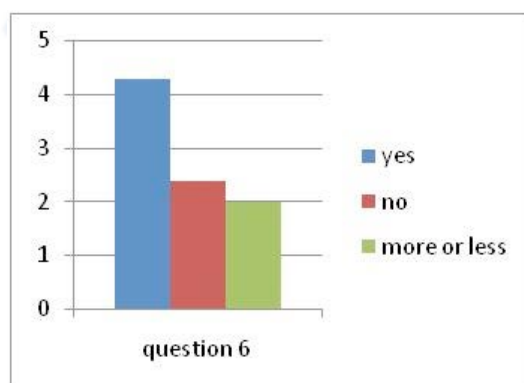


Figure 6. Graphic about the results of question 6

Another contradiction: How do they contribute to environment when they do not recycle the trash?

## Results and discussion

With reference to the survey on the knowledge of the subject by students of the public school we found that most young people know about the concept of sustainability. As for whether the school develops activities on sustainable development, we detected half-stated affirmatively and half negatively. We asked if they knew any song in English that deals with this theme (sustainable development of the environment) and the survey found that most did not know. As for what they did with the garbage from their homes, we found that most throw all the trash out unseparated. Also, we asked if they have recycling in their town/ neighborhood/school/supermarket/shop/or somewhere that they knew of and the majority responded affirmatively. On the question of whether they contribute to preserving the environment we found that the majority do not participate. Based on

their answers and on the community reality of this town (Ilhéus), we can affirm that currently there is no recycling collecting policy. This is one of the contradictions in their answers. The students claim they help the environment, but at the same time there is no environmental policy in that town. Trash is collected all together and not separated. So we can conclude that they do not have deep knowledge on this topic.

Based on the assumptions above, we decided to apply some activities on the basis of ways of changing this reality through selected texts and recreational resources. In regards to movies and songs we note the existence of more music than movies under this theme.

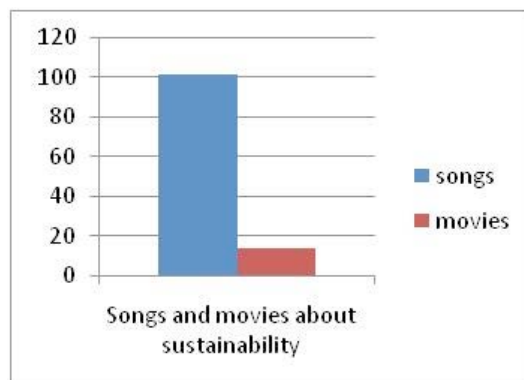


Figure 7. Graphic about the results of the research about songs and movies

For this reason, we decided to develop the theme of the project through songs. We found that there are more songs related to sustainability than movies, which is why we chose a song to be analyzed. One example of this is the analysis of the song “Mercy, Mercy Me” by Marvin Gaye: The situation of pollution in the skies, seas and radiation, among other problems.

Besides approaching songs and movies about sustainability we also worked with texts using different topics related to the same issue. When working with texts we apply reading strategies such as skimming and scanning.

There is a graph below illustrating the research to evaluate which topic appeared more often in the texts selected by the undergraduate students:

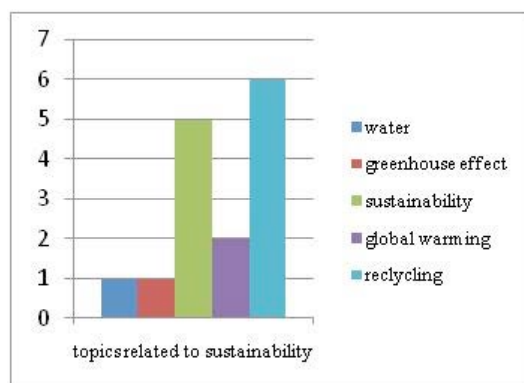


Figure 8. Graphic about the results of topics related to sustainability

Based on the graph above we can infer that water is the topic which appeared most often in the search for topics related to sustainability. Then, the other topics such as sustainability, global warming and recycling appeared less frequently. This does not mean that the other topics are less important; however, there is one which is affecting the neighborhood more than the others.

### **Conclusion**

Among our objectives we aim to develop competent readers and writers through the application of sustainability-oriented texts. Next, we present our preliminary results because the research is in progress. On the basis of the data collected we found that through music we can discuss the issue of sustainability. Based on the results of the data shown we can point out that sustainability is not a known subject and this justifies the discussion of this topic in the school. Furthermore, reflecting on the activities which are being carried out in the project, we realized the need to address the theme of the environment in public schools in order to help students not only to learn the English Language, but also to improve his/ her citizen formation according to Freire's (2001) assumptions about changing the reality where we live in to improve our lives.

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## *Toward Authentic Language Assessment: A Case in Indonesian EFL Classrooms*

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### **Abstract**

Meaningful assessment in Indonesian newly-instituted curriculum (the 2013 curriculum) of EFL now shares a more central position as the curriculum requires that the classroom instruction and learning has to be conducted in thematic integrative approach where authentic assessment is a core; while assessment practice has long been widely traditional where quantitatively-oriented tests are dominant, mostly knowledge-based, and depending largely on the results of product assessment but neglecting process assessment. Policies regarding such problem need to be made which mainly aim at helping English teachers prepared for the new curriculum. In EFL context, a need analysis has been done involving English teachers from 23 junior high schools in three regencies in Bali in 2013. Data were collected through questionnaire, interview, and document study. Focus of the analysis was teachers' readiness to implement authentic assessment, and challenges of implementing authentic assessment. Results of analysis show that teachers' readiness to implement authentic assessment is moderate. Most teachers consider that authentic language assessment is applicable to productive language skills only. Of all kinds of authentic assessment, the teachers mostly practice performance assessment (73.91%), essay (52.17%), and project (47.83%). Portfolio, product, and self assessment are very rarely used. Most teachers say that practicing authentic assessment is not new, but they just do not have enough knowledge which can support their practice. The analysis concluded some challenges to the use of authentic assessment in EFL such as authentic language materials, authentic tasks and rubrics, scheduling of English lesson, class size, student motivation, and teachers' readiness. Supports to EFL teachers such as at-hand authentic assessment tools and instruments, and training will help achieving the goals of the new English curriculum.

**Keywords:** authentic assessment, EFL curriculum

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Critics towards the use of formal assessment in classrooms have been heard for over two decades. Most teachers and educators are not happy with classroom assessment practice which have been very quantitatively oriented with over reliance to objective type tests. In the context of classroom assessment, the use of objective type tests, especially the primadonna multiple choice type, is not appropriate for at least two reasons. *First*, classroom assessment is formative in nature. It gives information about the day-to-day learning progress of a student including his/her strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles faced during learning. For this function, results of classroom assessment have to fulfill the reflective power of assessment through feedback provided by the assessment. Objective type tests fail to fulfill this function because of its orientation to assess just product of learning. Assessment in process cannot be done by using objective type tests because they just provide scores but not description of learning. *Second*, objective type tests are powerful only to assess cognitive aspects of learning. In the context of competency which involves knowledge, attitudes, and skills, daily assessment which emphasizes only on cognitive tests will not able to display the nature of competency itself. In many cases, skills and attitudes are assessed in cognitive ways. This, for sure, is not good for development of competency.

The trend to have comprehensive assessment practice, then, grows very rapidly along with an improved understanding on the importance of life skill learning. Our children will be able to survive in life if they grow in competencies and ways as expected by the global era. Over emphasis of learning on cognitive aspects may fail to support life. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes must evolve out as a whole within every individual student, so that he or she can function well in problem solvings of life challenges.

This trend also influences subject-matter curriculums in all levels of schools. In Indonesia, this trend has been instituted in the new curriculum of 2013 for elementary and secondary school levels. It is clearly stated in the process standard and assessment standard of Indonesian education that to help our students grow well with good problem solving abilities, assessment of learning must be authentic. This philosophy of assessment has also been instituted as the assessment approach in the new curriculum.

This institution of authentic assessment in the curriculum, however, has brought a big question on the readiness of teachers to implement it. Being very accustomed to using multiple choice type tests in classroom assessment has made teachers becoming anxious. As a matter of fact, despite the certification which requires four teaching competencies reflected in the three main tasks namely planning the teaching, executing the plan, and assessing learning progress. Actually, most teachers focus only on the executing the plan (teaching) phase. They rarely work on writing syllabus, lesson plan, and assessment. It is not just a rumour that most teachers use tests from item banks like national examination tests for formative assessment. This makes teachers rarely practice in writing test items, and almost never have exercise in designing authentic assessment.

To bring success to the new curriculum, Indonesian education has to improve perspective in teaching, especially in assessing. Assessing has to become one important task of teachers which has to be done correctly and well in order to improve quality of learning (the effect of assessment on learning). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) subject matter, assessment of language skills, especially

productive skills like speaking and writing is mostly performance. Up to this point, there is no discrepancy of assessment practice of EFL with the mandate of the new curriculum. However, there are some questions about the practice of authentic assessment of EFL which need to be addressed in order to promote quality EFL learning assessment especially in junior high schools. Based on those questions, there were three purposes of the study, namely the authenticity of assessment practice by EFL teachers, EFL teachers' readiness in implementing authentic assessment, and challenges of authentic assessment implementation. This analysis can give significant input for school policy regarding how authentic assessment can be well-implemented in classrooms.

Authentic assessment is an alternative (to objective type tests) assessment which has the capacity of providing students with the opportunity to explore life-like situations by having problem solving tasks. Most authentic assessment is integrated in instruction, therefore, it can be used as process and product assessment as well. It is on-going, so that there is ample opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning by having feedback from his/her own and peers, and teacher as well. As feedback is immediate and also personal, improvement can be done right away. This way, optimal learning can be obtained. Authentic assessment is also humane, in the sense that it supports the argument that mistake is natural and it indicates learning. Through making mistakes then students can think about making better learning to avoid further mistakes.

Kinds of authentic assessment involved in this study were portfolio assessment, performance assessment, project assessment, and self-assessment. Altogether are considered authentic assessment, the four kinds of authentic assessment above have different characteristics. Portfolio assessment is associated with a process of learning through continuous collection of works called a folder and reflection through self-assessment. Works in the folder show the growth of the student learning over time and how he/she grows as a learner. Portfolio assessment is considered the primadonna of authentic assessment because all good characteristics of authentic assessment can be found in portfolio assessment.

Performance assessment is a name which is often misleading. Many writers use the term performance assessment as another name of authentic assessment; while in many cases, performance assessment is a term used to refer to assessment to any performance made by the students, like drama performance. Performance assessment is the tracing of process in the performance. By assessing a drama performance students, the teacher can trace back the effort the students have done to make such performance.

Project assessment is typical with its phases. Related to project instruction which has been popular earlier, project assessment is used especially for a long-term assignment which may last for several days or weeks depending on the assignment. Project assessment is properly used to assess product done through steps or phases. Drama performance in EFL is appropriate for project assessment because it takes a long time to prepare and practice before execution in a performance.

Self-assessment gains growing attention because of the trend in education which manages to give more autonomy for the students to pursue their own progress in

learning. Self-assessment helps teachers understand that every student has his/her own strengths and weaknesses, has typical strategy to problem solving and learning from the past. Culturally, self-assessment is difficult to do because naturally a person will concentrate on strengths only, but not ready to reflect on weaknesses. Many students think that failure is external while success is internal and external. Without self-assessment, a student will submit an assignment without proofreading. With self-assessment, feedback will be obtained through proofreading. Self-assessment is effective if it is made formal with some checklist, rating scales, and systematic description.

The study was a need analysis regarding authentic assessment implementation in EFL learning by teachers of English in Bali Province, Central Indonesia. The study involved 23 junior high schools in three regencies in 2013. Data were collected through questionnaire, interview, and document study. Analysis of data was done descriptively. The study was focused on the four kinds of authentic assessment described above which were used in the four EFL skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Object studied was EFL teachers' readiness in implementing authentic assessment in EFL instruction and teachers' challenges and expectation toward the implementation of authentic assessment in EFL classroom as mandated by the 2013 Indonesian curriculum.

### **Teachers' Readiness in Implementing Authentic Assessment in EFL Instruction**

Teachers' readiness in implementing authentic assessment were assessed in four aspects namely knowledge in the nature of language skills, knowledge in the nature of assessment of language skills, and readiness to implement authentic assessment.

### **Teachers' knowledge of the Nature of English Language Skills**

Results of data analysis show that the teachers have good knowledge in the nature of language skills. The average score was 91.05 which is categorized as very good; in which speaking and reading are being the skills obtaining highest score (95) while listening is a bit below (93.5) and writing is the least (79.3). It can be seen that the teachers have least knowledge in writing skills. Further investigation through interviews reveals that the teachers consider writing is the most difficult skills to teach and for the students to learn. They say that they often are not sure what to start teaching writing with. Knowing that students find it difficult to write grammatical sentences, most teachers start teaching with sentence writing. Other teachers teach vocabulary before teaching writing, assuming that vocabulary will help much in writing because learning new vocabulary is relatively much easier than learning to write. The teachers, however, find it difficult to describe the process of writing. Marhaeni (2005) said that in the process of writing the students demonstrate knowledge and creativity in such a way which is typical for every student. Most teachers, however, emphasize on the use of grammar and vocabulary in writing, allowing students to use grammar and vocabulary without first emphasizing on the importance of topic, development of the topic in ideas, and organization of ideas.

## Teachers' Knowledge in the Nature of Assessment of Language Skills

Results of data analysis show that teachers knowledge in the nature of assessment of language skills is not as good as their knowledge about the nature of English language skills. Despite knowledge in writing which is moderate, teachers' knowledge in writing assessment obtained highest score among the four skills (score 85), while listening assessment and reading assessment obtained the same score (70), and speaking assessment obtained the lowest score (score 60). This is an interesting fact about writing skills. The teachers admitted that they understand that writing skills cannot be assessed using objective type tests like the multiple choice type. They know that they have to assess complex, productive skills which consist of several aspects; but through follow-up interviews it was found that writing assessment was not properly done. Most teachers assess writing product in a single score (holistically) but they failed to describe where the score came from. It is not clear about the aspects assessed in the piece of writing. ....(.....) argue that in assessing writing, holistic scoring is better than analytic scoring provided that writing skills reflect wholeness of knowledge and talent demonstrated in a piece of writing. However ..... emphasized that in context of learning to write at school, it was suggested to assess every single aspects of writing both in process and product of writing. This strategy of of assessment will give ample opportunity for feedback, reflection, and improvement a long the process.

In assessment of speaking skills, it was found that the category of teachers' knowledge in speaking assessment is moderate. It was found that the teachers have a quite premature knowledge in terms of speaking assessment. A major problem was found in their assessment of different speaking skills. They thought the aspects to assess in the skills are the same, therefore, they consider, for example, story telling task is the same with conversation task; while actually in story telling students use a ready-to-tell story, in this case, they do not demonstrate ability in finding topic and ideas, therefore not worth assessed; while in conversation, the students have to generate ideas based on the topic, and this is an important ability to assess.

Teachers' knowledge of assessment in listening skills and reading skills score 70 which is categorized moderate. Listening and reading skills are receptive skills which are mostly cognitive in nature. Most assessment astrategy used by the teachers is objective type tests. Considering listening and writing are cognitive, this strategy is appropriate. However, it was found that assessment strategies like summarizing, putting-it-in-another way etc. Which require higher level of cognitive abilities are rarely practiced.

## Teachers' Readiness to Implement Authentic Assessment

There were four kinds of authentic assessment which were investigated in the study, namely portfolio assessment, performance assessment, project assessment, and self-assessment. Results of data analysis of the teachers's readiness to implement authentic assessment show that across language skills, the average score of the teachers' readiness to implement portfolio assessment was 52.25 which was categorized as below average. Readiness average score to implement performance assessment was 69 which was categorized as moderate, readiness average score to implement project

assessment was 36.15 which was categorized poor, and readiness average score to implement self-assessment was categorized as 30 which was categorized as poor.

When analyzed across kinds of authentic assessment, it was found that the average score of the teachers' readiness to implement authentic assessment in teaching listening skills was 22.50 which was categorized as poor; in teaching speaking skills was 35.45 which was categorized as poor; in teaching reading skills was 68 which was categorized as moderate; and in teaching writing skills was 58.13 which was categorized as below average.

Based on the results of data analysis above, it is evident that, in general, the teachers are not ready yet to implement authentic assessment. Despite a better result in teachers' knowledge, it is clear that they are not ready to take action, that is, to systematically integrate assessment with teaching. This implies that up to this era of reform in instructional practice (which adores the constructivism perspective of teaching and learning) teachers still have a clear cut between teaching and assessing. This clear cut is not in line with the philosophy of authentic assessment which is integrated in the teaching and learning process, assessing product and process of learning, and contextual. Authentic assessment provides ample opportunities for students to explore knowledge and progress in accord of his/her own pace in learning. From the results above, it can be seen that the average teachers were not ready to implement authentic assessment. This implies a warning for Indonesian education. If teachers are not ready to implement authentic assessment, it will challenge the effort to achieve the goals of the curriculum.

### **Teachers' Expectation toward the Implementation of Authentic Assessment**

As mandated by the 2013 curriculum for classroom assessment using authentic assessment, EFL teachers have to be ready to implement authentic assessment. Interviews conducted after questionnaire administration revealed some challenges the teachers faced in implementing authentic assessment. The analysis of data of this point revealed some challenges to the use of authentic assessment in the 2013 curriculum, mostly caused by the requirement of implementing the assessment which may not be available at school; namely authentic language materials, authentic tasks and rubrics, scheduling of English lesson, class size, student motivation, and teachers' readiness.

In EFL context, learning material is a problem especially the authentic one. Most EFL learning materials available in Indonesian classrooms are dominated by textbooks which may have been used for some years after publication. In this era of information technology, it is relatively easy to access cyber authentic materials and tasks, but this may be challenged by the readiness of teachers in using technology which is not supportive as reported by Cahyani and Cahyono (2012).

Another notable challenge is availability of assessment rubrics which are very important in authentic assessment implementation. Results of data analysis suggested that, when assessing productive language skills, the teachers just holistically give a score to the performance without clear criteria and scoring guides. Further analysis shows that rubrics are rarely available in the textbooks used by the teachers. Being not very familiar with the internet, then it is difficult for them to have rubrics at hand.

Another challenge in this case is the traditional dichotomous quantitative-oriented scoring which is still dominant in classroom assessment. Teachers tend to give a single (holistic) score, while this is not in all cases effective. Hout (1990) said that holistic scoring of a language performance can only be done by an experienced evaluator. Hout further suggested for teachers to use analytic scoring rubrics. Beside an assumption that a teacher is not as skillful as an expert, analytic scoring is also very helpful in formative assessment because the information about every aspects assessed can be a powerful feedback for analyzing strengths and weaknesses of every aspects involved in the performance.

Technical arrangement of classes such as English lesson scheduling and class size also contributes to poor implementation of authentic assessment. In most schools in Bali, morning schedules are plotted for math and science while other subjects including English is plotted in the afternoon when most students have been tired. English is a foreign language in Indonesia. This language is used only in formal setting, not in daily life, therefore, it is a difficult subject for most students. Learning a difficult subject in an uncondusive classroom hinders students' motivation and concentration.

Class-size is another challenge. While authentic assessment is highly individualized which requires teachers to allocate sufficient time to supervise each student, most classes in Indonesian junior and senior high schools contain of forty students and more. With four credit hours (180 minutes) per week for English lesson, the teachers find it very challenging to conduct proper authentic assessment.

### **Teachers Expectation toward the Mandate to Conduct Authentic Assessment in EFL Classes**

Based on analysis of data obtained through interviews with the teachers, it was evident that the teachers are actually willing to learn more and implement authentic assessment properly. As has been explained above, the teachers are ready to implement authentic assessment. However, with the limited knowledge, experience, and materials, they actually need instructional and technical supports. First, they expect professional training programs in which they can improve knowledge and practice of authentic assessment. With the beginning of 2013 curriculum implementation this school year, the Indonesian government through the unit of curriculum implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture has conducted a massive training to teachers of all levels. However, Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reported early this year, that despite the excellent mission of the 2013 curriculum, it is a fear of implementation because of less training provided to teachers. Second, the teachers admitted that using assessment tasks and assessment rubrics to assess students performance is a special problem. It was uncovered in this study that most teachers do not have clear pictures about the aspects which need to be assessed in a particular performance. AS has been stated previously, the teachers cannot identify the different aspects which must be assessed between, say a story telling and a conversation. They have a common sense that both are speaking performance. While actually, content aspects and linguistic aspects which need to be assessed in both kinds of performance are different. For this reason, the teachers expect to have at-hand assessment rubrics with scoring guides for each characteristics of language performance.

### **A Prospect of Authentic Assessment in EFL in Indonesia**

The results of the study as described above indicate that there is a need to support EFL teachers in implementing the 2013 curriculum. In terms of instructional effectiveness to achieve the curriculum goals, authentic assessment plays a crucial role. A good teaching and learning strategy will not be optimal if assessment is apart from it. As illustrated earlier in this paper, authentic assessment is not just a strategy of assessing English proficiency, but authentic assessment can also be said, at least in Indonesian classroom context, to be a paradigm shift of assessment. The traditional over reliance to objective type tests must be revisited as the curriculum requires. Authentic assessment also, seen from its nature, is a way to improve affective aspects of learning. With portfolio assessment, for example, students are exercised to self-assess, which, according to Salvia and Ysseldyke (1996) will improve students ownership of learning and risk taking. For the future of Indonesian education, this autonomy must be facilitated so that the next generation will have the capacity to win life in the global era which is very competitive.

The results of this study also implies that to bring the 2013 curriculum implementation to a success, teachers needs. as described above, must be responded. The team in this study has concluded that instructional support would be provided. The next year project will be development of authentic assessment instruments and teachers' assessment guides which are expected to be teachers' at-hand materials to support the teachers; teaching and students' learning.

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*Native English Speaker Teachers versus Non-Native English Speaker Teachers in King Khalid University: Myths and Realities*

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**Abstract**

A small number of studies have addressed the debate comparing native English speaker teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs). However, most of the studies focused on teacher rather than student opinions. The present study examine ESL Saudi students' perceptions of NEST and NNEST professionals/teachers in King Khalid University - to ascertain whether they are negative as many administrators believe, or more positive as found in recent academic research. A total of 60 Saudi students were asked to participate in this study. They registered in an intensive English course for medical science students, at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. The data were collected by asking students to write their opinions to a stimulus question. Their responses to the question were analyzed using a discourse analytic technique. The results of analysis indicated the following main findings: 1) NESTs emerged as superior in the teaching of oral skills (Speaking and Pronunciation). 2) NNESTs received the highest praise for their grammar teaching skills in the "linguistic factor" group. 3) There is a clear preference for NNESTs at all level of personal factors (Experience as a L2 learner and Affect). The majority of the participants, although they see and acknowledge NNESTs' strengths, prefer attending classes taught by native speakers. Native speakers seem to maintain an advantage over their non-native counterparts. More attitudinal research needs to be conducted to determine what specific factors are influencing the students' perceptions of both NNESTs and NESTs.

Keywords: Non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST), Native English speaking teachers, EFL.

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## Introduction

It has been shown in many literature that the hiring practices of administrators, in charge of English Language teaching (ELT) programs in the United States, tend to greatly favour Native English Speakers Teachers (NNEST) over Non-native English Speakers Teachers professional (Cook, 2000; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992). They justify their choices by openly claiming that their students prefer NESTs. However, in an attitudinal study conducted by Mahboob (2004), data showed that the administrators' perceptions were not grounded in students' beliefs. From the findings, it was apparent that the students who volunteered for this study did not appear to find one better than the other; instead expressing that both types of teachers had their strengths and weaknesses. Additional research has also revealed that not only do NNESTs face discrimination from ELT programs administrators, but also from students and fellow ESL professionals (Braine, 1999). Given the abundance of qualified and proficient NNESTs in the industry have these cynical opinions begun to evolve? Or do NNESTs continue to be viewed through the lens of the "*native speaker fallacy*" which pigeonholes them as inferior for everything from their accents to their physical appearance? As this negative stereotype is one that is widespread, more attitudinal research focussing on this notion of the 'idealised' native speaker needs to be undertaken.

Studies that have already been conducted on the native/non-native speaker dichotomy have established that although a negative image of NNEST does exist, professionalism is commonly cited as more significant than language background (Liu, 1999; Shin and Kellogg, 2007; Mahboob, 2004 and Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman & Hartford, 2004). This is supported by Medgyes (1992) who argues that although natives have more language proficiency than non-natives; effectiveness in teaching depends mainly on qualifications rather than just language competence. The array of opinions observed above lead us to the purpose of this study, which is to examine EFL students' perceptions of NEST and NNEST professionals/teachers in King Khalid University- to ascertain whether they are negative as many administrators believe, or more positive as found in recent academic research.

## Literature Review

Few studies have compared native speaker teachers (NESTs) and non-native speaker teachers (NNESTs) to date. As what Medgyes' (2000, p. 445) believe that " On the whole, the study of the non-native teacher remains a largely unexplored area in language education". However, most of these studies focused on teacher rather than student perceptions (Hayes, 2009). In the last few years, there is an ever-growing number of non native speakers teachers and language learners (Crystal, 2002,2003). It echoes Canagarah (1999) and Samimy & Brutt-Griffler,1999). state that globally, NNESTs constitute 80% of the world's English teachers. In addition, the number of English learners is constantly increasing and NNS of English will continue to be the majority.

In spite of these facts, many ESL and EFL programs around the world prefer hiring NESTs to get jobs in their countries rather than hiring NNESTs, basing their decision on an assumption that the ideal teacher of English is the native speaker. Phillipson (1992) labeled this the "*native speaker fallacy*". This notion means that the ideal

teacher of English is a native speaker of that language. Canagarajah (1999) disagrees with this notion and states that there are hidden economic, political and ideological agendas behind the widespread nature of this assumption. Furthermore, in order to understand the relationship between the NEST and NNEST professionals in ELT, it is better to know first the non-linguistic and non-pedagogical motivations.

There are some empirical studies addressing the relationship between NESTs and NNESTs. Widdowson (1994) states that NNESTs have a privilege in learning experience but NESTs have a certain advantage in language use. Medgyes (1994) in his surveys of NESTs and NNESTs found that most NNESTs face a difficulty in language use and in their efforts to learn more of it, including vocabulary, speaking, and pronunciation. And they have less difficulty in reading and writing. Grammar was labeled by Medgyes as the NNEST's "favorite hunting range" (1994:37). Lasagabaster & Sierra (2002; 2005) found that the respondents in their surveys showed a preference for NESTs in the area of pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary and culture. These findings provide more support to those from Medgyes's (1994) surveys, reported above, of teachers.

## **Method**

### **Study site**

At King Khalid University where this study was undertaken, the recruiters market the school overseas as qualified native-speaking teachers only. However, this appears to be an advertising ploy, as they do employ a handful of qualified nonnative teachers as well. Administrators say that if they openly admitted to the latter, the school's attendance rate would significantly drop. This native speaker policy was instilled because in the past there were ongoing complaints about the high number of nonnative speaking teachers on staff. Students claimed that they had not travelled all this way to be taught by someone who was also a learner of English, which is why the bulk of the teachers are now native speakers.

### **Participants**

As part of these programs, students receive a total of 4.5–5 hours of classroom instruction daily, for a period of six months with the option to continue, which the majority tend to do. The institute employs both native (majority) and non-native (minority) English speakers as language instructors, and the students receive instruction from both. They are, therefore, familiar with having NNESTs in Australia as well as their home countries.

A total of 10 adult students, from various language backgrounds, were asked to participate in this study. Although the language proficiency of the students does vary, they can be roughly placed on a continuum between upper-intermediate and advanced levels. In addition, limited biographical information about the students was obtained including: age, home country, mother tongue, years of English instruction, level at the current institute of study, and past experience with a nonnative teacher.

## Instruments

In order to collect students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs, all students (60) registered in an upper-intermediate EAP course, at English institute in King Khalid University, were invited to write their opinions to a given stimulus question designed by Mahboob (2004).

*Some students think that only native speakers can be good language teachers. Others think that non-natives can also be efficient teachers. What do you think? Please feel free to provide details and examples.*

## Data Analysis

Following Hyrkstedt and Kalaja (1998), students' responses to the question were analyzed using a discourse analytic technique. In line with Mahboob (2004), the 60 essays were first read independently by two readers. No a priori categories were used in the analysis of the essays, although the categories which emerged as a result of the analysis were compared to those which surfaced in the study carried out by Mahboob (2004). Each reader also coded every essay individually using different colour highlighters for the assorted types of comments they deemed significant. The readers then got together to generate and label a list of categories of student comments about both NESTs and NNESTs.

## Results

Owing to time constraints, the number of participants in this study is too low to make broad generalizations from the findings. It is however a good starting off point that can be expanded to verify if a larger group of informants would corroborate the results. From the data analysis, two broad groups of categories encompassing 5 individual categories emerged. The first group labelled "linguistic factors" included "oral skills", "grammar", "vocabulary" and "culture". The second group "personal factors" included "experienced as a second language (L2) learner and "affect". The results of the analysis are presented next.

### Linguistic factors

*Table 1  
Distribution of Comment for the Linguistic Factors*

Linguistic Factors	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments	Negative Comments	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
Oral skills	15	0	5	5
Grammar	0	0	25	5
Vocabulary	25	0	0	5
Culture	15	0	0	0
Total	55	0	30	15

Table 1 shows that there were 100 remarks spread over the four linguistic categories. There were 55 positive and 0 negative statements about NESTs and 30 positive and 15 negative comments about NNESTs. The following are the results.

### **Oral skills**

The category of “oral skills” was composed of 25 statements concerning speaking and pronunciation. NESTs emerged as superior in the teaching of oral skills. There were 25 statements in this category, 15 of which discussed the role of NESTs, while the other 10 were concerning the role of NNESTs in teaching this skill.

All 15 students’ comments regarding NESTs were positive, while NNESTs received 5 positive and 5 negative comments. In most cases, students stated that NESTs were good models for pronunciation and spoke more naturally than NNESTs. The following statement from one of the essays exemplifies the notion of NESTs as pronunciation gurus:

*“...also have real pronunciation and they know idioms and collocations than non-native speakers.” (Student #16)*

*“...if students are study in high level, they need to learn about...special pronunciation...natives are better than nonnative teacher.” (Student #25)*

When interviewed, the students stated that by *real pronunciation*, they meant that they knew how to correctly say things and could therefore explain and help them learn to read and utter words accurately. The above 2 statements show that NESTs were preferred as teachers of oral skills given that “they are more natural than non-native speaker about use-English” (Student #1). These findings corroborate research by Mahboob (2004) and Arva & Medgyes (2000) which both found that NESTs communicative abilities are seen as their forte by NESTs and NNESTs alike.

In comparison to NESTs, NNESTs’ oral skills received mixed reviews. On the one hand, out of the 2 comments, 1 was positive and 1 was negative. The positive comment expanded on their precision and speed when speaking, which is exemplified in the following comment:

*“...they speak correctly and slowly. So I can understand easily.” (Student #9)*

On the other hand, NNESTs were criticized for using words out of context, and being unaware or unsure of the exact meaning of certain words:

*“But sometimes they use the words not influence.” (Student #6)*

### **Grammar**

As in Mahboob’s (2004) study, NNESTs received the highest praise for their grammar teaching skills in the “linguistic factor” group. There were 30 comments in this category all geared towards NNESTs, 25 of which were positive and 5 of which

was negative. The complete lack of comments for NESTs can lead us to believe that either the students deem that NESTs have weak grammar skills, or that they do not associate grammar skills with NESTs whatsoever. The latter could be a perception they have been fed by recruiters and administrators, motivating them travel to inner circle countries to improve their oral skills with NESTs whose communicative approach focuses on pronunciation and speaking while avoiding grammar. If one is constantly told that these native-speaking teachers do not teach grammar, then they could possibly not notice when it is taught to them using different means than the ones they are accustomed to, in turn not associating grammar with NESTs. The factors affecting students' perceptions in this respect need to be further researched. The strength of NNESTs in teaching grammar is exemplified below by a student who clearly favours NNESTs over NESTs:

*"...they are enable to advise and teach in non native speakers perspective. Such as, the concept of past sentence etc." (Student # 8)*

The 1 negative comment below, whose meaning was clarified by the student during a personal interview, stresses that NESTs place too much emphasis on specific grammar points and not enough on sentence construction as a whole, which NESTs do better.

*"...non-native speaker require to me understand about grammar, but native speaker emphasis that I remember the whole sentence." (Student #1)*

This specific and seemingly artificial teaching, the student went on to explain, results in language learning that is hard to apply outside of an examination context or the classroom; implying that NNESTs do not place enough emphasis on language that can be used in the English-speaking world, whether it be with NSs or NNSs.

### **Personal factors**

*Table 2 Distribution of Comment for the Personal Factors*

Personal Factors	NESTs		NNESTs	
	Positive Comments	Negative Comments	Positive Comments	Negative Comments
Experience as a L2 learner	0	0	20	0
Affect	5	0	40	0
Total	5	0	60	0

There is a clear preference for NNESTs at all level of personal factors. In table 2, personal factors were classified into two categories: "Experience as a L2 learner" and "Affect". There were 65 comments in this group. Table 2 shows that all comments are positive for NESTs and NNESTs. NNESTs received 40 positive comments while NESTs just received 5 positive comments.

### ***Experience as L2 learner***

Students' comments show an obvious privilege for NNESTs rather than NESTs in the area of experience. The total of number of comments is 20. All of them supported the idea that NNESTs are in a better position to have more experience as L2 learners because they have gone through the learning process themselves, while NESTs had acquired the language naturally. It has been claimed (Lee, 2000; Seidlhofer, 1999) that NNESTs can teach a foreign language better than NESTs because the later have not experienced the process of learning the language in the same way as their students will.

Student #5 stated that:

*“Non-natives are more sensitive about learning problems of English, because they have already experienced some problems.”(Student # 5)*

Another statement shows the relationship between teacher's experience and grammar. The following statements stated this:

*“They “NNESTs know which part is difficult because they have already experienced difficulty to learn English and they know what is the easiest way to learn English. (Student # 6)*

About 44 % of the students in this study believe that NNESTs experience in learning English as a L2 provides them with more sympathy and awareness of the learning English difficulties.

### ***Affect***

This category had the largest number of comments (45 out of 65). All of these comments were positive statements about NNESTs except 5 for the NESTs. These comments provided clear idea that NNESTs can support their students emotionally. In addition, NNESTs share their students the feeling as a second language learners. Student #33 stated that:

*“Non-native speakers can understand our feeling.”*

Student #49 gave another example:

*“Non-native speaker teacher know how difficult to learn English.”*

Lasagabster & Sierra's (2002) study of university students found that NESTs were more confident in English use, but NNESTs seen to know more about students needs.

Teacher's characteristics play great role in the success of learning process Some students pointed out that NNESTs have more positive emotional characteristics such as patience and sensitivity as second language teachers. These characteristics were exemplified in the following statements:

*“ Non-native English speaker is more patient than native speakers.” (Student #1)*

*“ Non-natives are more sensitive about learning problem of English.” (Student #5)*

*“ I think that good language teacher depend on their characteristics and attention they pay to their students. (Student #9)*

Widdoson (1994) stated that NNESTs share their students’ attitudes, beliefs, and values in cultural atmosphere.

### **Conclusion**

Even though NNSs constitute the majority of ELTs, they continue to be discriminated against as they are not considered native speakers, and are deemed deficient in some way – reinforcing the *native speaker fallacy*. However, this situation is evidently improving, as students and program administrators have in fact started recognising that teaching skills and training can prevail over a teacher’s mother tongue. Qualified, trained, and proficient NNESTs have a lot to offer the field, predominantly in the areas of grammar, similar learning experiences, and the ability to empathize with, and understand their students. That being said, it appears that the majority of the participants, although they see and acknowledge NNESTs’ strengths, prefer attending classes taught by native speakers, *“...however, I think that I suit native speakers”* (Student #2) and *“I like native speaker more that non-native speaker”* (Student #1).

At present, in King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia, native speakers seem to maintain an advantage over their non-native counterparts; as Medgyes (1992: 342) claimed, this advantage is so great that it cannot be outweighed by other factors in the learning situation such as motivation, aptitude, perseverance, experience, and education. More attitudinal research needs to be conducted to determine what specific factors are influencing the students’ opinions of both NNESTs and NESTs. Although the NESTs advantage as language users continues to triumph over the NNESTs experiences as language learners, it is evident that the significance of NNESTs in ELT is no longer going unnoticed and as one student nicely expressed:

*“ In my opinion, teachers’ origin doesn’t matter. Their teaching skill is more important” (Student # 4)*



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## *The Effects of Input Type and Tasks on Vocabulary Learning*

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### **Abstract**

This paper will examine if different type of inputs and tasks have different effects on L2 vocabulary learning. Two studies were conducted from 2013 to 2014 with 29 English native speakers who were learning Japanese in university.

In Study 1, the 37 verb list was presented to three groups under three conditions: words in alphabetical order, words with pictures, and words grouped by categories. Learners took a test at five different times. The results showed that accuracy rates went up after intentional vocabulary learning; however words were not retained and scores dropped significantly on the test performed 10 days later. Contrary to our assumptions, the SPSS analysis did not show a correlation between the type of input and test results. One possible explanation for this is that the beginning level learners are linking L1 translations to L2 words, rather than processing pictures or categories.

In Study 2, two groups of learners were assigned two different tasks with 27 verbs. Task 1 required the learner to complete a word by filling in the missing syllable. Task 2 was to read a story containing target verbs and then translate it to their L1. The learners took a vocabulary test and task tests 10 days later. The analysis showed a significant correlation between task type and word retention. The reading & translating task group had a higher score. This result suggests that reading and active linking with the learners' L1 activates a deeper recognition and brings a positive effect on vocabulary learning.

Keywords: vocabulary learning, word retention, task, input, word list

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## **Vocabulary: How much is enough?**

Lack of vocabulary impedes smooth performance in communication. Knowing an insufficient number of words causes an obstacle for reading. Lexicon is a key component of language. However, one of the difficulties of learning vocabulary is its size.

The size of recognition vocabulary (or passive vocabulary) of native English speakers is about 20,000 words at the high school graduate level. An educated person has a recognition vocabulary of 50,000 (Nation, 1990; Aichison, 2003). In the case of native Japanese speakers, recognition vocabulary is 20,000 to 40,000 at the middle school level, and 40,000 to 50,000 at the high school level (Hayashi, 1982; Hida & Sato, 2002).

How about second language learners? How much vocabulary do second language learners need to know? As a reference, there is a test called 'Japanese Language Proficiency Test' that has levels ranging from N5 to N1. The criteria for passing the N5 level is knowing 1,000 words, N4 is 2,000, N3 is 4,000, N2 is 6,000, and N1 is 10,000 words. The N1 and N2 levels are for those who are aiming to enter as undergraduates at most universities in Japan. The learners need to know this much vocabulary. However, there are limitations to remembering thousands of words by rote learning. Therefore, the researchers and language teachers have been seeking theories and techniques to promote vocabulary learning.

### **Previous Research**

Several theories have been discussed on vocabulary learning. Examples of such are 'the depth/level of processing theory' advocating the levels-of-processing effect on word memory (Craik & Lockhart, 1972), 'transfer appropriate processing theory' examining the initial encoded information and its retrieve (Morris, et. al., 1977), 'involvement load hypothesis' positing effect of the amount of involvement in the task onto the retention of word (Laufer & Hulstijin, 2001; Hulstijin & Laufer 2001), 'the dual coding theory' postulating that coding a stimulus from verbal association and visual imagery increases the chance of remembering the item (Paivio & Descroshers, 1980), 'type of processing-resource allocation model' disputing the level of processing and learning of the semantic properties of words (Barcroft, 2004b), and so on.

Various techniques and methodologies to promote vocabulary learning have also been suggested. One discussion among them is concerning reading. As an early research, Nagy, Herman & Anderson (1985) states that a moderate amount of reading will lead to substantial vocabulary gains. Hulstijin, Hollander & Greidanus (1996) remark that the look-up behaviour of learners with marginal glosses or a dictionary will foster incidental vocabulary learning. Another topic is to examine the effects of visual materials and multimedia systems. Plass et. al (1998) reported that students' performance was best when both visual and verbal modes of instruction were selected, moderate when students selected only one mode of instruction, and worst when they selected neither. Chun & Plass (1996) touched on a hypermnesia effect on the text-plus-picture words, which predicts better recall of pictures over time. As for a student's strategies, Read (2000) proposed a keyword technique to remember words.

Those topics drew a great deal of interest from researchers and numerous papers performing verification experiments have been presented.

As we see from the brief summary above, there is a number of research and suggestions on vocabulary learning, however, intriguingly, not much research has been done targeting the beginning level students, especially Japanese language learners. In this paper we will discuss vocabulary learning of the beginning level Japanese language learners.

### **Research Questions and Assumptions**

We will focus on vocabulary learning and classroom instruction. How to present new vocabulary is of fundamental interest to language teachers. The discussion in this paper is to see how vocabulary presented to learners affects the learners' vocabulary learning. To answer this question, we used three types of word lists as an input: words in alphabetical order, words with pictures representing meanings, and words grouped under a title like 'weekend' or 'classroom'.

Most textbooks present new vocabulary in an alphabetic order. The word list in alphabetic order is supposed to give subjects a phonological cue. This is word list Type 1. Word list Type 2 has pictures illustrating the meaning of a verb. Many language teachers use illustrations, images, and pictures to introduce new vocabulary at the beginning level of instruction. Its motivation is that teachers want to avoid interference from learners' L1. Also, the combination of text and image is expected to leave a reinforced trace in the memory more than showing just a text as previous research has suggested (cf. Paivio & Descrochers, *ibidem*). Word list Type 3 grouped words by categories. Moher et. al (2012) discuss that both adults and toddlers can increase the total amount of stored information by "chunking" object representations in memory. Mochizuki et. al. (2003) state that learning words under the same topic makes it easy to establish a network through the association of words. This list is used expecting the subjects could associate words by categories.

Our assumption is that the words with pictures or words under a category should demonstrate a significant difference in vocabulary learning. That is, we predict that imagery or word grouping will reinforce learners' memory as previous research has suggested.

### **Study 1**

#### **Subjects**

The experiments were conducted from 2013 to 2014. There were 13 subjects in 2013, and 16 subjects in 2014, for a total of 29 subjects participating in Study 1. They were all native speakers of English and beginning level Japanese language learners at the University of Guam. The textbooks that they were using were all the same and the speed of teaching and content of materials were all the same. They had taken the Japanese language course before, at least for one semester.

## Materials

Subjects were divided into three groups. Three types of word lists (Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3) were assigned as a variable to each group. Each list contained the same 37 verb words. The reason for using verbs was to minimize the difference of word knowledge among subjects and the influence from previous learning. Nouns are said to be easier to acquire than verbs (Rogers, 1969; Davelaar & Besner, 1988; Ellis & Beaton, 1993), because nouns evoke a mental image more easily than verbs. Some of the subjects took Japanese during high school so they started with more noun knowledge. However, since high school education is not intensive and focuses more on the cultural aspects, overall the subjects' vocabulary was limited, and they were still beginning level learners.

Examples of each word list are below. Type 1 word list indicates the verb words in Japanese alphabetical order. Type 2 word list shows the verb words with pictures. The pictures are cited from the website for Japanese language teachers (see appendix). Type 3 word list divides the words into 11 categories under the title of: going to school, bus, door, classroom, study, night relax time, library, friend, TV, weekend, and party.

あ〜 [a, i, u, e, o]	
あ い ま す あいます	to meet
あ け ま す あけます	to open
あ そ び ま す あそびます	to play

Type 1



Type 2

weekend	
せんたくします	to do laundry
そうじします	to clean (a room)
やすみます	to take a rest/ day off

Type 3

## Procedure

Five tests were given to three groups.

Test 1: The test was given to the subjects without notice. Its format was a typical vocabulary quiz. Words were arranged in random order. The subjects had to write a Japanese word corresponding to an English translation.

Test 2: Subsequently subjects were provided with word lists. They were instructed to memorize those words in 10 minutes and would take a test with the same format. Each group received a different type of word list. While subjects were memorizing words, some were writing words in their notebooks, and some others were mumbling

the words. After 10 minutes of intentional vocabulary learning (IVL), they took a test. The test format was the same as the word list, but it contained only the English part and subjects had to fill in the corresponding Japanese words.

Test 3: The next day, the vocabulary test was given without notice to see subjects' word retention. The format of the test was the same as the one used in Test 2.

Test 4: After Test 3, subjects were told to memorize the words over the four day weekend, and that they would be tested in the same format. This was Test 4.

Test 5: Ten days after Test 4, subjects were given a test in the same format without notice to measure their word retention.

## Results

The table below shows the increase rate of the results between subsequent tests. The words were new to the most subjects and they could not answer many in Test 1. The average correct answers were 8 out of 37. After 10 minutes of IVL, the score of Test 2 increased; however, the words in their memory were not retained for 24 hours (Test 3). The average increase rate was -5.1%. After four days of IVL, most subjects' test score increased as we would expect (Test 4). The average increase rate went up to 33.1% compared to the result of 10 minutes of IVL (Test 2). At this point, teachers would be satisfied and believe that the learners remembered new vocabulary. However, the score dropped after 10 days (Test 5). It was at most a 70.3% decrease, and the average was a 28.3% decrease compared to Test 4.

	T1 vs. T2	T2 vs. T3	T2 vs. T4	T4 vs. T5
The lowest increase rate	-2.7%	-27.0%	-2.7%	-70.3%
The highest increase rate	56.8%	10.8%	67.6%	0%
The average increase rate	27.7%	-5.1%	33.1%	-28.3%

Table: Increase rates between two test results

Those who started from a low score were especially prone to forgetting. This result is not surprising. The main inquiry of this paper is if there is a correlation between the type of input and vocabulary learning. We used the chi-square test to examine the correlation between the type of word list and each test result from Test 2 to Test 5. We predicted word list Type 2 and Type 3 should have a positive effect in vocabulary learning. The result, unexpectedly, did not show any significant differences. That is, the advantages of using pictures or grouping were not seen as suggested by previous research. This suggests that there is no difference in vocabulary learning by input for the beginning level of learners. One possible explanation for this could be that the learners are matching L2 words with their L1 word in their mind even if they are looking at the pictures or drawings as Matumi (2002) pointed out. Therefore, whether there is a picture with a word, or whether words are grouped by a topic does not bring a significant effect.

## Study 2

### Research Questions and Assumptions

Since Study 1 results show that the different inputs do not have a strong effect on vocabulary learning for the beginning level learners, we conducted Study 2. Study 2 was designed to see if the different types of tasks effect word retention.

Among the various theories on vocabulary learning, let's observe 'the depth/level of processing theory' and 'involvement load hypothesis'. These notions were developed from the depth of processing model, which was first proposed by Craik & Lockhart (1972). They suggested that retention in long term memory depends on how deep information is processed during learning. Furthermore, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) advanced the theory and proposed 'involvement load hypothesis', which postulates that the amount of learners' involvement in the task affects the retention of words. Hulstijn (2001) also states that the nature of information processing primarily determines retention. Based on these theories, there is growing interest in using a task in language teaching. There are numerous studies discussing the effect of tasks, too. However, the majority of the previous studies discussed its effects on the oral performance of the learners. There is not much focus on the vocabulary learning for the beginning level learners. If the hypotheses above are pertinent for the beginning level learners too, the different tasks should pose different results in word retention. In order to examine it, we used two types of tasks to examine the correlation between type of task and word retention.

Task 1 is a fill-in-the-letter task. It pushes the learners' attention toward the linguistic aspect of the word. Task 2 is a reading & translation task. It makes the learners' utilize their L1 knowledge. We assume that Task 1 should be more effective for learners' word retention than Task 2; because we expect that the fill-in-the-letter task pushes subjects to more careful attention to each word and each syllable more than reading a long story.

### Subject

The test was conducted in 2014. The number of subjects was 16. The 16 subjects were divided into two groups (7 subjects and 9 subjects). All of them were in the Study 1 experiment.

### Materials

Study 2 used 27 verb words. Each group was assigned a different task. Task 1 is the fill-in-the letter task. It has words which are missing one or two syllables. This task aims to make the subjects focus on the form and meaning of a word. Task 2 is the reading & translation task. It has a story containing the target 27 verb words. The subjects needed to read the story and translate it into their L1. In this case English. Below is an example of the tasks. Non-target words were indicated in the right column with English translations to avoid interference in Task 2.



to cut	き ( ) ます
to quit	( ) めます
to worry	し ( ) ば ( ) します
to walk	( ) る ( ) ます
to loose	( ) く ( ) ます
to begin (something)	はじ ( ) ます
to need	い ( ) ます
to receive	も ( ) います
to cough	せ ( ) をします

Task 1

5月に <u>春学期</u> が終わりました。 <u>春学期</u> に、私の友だちの田中さんは私 <u>春学期</u> = spring semester
に可愛い女の字をしようかいました。名前はさちごさんです。さち
ごさんは <u>犬</u> をかっています。私はさちごさんとデートをしました。でも、 <u>犬</u> =dog
さちごさんはうそをつきましたから、けんかして、わかれしました。
今、8月です。私は日本にきょうみがありますから、 <u>今学期</u> は日本語 <u>今学期</u> = this semester
のクラスをとります。今日からクラスがはじまりました。私はどてもき
んちようしています。そしてしんばいしています。そして昨日の夜はね
ませんでした。 <u>だから</u> <u>今朝</u> こくしました。 <u>だから</u> = therefore
私は <u>今学期</u> 、 <u>数学</u> のクラスと日本語のクラスにでます。たくさん漢字 <u>今朝</u> = this morning
<u>数学</u> = mathematics

Task 2

## Procedure

Preparation: Two group members were given different verb lists. Group A subjects received a verb list with Roma-ji on top, and Group B subjects received a verb list without Roma-ji. The list with Roma-ji was presented to Group A in order to draw the subjects' attention on the phonological cues from the beginning. The order of the verbs is the same. The left column has English translations and the right column has corresponding Japanese words. Each group was instructed to memorize words on the list for 10 minutes and told they would be performing a task.

Task Activity: After 10 minutes, Group A and Group B were given a different task. The fill-in-the-letter task is for Group A, and the reading & translation task is for Group B. They were allowed to look at the word list in case they had could not recall the words.

Test 1: 10 days later, the subjects were given a vocabulary test without notice. This was a typical vocabulary test looking at English and writing a Japanese word.

Test 2: Subsequently, after the vocabulary test, the subjects were given two task tests. The first one had the same format as the one they did as a task activity 10 days before. This time it was a test and they had to answer without looking at anything.

Test 3: Following Test 2, they were given another task that they did not do 10 days ago as a test.

## Result

The correlation between types of tasks and the results of the three tests was examined using Fisher's exact test. The result showed a significant difference on two items below.

	value	df	Fisher' exact test
Task type × 10 days after vocabulary test result	$\chi^2 = 5.333$	1	.038*
Task type × 10 days after reading & translation test result	$\chi^2 = 9.000$	1	.005**

Table 1: Correlation between the task type and test results

First, observe the results between task type and the 10 days after vocabulary test result.

None of the subjects who did the fill-in-the letter task activity could score more than 30% on the vocabulary test. In contrast, half of the subjects who did the reading & translation task activity could answer the vocabulary test with a score of more than 30%.

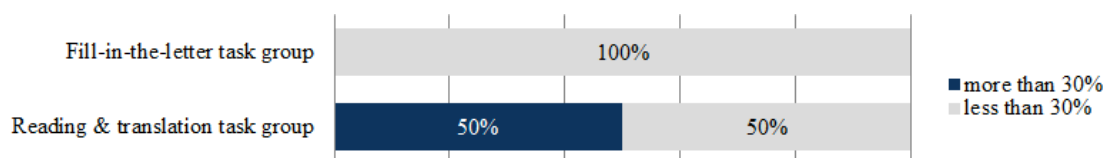


Figure 1: Vocabulary Test Result

There was also a significant difference between the type of task activity and the result of the reading & translation task test after 10 days.

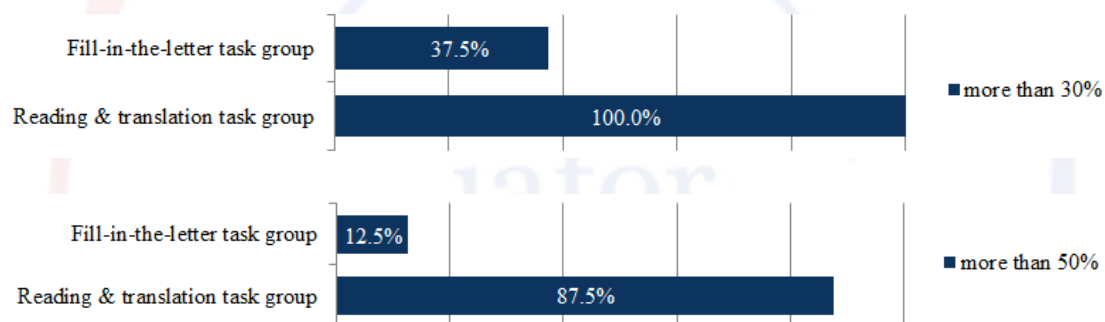


Figure 2: Reading &amp; Translation Task Test Results

Only 37.5% of the subjects, namely about 1/3 of the subjects, who did the fill-in-the-letter task activity could score more than 30% on the reading & translation task test, whereas all the subjects who did the reading & translation task activity scored more than 30%. Coming to the 50% criteria, only 12.5% of the subjects among the fill-in-the-letter task group could score more than 50%. Meanwhile 87.5% of the subjects among the reading & translation task group scored more than 50%. This result indicates the different effects by task type. It suggests that the reading & translation task could promote vocabulary learning more effectively.

The chi-square test did not show a significant difference on the subjects' previous learning history and test results. This means that the test result was not correlated with their past learning period. It suggests that the positive effect was from the reading and comprehending task.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed if there is a variable that affects vocabulary learning for the beginning level Japanese language learners. Study 1 did not show any significant difference between the type of input (the word lists) and vocabulary learning. The

test results also show that learners forget a significant amount of what they memorized after a period of time has elapsed. As previous research has suggested (cf. Nakamura, 2011), the result in our study amplified that learners need a process of 'recognition → retention → search & production' repeatedly in vocabulary learning. We do not know how to retain memory yet. However, from our study, we can suggest that the learners should have contact with words again before 10 days has passed.

Study 2 results show the effect of the reading comprehension task. It indicates that the task utilizing the learners' L1 and focusing on reading comprehension has more positive effect on word retention than the task focusing on the word's form and meaning. From the results we can suggest that learners' L1 should not be considered the enemy of vocabulary learning. The language teachers should consider a way to utilize it.

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## Appendixes

website containing pictures (Minna no Kyozaï)  
<http://minnanokyozai.jp/kyozai/home/ja/render.do>

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***The Correlation between Personality and Gender in Second Language Acquisition:  
A Case Study***

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**Abstract**

Whilst it has been long accepted that personality plays a pivotal role in successful Second Language Acquisition, the role of gender remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. It remains impossible to examine the influence of each factor in isolation; however, it is the contention of the author that pairs of factors may be analysed in conjunction in order to determine the extent to which gender has any influence on the acquisition process. Using a novel approach to the collection of research results on test groups, it is the intention of the author to examine if it is at all possible to draw conclusions as to the extent to which gender plays a role in language learning. The article will briefly discuss the theoretical background before describing the research methodology. Finally, an attempt will be made to analyse the results and frame any tentative conclusions.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, gender, personality

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## Introduction

In his book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, John Gray indicates that males and females are divided by fundamental psychological differences, which lay at the root of the vast majority of dysfunctional relationships. This fundamental gender difference has provoked a wide variety of scientific interest as to how the perceived differences between males and females might be defined and attributed. In the world of Second Language Acquisition (henceforth SLA) the question of the role of gender in the success of the acquisition process is somewhat neglected. The following paper presents a narrow part of a much broader doctoral research programme into the question of whether it is at all possible to ascertain a relationship between gender and language acquisition. Here, the fundamental question posed is based on the question of personality, and how personality might be related to gender, with the explicit intention of attempting to see if it is possible to isolate gender as an individual factor in SLA, or whether gender in and of itself will determine other factors which do have a clear influence on the language learning process.<sup>1</sup>

First, a brief overview of the existing state of research into the influence of personality and gender on SLA will be set out, before turning our attention to the current case study. Here, the research methodology will first be outlined, before a presentation of the results and discussion of the implications and conclusions to be drawn.

## Theoretical Background

The case for the influence of personality on learning in general dates back to the pioneering work of psychologist Hans Eysenck,<sup>2</sup> who, in short, stated that there are two basic psychological types – introvert and extrovert – and that there are fundamental brain differences which are observable in the two which result in differing memory functions. The conclusion that he forwarded was that introverts have an advanced long term memory capacity, while extroverts remember things in the short term which, in part, goes towards the explanation as to why extroverts are more communicative, but introverts seem to achieve better results in more academic studies. What is most interesting about the foundations laid by Eysenck is that he has prompted a wide variety of scientific investigation into the effects of personality on SLA, which have provided completely inconclusive results.

To exemplify, Peter Skehan (1989), in his discussion of the role of introversion and extroversion in SLA, lists the theoretical assumptions of some of the leading lights of SLA theory (such as Krashen, Long and Swain), who all assume that extroversion must have some basic influence on the quality of input as extroverts are more social. Subsequently, he then discusses the results of a number of empirical experiments designed to test these basic ideas, which show a remarkable lack of homogeneity in their conclusions. To provide three examples here, Skehan cites the results of

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<sup>1</sup> Despite some taxonomical debate, in this paper the terms ‘language acquisition’ and ‘language learning’ will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Starting in the mid-1950s and continuing up to the mid-1980s, Hans Eysenck developed a series of hypothesis regarding human psychology and its implicit effects on the subject’s ability to learn. Two of his more influential works in this field include *The Biological Basis of Personality* (1967) and *Personality and Individual Differences* (1985).



experiments by Rossier (1976) which found a correlation between extroversion and oral fluency; Smart *et al.* (1970), which found no relationship at all between extroversion and college achievement; and Chastain (1975) who found correlation in some areas between sociability and achievement, but not in all. The conclusion here must be that, as Skehan (1989) himself points out, there is insufficient evidence to support the view that extroversion does play a significant role in language learning, unless one takes into account the relationship between sociability and oral fluency. Introversion, on the other hand, has been documented on a number of occasions to have a clear relationship with academic performance, one such example being the research conducted by Entwistle and Entwistle (1970), which indicated that introversion played a more significant role than good study practices in academic achievement among British University students. The problem with introversion is that it has proven to be less attractive to researchers in SLA, because of the perceived connection between output (especially oral production) and extroversion. At this point, it is necessary to refer to the work of Dewaele and Furnham (1999) who indicate that *'there may be a trade-off between speed and accuracy [in the fluency of oral production], such that the extravert's oral production speed is at the cost of lesser accuracy.'*<sup>3</sup> This leads one to pause for thought, and consider just what it is that is being examined: when a researcher refers to fluency, the question that should be posed is to what extent fluency is a measure of linguistic competence? The obvious response is that fluency without accuracy and should not be taken as a measure of the level of achievement of a language learner. If a student were to take a test and speak fluently, but incomprehensibly, the student would surely fail the test. Whereas if a student speaks with greater difficulty but their accuracy is sufficient to convey their intended meaning, they would achieve a positive grade. The conclusion here is that using fluency alone as a measure of linguistic competence is erroneous. Of course, there exists a clear argument that language is a practical tool of communication, and that one can only be a true master of a language when one can use it freely and fluently, but from an empirical perspective, it is more difficult to agree upon a cogent set of rules that would allow for an easy classification of linguistic competence based upon oral output. This lack of harmony results from the fact that the reception of oral output remains a highly subjective activity, as each individual pays attention to different aspects, such as accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, the coherence of the utterance and so on. When, on the other hand, one analyses more objective tests of language competence, such as reading, listening and grammar tests, one can see that the research carried out in this field tends towards the predominance of introverted learners (see, for example, the results of tests conducted by Carrell, Prince and Astika, (1996)).

To summarise, it would appear that it is possible to conclude that personality does play an important role in SLA, but some of the research to date lacks a clearly defined understanding of what exactly is being measured, and that the results of many tests remain either contradictory or, at best, inconclusive. Part of the problem here, as suggested by Hummel (2014: 208) is that *'[...] there are many other background variables that need to be taken into consideration in interpreting research, [...]*'. This fact leads us to the conclusion that one cannot simply test in isolation the effects of personality on SLA. Secondly, one must be careful about what one defines as

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Hummel (2014: 207).

language competence because, in all probability, when one refers to a garrulous and inaccurate speaker as competent, one is erroneous.

Moving on to the question of gender in SLA, one is first of all struck by the relative lack of interest shown in the subject. There have been a number of attempts to define the use of language of the learner on the basis of gender – defining so-called communication strategies – by such luminaries as Bacon (1992) or Maubach and Morgan (2001) who indicated that males and females adopt different communication strategies, with males being more inclined to risk-taking and spontaneity. Equally, a number of studies have focussed on those gender differences which are imposed by a given society or culture, with Ellis (1994: 204) clearly indicating that ‘[...] *Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in L2 English than do Asian women for the simple reason that their jobs bring them into contact with the majority English speaking group, while women are often “enclosed” in the home.*’ This aside, there is little in the way of conclusive evidence that gender plays a role in the success of SLA. Some studies report, as previously mentioned, differences in communication strategies, or the recorded output of L2 users, but these reports simply reflect natural differences in L1 usage. In terms of actual achievement, a study by Piasecka (2010) confirms work carried out previously by such researchers as Kimura (2006)<sup>4</sup> who indicate that females have better achievement in such skills as reading, spelling and grammar tests. Somewhat contradictorily, the national results of the United Kingdom A’ Level tests for 2013 show that, despite the much larger number of females taking French and German as an examination subject at the age of 18, the actual pass rate of Grade A and B is slightly higher for males.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, it would appear to be the case that there is no clearly documented correlation between gender and achievement in SLA.

To round off the discussion on Gender and Personality, it makes sense to analyse the research which has been conducted into this field, and one need look no further than the work of Del Giudice et al. (2012) to see that there are clear differences along gender lines when it comes to personality. The largest areas of difference came in terms of sensitivity and aggression when the research team utilised a sixteen personality factor questionnaire based on the research of Raymond Cattell. With the fact that aggression is one of the key predictors of extroversion, one would expect to find that males were, in general, more extroverted than females, whereas, there is, in fact, limited information available to corroborate this theoretical assumption.

In conclusion, one might say that the research to date indicates that, from the point of view of SLA, there is clear evidence that personality has some influence on the success of the process, but it is unclear exactly to what extent this influence occurs. Equally, gender is likely to play some part, especially when one takes into consideration the current line of thinking that gender is a purely social construct, and that a female’s behaviour is largely dictated by the imposition of ‘social norms’. What is interesting is the basic question: to what extent the gender of language learners and their personality go hand in hand? Furthermore, if there is no clear link between gender and personality, then is it at all possible to isolate these two factors in order to

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<sup>4</sup> The research here is quoted from Piasecka (2010).

<sup>5</sup> The information here is obtained from the official exam reports of the Joint Council for Qualifications, which is a membership organization of the seven largest exam certificate boards of the United Kingdom. Its home address is: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/>.

examine their influence independently? The remaining part of this paper shall attempt to answer the first of these two questions.

## **Methodology**

In this section, following a brief introduction of the subjects of the case study, the method of data collection, and the survey used in order to ascertain the personality types of the participants will be discussed.

The investigation was carried out in the 2013-2014 academic year in Poland on five groups, totalling 42 participants. Of the participants 25 were female and the remaining 17 were male. Three of the groups mentioned attended a private language school and were learning in order to pass a C1 level examination on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. These three groups were chosen for their remarkably high degree of homogeneity when it comes to the variety of variable factors which influence SLA and consisted of 23 participants of whom 12 were female and 11 male. They were all of a similar age, between 17 and 19, and all attended the Polish equivalent of Grammar School. Thus, it may be assumed that they have a similar level of motivation to participate in the extra-curricular course. Given that this was a fee-paying course, one might also reasonably assume that they come from a similar socio-economic background. Finally, given that pupils in secondary education in Poland have a choice as to their compulsory foreign language, one might venture the claim that they should all have a positive attitude to the language as they would always have the choice of studying an alternative language. Thus, the primary variables which could be observed and assessed in the groups were their learning style, personality and gender.

The remaining participants, a total of 19 students, attended the University of Rzeszow, studying in their first year for a Bachelor's Degree in English Philology. There were 13 females and 6 males (the discrepancy here is a common factor in language study at level in Poland, where the vast majority of graduates are female). The two groups were part-time, meaning that they had to attend classes and lectures on alternate weekends, and they had to pay a fee for their participation (in contrast to full-time students who study for free in state institutions). This allows us to suppose that they have a similar degree of motivation, and an equally positive attitude towards the language. The age range of the students was somewhat broader, ranging between 19 and 35, while it is not so plausible to assume a homogenous socio-economic background. Finally, there was a slightly lower level of harmony in terms of language level, as all of the participants were of the level B2 (in order to satisfy the minimum entry level requirements of the Polish Ministry of Higher Education), but some of the students actually were of the level C1. However, one of the aims of the Practical English Course was to ensure the standardisation of the level of the participants. Consequently, one may assume, although with a lesser degree of certainty, that the main variables will be gender, personality and learning style.

The personality questionnaire chosen was the 16 personality factor questionnaire developed by Richard Stephenson (2013). This was chosen because of its statistically proven reliability, having been tested on over 12,000 subjects, with the test results matching favourably with other assessment tools. It was also easily available to use, and also readable and relatively uncomplicated for the students to comprehend. The

test itself contains 77 forced questions, meaning that the respondents have to give an answer 'A' or 'B'. The questions are designed in order to identify four 'bi-polar' psychological preferences based on the original work of Carl Jung. These pairs are as follows: extrovert, introvert; sensing, intuition; thinking, feeling; and judging, perception. The combination of these four preferences gives a possible sixteen personality types. As a result of the need for concision, a full discussion of the test will be omitted from the following, and we shall focus here on just the first of the pairs; namely the polarity of introversion/extroversion.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this decision is based on the theoretical discussion which preceded this section, in which it was highlighted the fact that researchers into personality have tended to focus on the influences of introversion and extroversion.<sup>7</sup>

Having chosen the questionnaire to be used, it was then prepared in a PowerPoint presentation, with the respondents using an Audience Response System in order to register their answers to each individual question. The main reasoning behind this was in order to maintain a sense of normality about the questionnaire. The ARS had been used from the beginning of the academic year in order to collect the mass of data to be used in monitoring the progress of the participants in reading and listening tests, thus, the system was familiar to the learners. In addition, it was felt that by using the ARS it would be possible to reduce the possibility of collusion amongst the subjects: as each participant has their own, unique response card, it was felt that there would be a much lower instance of people prompting each other. Equally, as the questionnaire was conducted in lockstep, there was no chance of early finishers putting pressure on those who took a longer time to complete their answers quickly in order to allow the lesson to progress. Finally, in order to maintain the veracity of the test, it was not announced to the students the real intention of the questionnaire, rather it was interwoven into a general lesson on the subject of personality. This was done in order to try to reduce the instance of respondents giving answers to the questions which they felt were what the researcher was looking for. The results generated were tabulated and will be discussed below.

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<sup>6</sup> For a full discussion of the Jungian 16 Type Personality Test used here, please refer to the handbook which accompanies the test, which can be accessed at <http://richardstep.com>.

<sup>7</sup> It is the intention of the author to engage in a full discussion of the relationship between personality, learning style, gender and achievement in SLA in her pending doctoral thesis.

## Results

The first thing that becomes obvious is that the sample group is more or less evenly split on the whole, as shown in the following table.

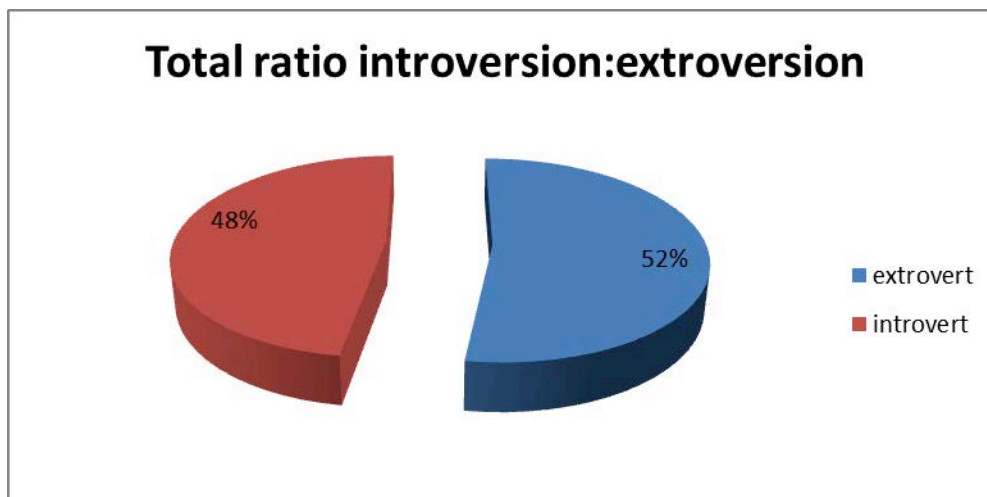


Table 1. Total ratio introversion:extroversion.

This is extremely encouraging as it comes within an acceptable margin of error<sup>8</sup> for the 'standard population' as calculated by the Myers-Briggs Organisation, which calculated that there is a ratio of 49.3:50.7 being slightly in favour of introversion. When it comes to a breakdown along gender lines we are presented with the following two sets of results.

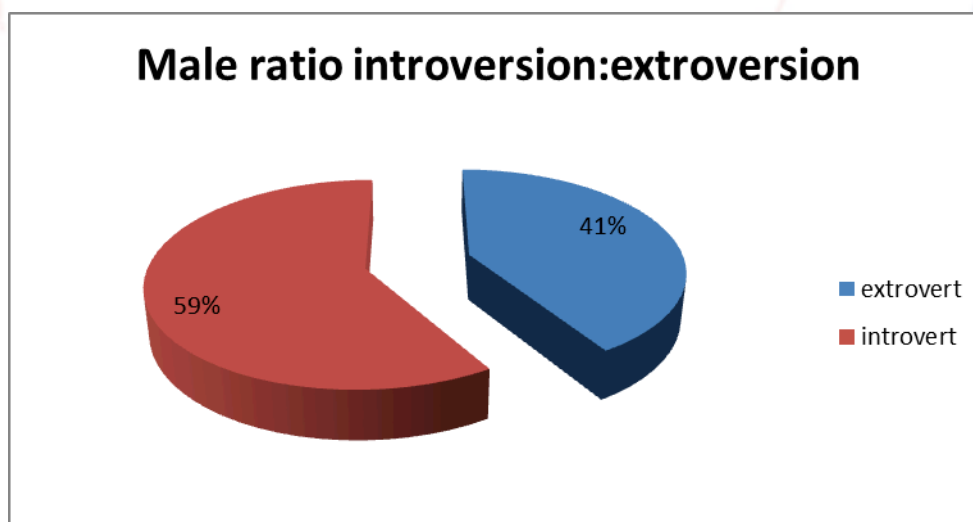


Table 2. Male ratio introversion:extroversion.

<sup>8</sup> In this case, the exact margin of error is approximately 5.5% in both cases. This is quite reasonable considering the fact that the Myers-Briggs statistics are concerned with a prototypical American population. The most important thing here is the approximate 50-50 split, which is what one would hope to see. For the purpose of a benchmark score, the statistics obtained from the Myers-Briggs Organisation shall be used throughout.

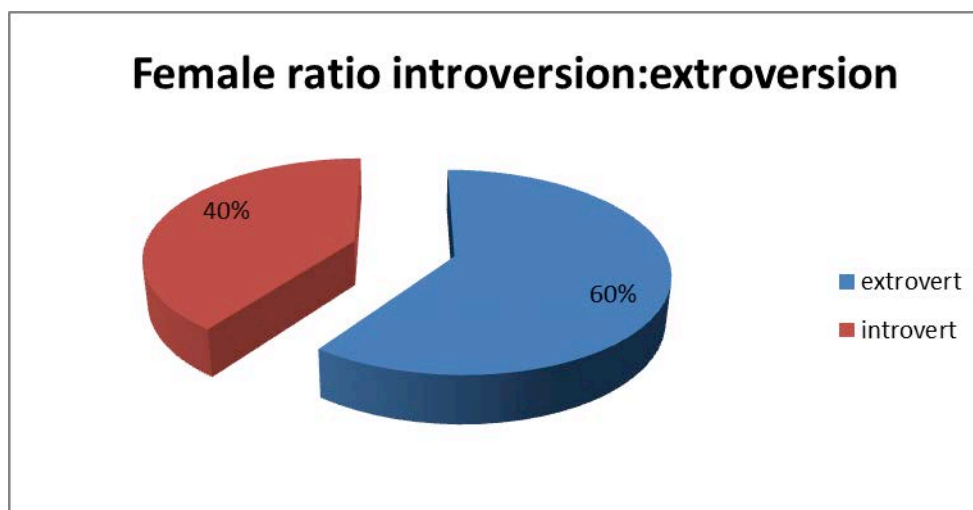


Table 3. Female ratio introversion:extroversion.

What is immediately obvious here is that there is a distinctive gender difference. The male ratio is almost 3:2 in favour of introversion, while the female ratio is 3:2 in the opposite direction. The first thing that is necessary to do here is to compare with the findings of Myers-Briggs. In males, the ratio is 45.9:54.1 in favour of introversion, while the female score is 52.5:47.5 in favour of extroversion. Therefore, the general biased is reflected in the results of the current study, although the extent of that biased with females showing a greater tendency to extroversion and males the opposite being somewhat more exaggerated than in the benchmark population sample.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The first and most obvious thing that seems to be suggested by the results obtained is that males have a greater inclination to introversion, and females to extroversion, which runs contrary to many of the assumptions put forward in the scientific literature to date. So, returning to the neuroscientific work of Eysenck, on the assumption that extroverts have an enhanced short-term memory function, while introverts retain things in the longer-term, these results might go some way to explaining the academic results of males and females obtained in the A' Level examinations in the United Kingdom. What would be very interesting would be to analyse the age of results of personality tests against the development of gender equality in order to analyse to what extent the change of the socio-cultural position of females has influenced the perceived level of openness.

With this theoretical assumption about the achievement of males in more academic situations, the logical extension is that females should, on the basis of the results, be the greater communicators as they are the more open to social interaction. Consequently, they should benefit more from the social aspects of using language as a tool, and, on the basis of the Input Model of Krashen, be the better users of language with the greater level of communicative competence because of the greater levels of interaction.

There are a number of things which need to be stated at this point to mitigate any radical conclusions being drawn. The most obvious of these being the fact that this is a tiny sample group, with a slight imbalance in favour of the females. Secondly, this is

not a sample which covers the entire population spectrum. It is a group which is, in the main deliberately homogenous, so it fails to take into consideration any potential changes of personality with age. Equally, the group is highly educated, with all members either being actively involved in, or preparing for, academic life. There are, quite possibly, other reservations which may be expressed pertaining to the results revealed here, but the limitations of space also limit our scope for speculation.

What can be concluded here is that the results are sufficiently enticing to encourage further study on a much greater scale. It would be most interesting to test to what extent the results achieved here are anomalous. In addition, the next step would be to analyse the progress made in language acquisition during the academic year of the sample population to investigate any correlation between achievement and personality/gender. But that is for another paper, and one can only, at this moment, speculate that one would expect the introverted male population to obtain a higher average grade than the extroverted female population in the fields of listening and reading.

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***Interlanguage (IL) development and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) proficiency levels in Sardinian high secondary school students.***

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**Abstract**

This paper is part of an ongoing larger study, whose general goal is to identify, classify and explain features of Italian-Sardinian/English interlanguage (IL) of second-language English learners in samples of written language, against the CEFR levels of language competence. The research questions to which the paper will try to answer are as follows:

- Is there a correlation between these students' IL development and CEFR?
- Is it possible to integrate IL analysis into language learning assessment?

This preliminary descriptive study was carried out in a high secondary school in Sassari, in an Italian-Sardinian bilingual context. Two first-year classes (26 students) and two third-year classes (28 students) were tested for the first time in May 2013. The first-year students had been learning English for at least 7 years through formal instruction, and the third-year students for at least 9 years. All the students had been also learning a second foreign language, French or Spanish, for at least 3 years. The students were asked to produce three pieces of free composition, according to the CEFR “can do statements”.

The manual correction of the written samples took into consideration the number of words used, the lexical, morphological and syntactical mistakes, using a qualitative and quantitative method of analysis. The influence of the Sardinian-Italian bilingual condition and of other languages was observed. The preliminary results show that there is little correspondence between CEFR levels and learners' IL, and that teachers' training in interlanguage development analysis would be of great benefit for teaching and assessment practices.

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## Introduction

This work is part of an ongoing larger study, whose general goal is to identify, classify and explain features of Italian/English Interlanguage (IL) of second-language English learners in samples of written texts, against the CEFR levels of language competence, in an unbalanced Italian/Sardinian bilingualism condition, to think on a different didactic attitude towards errors in second language learning. Some relevant questions we have tried to address are the following:

How can we investigate the relationship between the Interlanguage development and the CEFR levels in order to observe if the latter reflects the former? How is it possible to integrate Interlanguage analysis into formative and summative assessment? Which didactic benefits can teachers and learners in ESL classroom obtain?

The concept of interlanguage was first proposed by Larry Selinker<sup>1</sup>. Following his path a number of researchers opted to describe the same notion with different labels, such as Approximative System (William Nemser)<sup>2</sup>, Transitional Competence (Pit Corder)<sup>3</sup>, and Idiosyncratic Dialect (Pit Corder)<sup>4</sup>.

Selinker defines the Interlanguage as “a separate linguistic system resulting from learner’s attempted production of the target language norm”.

Learning, teaching and assessment in Europe are nowadays largely influenced by the CEFR<sup>5</sup>, which is a complete, complex and rich document. It is not prescriptive but the tendency is to consider it as a mandatory tool to assess and evaluate students, forgetting all its other important aspects. CEFR “provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe” and other parts of the world. Its aim is to provide a “comprehensive, transparent and coherent framework for language teaching.” “The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning on a life-long basis.”

The most popular part of the document are the level scales, so it is often used only to rate and evaluate learners in a strict counting of errors/mistakes perspective.

What does the CEFR say about interlanguage? In paragraph 6.5, Errors and mistakes, we can read that *Errors are due to an ‘interlanguage’, a simplified or distorted representation of the target competence*. Errors are an inevitable, transient product of the learner’s developing interlanguage. Errors should be accepted as ‘transitional interlanguage’... This paragraph of the CEFR contains other important information, which can be used as guidelines in a new didactic approach towards error analysis and explanation, it is subdivided in three parts: the different attitudes that may be taken to learners errors, the action to be taken with regard to learner’s mistakes and errors, what use is made of the observation and analysis of learner errors.

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<sup>1</sup> See references

<sup>2</sup> See references

<sup>3</sup> See references

<sup>4</sup> See references

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe. (2001). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

About the two interconnected aspects of the study we can say that more than 40 years of literature on Interlanguage concepts and more than 20 years of studies and research on CEFR have produced a huge bulk of literature. Moreover, during the last decade, research has investigated the relation between CEFR and SLA, but there is still relatively little research on the relation between Interlanguage development and CEFR.

### **Study setting**

This exploratory descriptive study was carried out in an upper secondary school in Sassari, in an Italian-Sardinian bilingual context. Two first-year classes (29 students) and two third-year classes (23 students) were tested in May 2013.

This phase was necessary in order to identify the best research strategy for the massive part of the study, which started in October 2013. The Italian educational system comprises three main levels of formal education, the primary level, the lower secondary and the upper secondary. The upper secondary schools are of three main types, namely classical education (so called *Licei*), technical education and vocational education. The students tested in this first phase of the study here described attend a vocational Hospitality and Catering school. This kind of school faces a number of issues as low socio-economic status of families, behaviour needs, high rates of students with dyslexia, special needs and learning disabilities, the highest rates of grade repeaters and dropouts.

As far as the learning of English in the Italian educational system is concerned, English is compulsory since the primary school. In the lower secondary school, together with a second Community language (generally Spanish or French) is part of the core curriculum and it is tested in the final exam of the third year. In the upper secondary education, English is part of the core curriculum for all types of schools and is part of the subjects tested at the final exam. According to the CEFR, the levels of proficiency in the learning of English are as following:

Level A1 at the end of the primary school, A2 at the end of the lower secondary school, B1 at the end of the compulsory school, namely the second year of upper the secondary and B2 at the end of the secondary school. In real contexts, many problems can be detected, especially in some types of schools and the results are often very different from the expected ones. In spite of the fact that the pupils who attend vocational schools have been exposed to English from the primary school and despite the fact that it is one of the core subjects in lower and upper secondary schools, provided for three hours per week, their competence in English is generally very low.

### **Data collection and data analysis tools**

A questionnaire for the teachers (data not shown), a personal information questionnaire for the students, two written tests for the students, with two tasks each on a given topic: A2 for the first year students; B1 for the third year students. The tests were prepared according to the CEFR “can do statements”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The 'can do' statements were developed by The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) of which Cambridge English Language Assessment is a founding member. The “can do” statements

The tasks were performed during English classes and the students were allowed a maximum of 60 minutes to fulfill their tasks. They were not allowed to use dictionaries or other aids.

The analysis of the personal questionnaire of the students took into consideration the gender distribution, the distribution of birth years, the formal education and social status of the parents, if the students attended any English course a part from school and if they had a some kind of certification. Moreover, we asked them about their perception of their English language proficiency level. The manual correction of the written samples took into consideration the number of words used, the lexical, morpho-syntactic mistakes, using a qualitative and quantitative method of analysis.

In particular, for the first year students a selection of tasks from the A2 proficiency level “can do” statements of CEFR was provided, as following:

- I can describe an event in simple sentences and report what happened when and where (for example a party or an accident).
- I can write about aspects of my everyday life in simple phrases and sentences (people, places, job, school, family, hobbies).
- I can briefly introduce myself in a letter with simple phrases and sentences (family, school, job, hobbies).
- I can write simple sentences, connecting them with words such as “and”, “but”, “because”.
- I can use the most important connecting words to indicate the chronological order of events (first, then, after, later).

For the third year students a selection of tasks from the B1 proficiency level “can do” statements of CEFR was provided, as following:

- I can write simple texts about experiences or events, for example about a trip, for a school newspaper or a club newsletter.
- I can describe in a personal letter the plot of a film or a book or give an account of a concert.
- In a letter, I can express feelings such as grief, happiness, interest, regret and sympathy.

## **Results**

### **First year students**

Analyzing the collected data through the personal questionnaire on the first year students, we can observe that the 65.5% of the participants are boys, and more than half of them are grade-repeaters.

62% of mothers and 55% of fathers have a lower secondary level of education. Only one of the parents has a university degree.

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have a relevant influence in promoting students awareness, if used as an instructional tool in class activities.

All the students use Italian at home; 19% of them use Italian and Sardinian with parents and only the 13% with siblings. The students are not aware of their level in English proficiency. In fact, the 31% of them replied that they did not know it, and the 27.6% answered “Intermediate level”, nobody said “beginner”, 10% said “advanced”, the rest said “elementary”. Their results in the proposed test clearly show a very low level of English proficiency, much lower than expected according to the CEFR scales. An important information emerged from the questionnaire is that almost all these students have never attended an English course outside school and the 100% of them do not possess any certificate in English. Moreover, they do not know anything about the CEFR.

In the first task, the students were asked to describe their everyday life, using a number of words between 20 and 40. Only three students were not able to write the minimum number of words, whereas more than 50% used more than 40 words. Analyzing the number of errors, we can observe that 16 out of 29 students made between 5 and 10 errors.

In the second task, the students were asked to describe an important event of their life using a number of words between 20 and 40. The most striking aspect here is that 44.8% of students did not write anything. Only 6 students out of 16 made between 0 and 3 errors.

#### **Types of errors in the first year students texts**

Ten out of 29 students made global errors, so that the sentences were very difficult to understand. For example: 1) I go to the four with my friends (at four I go out with my friends). 2) August 14 there very nice for a party. (August 14<sup>th</sup> was a very nice day for a party). 3) Happy of I was from they (I was happy to be with them).

All students made local errors.

All of them made morpho-syntactic errors, whereas 65.5% of them made lexical errors. 27.6% of the group used Italian words. Here is a table providing a not exhaustive list of the most common errors found in the texts analyzed.

<b>Omission</b>	<b>...take the bus /I take the bus; I lunch/I have lunch; I take bus/ I take the bus; I listen music/ I listen to music.</b>
<b>Substitution</b>	<b>After I go to bed / Then I go to bed ; towards half past ten/ around; on-in bus/ by bus</b>
<b>Addition</b>	<b>I go to home/ I go home; have a lunch/have lunch I go to my home; a good friends/ good friends;</b>
<b>Word order</b>	<b>event important; girl beautiful</b>
<b>Spelling</b>	<b>bad /bed; breackfast/ breakfast; meat/ meet</b>
<b>Verbs/tenses</b>	<b>Present/past; I have go/I went; I going to school/ I go to school;</b>

### **Third year students.**

More than 90% of the participants are girls<sup>7</sup>, and more than half of them are grade-repeaters. 78% of mothers and 34.8% of fathers have a lower secondary education level. 26.1% of fathers have an upper secondary education level. 91.3% of the students use only Italian with their families. 8.7% of them speak both Italian and Sardinian. The students are little aware of their level in English proficiency, even if more aware than the first year students. In fact, the 34.8% of them replied that they did not know it, the 30% answered “Intermediate level”, nobody answered “advanced”, and the 13% said “beginner”, while the rest answered “elementary”. Their results in the proposed test clearly show a proficiency level much lower than expected according to the CEFR scales. An important information emerged from the questionnaire is that almost all these students have never attended an English course outside school and the 100% of them do not possess any certificate in English. Moreover, they do not know anything about the CEFR.

In the first task the students were asked to write a letter describing a past experience or event, expressing also some feelings about it, using a number of words between 50 and 80. Five students out of 23 (21.7%) did not write anything and only one wrote more than 80 words. Moreover, six of them wrote a number of words below the minimum required, and eleven students wrote between 59 and 80 words.

As far as the number of errors is concerned, only one student did not make any mistakes and five of them made between three and 4 errors/mistakes. Four students made between 14 and 18 errors, which was the maximum.

In the second task, the students were asked to write something about the plot of a film they saw or a book they read, giving their overall impression, using between 50 and 80 words. In this task the number of students who did not write anything rose to 11 out of 23, that is a percentage of 47.8%; moreover, five students wrote less than the minimum required. Only six students wrote more than 50 words. In relation to the number of errors, the minimum was three and only one student had this result while 5 made between six and nine errors; other 5 students made between 11 and 18 errors and one made 33 errors.

### **Types of errors in the third year students' texts**

Five out of 23 students made global errors, so that the sentences were very difficult to understand. For example: 1) He became friends of a children ebreo; 2) I want speak the film I see to the cinema; 3) the film speak of a man the name Edward che had a bad life.

All the students made local errors. Half of the others used Italian words. 47.8 % of them made lexical errors. Here is a table providing a not exhaustive list of the most common errors found in the texts analyzed.

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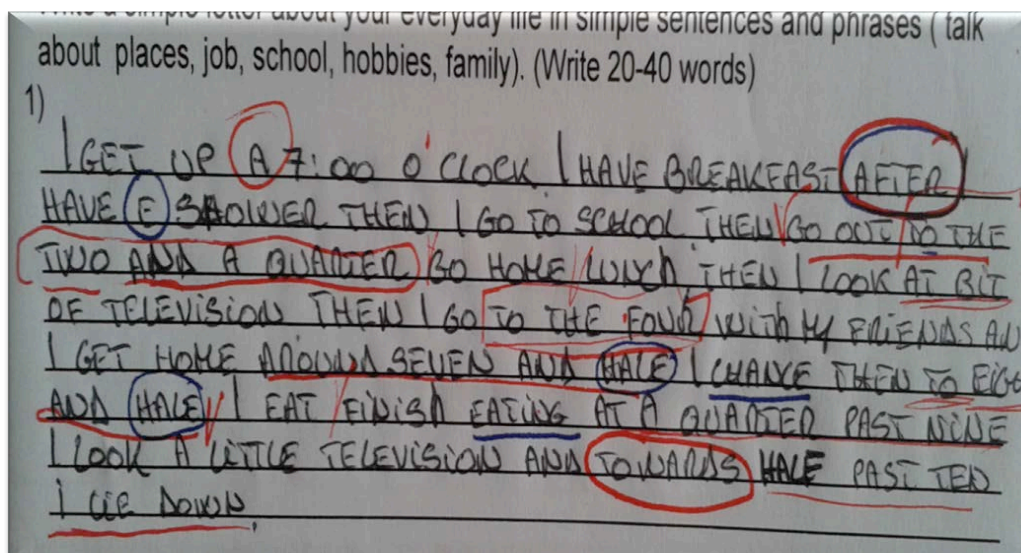
<sup>7</sup> After the first two year of common core, students of vocational schools have to choose the specific course for the last three years. The students of this group attend a special course in tourism hospitality, which is preferred by girls, whereas boys prefer to attend the Cookery course or the Food and Beverage service course.

Omission	...was a / <b>it</b> was a; I... very glad/ I <b>was</b> very glad; It was <b>rain</b> / it was <b>raining</b> .
Substitution	I <b>had</b> afraid/ I <b>was</b> afraid; For play/ <b>to</b> play
Addition	<b>The</b> Spain; in <b>the</b> April; <b>miss</b> / missed.
Word order	A book very interesting; a film very moving;
Spelling	<b>Custle</b> / castle; <b>spanish</b> / Spanish;
Verbs/tenses	I <b>have</b> know/ I knew; <b>are</b> / were; I've <b>saw</b> /I saw; He <b>was</b> decided/ he decided; he <b>has</b> win/ won; The film <b>not are</b> / the films are not; I'm <b>studied</b> / I studied;

## Discussion

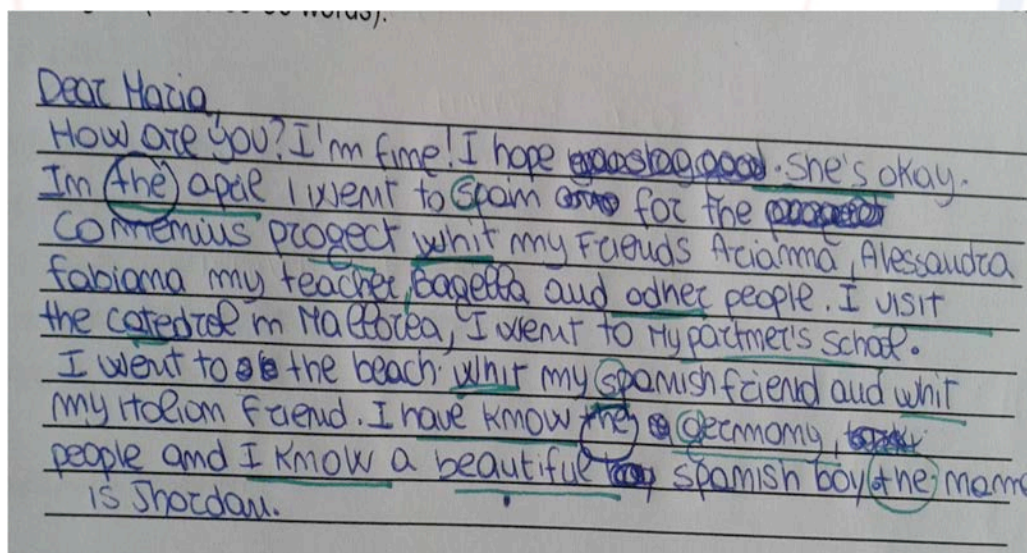
Some features of the interlanguage observed in the outputs of first year students are a great number of omissions, substitutions, additions and wrong word order; problems with the use of pronouns, articles and prepositions; a largely dominant influence of Italian; a very poor vocabulary.

In the outputs of the third year students we observed a limited number of omissions, additions and substitutions regarding pronouns, articles and prepositions; great difficulties in using the verb forms and tenses; a poor vocabulary even if not so limited as in the first year group. In particular, the influence of Italian results in the word order, in the use of subject and of tenses, in the borrowings, that is a complete language shift, as in the phrase “senza you”, or “book preferito”; in the coniations, that is the adaptation of Italian words so that they sound or look like English, e.g. “locato” becomes “locade”; or “ti saluto” becomes “I salute you”. Sardinian seems to have no influential effects, probably because it is a language from Latin origin, as Italian is and it has nearly the same grammar structure. But further research might be needed to investigate this aspect. No influence from other languages was observed, but in the texts of the few foreign students (three) attending the first year class, some influences from Italian were also observed; e.g. the Russian student wrote “Me like” instead of “I like”, from the Italian “Mi piace”. As far as the CEFR levels correspondence to IL, we observed that there is little correspondence between the CEFR levels and these learners' IL. Only 4 students of the first year group seem to reach the A2 level according the CEFR. None of the third year group reaches the level B1 and only few of them are aligned with the A2 level requirements.



An extract from the first year texts.

In this text, we can observe many different errors/mistakes, both global and local. Many expressions are clearly strongly influenced by Italian, for example ...go out to the two and a quarter (*esco alle due e un quarto*); I go to the four with my friends (*esco alle quattro con gli amici*); but at a quarter past nine. So we understand he knows how to express the time in English, but he shifts from the right to the wrong form, revealing difficulties to control his knowledge of English. He uses *after* instead of *then* (because the corresponding Italian words *poi* and *allora* have the same meaning), but he uses *then* correctly twice; he uses *around* correctly, but also *towards* (in Italian *around* and *towards* are translated with the same word *verso*).



An extract from the third year texts.

The errors/mistakes in this extract are fewer and there are no global errors. Some spelling errors can be observed, as *whit* instead of *with*, *odher* instead of *other*, or *catedral* instead of *cathedral*, *proget* instead of *project*. The adjectives of nationality are without the capital letter and the name of nation is used instead of the adjective. Moreover, we can see a wrong use of tenses, such as *visit* instead of *visited*, or *have know* (that should be *known*) instead of *knew*, and *know* instead of *knew*.



## Conclusion

It is clear that a situation as above described needs a series of actions from Institutions and teachers in order to be faced and overcome. According to the CEFR, attitudes and actions toward learners' mistakes and errors must take into consideration that they are "evidence of the learner's willingness to communicate despite the risks" communication implies; that "errors are an inevitable, transient product of the learner's developing interlanguage"; that "mistakes are inevitable in all language use, including that of native speakers". The teachers of English, but also of other languages, must adopt different strategies in correcting errors. This will be beneficial in order to avoid the error-counting attitude and to help students in their learning improvement and in the acquisition of self-awareness. As we can read in the CEFR "peer-correction should be encouraged to eradicate errors; all errors should be noted and corrected at a time when doing so does not interfere; errors should not be simply corrected, but also analyzed and explained at an appropriate time; errors should be corrected only when they interfere with communication". The use of the CEFR "can do" statements should become a great learning tool to improve self-awareness and self-correction practices. Finally, integrating the Interlanguage analysis into the Language classes practices would lead to a better learning environment. Obviously, the first step should be the teachers' training in the assessment practices integrated with the Interlanguage development analysis. In fact, the analysis of the students' interlanguage is a powerful tool to identify the learning weak points both of an individual and of the class group. In this way, it is possible to adapt scaffolding activities to help students to overcome their errors and to improve their proficiency in English according to the CEFR scales.

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***The Spirit of Post-Methods Era Produces Innovative  
Methodologies and Successful Learners***

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The European Conference on Language Learning 2014  
Official Conference Proceedings



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## **I. Introduction**

As the world is shrinking, English is emerging as the world's link language. This new reality has immense potential for us in India.

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill, but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression. (Graddol, 2000, p. 120)

On one side, number of English medium schools in the urban areas is exponentially increasing but, in the rural areas where the majority live, is another story.

### **A. English in Rural India**

Due to the agrarian background, 75% of learners come from rural background. The government runs most of the schools in India. English is the official link language in India. The learners begin to learn English when they are eight years old. They study English language as just another subject and for one hour a day, merely want to pass an examination by memorizing few questions. Listening and Speaking skills are totally neglected in these schools. Reading skills, to certain extent, is encouraged. Of course, writing skills are given priority. But, writing skills are limited to memorizing and reproducing some pre-prepared answers. They are taught by teachers, who themselves do not or cannot speak in English. There is a vast divide between the rural and urban learners of English. Urban learners of English seem to have better exposure to English.

Such sorry state of affairs has its effects on the learners, when they join the tertiary level of education. In India, 90% of tertiary level of education is in English. The English proficiency among learners joining higher education is far from being satisfactory. In fact, it is miserable.

... Our average Undergraduate cannot speak a correct sentence in English, write Curriculum Vitae, or even read an English Daily. There is no exaggeration. Complaints such as these are voiced all over the country. Parents, teachers, examiners and employers complain our learner's poor achievement in English. (Sood, 1995, p. 167)

These learners in the college, lag behind in studies, get discouraged and some are even driven to take the extreme step of ending their life. Not that these rural learners are intellectually inferior to others, rather, they have not had enough exposure to English. Their numbers are huge. Some immediate bold steps are a must.

### **B. Methods Used to Teach English**

When the outside world is using English for international and intercultural communication and technology purpose, universities and college in India still follow the Macaulayan syllabus and teach English as a subject. The aim of teaching English in India must be to help learners to acquire practical command of English. The age

old, Grammar Translation and Bilingual Methods are still being used in teaching English.

When academicians and language practitioners wanted to improve the quality of English in India, naturally they turned to some of the so-called brands. These brands are the numerous Approaches and methods put forth by English Language Teaching and Learning power houses. All most all of them are from the English Speaking counties. Teachers in India and other places are merely asked to follow these successful methods, without critically evaluating them for suitability. Teacher's own discretion is not given any room.

Teachers are not mere conveyor belts delivering language through inflexible prescribed and proscribed behaviors. They are professionals who can, in the best of all worlds, make their own decisions. They are informed by their own experience, the findings from research, and the wisdom of practice accumulated by the profession. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. x)

Empowering English language teachers and taking them on board will certainly lead to successful language teaching and learning. This is in short 'the spirit of post-methods era'.

## **II. The Spirit of Post-Methods Era**

More than 60 percent of today's world population is multilingual. Therefore, it is not an over statement to say that throughout history, foreign language learning has always been an important practical concern. A look into the history of language teaching deems fit.

### **A. One Method Era**

Till about 500 years ago, Latin was the widely studied foreign language in the world. Latin was the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in the Western world. This hold loosened in the sixteenth century as French, Italian and English gained in importance as a result of political changes in Europe (Richards, 2001, p. 3). Still, Latin was studied by the pupils to study the classical works in Latin. An analysis of Latin grammar and rhetoric became the model of foreign language study from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Textbooks had grammar rules, lists of vocabulary, and sentences for translation. Speaking the foreign language was not a goal and oral practice was limited to learners reading aloud the sentences they had translated. This method came to be known as *Grammar Translation Method* and was the only method of foreign language learning.

### **B. Methods Era**

In the mid- and late nineteenth century, opposition to the Grammar Translation Method gradually developed in several European countries. This reform movement laid the foundations for the development of new ways of teaching languages. Increased opportunities for communication among Europeans created demand for oral

proficiency in foreign languages. Linguists emphasized that speech, rather than written word, was the primary form of language (Richards, 2001, p. 9).

As applied linguists and others sought to develop principles and procedures for the design of teaching methods and materials, drawing on the developing fields of linguistics and psychology to support a succession of proposals for what were thought to be more effective and theoretically sound teaching methods. The quest for better methods was a preoccupation of many teachers and applied linguists throughout the twentieth century (Richards, 2001, p. 1)

The most active period in the history of approaches and methods was from the 1950s to the 1990s. The 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of the Audiolingual Method and the Situational Method, which were both superseded by the Communicative Approach. During the same period, other methods attracted smaller but equally enthusiastic followers, including the Silent Way, the Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response. In the 1990s, Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Language Teaching emerged as new approaches to language teaching as did movements such as Competency-Based Instruction that focus on the outcomes of learning rather than methods of teaching. Other approaches, such as Cooperative Learning, Whole Language Approach, and Multiple Intelligences, originally developed in general education, have been extended to second language settings (Richards, 2001, p. 15)

All these approaches and methods have in common the belief that if language learning is to be improved, it will come about through changes and improvements in teaching methodology. So, there was a constant quest for the 'best' method of teaching a language or more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages.

### C. Post-Methods Era

By the 1990s, many applied linguists and language teachers moved away from a belief that newer and better approaches and methods are the solution to problems in language teaching. By the end of the twentieth century, mainstream language teaching no longer regarded methods as the key factor in accounting for success or failure in language teaching.

The major criticism made of the approaches and methods are:

1. **The 'top-down' criticism:** Teachers have to accept on faith the claims or theory underlying the method and apply them to their own practice. Role of the teacher is marginalized; his or her role is to understand the method and apply its principles correctly. There is little room for the teacher's own personal initiative and teaching style. The teacher must submit to the method.
2. **Role of contextual factors:** These approaches and methods believe one 'size fit for all'. These are often promoted as all-purpose solutions to teaching problems that can be applied in any part of the world and under any circumstance. The cultural, political, local institutional, teachers and learners contexts are ignored in applying these brand-methods.
3. **The need for curriculum development processes:** Curriculum planners view teaching method as part of a broader set of educational planning decisions,

such as, the teaching objectives, trial use in similar institutions, assessment of the methods and feedback from the stack holders. Choice of teaching method cannot, therefore, be determined in isolation from other planning and implementation practices (Richards, 2000)

4. ***Lack of research basis:*** Approaches and methods are often based on the assumptions that the processes of second language learning are fully understood. We know well that current knowledge is tentative, partial, and changing. Many of such claims and assertions have not been tested enough.
5. ***Similarity of classroom practices:*** It is very difficult for teachers to use approaches and methods in ways that precisely reflect the underlying principles of the method. Many of these activities are similar to each other and so there is nothing distinctive to demonstrate each approach or method. (Richards, 2001, p. 247-250)

Approaches and methods have played a central role in the development language teaching and learning. They will continue to be useful for teachers and learner teachers to become familiar with the major teaching approaches and methods proposed for second and foreign language teaching.

#### **D. The Spirit of Post-Methods Era**

Experts in the field of ELT have proved beyond doubt that there is no ‘one size fit for all’, with regard to any particular approach or method. An approach or a predetermined method, with all its activities, principles, and techniques could be a good starting point for an inexperienced teacher. As the teacher gains experience and knowledge, he or she will begin to develop an individual approach or personal method of teaching, one that draws on an established approach or method but that also uniquely reflects the teacher’s individual beliefs, values, principles, and experiences to fit the realities of the classroom. Teaching is more than following a recipe. The decisions that teachers make are often affected by the existing conditions of a classroom rather than by methodological considerations (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. xi). Thus, the spirit of post-methods era places in the teacher at the centre of language teaching and learning process. It is the teacher who decides what to teach and how to teach.

Other principles form the collective body of the Spirit of post-methods era as pointed out by Bailey:

- Engage all learners in the lesson
- Make learners the focus of the lesson
- Provide maximum opportunities for learner participation
- Develop learner responsibility
- Be tolerant of learners’ mistakes
- Develop learners’ confidence
- Teach learning strategies
- Respond to learners’ difficulties and build on them
- Use a maximum amount of learner-to-learner activities
- Promote cooperation among learners
- Practice both accuracy and fluency
- Address learners’ needs and interests. (1996)

An individual teacher may draw on different principles at different times, depending on the type of class he or she is teaching. Using various approaches and methods can provide teachers with an initial practical knowledge base in teaching and the same could help exploring and developing teachers' own beliefs, principles and practices.

### III. Innovative Methodologies

The post method era is indeed a paradigm shift. If the methods era belonged to the experts and specialists in ELT, the post method era belongs to the teachers. The teacher is empowered to decide on the method(s) to be used for the learners. The teacher knows and understands the level and needs of the learners; and ultimately decides on 'what to teach', 'how to teach', 'when to teach', etc. The spirit of post-methods era places the responsibility of language teaching in the lap of the teacher. This newfound freedom and confidence invested in the teacher unleashes the creative potential in the teacher and innovation takes its wings. Following account is that of the researcher, who was invested with the responsibility of evolving an innovative methodology:

#### A. Process Followed by a Teacher

The actual setting and objectives should be stated clearly first and then an actual ground level analysis of the situation must be carried out.

**Setting and problem:** The learners from vernacular medium are joining the college to pursue various Undergraduate courses via English medium. They have very poor communication skills and are incapable of coping with the lessons in English language.

#### **Objectives:**

To make the learners to become reasonably proficient enough in English, to pursue their respective courses

To enable the learners to communicate fluently in English within three months' period

**Analysis of the situation by the teacher:** Before embarking on an innovative solution for the above stated problem, a detailed analysis of the ground realities was undertaken by the researcher.

The learners are of 17 to 20 years of age. The learners have studied English for 10 years, from the age of eight to seventeen. They have studied English as a subject and not as a language. So, they are not at zero level, thus, we need not start from zero level. They know some English already. Hence, we need to build on their previous knowledge. Listening and Speaking have been completely ignored at the school level. Reading has been given very little importance. The available time for classes is just three months. They need to communicate fairly well

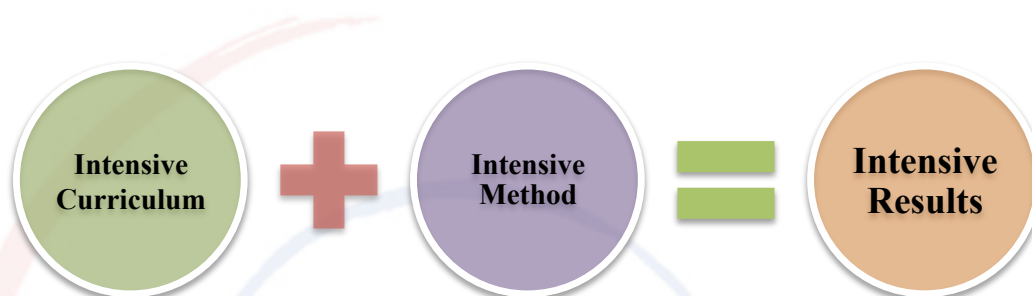
They need to follow their lessons in English. The learners would be available for five hours every day.



The teacher, who is also the researcher, puts together a plan, using the experience and knowledge of the learners, for an innovative methodology to impart communication skills to these learners.

## **B. Innovative Methodology: An Intensive Language Teaching and Learning Method**

We need to redesign the existing curriculum and adapt methods to teach English language proficiency. One such proposed and tested method is ‘Intensive Language Teaching and Learning Method’.



*Figure 1: Successful Methodology –An intensive ELT Method*

Intensive English learning is as an enrichment of the program by the creation of a period of intensive exposure to English, which enables the learner to receive 3 or 4 times, the number of hours of instruction normally devoted to English. The program has the following characteristics:

- an intensive period of study
- use of the target language as a means of communication
- focus on language learning only

Learners who are exposed to a period of intensive study of English show greater progress than learners exposed to the same number of hours of instruction but spread over a longer period of time (the so called “drip-feed” method).

### **1. Intensive Curriculum**

**Reorientation of the Existing Curriculum** - As the objective of learning English is focused completely on the communicative skills and the practical use of the language; regular English text books are not used. A new set of materials are prepared for this special intensive program.

In a normal communicative English program, the four language skills are taught and learnt in progression, i.e. listening and speaking skills are introduced first and reading and writing skills are introduced later but, in the reoriented Intensive curriculum, all the four basic components of a language are taught and learned concurrently.

#### **a. Listening**

Children learn their mother tongue by listening before they speak; the same is true of immigrants. Learners from rural backgrounds do not have enough opportunities to listen to English. So, the teacher has to consciously compensate for the lacking opportunities. Among the many possible uses of English in the classroom are:

*Greetings and Farewells* ('Good morning. How are you today? See you tomorrow.'). Similarly, *Instructions, Enquiries, Feedback, Chat, etc.* (Davies, 2000, p. 6)

By establishing English as the main classroom language, the learners are given meaningful, authentic listening practice. BBC audio content can be effectively used to improve listening skills.

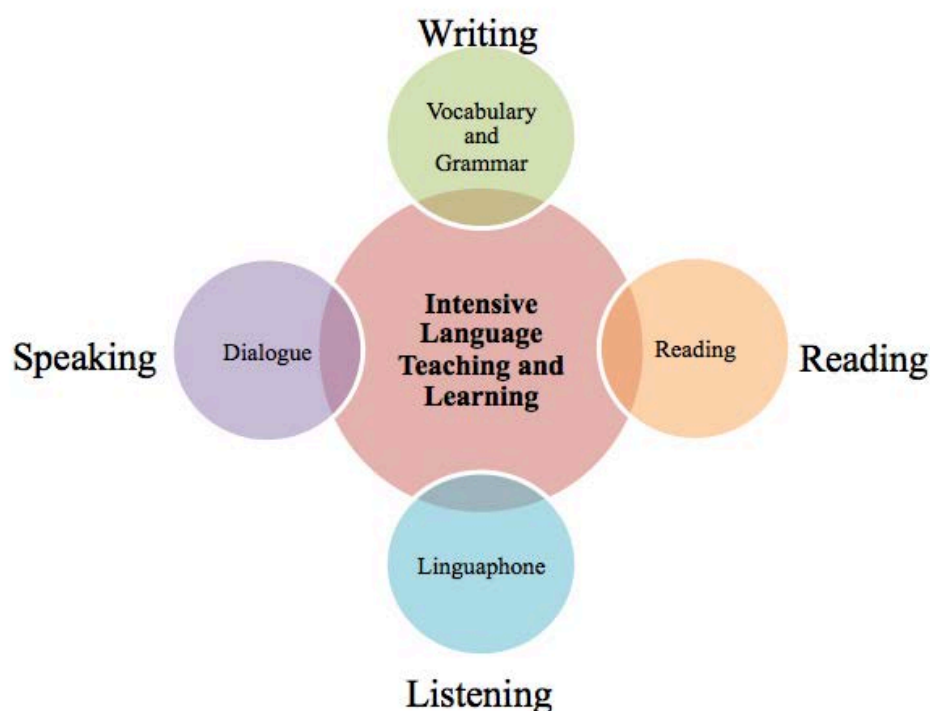


Figure 2: Proposed Components for Intensive Language Teaching and Learning

### b. Speaking

The best way to learn spoken English is, of course, to speak English as often as possible, with as many people as possible, and in as many varied situations as possible.

One of the most influential personalities behind the communicative-style, Stephen Krashen says,

Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interactions in the target language-natural communication-in which speakers are concerned not with the

form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. (Krashen, 1982, p. 1)

According to Littlewood

Activities that involve real communication promote learning.

Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

According to Johnson,

Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning (Richards, 2001, p. 161)

Dialogues, set in daily concrete situations, are the best to engage the learners in meaningful and authentic language use. For example, greetings, requesting, offer help, congratulating, apologizing etc., are practiced with different types of substitutions in the class. The class gets alive and fully engaged, when interesting and funny situations are presented and enacted boosting their confidence.

Because of the increased responsibility to participate, learners may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Learners are more responsible managers of their own learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 130).

### c. Reading

Reading comprehension consists of scanning, skimming and intensive reading. There are three stages to make reading intensive:

**Pre-reading:** prepare the learners for what they are going to read.

**While-reading:** scan, skim and go more thoroughly to understand.

**Post- reading:** help learners to connect what they have read with their life.

Lexical knowledge is now acknowledged to be central to communicative competence and the acquisition and development of a second language . . . vocabulary continues to be learned throughout one's lifetime" (Schmitt, 2000, p. 4).

The individual learners are assisted by the teachers, to choose from the graded Reading Cards (developed by CIEFL, Hyderabad, India) according to their ability. Learners progress at their own pace in intensive reading.

The Reading Cards are used in practicing loud reading, in producing correct pronunciation, articulation, intonation, stress and rhythm and allows teachers to evaluate learner's reading ability, and it prepares individuals for effective silent reading. In the words of Krashen,

A very large vocabulary required of a high-school learner for academic purposes is not acquired in an all-or-none, "taught" manner, but built up gradually and incrementally through reading (Krashen, 1982, p. 105).

### d. Writing

Writing has a strong relationship with Vocabulary and Grammar.

## [1] Vocabulary

The rural learners are made to speak and write using simple vocabulary. The initial vocabulary taught is the list of 50 words most frequently used in written and spoken English. (Troike, 2006, p. 139). Then, nouns and verbs related to the immediate surroundings and day-to-day activities are taught. Such knowledge builds confidence in the learners and encourages them. Extensive reading increases one's vocabulary.

## [2] Functional Grammar

From the 1980s, the traditional notion of grammar is replaced by functional grammar.

‘The term functional should be considered in the broad sense of providing learners with the skills and abilities they need to take an active and responsible role in their communities, in their workplace and in educational settings. It requires learners to be able to communicate in ways that make them effective and involved as citizens, operate confidently and convey their ideas and opinions clearly in a wide range of contexts.

According to Crown, for example the British companies are looking for people who can:

- articulate clearly
- take and pass on messages
- deal with customers effectively
- read, understand and follow a wide range of documents
- write fluently and accurately, using accepted business conventions of format, spelling, grammar and punctuation. (p. 21-22)
- 

English language teaching must reveal how English is used in actual life situations. Though the learners are already aware of the eight grammatical parts of speech, a general outline of the same with examples is taught systematically.

## B. Intensive Method

Intensive Method exposes the learners to the target language for several hours each day and also the entire curriculum is designed towards authentic communication. It is achieved by creating a concentrated block of time in one semester of the academic year devoted primarily to learn English.

There are five key principles of Intensive teaching and learning Method:

- Active participation and emotional involvement of learners with the teacher and one another are pre-requisites for successful learning.
- In all tasks, learners should be motivated through the role-playing. The role-plays should be relevant to the intellectual level of the learners and of 'real life-situations'.

- The organization of group actions in pairs or more, leads to the inner mobilization of the learners. Basically, it denotes that the learner learns not only from the teacher but also through group dynamics by communicating to and with the group at both a conscious and an unconscious level. This is a key principle on which the Intensive Method is based.
- Through intense learning, large amounts of material can be absorbed by the learner (up to 5,000 words per course).
- Every communicative task solves several aims at one time in a hierarchical sequence for every level of teaching. Communicative training, for example, uses grammar, vocabulary and phonetics. (Byrne, 2002, p. 84-85)

### C. Intensive Success

In Intensive teaching, learners are immersed in the language and authentic life situations and learn much more than they would in shorter bursts. The following are the key points about this method that indicate success:

- The learners found the method attractive and positive; the teacher was particularly well liked and respected;
- Learners established a strong group dynamic and developed ways of supporting each other, this effect remained even long after they left the college;
- Learners enjoyed both written and oral projects;
- In spite of individual differences, all of them performed well;
- Self-confidence and self-esteem rose among the learners, even among those who had previously been reluctant;
- Produced oral proficiency and accuracy as well as fluency;
- In two months' time, the rural learners were able to converse in English reasonably well;
- The learners are well placed and appreciated in the IT industries and many are in technical writing industry;
- Visitors, especially from institutes of higher education are highly impressed by the language ability of the learners; Some of them have implemented this method in their institutions with a reasonable success;

Confucius says, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand". Intensive Method involves the learners in the learning activities. The table below gives an insight, as to why intensive method is successful:

*Table 1: Retention, Method, and Learning styles*

Percent Retained	Method	Learning Style
10%	Reading	Passive
20%	Hearing words	Passive
30%	Looking at pictures	Passive
50%	Watching a movie	Passive

<b>50%</b>	Watching a demonstration	Passive
<b>70%</b>	Giving a talk	Active
<b>90%</b>	Doing a dramatic presentation	Active
<b>90%</b>	Simulating a real experience	Active
<b>90%</b>	Doing a real thing	Active

Source: Adapted from Dale (qtd. in Bender).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The situation of the rural learners from vernacular backgrounds entering the colleges to pursue various undergraduate courses in English is a cause of great concern. It is because, the objectives of studying English in schools are not oriented towards language learning, rather, English has been treated as a subject to be passed. 'A one size fit for all' mindset is seen in the method thrust down by the education department. In this connection, the spirit of post-methods era, opens the flood gates of creativity and innovation by empowering the teachers to design their own methodology in language teaching. Teachers know the best, as they are close to the learners and understand their needs and capabilities. They also have a clear understanding of the institution and its objectives, social and cultural demands. Teachers who are in control of the situation are the best to judge to decide on what to teach and how to teach.

The researcher, with the spirit of post-methods era, accepted the challenge of taking up the responsibility of designing own methodology to address the problem at hand. The designed methodology has been tested and found efficient. The best method is one, which responds best to the situation. Open to the situation, with the spirit of post-methods era, with total commitment and the best interest of the learners at heart, produces innovative methodologies and successful learners.

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