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Topic of submission: Innovative language teaching and learning methodologies

Educational Plays for Learners of English

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Universidad Distrital and The Performers Educational Plays

The demand for cross-curricular connections and the teaching of content in L2 from very early ages at schools makes us think of integrating texts and tasks that engage learners as they integrate their learning. Theater may be an interesting option. Drama has been used in foreign language classes in many ways such as for building rapport among learners or to teach a language function or to present a discrete grammatical or lexical item. This paper will center on a more sophisticated notion of drama which are Educational Plays. These constitute elaborate products meant to reinforce the learning of other subject areas, touching upon culture, literature and of the English language.

True to the tradition of British theatre in education, The Performers plays (www.theperformers.net) aim at involving and motivating learners and at helping them to develop their imaginative, communicative and artistic potential. The plays represent an original resource for teaching English. In addition, the performances themselves provide learners of all ages with an opportunity to experience both the language and the dramatic arts in an authentic and entertaining context outside the classroom environment.

Schools have access to educational and entertaining plays that reassure learners that they can not only understand but actually enjoy a piece that has been prepared to meet their needs. Every season a Shakespeare play is included for the most advanced.

Three plays geared for children, pre-adolescents, young adults and adults, who are either users of the language or learners of the language, are produced each year. The play for children bring a clear message presented colourfully interactively and amusingly. Let us revise the plot of one of our recent productions.

THE GREEN KITCHEN. Alfred Works as a cook and waiter at a small restaurant he owns. Every day he prepares delicious meals for his customers with the help of Ms. Fridge, Mrs. Cooker and Mr. Bin. They really enjoy their work, but there are some problems: Ms. Fridge cleans but always forgets to turn off the tap; Mrs. Cooker leaves the burners on even if she has already finished cooking and Mr. Bin eats all of the rubbish such as paper towels, plastic bags and tuna tins without separating them properly! One day someone arrives to put an end to the situation: Mr. Ecology Inspector. He tells everyone that if they don´t start reducing, reusing and recycling the things they use in the kitchen, he will close the restaurant. Will Mr. Bin and his friends accept the new rules and learn how to take care of the world´s natural resources? Will Alfred be able to run a Green Kitchen? Let´s hope so…for it they do, they´ll help the world to be a much better place for you and me!

The plays for all ages of intermediate level is a musical comedy that keeps audiences entertained and very glad that they not only understood but enjoyed the foolish plots. Let's revise one of those plots.

THE NEW SHERLOCK. After inventing a powerful chemical mixture to paralyse and control the legendary Sherlock Holmes, Moriarty, the evil scientist, along with his faithful assistant, Agna, persuade the beautiful Irene to invite Sherlock to an apparently harmless dinner. Unfortunately, Irene mistakes the real Sherlock for his brother Mycroft, which leads to a series of hilarious misunderstandings.   Will this fake detective, who takes on the role of his distinguished brother using purely his intuition, be able to unfold Moriarty true intentions and put and end to his evil plot? Let´s enjoy a rich comedy full of surprise and adventure; a story where real identifies are yet to be discovered!

Every season a play by Shakespeare is produced. The original text is respected although some scenes and characters are excluded to facilitate understanding. As in the other plays teachers and learners have access in advance to the plot, the scripts, the song lyrics and the dialogues in the website. Background and language exercises are also provided in a CD.

Who are we? The Performers Educational Plays is the leading international company that was founded over 12 years ago to provide a service and a product of highly artistic and pedagogical qualities that contributes to the development of the target language.

Why do we exist? We want schools to learn about the transformative power of theatre, and inspire them to implement drama activities in everyday teaching. We know that classrooms have many limitations. The experiential cross curricular learning that takes place when attending a play, that is suitable to the learners´ age and English proficiency, gives learners a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment difficult to parallel in a class. Going to the theater resembles a ´field trip´ in which learners experience directly with the context. On the other hand, the genre drama helps interaction with mature speakers of English (used to called natives) within a meaningful context that resembles real life interactions.

What do we believe in? We believe that learners are smart and they can figure out through body language, gestures, etc what they may have missed when relying on language alone. We also believe that learners benefit from previewing topics, making connections and visualizing before attending a play and these are offered in the pre-show activities contained in the CD that brings the didactic material.

We believe that redundancy in the elements of the message greatly contribute to the learners´ understanding. Props, gestures accompany language. The play scripts also contain "echo" effects, paraphrasing, addressing the audience, and other discourse devices that make meanings and messages comprehensible. At the theater learners grasp the subtleties and nuances of the dialogs and the fine sense of humor which spice the plays.
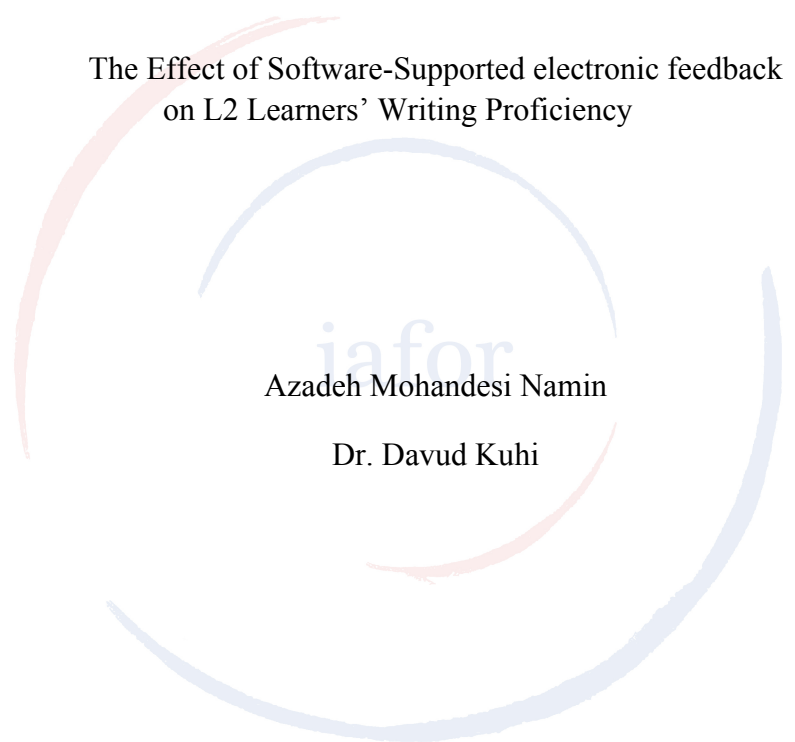
We also believe that assessing the value of the plays to their lives complements the 'field experience´ they had with us and therefore post-show activities are proposed in the didactic material.

What do we envision? After touring Latin American countries for over a decade with large audiences in many cities, The Company plans to expand its operation to Asia and is actively searching for Regional and City Representatives with key contacts in educational sector. Do contact us at: info@theperformers.net.

Running head: SOFTWARE-SUPPORTED ELECTRONIC FEEDBACK AND L2
LEARNERS' WRITING PROFICIENCY

The Effect of Software-Supported electronic feedback
on L2 Learners' Writing Proficiency

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Abstract

Teachers' feedback plays a crucial role in improving and enhancing the quality of students' written essays. However, in Iranian context, the number of university students has dramatically increased and feedback is often provided too slowly and lacks the necessary quality. This has necessitated development of faster and efficient ways of providing feedback in writing classes. The aim of the current study was to shed light on the potential of software supported electronic feedback for language learners and their teachers in an EFL essay writing class in an Iranian university. The research was administered during 6 months, and used Pretest Posttest Control Group design. We worked with two groups to undertake a comparative study of the impact of receiving software-supported electronic feedback and traditional classroom feedback. Findings of the study revealed that learners in experimental group outperformed those in control group, and software-supported electronic feedback as a new pedagogic practice was generally effective in terms of providing a more positive learning environment. Thus, the current study recommends the use of software-supported electronic feedback as a solution to help both teachers and students overcome the feedback related challenges and improve students' proficiency in essay writing.

Key Words: feedback, electronic feedback, essay writing

The Effect of Software-supported Electronic Feedback on L2 Learners' Writing Proficiency

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Introduction

Staff complain that traditional and current practices of providing feedback are no longer effective (Weaver, 2006) and that students do not act on feedback (Mutch, 2003), only being concerned with their marks (Wojtas, 1998) or seeing feedback as a means to justify the grade (Price & O'Donovan, 2008). This has resulted in a negative impact on the student experience of feedback. This negative attitude has been further indicated by responses to the National Student Survey (HEFCE, 2007) in which students have expressed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of the feedback they receive both in terms of timing and usefulness (Mutch, 2003). With the development of computers in language teaching and learning, some second language writing teachers have started to consider integrating the use of computers in generating electronic teacher and peer feedback in an attempt to overcome these problems. As educational tools, computers have played diverse roles in language instruction. Among successful models of using computers in teaching a foreign language, the use of electronic communication is now being considered as a useful activity. The most popular tool for electronic communication is electronic mail (e-mail), which is fast, convenient, inexpensive, and can be stored, modified and printed. In the field of writing, feedback stands out as an essential element in the writing process. The rapid pace at which educational technologies are growing creates a broad spectrum of ways in which technology can be integrated into classroom instruction. These multiplying points of contact between technology and second language writing converge on the concept of electronic feedback.

It has been claimed that sending tutors' comments electronically by email (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Denton, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Price & Petre, 1997; Race, no date), via the internet or virtual learning environment (Denton et al, 2008; Gipps, 2005) can enhance the way in which students receive and engage with feedback. Students receive their individual feedback in privacy, which enables them to respond to their feedback in different ways and at different times (Price & O'Donovan, 2008). A number of other studies have reported on the greater impact of electronic or online feedback (van den Boom et al, 2004; Guardado & Shi, 2007; Tuzi, 2004). However Rowe & Wood (2007) have suggested that further examination of how students receive and respond to electronically redelivered feedback is required.

Due to such a necessity, the current study aims at integrating technology in essay writing courses to investigate 1. the effectiveness of electronic feedback in the form of software-supported emails in essay writing classes and 2. learners' attitudes towards software supported electronic feedback. It is believed that the findings of this study can help us develop a better understanding of the role of electronic tools and channels in writing instruction.

Methods

Participants

The participants of the study were 60 university students (both male and female) from Shahriar University of Astara, Iran. The students shared some common characteristics as they were in their early twenties, and were starting their first year in Accounting. They were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group.

Instruments

A pretest, consisting of two writing tasks, was administered to both groups to assess what they already know (See Appendix 3).

In this study learners in experimental group were given feedback via E-mail by the use of Electronic Feedback Software. Electronic Feedback Software is an MS Office Marking Assistant developed by Phil Denton, which can generate and email MS Word processed reports to students (See Appendix 4). The software can return considerably more feedback to students, in a shorter space of time, than traditional approaches would normally allow. As well as generating feedback, the software can also be used to analyze the distribution of both marks and standard comments. It can also be used to detect instances of plagiarism between pairs of students. In control group learners were given traditional classroom feedback.

An electronic questionnaire and a video interview were administered to experimental group to investigate the potential of e-feedback in improving EFL students' essay writing skills. The questionnaire was structured and consisted of 15 five-level close-ended Likert scale questions (See Appendix 1). Questionnaire validity was achieved through using face validity by administering it to 3 jury members who are specialized in TESOL/TEFL. They made some modifications after which they accepted it as a valid questionnaire. As for questionnaire reliability, it was administered to a sample of 20 MA students in English teaching who were in their last semester. Statistical analysis also indicated its reliability. The results of the questionnaire helped decide the most important categories and themes of the interview (See Appendix 2). The interview was structured; composed of 6 five-level Likert questions and 12 claims that learners were asked to agree or disagree and provide reason.

Procedures

A pretest was administered to the learners in both groups to assess their current writing skill level. After that students were asked to participate in the study by exchanging e-mails with their essay writing teacher in the essay writing class to obtain software generated e-feedback. This e-mail exchange process lasted for a whole semester (i.e. 6 months). After that, students were asked to fill in the questionnaire. Then, all of the students in experimental group were asked to volunteer to attend the structured interview in their free time. Students' interviews were conducted in English, video recorded and transcribed. Through an electronic questionnaire followed by a video interview, the participants were encouraged to articulate their attitudes towards e-feedback, which enabled the researcher to work closely with the students to unpack their perceptions of their own experiences.

Results and Discussion

Having collected the required data based on the above mentioned data collection instruments and procedures, the researchers conducted the analysis of data and tested the hypothesis formulated for the present study. The results of the current study revealed that the effect of software supported electronic feedback on L2 learners' writing proficiency was significant. Our findings indicated that software supported electronic feedback as a new pedagogic practice was generally effective in terms of providing positive and more flexible

learning environment different. It increased student participation, facilitated student-teacher communication, encouraged students' responsibility for their own writing. T-test statistical analysis confirms these claims (see Table 2): L2 learners who receive software-supported electronic feedback will outperform those who receive traditional teacher provided feedback (T observed= 3.12 > T critical= 2.00, at 0.05 level of significance for two tailed test and 58 degree of freedom).

To compare the participants' level of writing proficiency at the beginning of the study in experimental and control groups, a t-test was conducted to analyze the results of pretest. (See Table 1).

TABLE 1:

RESULTS OF T-TEST ANALYSIS FOR PRETEST (HOMOGENIZING TEST)

Groups	N	M	SD	T observed	df	T critical
Cont.	30	48.23	16.13	1.02	58	0.97
Exp.	30	56.62	17.74			

As the results of Table 1 shows, there is no statistically significant difference [T observed (58) = 1.02, T critical = 0.97(two-tailed)] between control (M = 48.23, SD = 16.13) and experimental (M = 56.62, SD = 17.74) groups with regard to writing proficiency which confirms the homogeneity of the participants at the outset of the study.

In order to compare the performances of the participants in experimental and control groups over the whole test and examine the effect of the treatment, a t-test analysis was used. Table 2 summarizes the results for this analysis.

TABLE 2:

RESULTS OF T-TEST FOR THE WHOLE POSTTEST

Groups	N	M	SD	T observed	df	T critical
Cont.	30	53.86	18.26	3.12	58	2.00
Exp.	30	69.06	19.38			

As Table 5 reveals, participants in experimental groups (M = 69.06, SD = 19.38) significantly outperformed [T observed (58) = 3.12, T critical = 2.00 (two-tailed)] those in control groups (M = 53.86, SD = 18.26).

The current study reported the following findings from the analysis of questionnaires, and the interviews.

CHART 1: RESULTS OF INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE
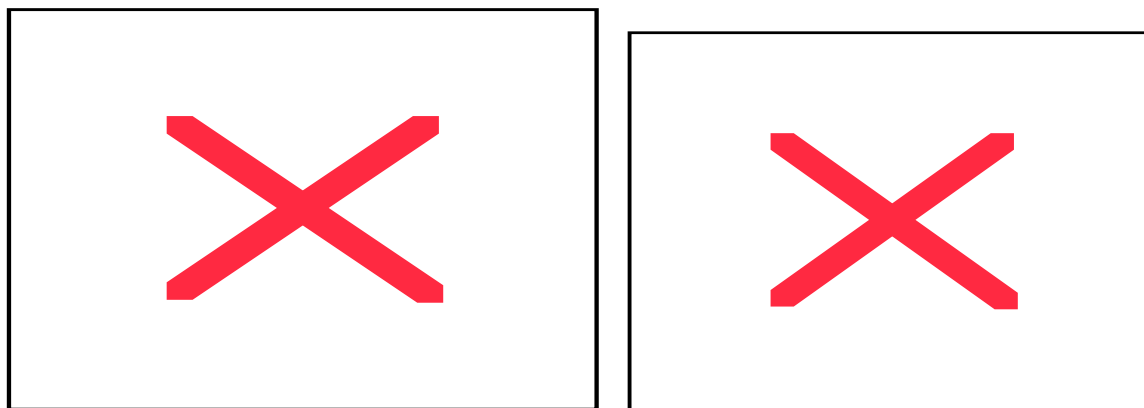
First, students in experimental group agreed that software-supported e-feedback has the potential to improve their writing skills (93% of the study sample). Students perceived teacher's e-feedback as impacting their revision (86% of the sample of the study pinpointed that this was the case with them) better than face to face feedback. This implied that e-feedback might be more useful in reducing the anxiety related to receiving feedback. It also helped students focus on larger writing blocks, both corrective and constructive and improve students' grammatical and lexical structures. Analysis of the questionnaire items revealed that 79% of the study sample agreed that e-feedback has the potential to improve grammatical and lexical mistakes. It also underscored the mechanics of writing including spelling and punctuation rules. Statistical analysis was consistent with this finding as 91% of the study sample strongly agreed that e-feedback helped enhance their punctuation and spelling.

The students who were interviewed also expressed a strong preference for the publishing of feedback and grades online. The use of technology made it easier for students to engage with their feedback as they have ultimate control over how, where and when they receive their feedback and it enables them to identify their strengths and weaknesses at a glance. In addition, students perceived peer e-feedback as artificial and not valuable.

This study revealed various advantages of using software supported electronic feedback in writing. First, by using e-feedback in the writing class students become familiar with a communication tool that is vital to their survival in the 21st century. It extends language learning time and place and promotes student-centered language learning (Selfe, 1992). Slower learners can work at a comfortable pace and can review material as many times as needed and faster learners have more opportunity for accelerated learning and enrichment. Another advantage of using e-feedback is the ability to electronically monitor the individual or group writing process from the brainstorming phase to the final draft. Additionally the software programs have a number of features that give the Electronic Feedback method the edge over traditional 'red pen' marking. There is a variety of plagiarism detection tools that can be used to check for similarities between electronic text files or for similar text on the web. In addition, instead of entering student scores manually, % marks can be calculated automatically by activating the Auto mark feature in e-feedback software. An added benefit to all this is that it can save natural resources by cutting down on the use of expensive paper and toner.' Using e-feedback can also save class time for some assignments. Another advantage is the permanency of written communication and the availability at any time. Research also suggests that when partners have negative attitudes towards the ethnic group of their partner, through the process of sending e-mail back and forth to one another, the partners begin to put aside their biases. A final, but not least, positive aspect of e-mail is that shy students have a forum for expressing themselves and asking questions. It is highly

recommended that software-supported e-feedback to be used in many courses and not only with language courses as it proved a potentially useful mode of giving feedback in the digital age.

However, this approach does have limitations and there was a competing preference for the use of a mixed model. Mixing of e-feedback with face-to-face learning styles has resulted in best results in terms of quality of feedback and impact on revisions. Furthermore, research suggests that feedback should be provided to the students in different ways, partly because students have different learning styles, but also because different types of feedback have different purposes and effects. Although nowadays emailing is becoming quite common among school and university students in Iran internet connection speed and lack of expertise on the part of both students and teachers are the major drawbacks of the new innovation. In addition, computer anxiety can be one of the factors that hinder the use of electronic feedback. Some of the drawbacks of software-supported e-feedback are that students might not adequately know how to use the computer system, financial costs, technical problems might occur, and lack of professional development for teachers. Upon deciding on the use of e-feedback, adequate training on the procedures of good e-feedback should follow. Finally, the need for further research derives directly from our limited sample of learners and thus from the need to explore the relevance of our findings to other settings. Nevertheless, future studies must deal with how employing a variety of new technologies affect other language skills as well.

However, even though computers are becoming more and more an integral part in the classrooms, SL teachers should deal with integrating software-supported electronic feedback with a balance of enthusiasm and cautiousness. Rushing to adopt new trends without careful planning before and during e- feedback sessions can negatively influence students' performance in the classroom.

Appendices

1. Students' questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to investigate the potential of software-supported e-feedback in improving EFL students' essay writing skills. I kindly request you to answer this questionnaire fully. All the answers you provide will be confidential and for study purposes only. Please respond to the following statements by putting a tick (✓) into the box that best expresses your opinions. Thanks very much in advance for your help and collaboration.

(1) = Never; (2) = Rarely; (3) = Sometimes; (4) = Often; (5) = Always

No	Statements	Always	Often	Some times	Rarel y	Never
1	I sent my written essays via e-mail to my teacher regularly.	□	□	□	□	□
2	I received my teacher's software-supported e-feedback within one or two days after sending it.	□	□	□	□	□
3	I found my teacher's software-supported e-feedback useful in terms of improving my writing skills.	□	□	□	□	□
4	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback helped me revise and edit my written essays better.	□	□	□	□	□
5	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback helped me focus on the content of my writing.	□	□	□	□	□
6	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback drew my attention to the grammatical mistakes.	□	□	□	□	□
7	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback drew my attention to the lexical mistakes.	□	□	□	□	□
8	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback helped me reshape my ideas.	□	□	□	□	□

9	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback focused on the mechanics of writing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback was constructive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback was corrective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	My classmate's software-supported e-feedback was helpful in improving my essay writing skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	My classmate's software-supported e-feedback was useless.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	My classmate's e-feedback was done on a surface level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	My teacher's software-supported e-feedback is better than that of my classmate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Students' Interview

Considering what you have experienced in receiving software-supported electronic feedback in your writing course, what's your idea about following? Answer to first 6 questions and give positive or negative response to 12 claims using strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree by providing reasons.

No.	Questions
1	Does it extend language learning time and place?
2	Does it provide a context for real-world communication and authentic interaction?
3	Does it expand topics beyond classroom-based ones?
4	Does it promote student-centered language learning?
5	Does it encourage equal opportunity participation?
6	Does it connect speakers quickly and cheaply?
No.	**Claims**
1	By using e-mail in the writing class students become familiar with a communication tool that is vital to their survival in the 21st century.
2	Interaction and feedback over a writing task is not limited to the confines of a classroom.
3	It provides the ability to electronically monitor the individual or group writing process from the brainstorming phase to the final draft.
4	The software programs have a number of features that give the Electronic Feedback method the edge over traditional 'red pen' marking.
5	Auto mark feature is advantageous for both teachers and students.
6	Students can use email features to organize their writing.
7	It can save natural resources by cutting down on the use of expensive paper and toner.
8	Using e-mail can also save class time for some assignments.
9	More writing is actually accomplished when using e-mail.
10	Using e-mail, audience tends to focus on the message itself.
11	Sending e-mail motivates learners to put aside ethnic biases.
12	Shy students have a forum for expressing themselves and asking questions.

3. Writing Skill Pretest

This test assesses your ability to produce two quite different pieces of writing in a fairly short period of time. The test is divided into two parts and you are allowed two hour to complete both parts.

Writing Task 1

In the first part, you are given a task based on some graphic or pictorial information. You are expected to write a descriptive report of at least 150 words on the information provided.

Writing Task 2

The second task is more demanding. You are expected to produce a written argument on a given topic and to organize your answer clearly, given some examples to support your points. You will have to write at least 250 words and, as Task 2 is longer than Task 1, you are advised to spend approximately 40 minutes on this task and 20 minutes on the first task.

Task 1
The graph shows Internet Usage in Someland by Age Group, 1998-2000. Summarize the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant. •   You should write at least 150 words. •   You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.
Model answer:
The graph shows changes in the age profile of Internet users in Someland between 1998 and 2000. The main users of the Internet in Someland are young adults between 16 and 30 years old. In 1998, they accounted for more than half of all users. In 1999 the number dropped slightly to 45%, but even in 2000 they were the biggest group. The second biggest group of users is aged between 31 and 50. They made up 41% in 1998, falling slightly to 37% in 2000. When combined with the 16-30 age group, over 94% of users in 1998 were between 16 and 50. However this number is dropping steadily as more children and older users log on. In 1999, the number of children online quadrupled from 2% to 8%, and it continued to increase in 2000. There were similar increases for older users, rising from 4% in 1998 to 10% in 2000. In summary, while adults between 16 and 50 still represent the great majority of Internet users in Someland, their share is declining as more children and older users join the web.
Task 2
You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic: In some countries young people have little leisure time and are under a lot of pressure to work hard in their studies. •   What do you think are the causes of this? •   What solutions can you suggest? Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience. Write at least 250 words.
Model answer:
Some young people find themselves with very little leisure time. I believe there are two main causes of this situation. The first is parental pressure and the second is competition for university places. Every parent wants to see his or her child do well in school and go on to have a successful career. This means that they exert pressure on their children to spend hours each day studying at home. Some even arrange extra tuition for their children. In my own country, it is not uncommon for young people to spend another three hours at small private schools after their usual day at stale school is over. As a consequence, their leisure time is extremely limited and the pressure on them is considerable. The second cause is related to the higher education system. Each year, there are many times more applicants to university than there are university places. The result of this is that only those students with very high grades manage to obtain a place. This contributes to the pressure on teenagers since they must work long hours to have any chance of success. One solution to the problem is for parents to be made aware of the effects of the pressure they put on their children. Schools should inform parents that too much pressure can lead to anxiety, stress and depression. They should be shown ways in which they can help their children lead more balanced lives with a reasonable amount of leisure time. Another effective measure would be for the government to invest in the creation of more university places. This could be done by expanding existing universities or by building new ones. This would have the effect of easing competition for places giving teenagers some of their precious free lime back. (296 words)

4. Electronic Feedback Software

Electronic Feedback Software Report Sample

	J43		f_x								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
2		Created by Azadeh Mohandesi Namin								
3		Created at 12:54 pm on 20/5/2011								
4										
5	GN	Assessor Names								
6	1	Azadeh Mohandesi Namin					Unadj.	Adj.		
7							Mark	Mark		
8		Student	Reg. No.		%	Rank	/100	/100	Grade Comment	Top Personal Comment
9	1	Sajad Zeynali	<1>	1	92	5th	89	92	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
10	2	Roghayeh Razaghi	<2>	1	75	14th	72	75	First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
11	3	Ali Mirazie	<3>	1	100	Joint 1st	98	100	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
12	4	Vahid Soleymanpoor	<4>	1	67	17th	65	67	2(I) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
13	5	Behrooz Mehryar	<5>	1	96	3rd	93	96	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
14	6	Mojhdeh Sadeghian	<6>	1	79	Joint 11th	76	79	First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
15	7	Masoomeh Bahrabadi	<7>	1	55	Joint 21st	53	55	2(II) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
16	8	Farshad Fadavi	<8>	1	46	25th	46		Third Class	Modify your writing work, you have got late penalty
17	9	Ebrahim Poormorad	<9>	1	90	6th	88	90	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
18	10	Mina Najafi	<10>	1	82	9th	79	82	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
19	11	Fatemeh Ranjkhah	<11>	1	86	8th	83	86	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
20	12	Navid Ebadi	<12>	1	94	4th	91	94	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
21	13	Iraj Beheshti	<13>	1	51	24th	48	51	Third Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
22	14	Sakineh Bakhshandeh	<14>	1	62	19th	60	62	2(I) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
23	15	Ruhallah Jahangirzadeh	<15>	1	70	16th	68	70	2(I) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
24	16	Roghayeh Ghahreman	<16>	1	76	13th	74	76	First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
25	17	Hadi Hasani	<17>	1	55	Joint 21st	55		2(II) Class	Modify your writing work, you have got late ness penalty
26	18	Mohamadreza Safari	<18>	1	63	18th	60	63	2(I) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
27	19	Vahideh Bakhshandeh	<19>	1	43	27th	40	43	Third Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
28	20	Peyman Poorjozi	<20>	1	39	29th	39		Borderline Fail	Modify your writing work, you have got late ness penalty
29	21	Zahra Dadfar	<21>	1	45	26th	45		Third Class	Modify your writing work, you have got late ness penalty
30	22	Sajad Nurmohamadi	<22>	1	37	30th	37	37	Borderline Fail	Modify your writing work, you have got late ness penalty
31	23	Abouzar Nazarizadeh	<23>	1	56	20th	54	56	2(II) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
32	24	Kamel Hoseinipoor	<24>	1	72	15th	70	72	First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
33	25	Hosein Kiani	<25>	1	80	10th	77	80	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
34	26	Mehdi Noorbakhsh	<26>	1	88	7th	86	88	High First Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
35	27	Raana Dadaie	<27>	1	52	23rd	50	52	2(II) Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.
36	28	Mehrnaz Rahmaninia	<28>	1	42	28th	40	42	Third Class	Thank you for submitting your writing work on time.

Criterion Stats. / Mark Stats. / **Marks and Comments**

Electronic Feedback Software Student Feedback Sample

	A1	f_x	Writing Course Work

Writing Course Work
Awarded Mark Statistics

	All Groups	Azadeh Mohandesi Namin
Group Number	N/A	1
No. of Students	30	30
Maximum Mark (%)	100	100
Average Mark (%)	69	69
Lowest Mark (%)	37	37
Standard Deviation	19.6	19.6

Any tutors not listed did not allocate any marks or comments.
Students not allocated any marks or comments are not included in this analysis.

Criterion Stats. / **Mark Stats.** / Marks and Comments

	A1	f_x	Writing Course Work

Writing Course Work
Criterion Style Standard Comment Allocation Statistics

		All Groups			Azadeh Mohandesi		
Group No.		N/A			1		
No. of Students		30			30		
Criteria		H	A	L	H*	A*	L*
1	Conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation	100	69	37	100	69	37

Any tutors not listed did not allocate any marks or comments.
Students not allocated any marks or comments are not included in this analysis.
*Highest, Average and Lowest Levels for individual groups are expressed as a % of the Maximum Level

Criterion Stats. / Mark Stats. / Marks and Comments

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Title

A Comparative study British and Thai undergraduates in Torrance Test of Creative Thinking.

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Topic of the Submission

Testing and Evaluation

A Comparative study British and Thai undergraduates in Torrance Test of Creative Thinking

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Abstract

This study examines the performance of British and Thai undergraduates in creative thinking using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT). The 25 undergraduates with average age of 20 years old of British and Thai groups were selected and assessed with the Figural and Verbal Torrance Test of Creative Thinking. The mean comparison between British and Thai group showed that the mean score of the British's students in fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration and total scores of TTCT was higher than of Thai's. In the analysis of Paired Samples T-Tests, the results indicated statistically significant differences in relation to the nationality in the level of $p > 0.05$.

Keywords: Creative thinking, Fluency, Flexibility, Originality, Evaluation

Introduction

Creativity is the ability to see something in a new way, to see and solve problems no one else may know exists, and to engage in mental and physical experiences that are new, unique, or different. Creativity is a critical aspect of a person's life, starting from inside the womb onward through adulthood (Runco, Mark A. and Robert S. Albert 2004). Researchers have found environment to be more important than heredity in influencing creativity, and a child's creativity can be either strongly encouraged or discouraged by early experiences at home and in school (Einon D 2002). Creative individuals tend to share certain characteristics, including a tendency to be more impulsive or spontaneous than others then it can also be a sign of creativity. Many creative individuals are unafraid of experimenting with new things; furthermore, creative people are often less susceptible to peer pressure, perhaps because they also tend to be self-reliant and unafraid the voice from their true feelings even if those go against conventional wisdom (Keane, Michael A.2004).

Teenagers are highly critical of the products they make and ideas they have. They try to express themselves creatively in a more adult-like way. Their creativity is influenced by their individual differences, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Adolescence is also a time for rapid cognitive development (S.R. Smith and L. Handler 2007).Piaget describes adolescence as the stage of life in which the individual's thoughts start taking more of an abstract form and the egocentric thoughts decrease. This allows the individual to think and reason in a wider perspective (Piaget 1985). As Lee (2003) said, Social environment and parents are still important for the behaviors and choices of adolescents. Adolescents who have a good relationship with their parents are less likely to engage in various risk behaviors, such as smoking, drinking,

fighting, and/or sexual intercourse. But this focus makes their thoughts less flexible because they also follow them parent in the parent ways.

At this point, push this study that Asian teenager who have strict culture to obey the elders would be creative thinking lower than the western teenagers who high flexibility or not? Because flexible-thinking is one of three components in creative thinking (Torrance 1968).

Literature Review

Cognitive development is greatly impacted by culture. As a race we are social beings and learn from our surroundings, community and family. In a popular study Liu (2004) argued cultural background and identity will influence us as we develop into adults, teaching us what and how to think. There are many influences which contribute to cognitive development that span across all cultures.

Creativity is one of the most complex products of the human mind. It is, in general, the ability to produce new, i.e. original, unexpected and high quality thinking associated with the task that the problem involves (Sternberg 2003). However, Sternberg points out that many studies have regarded creativity as a process formed by the combination of numerous factors, and thus propose a confluent approach to explain all aspects of the process. Guilford's studies play an important role in the emergence of the psychometric approach. In the 1950s, Guilford introduced if creative thinking can be analyzed according to an intellect model, then ordinary people in everyday life, also, should be used as subjects of study. Such an approach and intellect model have made it possible to develop paper-pencil tests and other various assessment tools to measure creativity or divergent thinking style (Sternberg & Ben-Zeev 2001). It was actually the attempts to identify assessment criteria of creative thinking that gave rise to the concepts of fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in the thinking processes. Creative individuals are expected to think in numerous different categories or dimensions. These four features – fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration – are also used extensively to define the manner in which creative individuals think. Creative thinking is assessed using scores of fluency, flexibility originality and elaborative on the tests developed (Torrance 1974). The four criteria are regarded as the basis of creative thinking by researchers today, who, by defining creativity as a cognitive function, also acknowledge that it can be assessed in everyday situations (Mouchiroud and Lubart 2001)

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT), The TTCT was developed and used much earlier. In 1966, Torrance published the TTCT in the form of substantial use to as a part of this long-term research program emphasizing classroom that stimulate creativity (Swart 1988). Originally, the TTCT was planned as a basis for individualizing instruction for different students based on the test scores (Torrance, 1966). Torrance discouraged interpretation of score as static measure of a person's ability and, instead, argued for using the profile of strengths as a mean to understand and nurture a person's creativity (Hebert et al 2002). The TTCT are the most widely used and studied creativity test (Johnson and Fishkin 1999). The TTCT are standardized measures of creative strengths, are culturally fair, provide a comprehensive score, grade and age norms, and national percentiles.

According to differences between the West and Asia, we will see there are many different including culture and education that are effective to their creative thinking, culture is concern about social that make people learning by social learning theory (Bandura A.,1977). Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, an environmental influences. Western culture stresses individualism more. McGray & Douglas (2002) said, Asia stresses conformity more. Students are expected to

memorize their instructor's lectures and repeat the answers essentially verbatim on exams, while in the West, our education encourages more in-class discussion and problem-solving exercises. Consistent with Louiseasl (2009) who is a Child Professional in the United States observed that many of Asian students are quite shy and defer to the teacher for all discussion while the Western students are more engaged in conversations.

Education is different in different parts of the world. The east typically focuses on math and science. Teachers believe in rote memorization. Students are encouraged to memorize most material and assessed with large exams at the end of the term. The western education model focuses on reading, writing and understanding concepts rather than memorization. Students are assessed through multiple methods such as class participation, essays, and tests. Both methods have advantages. The eastern method creates students whose math and science background are advanced due to memorization of early math facts. The western model is also advantageous because students learn a variety of ways to express themselves, take tests and advanced writing skills (http://www.education.com). In the example of the difference above. It is interesting about the differences of creativity between two areas. Then we will use the results of TTCT to explain the difference in creativity happens.

Results of the TTCT were originally expressed of four factor: Fluency (The number of relevant ideas), Originality (the number of statistically infrequent ideas), Flexibility (the number of shifts or categories in responses), and Elaboration (the number of details used in response).The TTCT can be administered as an individual or group test from the kindergarten level (age 6) through the graduate level and beyond. They require from 30 to 45 minutes working time. So speed is important and the Figural version of the test requires some drawing ability, however, artistic quality is not required to receive credit (Chase, 1985).

Procedure of study

It was a case-study; it was the Test of creative thinking by TTCT comparison of creative thinking between Asia and Western undergraduate students. The data were collected and analyzed then presented in the form of table and graph; the statistics were calculated by mean scores. Creativity means score, standard deviation, t with a significance level of .05.

Sample of the study

The samples of this experiment were taken from 25 students, Faculty of Computer science, Rajamangala University who Asia representative and 25 students, Faculty of Computer science, University of Hertfordshire who western representative.

Delimitation of the study

The scope of study was narrowed down to only the creative thinking of students in experiment.

Research Instruments

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking-Figural. (TTCT-Figural), the TTCT-Figural is formally titled "Thinking Creatively with Pictures" It consists of three activities; Picture Construction, Picture Completion, and Repeated Figures of Lines or Circles. Ten minutes are required to complete each activity.

Data collection and interpretation

The primary data were collected from the TTCT-Figural on the drawing by students and analyzed with statistics (creativity mean score, standard deviation, t with a significance level of .05.**).** The formula used to calculate T (t-test) was SPSS17.0. The data were presented in the form of table and graph.

Table 1: Comparison of mean scores, Asian and Western creativity.

	Asian	Western
Fluency	7.76	11.32
Flexibility	5.28	7.96
Originality	13.16	17.56
Elaboration	34.84	37.60

Figure 1: Comparison of mean scores, Asian and Western creativity.
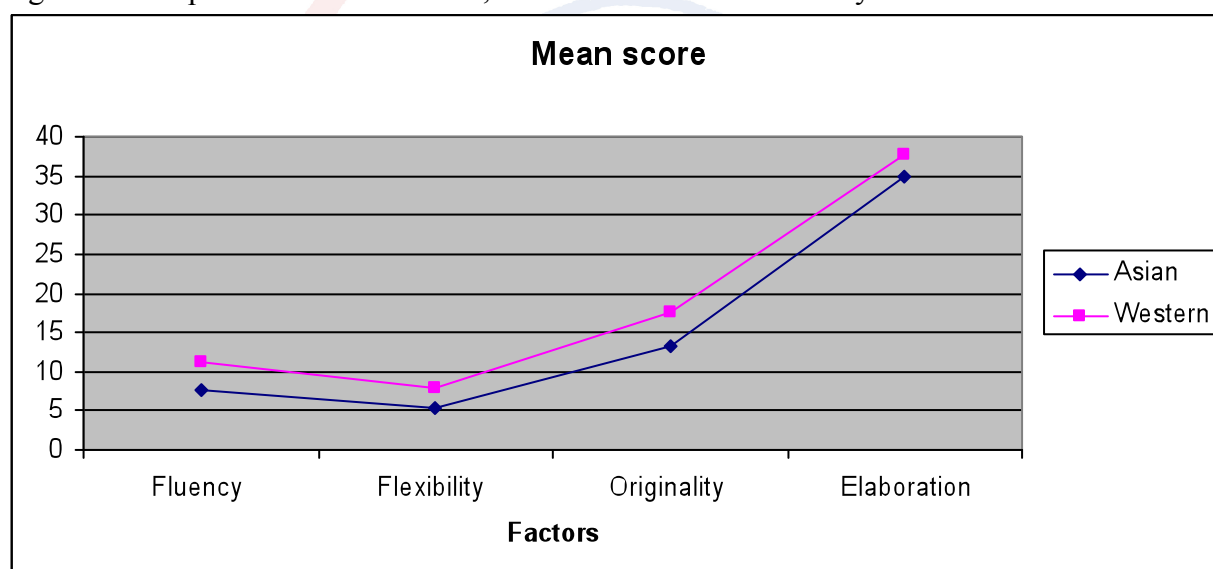
Results and Discussion

The results show that the creative thinking of Asian and Western were different. The Asian's mean score of Fluency is 7.76, Flexibility is 5.28, Originality is 13.16, and Elaboration is 34.48. The Western's mean score of Fluency is 11.32, Flexibility is 7.96, Originality is 17.56, and Elaboration is 37.60. To summarize, the creative thinking of Asian were lower than Western, to a statistically significant level of .05

The findings of this research tend to shown a difference on the fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Thus, it can be concluded that the learning environment between Asia and western can be the main aspects of creative thinking. This section will discuss which effective on the two places above, considering the present approaches and the results of the studies.

Learning environment is a reflection process that occurs when individuals express their associations of various stimulants that activate their ideas and emotions, events, learning, etc., by

symbolizing them and by means of acting. The individual may express his/her association of a stimulant through his/her tone of voice, body language, words, movements, similar symbolization, and the method of expression involves his/her impression of the stimulant as well as his/her interpretation of it. In this respect, learning environment in western is an open-ended process, and thus contains some uncertainty. It is almost impossible to predict how a student will respond to a stimulant, or what associations or combinations a stimulant will cause a participant to generate. This means that the process cannot be structured completely, and in fact, semi-structurability may be one of the important aspects of the creative thinking.

It is very probable that by being open-ended, semi-structured and uncertain the potential to be creative was stimulated. Many researchers, in fact, have shown that tolerating uncertainty, and even choosing it, is one of the main characteristics of creative people ([Amabile, 1983], [McKinnon, 1970] and [Martindale, 1989]). Sternberg, 2003 R.J. Sternberg, Wisdom, intelligence and creativity synthesized, Cambridge Press (2003).Sternberg (2003) points to the necessity of encouraging tolerance for uncertainty for the sake of supporting creative thinking. In regard to this, it can be said that the western learning-environment process serves to expand individuals' tolerance for uncertainty and even makes uncertainty enjoyable.

It is also possible that the semi-structured feature and uncertainty of western may activate the feeling of curiosity. Kashdan and Fincham (2002), claim that curiosity is the main characteristic that differentiates creative individuals from others. However, they do not mean to say individuals with a high level of curiosity are creative, or those with a low level of curiosity are not creative. They assert that curiosity is a required condition for creativity, but not sufficient in itself.

According to Sternberg (2002), another variable is a decision: an individual becomes creative only when he decides to do so, and takes risks. Individuals' creativity may vary under different emotional and motivational circumstances either when they work alone or in groups, as they may sometimes have high self-confidence and sometimes low. The decision concept may explain such differences in being creative. It can be said that the process of western life style may encourage individuals to decide to be creative. As a result, the creative thinking process can be said to have the following effects: since it is open-ended and semi-structured, it increases tolerance for uncertainty and triggers curiosity.

Recommendation

However, we must keep in mind that the experimental group should be the same back ground (age, subject, etc) even there are from different places. This means that when creativity is studied in the framework of a confluent approach, the interaction and personality characteristics of individuals should be controlled or treated as a variable.

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USING ACTION RESEARCH IN THE ORAL COMMUNICATIONS CLASSROOM

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ACLL: Language Education

Using Action Research in the Oral Communications Classroom

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Abstract

Action research helped the author identify his students' confidence problem to use English as being related to their unrealistic study goals and performance expectations. Furthermore, it assisted the author greatly in designing a course syllabus that met the curriculum specifications outlined by the Ministry of Education. In this framework, providing specific information and helping to set more realistic study goals increased students' appreciation of English communicative skills. Action research is presented here as an appropriate framework for teacher-researchers to conduct classroom-based research in the aim of effecting positive change. The process by which the outcomes were reached is described in detail. In this case, the gap between the standards set at the national level and the teacher's classroom reality was reduced and positive change did occur. Students' appreciation for English communication skills was achieved through attaining the ability to set more realistic study goals, resulting in more realistic performance expectations regarding English study. Professional competence designing and teaching an oral communications syllabus was also achieved by the author.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has made a definite shift in its policies toward language teaching approach, nationwide, advocating more communicative based curriculums in its public schools (Butler & Iino, 2005). This shift has also been mirrored by private schools. One of the major pedagogical results of this shift was the creation of oral communications (OC) courses in secondary schools (MEXT, 1999).

My Situation

In 2008, I began teaching OC in a private senior high school (SHS) in Kumamoto City. I had some experience as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. This gave me limited classroom experience in the public school system and some knowledge of the demands placed on language teachers in the elementary (ES) and junior high schools (JHS) where I taught. However, my duties were limited to that of a support position. Independently designing a course syllabus was something that I had not experienced. Moreover, my teaching experience was limited to ES and JHS students; a specific demographic with specific needs. I assumed that the needs of SHS students would be very different from that of students in ES and JHS.

I had little experience but needed to create a syllabus that complied with the Curriculum Guidelines (MEXT, 2009) and the needs of the students. In order to achieve this, I needed to find an explicit and disciplined approach to the problem and thus chose Action Research (AR) as a framework. Furthermore, I wanted to use AR to sharpen my insight into pedagogical matters with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of my syllabus.

This paper reports how AR helped me bridge the gap between the standards set by MEXT at the national level and the reality I confronted at the local level. Adapting to classroom challenges in a rational and accountable way through its systematic approach and working from the bottom up, AR helps teachers address the immediate concerns in their classroom in a reasonable time frame and lends itself easily to assisting the 'teacher-researcher' in the process (Wallace, 1991). AR has gained popularity among educators because it empowers teachers to become teacher-researchers which helps them address and correct the problems they face in the classroom (Altrichter et al., 1993, p. 204). This, Nunan (1992) argues, leads to professional development.

Outline of Action Research

The term 'Action Research' was first used by Lewin (1946) to describe the process of researching and acting on the findings of that research. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 162) describe AR as a form of 'self-reflection' conducted in order to improve one's practices, understanding of these practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out. A distinguishing feature of AR is that it is 'participatory' in nature (Dadich & Fitzgerald 2007, p. 12; Melrose 2001; Zuber-Skerritt 1996). Stringer (1999) argues that AR can be used to formulate effective solutions to problems faced in public and professional lives. Maintaining positive standards and or promoting a continuity of values are also essential components of AR according to Dadich and Fitzgerald (2007, p. 12). In a school setting, AR may be undertaken by teachers looking for ways to improve instruction and enhance student achievement (Ferrance, 2000, p. 1), and typically refers to disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practice in the future (Ferrance 2000, p. 2).

The study reported here conforms to the typifying features of AR listed above. The study was participatory in nature, involved disciplined inquiry and reflection on my part to overcome the challenge I confronted and to improve my own teaching practices.

Purpose of this Study

I began this study out of necessity; I needed to design a workable syllabus for the OC course conforming to MEXT's curriculum (MEXT, 2009) in a short time frame and with no guidance or opportunity for collaboration. Given the definition of AR, I felt that it would provide me with an ideal model by which to address problems that may arise while designing and developing an OC syllabus.

Here I will focus on one major problem that emerged; the problem of being unable to set realistic study goals resulting in a lack of confidence among the students to use English to communicate during classroom activities. I will show how AR helped me quickly identify this problem and address it effectively, even with my limited experience.

Pedagogical Context

This study was conducted during my OC classes at a SHS in Kumamoto, Japan. The participants included all of my 1st year OC students which included 391 male and female JHS graduates from in and around Kumamoto Prefecture. Grouped into nine classes, the average class size was 43 students. We met once a week for 50 minutes. One semester consisted of 14 to 16 hours. The total number of hours therefore, ranged from 28 hours to 32 hours for the entire school year.

Methodological Approach

AR frameworks may vary in the number of phases/cycles of research and intervention, but, each AR framework is grounded in the qualitative research paradigm (though it may not exclusively rely on this paradigm) and works to make the sometimes implicit problems of the classroom explicit with the purpose of affecting positive change.

Implementation

I used a six phase format adapted from Nunan's (1993) framework to conduct my study. I chose this model because it provided an observation phase after the initial problem was identified (see below table, Phase 2 Preliminary Investigation). This allowed me to construct a critically informed plan of action early in the study while the key points of the syllabus were still being formed. Table 1 presents an outline of each of these phases along with a brief description of what each phase entailed. Later sections of the paper elaborate on the phases summarized in the table.

Table 1. **Six-phased Action Research Study Outline (adapted from Nunan, 1993)**

Phase 1	Identify a problem	Lack of ability among the students to set realistic study goals which directly affected motivation levels
Phase 2	Preliminary investigation	Observation & Needs Analysis
Phase 3	Forming a plan based on observations of problematic areas for students to the aim of forming realistic study goals	Providing students with information that will help them set more realistic study goals will also increase their confidence to use English to communicate
Phase 4	Take action	The implementation of the Plan developed in Phase 3

Phase 5	Reflection (data analysis)	Review outcomes and collect further data to support or reject the appropriateness of the actions taken based on the planned intervention
Phase 6	Report findings	Provide copies of findings to co-workers and administration

Phase 1 Identify a Problem

During the initial observation phase I noticed that there was an overall lack of motivation to communicate in English during classroom activities. I recorded these observations in Classroom Improvement Assessment (CIA) field notes. The following CIA notes indicate the students' perceived apathy and decline in motivation.

CIA field note 1 May, 11th (1st Grade SHS class – Italics indicate my observations)

Today each student that I observed performed the task well but with little to no deviation from the example pattern. After the 'free talk' the students were required to speak in front of the class. It was at this time that their motivation levels dropped dramatically. Some students refused to participate.

CIA field note 2 May 18th (Same SHS first grade class)

1. *The students looked detached when giving them the structure sentence for the interview activity. I had the students stand up and taught them "Rock, Paper, Scissors" as a way to determine who would initiate the question and answer process. The students seemed excited but this quickly faded and the same blank looks returned.*

2. *The students were very loud when performing the interview activity but not focused. The students will perform their first individual speech presentations next week. Due to the observed lack of focus and motivation, I suspect that some of the students will not be prepared. I also expect the main weaknesses in the presentations to be low voice volume, and lack of eye contact with the audience.*

CIA field note 3 May, 25th (same class)

Today's greeting was not at all energetic. As suspected, the major weak areas of the speech presentations were low voice volume and lack of eye contact. Some students also deliberately held their papers in front of their faces between themselves and the audience. The actions of the students today and in previous classes seem to indicate a lack of confidence.

The lack of eye contact and low voice was a common occurrence among all of the students. Regarding speeches and presentations, the content was acceptable but the voice volume at times was almost inaudible and a common, consistent lack of eye contact lead me to believe that a

general lack of confidence was the major problem that needed to be addressed.

The data gathered in the initial observation phase was further supported in following phases. It showed that the students' lack of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (MacIntyer, 1994) stemmed from a deeper lack of confidence in personal language abilities. I made an initial inference that this lack of confidence was mainly a byproduct of unrealistic study goals that the students had set for themselves. Therefore, I commenced in collecting information that would empower the students by helping them set more realistic study goals.

Phase 2 Preliminary Investigation Needs Analysis and Observation

This is a very important phase of the AR cycle because it is in this phase that information necessary to take 'critically informed' action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) is gathered.

In order to determine that the implicit problem noted was not just my misunderstanding of the situation, I triangulated my research approach by developing questionnaires, conducting interviews and observing students reactions to communicative tasks/activities in the classroom. I commenced gathering information which would allow me to address my students' needs and form a plan of action. I also conducted research addressing various teaching approaches and continued to collect teaching materials.

Preliminary Research

I searched the internet, ESL textbooks and consulted with professionals to gain a better understanding of what designing and teaching an OC syllabus should entail. The information gathered during this phase was crucial in helping my students begin to set more realistic study goals and helped me organize materials for classroom activities. Furthermore, the information gathered here helped me to better understand how, and in what order, the materials should be delivered to students at various stages of the process of language learning.

Presentation of the Data Found in the Needs Analysis

I needed to assess my students' needs quickly. I had each student give an introductory speech to gage their productive abilities. I conducted interviews to assess their receptive and productive abilities in conditions that resembled real-life conversations. I also made use of questionnaires and CIA field notes to record this data. In this section, I present the data accumulated.

Key Questionnaire Items

The following data was crucial in determining confidence and WTC levels among the students, and in identifying the reasons behind their lack of confidence to use English to communicate. Furthermore, it helped me to realize that the initial problem of low levels of WTC was actually rooted in another problem; a lack of confidence in English abilities which stemmed from an

inability to set realistic study goals. I asked the following question in order to assess the accuracy of my observations:

How often did you know the answer but choose not to speak out in class?
Possible Answers: Almost Always, Often, Sometimes, Almost Never.

The students' answers were as follows:

36 students (9.20%) answered "almost always," 191 students (48.84%) answered "often," 153 students (39.13%) answered "sometimes" and 11 students (2.81%) answered "almost never."

The majority of the students answered "often" or "sometimes." This data sparked a further interest to find out why so many students had trouble speaking out in class even when they knew the answer. I asked my students in open class discussions if they felt stressed when they were asked to participate in classroom activities. Most of the students answered in the affirmative. The students' were obviously under stress when asked to participate in classroom activities. The questions emerging from this addressed where this stress was coming from and why they were feeling pressured to speak English. I needed to determine what variables (stresses) were preventing them from playing a more active role in the OC class.

Making the Implicit Explicit

I attempted to make this implicit concern explicit by identifying and addressing the stresses hindering students' involvement in classroom activities. I presented the students with a questionnaire and conducted more discussions, asking the students why they felt they could not speak out in OC class.

Table 2. **Students' Eight Most Common Stresses:**

1.	Worried about what others will say (classroom dynamic)
2.	Stress due to lack of confidence (low self esteem)
3.	Japanese people are shy (self and cultural image)
4.	Don't want to stand out (low self esteem)
5.	Too much pressure (external and internal stress)
6.	Must be right / worried about "what if I'm wrong?" (all or nothing approach)
7.	Must wait for others to speak first (cultural perhaps)
8.	A feeling of apathy "is it really important for me to speak out?" (WTC)

By identifying the stresses we made this problem explicit. Through discussing these concerns in an open forum the students appeared to realize that they were not alone in feeling inhibited. This seemed to have a positive effect on the classroom environment. In order to rule out apathy as a cause for low levels of WTC, I also needed to assess whether or not there was real desire among the students to improve their English communicative abilities.

The following questions were asked to assess the students' desire to use English to communicate and to assess their study goals:

1. **Do you feel there is a need to develop your OC skills in English?**
2. **State some current areas where you are weak in your communication skills.**
3. **Tell me one thing that you will do to improve your communicative skills.**

Their answers to the first question showed a real desire to improve their English communicative skills. Of the 391 students interviewed, 310 students (79.2%) answered yes, they felt there was a need to develop their English communicative skills while only 8 students (2.0%) felt there was no need and 73 students (18.6%) had no answer to this question.

Almost 80% of students desired to improve their OC skills but, they were still having trouble participating in classroom activities as noted in the following CIA field notes:

CIA Field note 4 May, 21st (1st Grade SHS class)

The problem does not seem to be entirely with their English language abilities but rather with their confidence to use it. All of the students had trouble speaking in a loud voice and there was little to no eye contact throughout the speech/presentations and interviews.

This led me to believe that the students were suffering from a lack of confidence in their abilities and not a lack of desire to improve their skills. The students' prepared their answers to questions 2 and 3, listed above and presented them to me in private one-on-one interviews and in writing the following week.

The data showed that 56.3% of students interviewed felt that their lack of vocabulary was the number one thing hindering their English conversation abilities while 37.3% of students interviewed stated that they were not able to use English to communicate due to a lack of confidence in their English abilities. It seemed that the students felt that, no matter how hard they studied, their English abilities would always be too poor to communicate effectively.

The students identified their confidence problem but, were unaware that it was connected to their unrealistic study goals. These unrealistic study goals and performance expectations trapped them in a downward spiral of disappointment causing them to lose confidence and desire to use English in the classroom.

In this phase of the AR, I was able to determine three important things:

1. The students did have a strong desire to improve their OC skills.
2. There was a confidence problem hindering involvement in classroom activities; they felt they lacked sufficient vocabulary skills needed to use English in communicative situations.
3. The students were unable to set realistic goals for themselves because no matter how much

they advanced they still felt that they were lacking sufficient vocabulary and grammar skills.

I wanted to work with them to think of ways that we could fix this problem. When asked what they would do to improve their conversation skills their answer was unanimous, they would study more. I considered this to be further evidence of a general lack of ability to set realistic study goals. This answer may also have been the answer they thought I wanted to hear. Therefore, I focused on strategizing to help the students set more realistic study goals by first determining what they wanted to use English for in the future.

Phase 3 Forming a Plan of Action

My plan of action centered on the following principle; providing the students with specific information designed to strengthen their strategic competence would help them set more realistic study goals and enhance confidence in their English communicative abilities.

Phase 4 Taking Action

After collecting more specific information regarding students' intended use for English, I presented the following information to them: The number and types of words needed to perform specific communicative tasks at various levels (Saville-Troike, 2006), the reasons for communication breakdown (Yoneoka, 2008) and effective presentation strategies such as; 'how you say something has a greater impact than what you say' (Dwyer, 2003).

Communicative-based Classroom Activities

The classroom activities aimed at providing the students with authentic conversation patterns. Tasks involving pair and group-work and were conducted using a communicative workbook to enhance productive and receptive language skills.

Talking about specific topics allowed students to have more interactively-focused conversations, which can be related to Pask's (1975) 'conversation theory'. Interviewing was used here to replicate real-life, North American-type conversation situations. Speech/Presentations in front of the class were intended to help the students gain experience in public-speaking, another essential aspect of communication that Parvis (2001) argues is both 'complex' and 'significant'. The interviews were also used to assess the students' productive and receptive abilities while giving them experience presenting ideas to a large group of people.

All of these tasks were intended to strengthen the students' oral ability and give the students the opportunity to develop their communication strategies in order to develop communicative competence as outlined in the 2009 course of study specifies by MEXT. Therefore, these tasks complied with the national guidelines and the immediate needs of my students.

I also introduced the information on how many words are needed to read English text books at the university level compared to how many words are needed to conduct personal and general conversations, as well as the most frequently used words in the English language (Saville-Troike, 2006). This and other essential information was presented in a seminar-type setting. The students could relate this information to what they intended to use English for in the future helping them develop their study goals.

Table 3. **The students' answers to the question, "what do you want to use English for?"**

● 247 Students	Wanted to use English to travel to foreign countries and or speak with foreigners using English
● 73 Students	Wanted to use English for future employment
● 71 Students	Wanted to use English for academic reasons such as passing entrance examinations

Table 4. **Number of words needed to conduct tasks in English**   (Saville-Troike, 2006)

Words needed to read English books	10,000 ~ 30,000
Words needed to read University level textbooks	100,000 ~ 200,000
Words needed to conduct general conversations	1,000 ~ 3,000

63.2% of the students wanted to use English to travel overseas or for talking with foreigners. These students would now be able to set their vocabulary study goals around the 1,000~3,000 words. The 18.7% who wanted to use English for future employment and the 18% who were interested in using OC for academic purposes could set their study goals higher, above 10,000. The important point was that students now had meaningful parameters with respect to vocabulary knowledge to locate their study goals. All of the students were now aware of the number of words needed to conduct general conversations and perform the other tasks expected of them in the OC class. This number was dramatically lower than most of the students originally thought, and those students who had no idea of a minimum vocabulary level to set their goals on before the intervention, did so now. This made it explicit to the students that a goal of learning between 1,000 and 3,000 words before graduating from SHS was reasonable and fundamentally attainable. The realization that basic conversations can be conducted with a vocabulary of only 1,000 words gave some students more confidence.

In an attempt to help the students better understand some of the things it takes to become an effective communicator I provided them with the following information: **"It is not what you say but how you say it!"** supported by Dwyer (2003). Dwyer states that words are 7% effective in getting the message across, tone of voice is 38% effective, and non-verbal clues are 55% effective. This led to discussion on how 'what' you say can be perceived by the listener.

Information on Communication Breakdown

The knowledge of why some conversations fail was presented in an attempt to facilitate better communication among the students. The 'Five Reasons for Communication Breakdown' Yoneoka (2008) was used to do this. We paid careful attention to numbers 3 and 5.

Table 5. **Five Reasons for Conversation Breakdown**

1.	**A wants to say ~ to B, B doesn't understand**
2.	**A wants to say ~ to B, A doesn't know how to say it**
3.	**A wants to say ~ to B, B understands but gives no feedback**
4.	**A says ~ to B, B cannot respond**
5.	**A asks B ~, B answers then the conversation stops**

(Yoneoka, 2008, personal communication)

I felt that numbers 1 and 2 could be addressed in other English classes and improve with time. Number 4 was too vague to deal with appropriately in this context. Therefore, we focused on numbers 3 and 5 in the OC course. The implicit problems that number 3 implies was dealt with by implementing the information outlined earlier in this paper. Providing Question and Answer patterns with follow-up questions that facilitate continued conversations addressed problem number 5. As a result of this, the importance of follow-up questions in the flow of conversations became another important focus of the OC syllabus. Furthermore, through pattern practice and exposure to authentic conversation patterns the students developed their communicative competence.

Communication strategies and communicative competence are closely related. Saville-Troike (2006, p. 100) described communicative competence as "what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community." Communicative competence involves more than just grammar and vocabulary. It involves attaining knowledge of such things as when to speak or when not to, what to say to whom and how to say it effectively. Furthermore, it involves how to say things appropriately given the situation the speaker may find him or herself in.

In support of spending time on such things as communication strategies in the classroom, Wada and Cominos (1994, p. 25) argue that "content and linguistic items necessary for interaction are only two pieces of the equation." Students should also be exposed to information that will help them develop 'communication strategies' in order to develop strategic competence that Richards, Platt and Weber (1987, p.25) define as "the ability of speakers to compensate for breakdowns in communication and deficiencies by relying on knowledge in other areas." It was in this context that we looked at the reasons why some conversations fail; in order to build on their knowledge of communicative strategies.

Phase 5 Reflection

In order to determine whether or not the implementation of this material had had a positive effect on the students, I conducted follow up interviews and questionnaires at the end of the school year. I used the reflection phase to review the data gathered and to support future actions. The following data was collected using the questionnaire given to all of the students of the 2008/2009 academic year.

1) What did you think about with regard to the importance of communicating in English before this class and how do you feel now?

Table 6. **Students' answers grouped into the following five categories:**

●	No importance before this class	217 Students (55.4%)
●	Important before this class	88 Students (22.5%)
●	Important now	329 Students (84.1%)
●	Not important now	8 Students (2.0%)
●	No Answer	40 Students (10.2%)

When the number of students who felt that there was no importance to communicate in English (before the intervention) is compared with the number of students who later felt this to be important a 28.6% growth in the students' appreciation for attaining English communicative skills can be observed. Therefore, the inference that the OC syllabus did have a positive affect on the students' level of appreciation for the necessity of attaining English communicative abilities is reasonable in this case.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the activities and tasks included in the syllabus and to get a better understanding of whether or not the students felt the syllabus, as a whole, was helpful I asked the students the following question:

Do you think the OC course activities were helpful for your English language communicative development?

A majority of students felt that the information presented to them in the OC course helped their English language development: "**Yes**, I do" – 305 students (78.0%); "**No**, I don't" – 43 students (10.9%); "**No Answer** (were unsure)" – 43 students (10.9%).

In order to assess whether or not the OC syllabus had any effect on the students ability to set realistic study goals I asked the students this question:
Do you feel the information provided to you in the OC course helped you set better goals for studying English?

A majority of students felt that the information presented to them in this OC course helped them

set better goals for studying English: "**Yes**, I do" – 330 students (84.3%); "**No**, I don't" – 39 students (9.9%); "**No Answer** (were unsure)" – 22 students (0.5%)

This data is evidence that the information provided had a positive impact on this group of students and reinforces the rational for its inclusion in the final draft of the OC syllabus.

Phase 6 Report the Findings

The publication of my study acts as the final phase in the AR cycle. Examples such as this one may resonate with teachers who are looking to improve their classroom situation. Therefore, it is important that the data gathered from studies such as this one are published so that they may offer examples to fellow educators who may find themselves in similar situations. The findings from my study, as part of an AR methodology, are obviously not generalizable, but the reporting of the usefulness of the method and my experiences in implementing it are professionally relevant and potentially instructive within a collaborative frame of reference.

Major Outcomes of this Study

This AR study produced four major outcomes, three of which dealt with the students' growth and appreciation for OC skills in English. The fourth outcome dealt with my professional growth. These outcomes are listed in the following table (Table 7).

Table 7. **Four Major Outcomes of this AR Study**

● Students' appreciation of OC skills	There was a growth in the student's appreciation for the necessity of OC skills in their language study.
● Increased confidence among students	The students displayed increased confidence levels while performing tasks such as interviews and giving speeches. This increased level of confidence was noticed through such things as extended eye contact and speaking in a louder voice.
● Students' desire to improve their OC skills	The students displayed a strong desire to use English for more than just academic purposes but rather in real-life type settings such as traveling overseas and communicating with foreigners.
● Attainment of a level of professional competence	The attainment of a higher level of professional competence regarding designing and teaching an OC syllabus based on the needs of a specific group of learners was achieved.

The OC syllabus, upon the completion of this AR, included two semesters which aimed to help the students identify their strengths and weaknesses as language learners. Together as a class we built on our communication strategies and communicative competence through the process outlined, and the experience formed the pedagogical template for later classes through the emerging syllabus.

Final Reflections and Concluding Remarks

The phases of the AR cycle helped me organize my data collection and gave structure to the way I assessed specific problems. Each phase guided me to a deeper understanding of my classroom environment. This process gave me experience which developed my confidence in the classroom helping me better assess and meet the needs of my students.

Completing this AR also helped me realize that the inability to set realistic study goals was a major problem hindering my students' WTC; they were not apathetic towards the OC course. They wanted to improve their English communicative skills but were unsure about how to do this. This personal stress translated into a lack of confidence to use English in the classroom. It may be argued that a good teacher would be able to realize this without using AR. However, without AR I may have misinterpreted the cause of this problem and handled it very differently. This AR helped me accurately identify and effectively deal with the problem among this group of students in an explicit and disciplined manner. Similarly, it may be argued that the steps I took, to improve my classroom environment and design a syllabus are what good teachers do anyway and that the same outcomes may be achieved without the aid of AR; that the process may not be necessary in order to reach these conclusions. However, as a teacher new to this field, AR was exactly the method I needed. AR helped me identify and address the problems present in my classrooms quickly. Furthermore, the AR model provided me with an organized step-by-step progression that helped me test out ideas and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken by helping me draw data directly from the students' answers to specific questions. Through this process I realized that designing and teaching a syllabus is a never-ending process of refinement and growth.

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WORLD ENGLISHES: THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR INDONESIANS?

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WORLD ENGLISHES: THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR INDONESIANS?

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Abstract: We are now facing the fact that English continues to grow as an International language (EIL). It leads English to be used around the world and adapted by different cultures because people use this language based on their own identity. For Indonesians who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), for instance, they do not need to adapt to a new culture. In EFL learning process, acquiring a native speaker accent seems to be unnecessary because there is no single standard of pronunciation. In addition, it is not necessary to ask learners imitating Western culture. Learning English can be viewed as an opportunity for Indonesians to have cross-cultural awareness.

Despite its potentially positive consequences, learning English can also lead to a serious problem. This statement is based on the reason that English has greater social power than the Indonesian language *(Bahasa Indonesia)* because it is now used as a medium in several aspects of life. Furthermore, English is more accessible because of the global spread of information using this language through media, such as television and Internet. Consequently, it is possible that Indonesian learners would take pride in using English in their daily lives. In this case, EFL teachers are expected to be able to give learners understanding that each nation has its own culture and there is no superiority among others. It is also important for them to respect languages and cultures in which the teaching and learning process occurs. In other words, teachers' cultural sensitivity is needed.

Key words: EIL, EFL, the Indonesian language, cultural sensitivity.

1. Introduction

As an international language, English is used throughout the world and adjustable to every culture. Smith and Kachru who initiated the concept of World Englishes state, "neither British nor American English can be used as a standard" (Alatis, 2005: 32). For the people living in Indonesia and learn English as a foreign language (EFL), for example, they learn English in their own cultural context and do not need to adapt to a new culture. Teaching EFL, therefore, primarily focuses on guiding learners to achieve their communicative competence and cross-cultural awareness. It is not necessary to ask learners imitating Western culture or even acquiring a native speaker accent, as there is no single standard of pronunciation. Providing learners freedom to act based on their own cultures and values, is essential. In the case of learning EFL in Indonesia, however, there is a possibility that learners would position English as a first-class language because it is now more accessible and commonly used in their daily lives.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss whether World Englishes is an opportunity, a threat, or both, for Indonesians. The role of EFL teachers in the attempt to help learners understand that mastering English does not mean ignoring their cultural identity will,

therefore, be examined by providing an example of teaching practice showing that teachers need to respect the Indonesian language and culture. The goal of foreign language teaching, however, will be explained first.

2. The Goal of Foreign Language Teaching

The main objective of foreign language teaching is "communication" (Allwright, 1979: 167). In addition, communicative competence is considered as a final product of language teaching. Hymes (in Brown, 2000: 246) explains that this term refers to "knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively". This explanation implies that at the end of the learning process, learners are expected to be able to use the target language to communicate appropriately with others in naturalistic settings. Savignon (in Nunan, 1999: 226) reports that the term communicative competence is not limited to spoken language but includes writing as well. In this paper, however, communicative competence, which is related to writing, will not be explained for the sake of maintaining a flow of discussion.

Richards, Platt and Weber (in Nunan, 1999: 226) state that communicative competence that is connected to spoken language has a number of characteristics, such as "knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the language and knowledge of the rules of speaking". These characteristics enable learners to communicate effectively. Gill (2006) further argues that knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary, for instance, are important for being able to produce meaningful and accurate utterances in the target language. Knowledge of the rules of speaking, on the other hand, gives an insight into the different kinds of topics that learners can and cannot talk about, depending on who their interlocutors are and what the event is.

Understanding the goal of foreign language teaching and its final product, however, is not enough. It would be better if EFL teachers implement their cultural sensitivity in the teaching and learning process. Nunan (1999: 4-5) argues that "pedagogical action need to be sensitive to the cultural and environment contexts in which teaching takes place". The succeeding part of this paper will provide an example of teaching practice depicting teachers' cultural sensitivity.

3. Teaching Practice

I teach an intermediate EFL class. There are sixteen learners. In a class session, I use a video as a material. It presents the conversation of two Australian teenagers (A and B). They meet at one of supermarkets. A is a customer and B is a part time worker. She is a cashier. When A wants to pay for what he has bought, a conversation with the cashier occurs:
B: "Hi, how ya doin'?"
A: "Fine".
When the customer wants to leave, the conversation is closed by saying:
B: "Catch ya later".
A: "See ya."

Then, I turn off the video. I ask learners, whether or not they understand the conversation. Basically, they know that the topic is greeting. However, they think that both speakers use unfamiliar words. I start to explain that those words are slang, commonly used by Australians, especially teenagers. Here, I try to give learners understanding of unusual English words and how to use them in a real life situation. Next, I ask learners to work in pairs. They have to make a dialogue using these new words in different settings and practice it.

The purpose of these activities is to improve both learners' listening (receptive) and speaking (productive) skills. In addition, I want to develop their cultural awareness by understanding the meaning and the usage of unusual words of the target language. I do not expect learners to be able to use these words in their daily conversation simply for acting like native speakers of English. As foreign language learners, it is important for them to go beyond the target language into the socio cultural examinations in which the conversation presented by the video occurs. It leads to the understanding that each nation has its own life style and there is no superiority among others.

Although I ask learners to make a dialogue using a particular language or slang, enabling them to imitate native speakers in terms of pronunciation is not my expectation. My objective is to give learners chances to practice what they have learnt. They can use *Indonesian English* accent as long as they are able to communicate effectively. In other words, pronunciation is not the emphasis of this activity.

4. World Englishes: Threat or Opportunity?

The number of non English-speaking countries, which use English as a medium in the educational process is increasing and Indonesia is one of them. This phenomenon has raised a critical question about the existence of the Indonesian language. Although English is adjustable to every nation, some experts believe that the Indonesian language is facing the threat of being devaluated by English. Suyanto (in Onishi, 2010) for example, argues that the government should be able to control the spread of English and promote the Indonesian language to unite the country.

It may indeed be true to say that World Englishes has potential negative effects on the Indonesian learners and the Indonesian language. However, if we try to look this phenomenon from a different perspective, we will find that it is a natural process, which is inevitable. As an International language, English is used throughout the globe enabling the people to communicate with others regardless their language and cultural backgrounds. It can be said, therefore, that English is a medium for those who want to be able to survive in the age of globalization. In addition, the influence of English on the Indonesian language has been existed for a long time. An Indonesian linguist, Sugihastuti (in Hajar, 2005) states that the Indonesian language had experienced lexical changes. One of these changes can be seen in the area of loan words, from English to Indonesian.

From the paragraphs above, I would like to suggest that we should not jump to the conclusion that World Englishes is purely a threat. Learning and mastering English would be beneficial for Indonesians to broaden their horizons. World Englishes enables them to learn other cultures and compete in the global market. Moreover, it enriches the Indonesian language vocabulary.

5. Conclusion

Everyone can be the owner of English as long as he or she can use it and do not need to adapt to a new culture. This is what we call World Englishes, a concept initiated by Smith and Kachru. Learning English then should be considered more as an opportunity rather than a threat for Indonesian learners and the Indonesian language. Mastering English enables Indonesians to have cross-cultural awareness and greater chances to compete in the global market. In addition, the influence of English on the Indonesian language is a natural process as every language changes caused by internal or external factors.

In the teaching and learning process, EFL teachers are then expected to comprehend the main goal of foreign language teaching and its final product and be able to give learners understanding that mastering English does not necessarily mean devaluing the national language and culture.

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Cover page

1. Title of the paper:
Effects of Corrective Feedback in the Prosodic Development of L2 Learners

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Effects of Corrective Feedback in the Prosodic Development of L2 Learners

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This study investigates the efficacy of types of corrective feedback attested in second language classrooms of Mandarin Chinese and the prosodic development of second language (L2) learners. Corrective feedback in second language acquisition (SLA) refers to the responses to a learner's nontargetlike L2 production. The trajectory of the L2 prosody development of Mandarin Chinese is unknown, and the corrective feedback in L2 prosodic development needs to be re-evaluated in Mandarin as a second language immersion classrooms. Three Mandarin language instructors, six Japanese learners and twenty-four Thai learners participated in the pre-tests, corrective feedback treatments, and post-tests. Results have shown that that self-repairs or prompts were superior to oral recasts in helping L2 learners improve their prosodic accuracy, although both recasts and elicitations seemed to have some effects on learning the targeted prosodic forms. The findings suggest that L2 learners with different backgrounds might react differently to the corrective feedback treatments. The effectiveness of corrective feedback was also dependent on the learners' language proficiency.

Keywords: corrective feedback, prosodic development, L2 learner, Mandarin Chinese

Introduction

Corrective feedback has been an important practice in second language classrooms. It refers to the responses to a learner's nontargetlike second language (L2) production in second language acquisition (SLA). Corrective feedback has generally been found to be beneficial to acquisition (Gass, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Gass, 2003; Li, 2010). There has been a growing interest in the role of corrective feedback in SLA. Some studies based on data collected in classrooms (cf. Panova & Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004) have examined the types of corrective feedback received by learners and the effects of the feedback. This study has addressed, in addition to the prosodic development of L2 learners, the efficacy of types of corrective feedback attested in second language classrooms of Mandarin Chinese.

Two major types of interactional feedback are *recasts* and *elicitations*, which have also been considered as pedagogically useful strategies in communicative language classrooms (Doughty, 2001, 2003; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Gass, 2003). Recasts refer to feedback that reformulates a learner's nontargetlike utterance into a targetlike one (Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, 2001). Recasts were considered indirect. When an interlocutor reformulates a learner's error, the reformulation may draw the learner's attention to the target form by signaling to the learner that his or her utterance is deviant in some way (Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998). Recasts may provide learners with opportunities for modified output, which has been suggested to be crucial for L2 development (Doughty, 2001; Swain, 1995; Nassaji, 2009). On the other hand, elicitations refer to feedback that does not correctly reformulate the learner's error pushes the learner to reformulate it (Loewen & Philp, 2006; Lyster, 2004; Nassaji, 2007). Elicitation strategies include self-repair, promoting and providing learners with opportunities to test and revise their hypotheses about the target language (Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Elicitations also provide opportunities for negotiation of form through various forms of requests for clarification and correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1998).

The effects of implicit and explicit corrective feedback differ on SLA. Implicit feedback often takes the form of *recasts*, in which there is no overt indicator that an error has been committed. Explicit feedback, on the other hand, can take *explicit correction*, in which the response clearly indicates that what the learner said was incorrect, or *metalinguistic feedback*, defined by Lyster and Ranta (1997) as "comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the learner's utterance" (p. 47). In L2 classroom practices, some recasts are explicitly corrective. As Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006) point out in their review of research on corrective feedback, the recasts used in the different studies might not have been equivalent in their degree of implicitness versus explicitness. If the L2 learner did not self-correct, recasts usually followed with emphatic stress to draw attention to the target or reformulated elements. Recasts work for SLA when learners notice the changes that have been made to their own utterances.

There are debates as to whether particular types of corrective feedback are more beneficial to L2 learning. Some researchers argue that recasts are the most effective type of corrective feedback in facilitating L2 learning, when provided in a so-called window of opportunity immediately following learner errors (Doughty, 2003; Long, 2007). Long (2007) argues that recasts facilitate acquisition by drawing learners' attention to form while keeping learners focused on meaning throughout a conversational exchange. In his opinion, recasts work best precisely because they are implicit and thus do not interrupt communication. Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) found that recasts were as effective as other feedback types in dyadic interaction. Oliver and Mackey (2003) reported that their classroom learners noticed recasts to a greater extent in an explicit language lesson than in contexts that involved conversational interaction. Other researchers claim that explicit corrective feedback or elicitations are most likely to contribute to development (Lyster, 2004; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006). They also encouraged self-repair from learners by withholding the correct forms. Sheen (2007) suggest that implicit corrective feedback such as recasts does not necessarily result in learner noticing and awareness and is not effective in promoting acquisition in a classroom context. Teachers' recasts may not be of value if learners fail to recognize their corrective force. Lyster's (2004) study suggests that metalinguistic feedback is more effective than recasts. Metalinguistic feedback may be more facilitative, because it provided explicit information about the target structure and thus was salient to the learner. However, not all of the studies have proven the advantage for explicit feedback. Kim and Mathes (2001), for example, failed to find any statistically significant differences in the scores of the explicit and implicit groups. Explicit feedback that consists of simply indicating that a problem exists does not appear to be helpful (Leeman, 2003). Previous studies have seldom explored the effects of corrective feedback on Chinese as a second language. It is unknown, accordingly, as to if explicit corrective feedback is more beneficial to the tonal learning of Chinese as a second language.

In the present study, oral recasts and elicitations, both implicit and explicit corrective feedback will be compared with the control group without any interruption of corrective feedback in classroom practices, to measure their effects on the oral prosodic production of the first-year language learners of Mandarin Chinese. The two types of corrective feedback investigated were (a) oral recasts, (b) oral elicitations. By investigating the efficacy of two feedback types on L2 learning, the current study presents a new analysis and affords new insights into how the effects of corrective feedback has on the prosodic development of the first-year L2 learners.

Mandarin tones have been an issue for many L2 learners. Tones have been elements to distinguish word meanings in Mandarin. A change in the pitch of a word can change the meaning of a word. Tones are very important in Mandarin, as the same syllable with different tones can have different meanings. The typical example is the syllable /ma/, as it means 'mother' when produced with the first tone, 'hemp' when produced with the second tone, 'horse' when produced with the third tone, and 'to scold' when produced with the fourth tone. Mandarin tones are taught at early stages of L2 learning. A second language learner makes an attempt to produce a level tone in his daily drill, but he may not be aware of his nontargetlike production. Some language instructors insisted on correcting every oral error, whereas other language instructors decided to focus on the grammar or written tasks without interrupting L2 learners' oral production in classroom interactions. There are debates as to when or how L2 learners' prosodic errors should be corrected. Although most of the language instructors agreed the importance of tonal accuracy in first-year language classrooms, types and frequency of corrective feedback varied.

This study aims to investigate the effects of corrective feedback on the accuracy of L2 learners, and the development of second language (L2) learning of Mandarin prosody. Corrective feedback in this context refers to the responses to a learner's nontargetlike L2 production. So far few researchers have paid attention to the L2 learning of Mandarin tones, not to mention the effects of corrective feedback in L2 prosodic development. The trajectory of the L2 prosody development of Mandarin Chinese is unknown, and the corrective feedback in L2 prosodic development needs to be investigated in Mandarin as a second language immersion classrooms. The study reported in this article investigated the following research questions:

1. Is there any difference in the effect of recasts and elicitations on the acquisition of Mandarin prosody?
2. Do L2 learners learn more from corrective feedback than from no corrective feedback?

The study explores the effects of corrective feedback in classroom practices. In fact, inquiry into oral corrective feedback can be seen as relevant to L2 pronunciation pedagogy or oral drills, given that one of the aims of such pedagogy is to improve students' pronunciation accuracy. The research perspective adopted here is to view oral corrective feedback as a type of form-focused instruction undertaken in a communicative language classroom with relevance to the prosodic development and pronunciation accuracy. The current study makes attempts to bridge the gap between SLA and L2 tonal research on Mandarin Chinese. The effects of the corrective feedback on learning were assessed by means of production tests designed to measure tonal learning and prosodic development of L2 learners.

Method

Spoken data from 3 Mandarin language instructors, 6 Japanese learners and 24 Thai learners were included in the present study. This study was conducted in a national university in central Taiwan. The university offers Chinese language courses in both its language center and academic departments. Language courses are taught by native Mandarin-speaking teachers and lasts 3 hours per session, five days per week for three months. Elementary Chinese (Level 1) course was chosen for this study, because tonal pedagogy was obligatory in the course. Three Elementary Chinese classes participated

in the investigation, one class without any corrective feedback as the control group, and the other two classes with corrective feedback as the experiment groups. This project involved three groups of Chinese-as-a-second-language (CSL) learners, two experimental groups and one control group. Each group composed of 2 Japanese learners and 8 Thai learners. One experimental group received recast feedback (Group 1), and the other received elicitation feedback (Group 2). The control group (Group 3) did not receive corrective feedback. Accuracy in producing Mandarin prosody was measured over a 3-month period by means of a pre-test–post-test design, a pre-test in the first week of the 3-month period and post-tests after 4 weeks, 8 weeks, and 12 weeks. The study examined the effect of the feedback options as they are well-established practices in CSL classrooms. Japanese and Thai learners who were new to the university were assigned to a proficiency level after taking a placement test. The university adopted communicative approach to the teaching of Chinese in its language courses and gives an equal focus to listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Participants

Thirty learners of Chinese as a second language from Japan and Thailand participated in the study. None of the learners were heritage learners, and they had no background of Mandarin Chinese before they enrolled in the language course. None of them had speech or hearing impairment history. The participants (20 females, 10 males) were predominantly exchange students (*n*=20). Their average age was 23. Most participants (*n*=26) had stayed in Taiwan for less than one year at the time of data collection. The instruction language was Mandarin Chinese. English, Japanese, and Thai were occasionally spoken by the learners. However, they were encouraged to speak Mandarin as frequently as possible.

Instructional procedure

Three language instructors were asked to conduct different feedback options, recasts, elicitations, and no feedback, during fifteen minutes of tonal drills and exercises per week, from Week 1 to Week 12. The learners received recast corrective feedback while they performed the tonal tasks in Group 1. The recasts were typically declarative. However, recasts intruded minimally into the flow of the classroom discourse, they might not have been very salient to the learners. This type of recasts is implemented as a teacher's oral reformulation of a student's erroneous utterance in the context of tonal drills and communicative activities. The learners in Group 2 received explicit feedback in the form of elicitation. The elicitations were often self-repairs and prompts during the session. The learners who made errors always received commands of repetition or self-repair from the instructor in Group 2. The learners in Group 3 did not receive any feedback during the treatment session, and they were encouraged to practice the Mandarin tones as more as possible without any interruption from the instructor. Note that in oral corrective feedback, corrective force may or may not be clear. Although corrective feedback is immediate, students are exposed to public feedback that was not restricted to their own errors. Students function as addressees but also hearer of the feedback.

Data collection

Three elementary CSL classrooms were video-taped to examine the effects of corrective feedback on the performance of prosody of CSL learners. Because of the amount of tonal drills required for each class, the data collection took place at different times during three months. In Week 1, the pre-test was conducted, after the

basic tonal structure of Mandarin was introduced in the classes. One week later, the corrective feedback was provided. Post-test was completed in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12, after the learners had been given different corrective feedback treatments. Classroom discourse was also analyzed, and tokens of tonal production of the CSL learners were quantitatively examined. The instructors and the learners in the three classes were given the opportunity to ask questions before the testing. Upon completion of the delayed post-tests, learners were given a questionnaire that asked questions relating to learner awareness of the purpose of the current project. This comparison using Pearson's chi-square tests showed that the group differences were significant ($p < .05$), with Group 1 (recasts) exhibiting 25% of awareness, Group 2 (elicitations) exhibiting 35% of awareness, and Group 3 (control group) exhibiting 0% of awareness.

Production testing procedure

Oral production test was conducted prior to and after the corrective feedback treatments. This production test consisted of a set of 32 phrases and sentences, with different tonal combinations. The target structure was taught in the three classes, and the learners had practiced the prosodic structure before the post-test. Learners were given three phrases or sentences to practice before beginning the test. Each item was presented on a page in *pinyin* with tone markers, and the learners were told that they were not allowed to go back to repeat any part of the test that they had already produced. The current study used a phrase or sentence-reading task in order to measure participants' performance. As the participants were beginning-level learners, a picture-description task was not practical. Learners' production responses were later scored by four language instructors in the language center of the university. Each token was scored as either correct (1 point) or incorrect (0 point). Test-retest reliability (Pearson's r) was calculated for the control group (Group 3). For the pretest and first post-test in Week 4, it was .68 ($p< .05$).

Prosodic development evaluation

For the purpose of measuring learners' improvement in prosodic accuracy, this study adopted a human rating method. Four trained Mandarin instructors were asked to listen to the 6720 stimuli (224 tokens × 30 participants) of each test and rate them as either correct (1 point) or incorrect (0 point). The four Mandarin instructors are identified as Raters 1, 2, 3, and 4. For the production testing, the mean of each participant's reading of phrases or sentences was obtained from the evaluation. In order to enhance intra-rater reliability, the four instructors were given instructions to make sure that only prosodic aspects of pronunciations were considered.

At the beginning of the language course, the 30 participants were asked to do the pre-test, and a brief personal interview was conducted to determine their backgrounds in terms of their knowledge of Mandarin prosody. One week after the pre-test, participants in Group 1 ($n =10$) and Group 2 ($n =10$) took part in a total fifty-minute instructional session with different corrective feedback treatments per week for three months while the participants in Group 3 ($n =10$, the control group) did not receive the feedback treatment during the sessions. Every four weeks all participants were asked to do the same task as a post-test to measure their tonal improvement. The tonal structure targeted in the study is taught at early stage of elementary level. All participants would have received instructions in the practices of the Mandarin tones before Week 4 of the language course.

Descriptive statistics for the pre-test and the three post-tests were calculated

separately for the three groups. One-way ANOVAs with Tukey's post hoc pair-wise comparisons were used to isolate the points in time where differences between the groups occurred.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the three groups on the testing were calculated. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the mean test scores for the two experimental groups and the control group at the four different testing periods.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for mean test scores by group and testing period

Group	N	Pretest		Week 4		Week 8		Week 12	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Group 1 (Recasts)	10	55.83	17.37	68.31	11.23	79.31	10.48	92.43	9.37
2. Group 2 (Elicitations)	10	53.89	16.53	69.08	10.78	82.88	9.52	96.76	8.45
3. Group 3 (Control)	10	56.75	14.27	63.17	18.96	70.35	14.27	78.45	10.74

As can been seen, the three groups were very similar at the pretest (Week 1), and the two experimental groups (with treatment of recasts and elicitations) increased their mean scores on the following post-tests. The control group also increased its mean score in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12, but to a much lesser extent than the two experimental groups. The different groups developed differentially over time in their prosodic production. One-way ANOVAs revealed that the differences in the scores were significant at Week 8 [F (2, 27) = 7.48; p < .05] and Week 12 [F (2, 27) = 6.15; p < .05]. Tukey's post hoc pair-wise comparison, with an alpha level of .05 was performed to isolate the significant differences among the groups. These indicated that in Week 8 and Week 12, the experimental groups outperformed the control group and that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental groups. A two-tailed *t*-test on pre-test scores also found no significant difference between participants in the experimental group and the control group.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the test scores for the three groups under analysis over the four testing periods. The analyses examined the effect of recasts versus elicitations on the learners' prosodic production of the targeted forms after corrective feedback treatments. The results showed that for both feedback types, the more explicit forms resulted in higher mean scores than the implicit forms. In particular, four Thai participants in Group 2 with elicitation corrective feedback improved their mean scores to a great degree, from under 60 on the pre-test to over 95 on the post-test conducted in Week 12. The first research question concerned the relative effectiveness of recast and elicitation corrective feedback. The mean scores in Week 12 among the groups have shown that elicitations such as self-repairs and prompts might be even more effective in enhancing the development of L2 prosody. The comparisons among the three groups indicated that, in the post-tests, Group 1 as well as Group 2 with corrective feedback performed better than the control group. Additionally, in the delayed post-test conducted in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12, both experimental groups performed better than the control group. However, there was no significant difference between Group 1 (recasts) and Group 2 (elicitations).
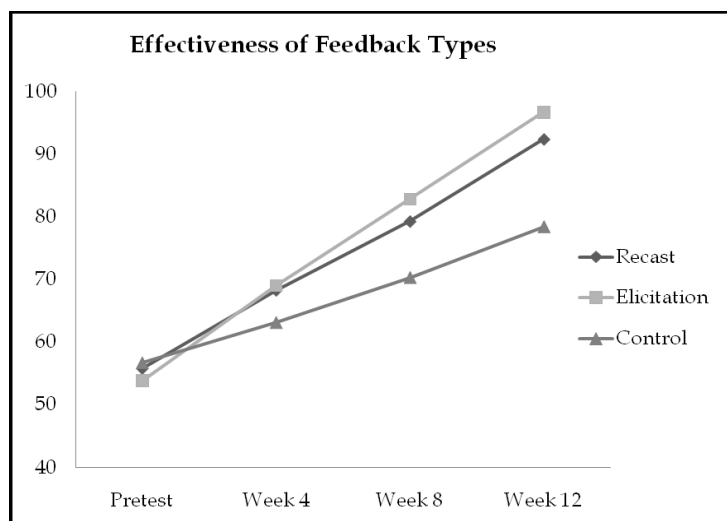
Figure 1: Mean percentage for four testing periods for each group

Results from L2 discourse analyses and questionnaire survey have revealed that Japanese learners preferred recast corrective feedback while Thai learners preferred elicitation corrective feedback. Interviews with the instructors have shown Japanese learners responded to the corrective feedback with a lesser extent than Thai learners. The interview excerpts from the instructor in Group 2 (elicitations) were given in (1)-(4). The instructor described the responses of Japanese learners during the fifteen minutes of treatments.

(1) "She *always agrees* with what I say in class *without any comments.*"
(2) "My impression was that she was *quiet and retiring* so I always went to ask her questions.
(3) "I felt that she would have been quite happy to be *in the corner and not really part of it.*"
(4) "When she pronounced the words during the routine drills, I could *hardly hear her voice*. I asked her to repeat again, but she did not seem to raise her voice"

The instructors in Group 1 (recasts) and Group 3 (control group) have pointed out that Japanese learners were cooperative and never saying no. The indirectness of Japanese learners prevented the face loss of the other classmates. Japanese learners tended to express deference in L2 classroom discourse. Interview excerpts from the instructors in Group 1 and Group 3 regarding the response of Japanese learners were given in (5)-(8).

(5) She is very *polite* and often says words with smile and nodding in a *softening voice* during the session
(6) She is very quiet, always *follows* me *without any opinions*
(7) She is very *quiet* and *never interrupts* the me or her classmates in drills and conversations
(8) She often responds to my reformulation with *positive answers*

Overall, Japanese learners have been reported most indirect in elicitations and classroom inquiry during the corrective feedback sessions. The indirect strategy was

often realized as longer pause and duration, higher accuracy but lower fluency of the overall prosodic skeleton in the production testing. Nevertheless, Japanese learners in the experimental groups outperformed those in the control group on the post-tests conducted in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12.

On the other hand, Thai learners in the control group often did self-correct even without any instructions or treatments. Thai learners have higher mean scores than Japanese learners in the same groups. Yet, Thai learners in Group 1 (recasts) and Group 2 (elicitations) outperformed those in the control group among the three post-tests. As mentioned earlier, Thai learners in Group 2 improved their mean scores to a great degree. For instance, Subject 20 (S20) received the score of 16 in the Tone 2 category on the pre-test but improved to 35, 83, and 97 on the post-tests conducted in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12 respectively in the same category. The same subject also improved his score in the Tone 3 category from 53 on the pre-test to 89 on the post-test conducted in Week 12. The prosodic development of Thai learners in Group 2 is illustrated in Figure 2.
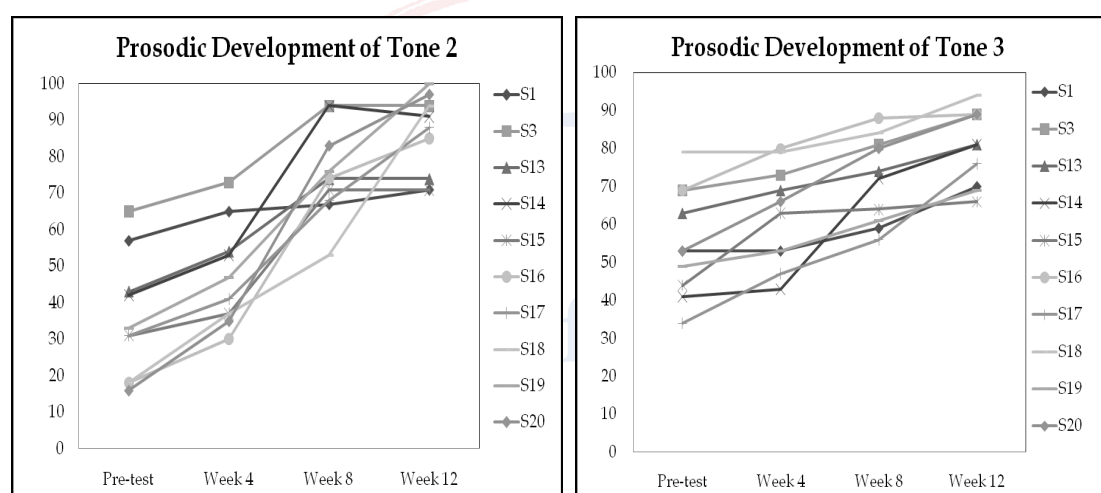
Figure 2: Prosodic development of Tone 2 and Tone 3 of the learners in Group 2

The high accuracy of Tone 2 (rising tone) and Tone 3 (falling-rising tone falling tone) in Week 12 indicates the better prosodic development of the Thai learners.

The second research question concerned the effect of corrective feedback on the prosodic production of the L2 learners. The mean scores in Week 12 among the groups have shown that corrective feedback should be encouraged in second language classrooms, especially at the beginning level. The control group also increased its mean score on the three post-tests, but to a much lesser extent than the two experimental groups. Corrective feedback can enhance the prosodic development of L2 learners, both Japanese and Thai learners in the present study.

Discussion

The findings of the current study reveal that self-repairs or prompts were superior to oral recasts in helping L2 learners improve their prosodic accuracy of Mandarin tones. A large number of studies have investigated the role of interactional feedback in L2 learning. Yet, much more research is needed to explore the link between interactional feedback and L2 development. The present study examined the effects of two types of interactional feedback, recasts and elicitations, on L2 prosodic performance. The results showed that both recasts and elicitations seemed to have some effects on

learning the targeted prosodic forms. Interactional recasts might have some immediate and delayed impacts on learners' learning of Mandarin prosody. Furthermore, L2 learners with different cultural backgrounds might react differently to the corrective feedback treatments. In the current study, Japanese learner refrained from expressing disagreement with the instructors or the answers delivered by their classmates. Their use of silence, instead of verbally responding to the instructor's elicitations, could be treated as communicative strategies in learning a second language. The effectiveness of corrective feedback was also dependent on the learners' language proficiency. When learners had better proficiency or relevant language backgrounds, elicitations could be more effective than recasts.

Lyster (2004) examined the effects of recasts and elicitation strategies in combination with form-focused instruction on learning French grammatical gender and found the group receiving prompts plus form-focused instruction significantly outperformed the group receiving recasts plus form-focused instruction. Ammar and Spada (2006) investigated recasts and prompts in three intensive ESL classrooms and found that the group with prompts outperformed the group with recasts on both the immediate and delayed post-tests. The results in the present study showed that learners with corrective feedback treatments outperformed those without corrective feedback treatments in the delayed testing. In the delayed testing conducted in Week 8 and Week 12, groups with corrective feedback still received higher mean scores. Although there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental groups, Group 1 (recasts) and Group 2 (elicitations), higher mean scores in Week 12 have indicated a better performance in Group 2. This finding suggests that if learners managed to self-correct their errors, they seemed more likely to remember the corrections than if the corrections had been provided by recasts. In the present study, Thai learners in the control group also self-corrected their own errors without the corrective feedback treatments of recasts or elicitations. The advantage of elicitations over recasts was in accordance with those of Lyster's (2004) and Ammar and Spada's (2006) studies. The benefits found for elicitations could be due to the combination of elicitations with form-focused instruction. When learners are forced or receive treatments to self-correct their own errors, their attention could be directed to subsequent input (Swain, 1995; Doughty, 2001). Although both recasts and elicitations are effective in learning Mandarin prosody, prompts and self-repairs may receive more attention from the learners and enhance the prosodic development of the learners in the long term.

On the other hand, at early stages of the Elementary Chinese language course, accuracy of Mandarin tones was emphasized by the three instructors in daily drills. Learners were expected to achieve the target prosodic forms after a number of practices. As can been seen in Table 1, L2 learners in Group 3 (control group) also showed prosodic development in the three-month period, though to a much lesser extent. The results seemed to indicate that form-focused instruction could be effective in L2 tonal pedagogy, even without corrective feedback treatments.

It is interesting to note the different reactions between Japanese and Thai learners towards the corrective feedback treatments. Further research is needed to determine whether there are differences in the effectiveness of the various explicit and implicit forms of the same feedback in the context of Chinese as a second language, and if there are, which form is more effective. Although distinctions have been made among different forms of recasts, few L2 studies have investigated and compared the effectiveness of these different forms with respect to L2 development, particularly in Chinese as a second language.

Conclusion

This study investigates the efficacy of types of corrective feedback attested in second language classrooms of Mandarin Chinese and the prosodic development of second language (L2) learners. The corrective feedback in L2 prosodic development was evaluated in L2 Chinese immersion classrooms. Three Mandarin language instructors, six Japanese learners, and twenty-four Thai learners were divided into three groups and participated in the pre-tests, corrective feedback treatments, and post-tests. The research perspective is to view oral corrective feedback as a type of form-focused instruction undertaken in a communicative language classroom with relevance to the prosodic development and pronunciation accuracy. The effects of the corrective feedback on learning were assessed by means of production tests.

Results showed that the three groups were very similar at the pretest, and the two experimental groups (with treatment of recasts and elicitations) increased their mean scores on the following post-tests. The control group also increased its mean score in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12, but to a much lesser extent than the two experimental groups. For both recast and elicitation feedback types, the more explicit forms resulted in higher mean scores than the implicit forms. The mean scores in Week 12 among the experimental and control groups have shown that elicitations such as self-repairs and prompts might be even more effective in enhancing the development of L2 prosody. In the delayed post-test conducted in Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12, both experimental groups with corrective feedback treatments performed better than the control group without the treatments. The findings suggest that that self-repairs or prompts were superior to oral recasts in helping L2 learners improve their prosodic accuracy, although both recasts and elicitations seemed to have some effects on learning the targeted prosodic forms.

The effects of corrective feedback were verified by the quantitative number of accurate production tokens of the L2 learners and the interviews with the language instructors. Results from L2 discourse analyses and questionnaire survey have revealed that Japanese learners preferred recast corrective feedback while Thai learners preferred elicitation corrective feedback. Japanese learners responded to the corrective feedback with a lesser extent than Thai learners. Thai learners in the control group often did self-correct even without any instructions or treatments. Thai learners have higher mean scores than Japanese learners in the same groups. Yet, Thai learners in Group 1 (recasts) and Group 2 (elicitations) outperformed those in the control group among the three post-tests. The findings suggest that L2 learners with different language and cultural backgrounds might react differently to the same corrective feedback treatment.

The high accuracy of Tone 2 (rising tone) and Tone 3 (falling-rising tone falling tone) in Week 12 indicates the better prosodic development of the Thai learners. The mean scores in Week 12 among the three groups have shown that corrective feedback should be encouraged in second language classrooms, especially at the beginning level. The control group also increased its mean score on the three post-tests, but to a much lesser extent than the two experimental groups. Corrective feedback can enhance the prosodic development of L2 learners.

Japanese learners have been reported most indirect in classroom corrective interactions. The indirect strategy was realized as longer pause and duration. In the current study, Japanese learner refrained from expressing disagreement with the instructors or the answers delivered by their classmates. Their use of silence could be

treated as communicative strategies in language classrooms. When learners had better proficiency or relevant language backgrounds, elicitations could be more effective than recasts. The effectiveness of corrective feedback was also dependent on the learners' language proficiency.

In the current study, the effects of corrective feedback were verified by the quantitative number of accurate production tokens and the analyses of the discourse of the L2 learners. It is suggested that L2 learners manage to self-correct their errors at the beginning level of language learning. Corrective feedback in both contexts of learners performing communicative tasks and part of a focus-on-forms could be effective. It is concluded that both recasts and elicitations are effective in learning Mandarin prosody, and that prompts and self-repairs may receive more attention from the L2 learners and enhance the prosodic development of the learners in the long term.

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An investigation into the cognitive aspects of the figurative interpretations demonstrated by different mother-tongue users[1]

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This paper summarizes an investigation into the unique aspects of figurative interpretations demonstrated by different mother-tongue users. The aim of the investigation is to discover a way of investigating interpretation differences in figurative/idiomatic expressions among different mother-tongue users and to specify what kinds of figurative expressions users of different mother tongues understand or interpret successfully and/or unsuccessfully; it also investigates what cognitive aspects are prominent in the figurative interpretations performed by users of different mother-tongues. The conclusion from the investigation is primarily intended to contribute to the improvement of the linguistic ability of language learners who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) and to promote successful communication and cultural understanding between different language users.

1. Introduction

First let us look at figures of speech or figurative expressions. Figures of speech are classified into several types, such as simile, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, allegory, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, personification, and so on. The simplest and most identifiable is a simile, which has a figurative marker, such as *like*, *as …*, *as if*. This paper deals mainly with metaphor. The following are examples of a simile (1) and a metaphor (2).

(1) *as a lion* he rushed on (Aristotle, translated by H. C. Lawson-Trancred, 1991: 224)
(2) Life is a journey.

Quotation (1) is a simile, which has the figurative marker 'as' in it. Other markers are 'like' or 'as if.' Simile is overt, while metaphor is covert. Metaphor does not have any marker like those in a simile, as can be seen in (2); the meaning resides in the language. In this sense, a metaphor is not as simple as a simile. The characteristic of metaphor is that it involves language and thought.

Among several types of figures of speech, this paper focuses on metaphor or metaphorical (including metonymic) expressions. The word 'figurative' is used in this paper as a holistic term to include metaphor and metonymy. The reason for taking up metaphor in this study is that the characteristic and mechanism of metaphor can be applied to language learning/teaching.

1.1. Mechanism of metaphor

One of the metaphors that describes life is *Life is a journey*. Life is exemplified by a journey. One's life is long, and there are twists and turns in life, for example, when there are good and bad times. The mechanism of the metaphor can be illustrated as follows.

Mechanism of metaphor (simplified illustration)

LIFE	IS	A JOURNEY. (a conceptual metaphor; in capital letters)
[LIFE]	{mapping}	[A JOURNEY]

target domain – {mapping} – source domain   (mapping takes place between the domains)

This conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY features the prominent characteristics of a journey to illustrate life. The concept of life is abstract, whereas the image of a journey is concrete. Everyone will have travelled more than once during their life; therefore, it is easy to imagine what a journey is like. Before going on a journey, one plans, prepares and starts it. During a journey, one encounters an unexpected (happy or sad) happening, and enjoys or is disappointed with the journey. The same features are applicable to life. The journey of 'life' starts ('birth' in the case of life) and ends ('death' in the case of life) in happiness or disappointment. These features of the journey are mapped onto life, and one draws the image of life and understands its aspects. In this sense, metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else. One analogically applies the features of a concrete idea (e.g., a journey) to an abstract notion (e.g., life). The process of understanding a metaphor is the process of analogical reasoning, which is one of the basic human abilities.

1.2. Reasons for considering metaphor or figurative expressions in language teaching

The mechanism, function and characteristics of metaphor can be made use of in the field of applied linguistics in many ways, for example, for enriching and expanding vocabulary and/or delving into meanings, as indicated by McCarthy (2001). A word is polysemous; it has central and peripheral meanings. Due to the polysemous nature of a word, its meaning extends/expands and this nature widens one's semantic field(s). McCarthy (ibid.: 23) explains the importance of metaphor application to language teaching by giving the following example "head" :

> She's *head* of the department.
> I'll meet you at the *head* of the valley.
> Have you hurt your *head*?

The first two sentences are figurative. The 'head' in the third sentence has a core meaning, referring to the top part of a human body; the 'head' in the second sentence is an expanded meaning created by the metonymic function of 'head'; the 'head' in the first sentence has a metaphorical meaning created by the application of an abstract idea of a 'head.' As is stated in McCarthy (ibid.: 27), metaphor, as a device for creating and extending meaning, is very important in the study of vocabulary. It is related

to one's logical thinking or analogical reasoning, because metaphor is a way of enabling us to talk of one thing in terms of another.

1.3. Past research

   We will briefly look at contemporary studies of and/or references to metaphor and figurative expressions, though limiting the survey to major works and some works directly related to this paper.

   The history of the study of figures of speech goes back to Aristotle (about 400 to 320 BC), when figures of speech were studied and practiced as rhetoric, through several amendments and refinements were made to the theories and views, for example, by Du Marsais in the 1730s and Fontanier in the late 1830s, to name just a few. Since the late 1970s, stimulated by the development of cognitive science, the amount of research into figures of speech has increased. The 1970s were the epoch-making period for this field of study. Since then, the number of researchers who are engaged in it has increased. Representatives in the early times were Richard (1936) and Ortony (1979); many more have followed them.

   In Japan, too, in the middle of the 19th century (the Meiji Era), figures of speech that had long been studied in the Occidental world influenced literary figures and politicians in Japan. This was the time when the terms 'metaphor, 'metonymy' and other terms were imported into Japan. Then, Japanese names equivalent to the original term for each figure of speech were chosen and their functions defined. These studies are beneficial to present research in Japan.

   In the field of Cognitive Linguistics, the studies by Lakoff (1994) and Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphor We Live By*, 1981; 2003) were influential in the sense that they redefined the concept of metaphor and systemized metaphors. Their most important contribution to other later studies is the classification of Ideal Cognitive Models, ICMs, in which metaphor is viewed as an experientially based mapping from an ICM in one domain to an ICM in another domain. Langacker's cognitive grammar (1986, 1991) and Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces (1985) also promote these studies. In the field of psycholinguistics, Gibbs (1994, 1999) posits that metaphor is one of the most complicated topics in the intertwined domain of language and thought; based upon this idea he emphasizes that interdisciplinary studies are necessary. He published many works on this issue.

   In the field of Applied Linguistics, it is worth mentioning the effects of the etymological or cultural learning of figurative idioms, for example, Boers (2000, 2001) and Boers and Demecheleer (1998), because idioms and figurative expressions are related to each other. In a similar vein, there are references dealing with language teaching, such as Deignan, Gabrys and Solska (1997), who examined and discussed teaching English metaphors using cross-linguistic awareness-raising activities; and Charteris-Black, who explored second language figurative proficiency in a comparative study of Malay and English (2002). In the same area, other researchers have studied the competence of understanding and use of metaphor or metaphorical competence. This issue is closely related to the present study; therefore, we will look briefly at the studies concerning metaphor and metaphorical competence made by Littlemore (2001), Azuma (2005) and Littlemore and Low

(2006).

Littlemore (2001) investigated metaphorical competence in Belgium students with French as L1 and English as L2, and indicated that students who have a holistic cognitive style process metaphors more quickly than do those with an analytic cognitive style. This suggests language teachers should pay attention to not only analytic skills, which are believed to assist metaphorical treatments, but also to holistic cognitive skills, which assist the overall language learning. Azuma (2005) investigated EFL students' metaphorical competence; she discovered EFL students showed reasonably high metaphorical competence in recognition, but their competence was not as high in performance. This indicates that comprehension is easier than the use of metaphorical expressions. The other important reference is Littlemore and Low's study (2006), which places metaphorical competence in communicative competence. Last but not least are Carter (1998), McCarthy (2001) and Cameron and Low (1999a, 1999b). All these researchers express the importance of dealing with metaphor (including learning individual metaphors) and teaching the mechanism of metaphor when teaching languages. Still another important reference to be taken note of from the viewpoint of a basic language learning strategy is Oxford's research (1990), which proposes implications about language learning strategies, where figurative/metaphorical issues are mentioned as the strategy of analyzing and reasoning (in cognitive strategies) and that of guessing intelligently (in compensation strategies).

In addition, we should think about the cultural elements of metaphor. In the field of metaphor and culture, several references from Kövecses (2007, 2010) provide us with noteworthy implications concerning the study of metaphor and culture.

Japan is also proud of having a great number of researchers and references; for example, Sato provides us with abundant publications (1992, 1997, to list just a few). Seto (1997, 1999), Yamanashi (1995, 2000) and other scholars offer their views on cognitive linguistics and metaphor.

2. Investigation in this study

2.1. Research questions

The investigation of this study considers and discusses the following research questions together with some related issues.

RQ1 What methods are valid to investigate figurative interpretations for different mother-tongue users?

RQ2 What interpretive aspects are characterized and prominent in the figurative expressions by users of different mother-tongues? And, what are implications from the study for language teaching?

2.2. Methods for investigation

The rest of the section 2 is concerned with and answers RQ1.

There were only a few past studies with similar investigative purposes which could provide guidance for this study, for example, Deignan et al. (1997), Charteris-Black (2002) and Littlemore

(2001). The major differences between this study and past studies are the nature of the mother tongue, the target language and the learners' environment. The mother tongue of the learners in this study is not one of the Indo-European Languages but Japanese (Austronesian) and they learn the language (English) as a foreign language (EFL) not a second language (SL) or L2, that is, they have less access to the target language. Taking these conditions into consideration, the author designed a metaphor test and named it the Metaphor Cognition Test, MCT. Test items were selected to reflect interpretive aspects of mother-tongue user traits, for example, the effects from the knowledge of the mother tongue and schemas possibly used for interpretations, such as general knowledge, mental images and linguistic ability or skills. Answers must be derived cross-culturally to make cross-examination possible. With this purpose in mind, test participants and interviewees were selected from two different language groups: one was Japanese mother-tongue users or Japanese native speakers (JNSs) and the other was English native speakers (ENSs) or the users of English as a mother tongue. JNSs were recruited in Japan, and ENSs were recruited in three countries (America, Australia and Britain). Recruited were 147 JNSs (EFL students) and 100 ENSs (32 American and 31 Australian and 37 British English speakers). Places and times for the test and interviews were looked for. They were set up in Japan, Britain, America and Australia and the test and interviews were administered in 2006-2009.

2.3. Metaphor Cognition Test, MCT

The investigative method of this study was testing and interview. MCT as a measurement instrument consisted of 40 items. The test items featured wordings and concepts that were the same/similar or that had different wordings and concepts between English and Japanese. The items were carefully selected to have the figurative characteristics of each of the two languages; for example, some items had the characteristics of English figurativeness and others had those of Japanese figurativeness. The test items were numbered randomly from 1 to 40. Participants were asked to write figurative meanings for each expression or to provide figurative interpretations.

For the convenience of discussion, the items are categorized into two major categories in this study: universal (U) and non-universal (Non-U) categories as follows.

(1) U: figurative/metaphorical expressions that share concepts and wordings between English and Japanese, and

(2) Non-U: culture-specific figurative/metaphorical expressions that are unique to English and Japanese. English expressions were used as they were originally. Japanese expressions were translated literally into English to preserve the original nuances and features of Japanese.

2.4. Hypotheses about the two categories in the MCT:

(a) U: The expressions have universal concepts; therefore, it is hypothesized that interpretations by users of different mother-tongues may be successful.

(b) Non-U: The expressions have culture-specific concepts; hence, it is hypothesized that

interpretations may be (slightly or strongly) influenced by mother-tongue knowledge or culture-specific schemas.

(c) The items having clear images or those having the metonymic nature of this category may be successfully interpreted by both groups of mother-tongue users.

2.5. Test items

Forty test items were selected and incorporated in the Metaphor Cognition Test, MCT; these were then further classified into 13 U items and 27 Non-U items. As mentioned previously, the test items in the MCT were numbered randomly from 1 to 40 .

(1) U items: 13 items having shared concepts between English and Japanese:

The following are 5 examples from 13 items (abbreviations used in tables).

   1 *Time is money*. (Time is money)   2 to *bear fruit* (bear fruit)

   3 We are *at the crossroads*. (crossroads)   4 *a bolt from the blue* (bolt blue)

   5 to *slip through one's fingers* (slip fingers), etc.

(2) Non-U items: 27 items having culture specific concepts:

The 27 items in Category Non-U break down into

         Non-U-1 English origins - 13 items;

         Non-U-2 Japanese origins -11 items;

         Non-U-3 Problematic expressions - 3 items

The following are some examples of U items first, followed by U-1, Non-U-2 and Non-U-3 items.

Non-U-1: English origins: 5 examples from 13 items (abbreviations used in tables)

13 to *have a loose tongue* (loose tongue)

16 to be *off one's head* (off head)

19 My *sides split* (sides split)

22 *double-tongued* (double-t)

24 I need to *pick your brains*. (pick brains)

Non-U-2: Japanese origins translated into English: 5 examples from 11 items

Japanese items were translated literally into English in this study to preserve the original figurativeness embedded in the items. An ordinary translation of a hiyu (a figurative expression), for example, 'hyotan kara koma' 「瓢箪から駒」 is translated as 'a surprise' in a Japanese-English dictionary (2000). Dictionaries usually take broad translations for the safety of neutral meanings. However, the broad translation cannot convey the nature of a hiyu; the original nuance of suddenness and speed of the original expression disappears. If the expression to *kick the bucket* was translated as

to 'die,' the humor and flavor of the original nuance would have been lost. There are 11 common Japanese figurative expressions in this category (which were translated literally into English). The way of literal translation may well be called 'raw translation,' because it is not cooked, therefore, 'raw,' or unprocessed. Most of the selected items featured a metonymic nature and with clear images so that participants in MCT may consider them easy to interpret. The following are 5 examples from the 11 items.

18 You and I *are united with a red thread*. (united red)

21 *a frog in the well* (frog in well)

23 to *cast a shrimp to catch a bream* (shrimp bream)

31 *a horse out of a bottle gourd* (bottle gourd)

35 *the carp on a cutting board* (carp cutting), etc.

Non-U-3: Problematic expressions: 3 items

For the purpose of the investigation, 3 items in the MCT have the same wordings but different meanings in English and Japanese. It was assumed that the meanings between English and Japanese were so far apart that the items would stimulate different interpretations between English and Japanese participants. In a way, the items could be grouped into Non-U 1 or Non-U 2. However, this categorization is intended to highlight and make different interpretations visible.

14 to *come to a head* (come to head)

17 to *pull someone's leg(s)* (pull leg(s))

25 Tim must *be soft in the head* to do such a thing. (soft in head)

2.6. Treatment of the answers

   Answers in the test need to be statistically treated. This study took the method of calculating the correctness ratio of each item in order to show how well or otherwise the item was understood. Since it was necessary to set a correctness boundary for each item, two raters first established the boundary. Then, if there was any discrepancy between the ratings of the item, the raters discussed the issue until they reached an agreement. One point was allocated accordingly for the established correctness. In this calculation, if an item is answered correctly by all participants, the ratio of that item will be 100. The statistical instrument used was SPSS 17.0.

3. Results and Discussion

   Sections 3 and 4 are concerned with and answer RQ2.

3.1. Overall similarity of interpretations among 3 major varieties of English

   There were 100 participants from the major English-speaking countries. We will be able to see from the correlation results how similar or different they are in their interpretations.

Table 1 Correlations between the 3 major varieties of English

Correlations

		Au31	Br37	Am32
Au31	Pearson Correlation	1	.972[**]	.956[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	40	40	40
Br37	Pearson Correlation	.972[**]	1	.968[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	40	40	40
Am32	Pearson Correlation	.956[**]	.968[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	40	40	40

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows strong correlations among the 3 major varieties of English. This possibly indicates that as far as the items of the MCT are concerned, ENSs can be expected to understand these expressions in same/similar ways. Hence, the MCT could serve as a test battery for both ENSs and (possibly) JNSs[2].

3.2. Overall results of interpretations

Table 2 shows the averages of the U and Non-U categories contrasting 147 JNSs with 100 ENSs.

Table 2 Correctness ratios of U and Non-U categories

	U Item N=13	Non-U 1 E origins Item N=13	Non-U 2 J origins Item N=11	Non-U 3 Item N=3	
				J meanings	E meanings
JNSs N=147	55.7	24.7	58.2	79.2	5.5
ENSs N=100	95.4	90.7	28.4	0	93.3

The ENSs demonstrated high averages in the categories of U, Non-U-1 English origins and Non-U-3 in English meanings; however, they demonstrated low averages in the Non-U-2 J origins and Non-U-3 in Japanese meanings. In contrast, the JNSs demonstrated the reverse phenomena to those

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[2] The reliability of the test was examined by Cronbach alpha and ANOVA, using MCT 40 and MCT 19 (a second part of the MCT) as variables for the both NSs groups. VLT (Schmitt, 2000) was added for the JNSs as one of the variables. The results statistically ensured the reliability.

demonstrated by the ENSs; in particular, the average of Non-U-3 in Japanese meanings was highest; next to it were the Non-U-2 Japanese origins, followed by the U. The lowest in the JNSs was Non-U-3 in English meanings and next to it was Non-U-1 English origins. These results possibly indicate that both groups of language users tended to interpret the expressions by resorting to the knowledge of their mother tongues and their familiar linguistic and cultural schemas. As a matter of fact, the interviews confirmed these tendencies. The interviewees said they resorted to their mother tongue knowledge and that they applied their general schemas in interpretations.

3.3. Summary of the results of categories U and Non-U

We can summarize the results referring to typical phenomena to explain them.

(1) the items with shared concepts bring forth similar interpretive aspects between the ENSs and the JNSs; for example, *Time is money* accumulated a high interpretation ratio: 100 % in the ENSs, 97.3% in the JNSs. The interpretation seemed to take place successfully by means of general schemas, logical thinking and the application of cultural knowledge.

(2) the items with origins in the mother tongues are beneficial for the users of the respective mother-tongues that is, the expressions that originated in English are easier for ENSs; those that originated in Japanese are easier for the JNSs. For example, the ENSs 100% correctly interpreted Item 39 Simon is *getting cold feet* about advancing you the money, whereas only 33% JNSs interpreted it correctly. The misinterpretation was caused by 'getting cold feet.' They confused the expression with 'getting + catch + cold.' They based their interpretation upon the idiom they knew. Their language ability and schematic function were inappropriately employed.

Another example along similar lines for the ENSs is Item 18 You and I are *united with a red thread,* meaning you and I are destined to be united. This makes a counterpart to *getting cold feet.* This familiar Japanese expression is often used in the daily life of JNNs. As high as 99.3% of JNSs interpreted it correctly. On the other hand, the ENSs' correctness ratio was 37.4%. They analogically interpreted 'united + red + thread.' Their analogy of 'red' was effective to a certain point, at which their interpretations branched off: one went to 'love relationship' and the other went to 'blood relationship.' It may be worth noting this kind of cognitive tendency occurs where the participants' analogy, schema or cultural knowledge affects interpretations.

(3) if the wording of an expression is the same and the particular meaning is different between languages, people tend to interpret the expression according to the meaning in their own mother tongue. This may lead to a communication discrepancy. This is a crucial area when figurative expressions are used in conversation or other occasions.

4. Prominent strategies and cognitive aspects

Analyzing and reasoning in cognitive strategies and intelligent guessing in compensation strategies are identified as language strategies (Oxford, 1990). This study took in the essence of Oxford's views (1990), and interviews took place with volunteers, where questions were asked concerning how

participants answered the test items as a general question and as specific questions. The questions asked in the interview were concerning what kinds of strategies they used, for example, whether they answered intuitively, utilized any logical thinking, and/or resorted to their mother-tongue knowledge, and what images they drew in their mind when they read the expressions. The results obtained from the interviews are classified into three major aspects: the utilization of (1) general knowledge or schematic cognition (2) logical thinking or analogical reasoning and (3) image schematic association. All three are intertwined in one's mind, and therefore, it is hard to separate them from each other. In particular, logical thinking or analogical reasoning has cross-over functions in any cognitive process. In this classification, too, it relates to functioning general knowledge or schematic cognition and visualization or image schematic association. However, this study boldly attempted to find out which cognitive aspects function more strongly in interpretation, that is, the utilization of general knowledge and image schematic association or visualization. This specific investigation was carried out in the interviews and ensured by the interviewees' responses. Table 3 shows the results. In the table, 'k' stands for general knowledge; 'v' stands for visualization.

Table 3 Cognitive aspects

Cognitive aspects	k				
Category	U	Non-U E origins	Non-U J origins	Non-U 3	
items	**6**	**8**	**4**	**2***	
JNSs=147	62.3	24.5	44.4	J: 79.6; E: 7.2	J: J meanings;
ENSs=100	95.3	89.1	30.8	J: 0; E: 95.8	E: E meanings
				*17 pull leg(s), 25 soft in head	
Cognitive aspects	k + v		v		k + v
Category	U, Non-U E origins	Non-U J origins	Non-U E origins	Non-U 2 J origins**	Non-U 3***
items	**4**	**6**	**8**	**1**	**1**
JNSs=147	41.4	67.2	38.7	59.9	J: 78.2; E: 2.1
ENSs=100	95.3	27.1	94.2	27	J: 0; E: 88.4
				**31 bottle gourd	***14 come to head

The general knowledge or schematic cognition ('k' in the table) and the visualization or image schematic association ('v' in the table) of the ENSs are prominent in the items of U 1 and the English origins in the other categories in contrast with less prominent in the Japanese origins. Those of the JNSs are not as prominent as those of the ENSs; however, if we consider the linguistic ability of the JNSs, the correctness ratio over 50% could be evaluated to be quite reasonable for non-native English speakers, therefore, this indicates that the JNSs made use of their general knowledge and image association very well in the items of U1 and the Japanese origins. As a whole, both NSs groups had a tendency of resorting to the utilization of their mother-tongue knowledge.

5. Conclusion and Implications

    So far, the research questions were answered in sections 3 and 4, and comments on the three

hypotheses were also made in the same and related sections. The following additional comments conclude the paper.

(1) Universal concepts may help us understand figurative expressions; however, caution is necessary:

- ・ the expressions with similar concepts/wordings and similar meanings are understood well by users of different mother-tongues, but

- ・ the expressions with similar concepts and similar wordings that have different meanings may cause problems between different language users; therefore, we should be cautious.

- ・ the expressions that have unique meanings originating in specific cultures may cause problems, either small or large; therefore, we must be cautious about these expressions.

(2) Metonymic expressions with clear images, such as to *cast a shrimp to catch a bream* or *the carp on a cutting board*, may not be as problematic as to *kick the bucket* or to *spill the beans* for different mother-tongue users. The expressions to *kick the bucket* or to *spill the beans* have clear images, but they contrast with the conventional meanings. We should consider the conventionality or culture-bound nature of these kinds of expressions.

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A Case Study of Learning English Passive of Thai EFL Learners:

Difficulties and Learning Strategies

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Introduction

The English passive has been taught to many Thai EFL learners in primary schools, high schools and university levels. The English passive is an English language structure that is found in English texts to avoid assigning direct responsibility of the doers. In the university levels in Thailand in which emphasis is given to reading and writing, the English passive is one of the language structures that is employed in many reading passages. Therefore, it is obvious that English passive is included in English instruction in most education levels. From my teaching experiences, I have found that a large numbers of Thai EFL learners, at university level, cannot use the English passive accurately and appropriately, although they have been taught this language point since high schools. Only a few numbers of EFL learners can use the English passive in meaningful sentences. Thus my intention in investigating what grammar learning strategies Thai EFL learners use when learning the English passive and what they found difficult.

In Thailand, passive voice is part of grammar instruction which is taught by Thai teachers. Form-focused instruction is used when teaching grammar points. That is to say, the teacher presents language structures to the learners, explains to them how and when it is used in a linguistic context and gives them drills to practice. The end product of the instruction is that the learners must be able to produce a language structure accurately and appropriately. According to Oxford and Lee (2007), focus on form – explicit-deductive mode is widely used; however, it is found that after years of learning English, learners feel that they cannot use language for communication effectively and fluently. To this, learners play an important role in how they learn a language for communication. Ellis (2002, 2006) found that successful learners prefer form focused instruction and have good attitude towards learning a language.

From my teaching experience at university level, I use focus on form – explicit deductive mode as Thai and English have different language structures so it is important that the language structure is presented to the learners and it is hoped that they can generate other meaningful sentences. However, I found that though the language structure is presented to many learners, they fail to recognize it and are unable to make a distinction between passive and active voice. Only a few of them are able to master active and passive voice structures accurately.

According to Oxford and Lee (2007), research about grammar learning strategies is scarce. It is therefore worth investigating how Thai EFL learners learn the English passive as part of grammar learning e.g. what language strategies they use

and what they find easy and difficult to master about the English passive. Understanding this has implications for teaching and learning grammar, and designing appropriate teaching materials as well as fulfilling the lack of research in grammar learning strategies.

Objectives of the study

1.) To investigate what difficulties Thai EFL learners encountered when learning the English passive.

2.) To find out what learning strategies they used to learn the English passive.

These objectives can be stated as research questions:

1.) What difficulties do Thai EFL learners encounter when learning the English passive?

2.) What learning strategies Thai EFL learners reported using when learning the English passive?

Definitions and Concepts of Passive voice

Passive voice is the grammatical construction (voice) in which a head noun functioning as a subject of a sentence denotes the recipient of the action rather than the agent and may be used to avoid assigning direct responsibility to the doer. In most cases, the passive voice is formed by the inversion of subject and object. Sometimes "by" can be deleted, e.g. Christmas trees are decorated beautifully every year (by my mom.)

According to Prasitrattasin (2006), the Thai passive voice is generally used to refer to unpleasant events or is known as "adversative passive." When used it is denoted by the insertion of the marker, "tuuk" before the main verb.

Table 1 shows a comparison of English and Thai passive voice structure

English	Thai
- Inversion of Subject and object	- Inversion of Subject and object
- Add "by"	- Add "doy" (by)
- Add inflected form of be	- Add passive marker in front of the main verb
- Change the verb to past participle	- No change in the main verb.

A contrastive study by the Defense Language Institute (1978) wrote that obviously, the main source of interference for Thai speakers with this grammatical pattern of English passive is with the addition and correct inflection of "be".

An article entitled "Problems faced by Chinese ESL learners in the Acquisition of English passive and recommendations for teaching" by Manfred Wu Man Fat (2009), aimed at identifying the difficulties of Chinese ESL learners in acquiring the English passive. Particular reference is made to how the differences of the treatment of the passive in the Chinese and English languages contribute to the difficulties. The second part of this article focuses on providing pedagogical recommendations for the instruction of the English passive to Chinese ESL learners. However, the article was based on contrastive analysis of English and Chinese so more empirical research is still needed.

Grammar Learning Strategies

Based on Oxford and Lee (2007), grammar learning strategies are referred to as grammar strategies. They are "actions or thoughts that learners consciously employ to make learning to use a language easier, more effective, more efficient and more enjoyable." However, grammar strategies are said to be a "Second Cinderella" as it is the area of studies left unexplored. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore this area of study

Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from learners registered for English for Social Science II, in the first semester of the academic year 2009. There were 185 learners altogether divided into 5 sections. I was responsible for 2 sections. The section for this study comprised of 37 learners; 10 males and 27 females. They held a senior higher vocational certificate and were allowed to enter the university in a two-year program to obtain a bachelor degree. They were studying Accounting.

Instruments

To get reliable data, the following instruments were used as data collection instruments.

Diary: Thirty-seven learners were asked to handwrite a diary, noting their learning strategies used and difficulties in learning the English passive. According to Nunan (1992), the advantages of writing a diary are that learners can record problems arising from learning a subject language in order to find ways to cope with the problem, motivate themselves to be responsible and build their self-confidence. As the teaching of English passive took 4 sessions to finish, in this part the learners in this section were asked to write a diary for 4 days describing what difficulties they encountered and what learning strategies they used to cope with these difficulties.

In-class observation: While teaching the English passive, the researcher observed how the learners learnt the English passive and the mistakes they frequently made, to find out what difficulties they had had. This is also to confirm what the learners had written in their diaries.

Achievement test: This is an instrument for measuring knowledge of learners in order to check understanding and its application. Learners who had the highest, average and lowest scores in the English passive quiz were selected to do another two gap-fill tests. The first test (see Appendix one) was similar to what was taught in the class. The vocabulary and context were about festivals such as Thanksgiving and Halloween. The second gap-fill test was adapted from Azar (1999)–see Appendix Two). The context of the second test was unfamiliar to the learners as this was to find out if they could transfer application of the English passive taught to other linguistic contexts. There were 12 learners who were selected to do both gap-fill tests. There were 12 items in gap-fill test one and 13 items in gap-fill test two. Thirty minutes were allowed to do both tests.

Think aloud protocol: Twelve learners were selected to do the two tests. While doing the tests, they were asked to think aloud how they came up with the answers. This is to check what learning strategies they used while trying to use the English passive appropriately.

Individual interviews: After the learners had done the tests using think aloud protocols, each of them was asked to reveal more about the learning strategies they used and about any difficulties that may not have been explicitly revealed in the think aloud protocols.

Data Analysis

The obtained data from the achievement tests were analyzed by using descriptive statistics

The data from the diary study, class observations, think aloud protocols and individual interviews were analyzed to reve1al difficulties and learning strategies used.

Findings

1. Difficulties in learning the English Passive

From the data it was found that lack of linguistic competence hinders the ability to use the English passive appropriately.

1.1 Situations when passive should be used

The majority of learners in this study reported that they are uncertain and confused if they should use active or passive voice when, in a gap-fill tests, only the subject and the verbs were given. Many learners wrote that, "I need to know if the subject can perform the action verb, and then active voice is needed to complete the sentence but it is very still quite difficult to know if the passive voice is used or not.e.g. The parade (hold) _____ for the first time in the year of 1924. The parade (begin) _____ on a very small scale.

This sentence is quite uncommon for Thai learners because the passive voice is generally used in Thai to show violent or unpleasant events or "adversative passive", in which the subject is adversely affected by the action portrayed in the verb. However, the given sentence has neutral meaning.

1.2 Aspects of English Verbs .

From the diary and class observation, many learners complained that it is somewhat difficult to master English tenses, although only three tenses were administered which are present simple, past simple and future simple. Though adverbs of times such as yesterday, last month, nowadays were given as hints for guessing tenses, many learners find it difficult to use them appropriately.

e.g. The Songkran festival (celebrate) _____ during 13-15 April of every year in Thailand.

It seems that many learners were not aware of the given time marker, 13-15 April of every year, to help them able to use English tenses appropriately.

1.3 Mastery of English irregular verb forms

The Past participle is needed to form the English passive, but it was found that the many learners failed to use the past participle, especially the irregular forms. From in class observation, it was found that many learners were unable to master English. They failed to add –ed and used the irregular morphological forms such as *catch-caught-caught*

hold-held-held

know-knew-known

They find English irregular verb forms very difficult and think their errors resulted from these. Adding, suffix –ed and the irregularities of irregular verb confused them. This feature is absent in Thai.

1.4 Mastery of the syntactic construction of the English passive

The structure for English passive is *"Subject + be + past participle"* which may be perceived by most learners as something different from other English structures. Some learners reported that they couldn't recognize the structure. They usually left out verb to be and did not add the –ed morpheme to the verb stems. Some learners reported that they felt present and past continuous tense are similar to the passive voice syntactic structure. These learners added –ing instead of –ed to the verbs because the syntactic structure confused them.

1.5 Unknown lexis

This is a big problem for Thai learners. It was observed that many learners had difficulty in knowing word meaning. And this posed a great difficulty in distinguishing between active and passive voice. Almost all learners reported in their diary that at least if they knew a word's meanings they could, to some extent guess correctly if an active or passive structure was needed. They reported that they felt more confident choosing between a passive or active form if they knew word meanings. One learner reported that "if I know the meaning of the subject, *Christmas trees* and the verb, *decorate*, then I feel more confident that passive voice is needed for this sentence."

2. Passive voice learning strategies

It was found from the findings that many learners have passive voice learning strategies that attempt to cope with their difficulties.

2.1 Affective strategy

Many learners complained that they don't like English because it is too difficult. They found that because the attitudes towards the language are negative, this results in the failure to master the target language. Many of them believe that if the affective filters are low, they can learn a language more effectively.

"…in mastering passive voice effectively, I must try to develop positive attitudes towards the language and believe that learning English helps for communication in business areas; otherwise I won't be successful in using English for communication."

2.2 Memory strategy

Many learners realized that they have vocabulary problems. Therefore they reported that they tried to cope with this problem by memorizing word meanings as much as possible. They believed that if they know word meaning, this could help them choose either active or passive voice appropriately because this could assure them that the given subject can perform the action verb or not. Additionally, as the construction of English passive is quite complex to them, they reported that they memorized its construction as they believed this could help then to be able to write the form out correctly.

2.3 Translation strategy

It was found from the data drawn from think aloud protocols that the learners who scored better (competent learners), in this study, used translation strategy – part of cognitive learning strategies of transferring one language to another language, (Liao 2006) and converting a target language into the native language or the native language to the target language (Chamot, 1987) - as a way to see if the subject can perform an action verb. They used the Thai passive marker, *"tuuk"* in Thai to see if *"tuuk"* in Thai can be inserted and the sentence sounds meaningful. They claimed that this strategy works a lot for them. It is very interesting to note that the learners who did not score very well (less-competent learners) did not use translation strategy (the translation of *"tuuk")* in their thinking process. After this, the competent learners looked at the *verb to be* in order to use the tense form appropriately. They looked at adverb of time such as yesterday, two days ago, or nowadays to see what tense should be used.

Apart from a more systematic thinking process of competent learners, it was also found that the competent learners are more confident and had a tendency to take more risks than their less successful counterparts. From the think aloud protocols it was found that the less competent learners seemed to need longer times in choosing tenses and passive forms.

However, it was surprising that the competent learners could not score very well when doing test II (Table 2 and 3) which had vocabulary and contexts different from what was taught in the class. Before conducting this study, it was hypothesized that competent learners were able to transfer knowledge of English passive to other sentences other than what was just taught in class. Many of them claimed that they did not know the Thai equivalent meanings of the given words in test II; therefore they failed to translate the sentences. This made them unable to make effective guesses of whether a passive or active form was needed. From this finding, it can be concluded that lexis plays a significant role in using passive or active appropriately as this can help learners translate from English to Thai by inserting the Thai passive marker, *tuuk* to see if passive is needed.

Table 2 shows percentage, mean score and standard derivation of Test I

Score (13 items)	Frequency	Percentage
12	1	8.33
10	3	25
8	1	8.33
5	1	8.33
3	2	16.67
0	4	33.33
Mean 5.08		
SD 4.67		

Table 3 shows percentage, mean score and standard derivation of Test II

Score (12 items)	Frequency	Percentage
8	1	8.33
7	1	8.33
5	1	8.33
4	1	8.33
3	1	8.33
2	1	8.33
1	3	25
0	3	25
Mean 2.66		
SD 2.77		

Conclusion and Discussion

There are several research questions addressed in this study, and (1) it was suggested that learners learning passive voice encounter many difficulties such as situations of when passive voice should be used, English tenses, mastery of English irregular forms, mastery of syntactic construction of English passive and unknown lexis. (2) Many of them have different passive voice learning strategies to cope with its difficulties such as affective strategy, memory strategy, and translation strategy. It is very interesting to find out that the competent learners in this study mentioned translation strategy as a way to learn passive voice successfully. They tried to use Thai morpheme, *"tuuk"* to see if it could be inserted in a sentence. The more successful learners of this study also claimed that memory strategies worked very well with them because it is important to recognize the structure *"subject +verb to be+ past participle."* They emphasized that if this form is not mastered, the passive voice cannot be formed. This point is different from the findings of Ying-Chun Lai (2009) who investigated the learning strategies used by   university freshmen in Taiwan. In his study, memory strategies were less frequently used by more competent learners and translation strategies were not mentioned as a way to learn a language.

According to Liao 2006, translation strategy in learning a foreign language is often criticized by language teachers. Many teachers often ignore the role of translation in language teaching. However, this study shows that it is used by the learners; especially the competent ones. It seems there is a mismatch between teacher beliefs and student beliefs about the implementation of translation strategy in a classroom. According to Husian (1995, cited in Liao. 2006), he suggested that introducing translation strategy to low and intermediate level learners had a positive effect on their learning.   In this study, the competent learners used translation as a learning strategy to produce the target language. It is the strategy that they use to facilitate language learning. What they did was to translate the given sentence by inserting the Thai passive marker *"tuuk."* Translating the target language into the L1 provides a valuable resource for learners as this can help facilitate language learning to make up for limitations in learning an L2, (Corder, 1981; cited in Liao 2006).

In addition, it was also found that the more competent learners in this study could not do well in Test II which had vocabulary in contexts different from what was taught in the classroom. That is to say, they could not transfer knowledge of the passive voice to other verbs and topics. To clarify this, what was taught in class is about festivals and traditions so the learners were familiar with the words "celebrate", "decorate", "Christmas tree", and "water" so that it was easier for them to make correct guesses whether a passive or active form was needed. When it came to other topics such as those found in daily life, they could not make correct guesses as they lacked vocabulary and therefore failed to use the passive voice.

Teaching implications

1.) Explicit instruction VS. Implicit instruction

Explicit instruction was found suitable for EFL learners because it can help them produce many meaningful sentences and relatively complex structure (Manfred Man Wu fat 2007, Andrew 2007, Reinders n.d.). However, in this study, though explicit instruction was used, it was found that many learners failed to pick up forms and structures, and even the competent learners were unable to do Test II successfully. It is suggested that language teachers focus on meaning rather than forms at the early stage of teaching the English passive. This is to get learners familiar with meaning as Thai language carries adversative passive system. Cohen (2008) also suggested that if a particular language is said to have an adversative passive system, it may be wise to plan a first lesson by asking the learners what the materials around them are made of. They may use active voice or struggle to the use passive voice. Teachers should not concern themselves or the class to bother with grammar. aTeachers should try to keep the learners get familiar with different passive voice meaning. Grammar presentation in the form of explicit instruction should be introduced later on.

2.) The nature of Thai passive voice

Asian languages passive voice is said to have an adversative passive, including Thai. It may be important for teachers to point this out to learners that English passive does not carry the same implications as it does in Thai (Cohen, 2008). Awareness-raising through contrastive examples of English and Thai passive voice is a useful approach to help learners understand and appropriately produce English passive in many situations.

3.) Translation strategy

Equipping learners with translation strategy may have limitations as there is no equal or word to word translation. In a sentence, "Songkran festival is regarded as Thai new year.", in Thai, the Thai translations for this sentence is active form. This may cause confusion for Thai EFL learners. It would be better to introduce learners to English logic in which only animate or living things can be agents in active sentences except in for cases where the verb is ergativity is a grammatical issue.

Materials Development

According to Manfred Wu Man Fat (2009), there is a need to develop materials which take into consideration the features of the Chinese passive and how it is different from the English passive. Therefore, here, the materials should present the features of Thai and English passive voice to the learners as well. There should also be a section in the materials that explains to learners the situations in which the English passive should be used in addition to the traditional focus of how to form correct passive sentences.

Suggestions for future research

A case study of other grammatical points, other than English passive, would give fruitful information of how language learners learn grammar. It is also interesting to explore grammar strategies of learners in other contexts.

Appendix

Test 1

Directions: Change the verbs in brackets to form "Active – Passive" voice. Pay attention to tenses: present simple, past simple, future simple.

1. Because turkey (ไก่งวง) is the most common main food of a Thanksgiving dinner, sometimes Thanksgiving – เทศกาลขอบคุณพระเจ้า - (call) ....*Turkey Day*.
2. Usually parties (hold) ……………………..at home. It is a time to enjoy their favorite 'Roasted Turkey' with the family.
3. The parade (hold) …………………for the first time in the year of 1924. The parade (begin)………………… on a very small scale.
4. Thanksgiving is a time for gifting your family and friends. The young (show) ……….................... gratitude and respect to the elders, friends, siblings and also colleagues. Thanksgiving flowers, jewelry, chocolate gift baskets, wine etc. (know) …………………….as popular gifts for this special day.
5. In the old days, candy apples (give) ………………………… to children
6. Halloween (celebrate)……………………… in several countries of the Western world.
7. The houses (decorate) …………………………..with pumpkins.
8. In Welsh, Halloween (know) …………………………. as *Nos Galan Gaeaf.*
9. Christmas (regard) …………………………. as a fun and warm festival for people all over the world.
10. In France, Christmas (call) ………………….. 'Noël.' Children (receive) …………………… their presents on Christmas Eve, usually with a family member dressing as Father Christmas.

Test 2 (adapted from Azar (1999)

Directions: Use either active or passive, in any appropriate tense, for the verb in the parentheses.

1. The Amazon valley is extremely important to the ecology of the earth. Forty percent of the world's oxygen (produce)…………………………there.
2. Roberto is in the hospital. He (treat)………………………..for a bad burn on his hand and arm.
3. The game (win) …………………………by the other team tomorrow. They are a lot better than we are.
4. There was a terrible accident on a busy downtown street yesterday. Many people (see)………………………………………it, including by friend, who (interview)…………………………………….by the police.
5. In my country, certain prices, such as the price of medical supplies (control)………………………..by the government. Other prices (determine-กำหนด)……………………………..by how much consumers are willing to pay for a product.
6. Yesterday, a purse snatcher (catch)…………………………..by a dog. While the thief (chase)……………………………by the police, he (jump)………………………over a fence into someone's yard, where he encountered a dog. The dog (keep)……………………….the thief from escaping.
7. Carl (recognize)………………………………………….as a mathematical genius when he was ten.

Interview questions
1. What are your difficulties in learning English passive?
2. What are your grammar strategies in learning English passive?
3. Which test items are easy and difficult for you? Please explain?

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Introduction

Nonviolence is an active, positive, and constructive force. Mahatma Gandhi used nonviolence to attain India's independence. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used nonviolence to fight for racial equality in the United States. Language teachers can use nonviolence to benefit themselves, their students, their schools, and the broader community.

Part one of this paper is an explanation of the general concept of nonviolence. Part two deals with nonviolence as subject matter in language classes. Part three is about nonviolent teaching practices.

Many of you are already teaching nonviolence, though you may be doing so unconsciously or calling it by a different name. Through this paper, I hope to share some practical ideas and encourage open discussion and development of teaching nonviolence.

Part 1: What is nonviolence?

Nonviolence is the opposite of violence. I define violence as thoughts, words, and actions which are harmful. Thus I define nonviolence as thoughts, words, and actions which are helpful. Nonviolence is not neutral, nor does it simply mean the absence of physical violence. The closest synonym in the English language is love. Nonviolence is selfless and universal love.

The concept of nonviolence is based on a belief that everything is united. I am writing this sentence and you are reading this sentence. We are connected at this moment, transcending time and space. No human exists in isolation. Rather we each exist as a small part of an unfathomably vast and interconnected universe. If I intentionally inflict

harm upon any part of our universe, I will be harming myself. If I intentionally help any part of our universe, I will be helping myself.

The universe itself is composed of death and life, hate and love, suffering and joy, violence and nonviolence. It is composed of you and me, broken staplers and majestic waterfalls. Because we are human beings we are capable of making these distinctions between individual elements which are really only parts of a larger whole.

I hope that after I die my decomposing body will provide food and nourishment for other living things. At that point, I will no longer be concerned with the human concepts of violence and nonviolence. There will be no distinction between the universe and me. At present, there is only a distinction between the universe and me, because I perceive that distinction. But this perception is my reality, and I am profoundly happy and grateful to be alive as a human in this universe in this moment.

If I am aware of myself only as a human, I am unable to see the beautiful universe around me. If I am aware of myself only as a part of the universe, I am unable to see the beautiful humanity within me. I want to be simultaneously aware of myself as a human and as a part of the interconnected universe. Very few, if any, are able to completely and permanently attain this simultaneous awareness. Nonviolence is a path which leads towards this distant goal, and it offers some glimpses of spectacular views along the way.

Please consider this example. I meditate by the river and almost feel that I am one with the rocks beneath me, the water before me, and the clouds above me. But then my mind wanders to the thought of a nice grilled cheese sandwich. I forget about the rocks and the river and the clouds and think only about my hunger. As I walk determinedly towards home with the image of the sandwich in my mind, an acquaintance from work stops me. His name is Chris and he wants to complain about what a bad day he is having.

If I choose the path of violence, I greet him curtly, look at my watch to indicate my impatience, and try to continue on my way all the while thinking about the sandwich. If he tries to stop me I might have to push him out of the way or even punch him. I wander deeper and deeper into the selfish perception of myself as a disconnected individual. I do not feel connected with Chris, a human being in front of me, much less the rocks,

river, and clouds. I am profoundly alone.

If I choose the path of nonviolence, I recognize that Chris and I are connected and that I need to do whatever I can to help. If I am too hungry to listen to him earnestly, I need to be honest with myself and with him. "I'm sorry Chris, but I really need to get something to eat. Can we talk later?" If I can ignore my hunger for a moment then I need to really listen to him. If he is suffering I want to alleviate his suffering. His suffering is my suffering. I walk closer and closer to my fellow human being, to the rocks, river, clouds, and the interconnected universe, and I do so with all the limitations and strengths of a human being.

The term "nonviolence" comes from the Sanskrit word *ahimsa*, the prefix *"a-"* resembling "non-", and *himsa*, meaning violence. According to Michael Nagler[1] in his book *The Search for a Nonviolent Future*, "…in Sanskrit abstract nouns often name a fundamental positive quality indirectly, by negating its opposite. The reason ancient India's great thinkers expressed themselves in this apparently oblique way is that phenomena like love, absolute courage, and compassion are primordial things that cannot be fully expressed in fallible, conditioned human language." (Nagler, 2004, p. 44). Nonviolence is an imperfect word which refers to something that cannot be completely captured with language.

What does nonviolence look like in a language class? I couldn't tell you. Of course it is a class free of violence, but beyond that it could take countless different forms. A teacher might be smiling and joking with students. A teacher might be sternly raising his voice and demanding that students try harder. A teacher might be taking the students for a walk outside or administering an extremely difficult and grueling exam. If these teachers are all genuinely trying to help their students, they are teaching nonviolence.

Part 2: Nonviolence as subject matter

It is not possible to give a comprehensive list of the incredible range of activities that can be used to teach about nonviolence. The best I can offer is a few concrete examples from my English classes and my own experiences as a teacher. I teach first and second year compulsory English classes at Momoyama University in Osaka, Japan. Of course I sometimes get diverted, but as much as possible I try to follow the path of nonviolence.

Choosing nonviolent materials

I rely heavily on authentic materials, specifically hip-hop music and film. In choosing an appropriate song I look carefully to find lyrics that are nonviolent. My favorite song to use in class is *Where is the love?* by the Black Eyed Peas (Black Eyed Peas, 2003). Through its denunciation of violence it contains a very positive and nonviolent message. Out of the thousands of films I could choose, I always come back to Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (Attenborough, 1982). It is effective for introducing the students to world Englishes, and teaching them about one of the world's greatest nonviolent practitioners.

Memorization of nonviolent quotations

I often have my students memorize various nonviolent quotations from Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Buddhist texts and other sources. It was rewarding to hear hundreds of students reciting the following quotation from the *Dhammapada*: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow which never leaves him." (Buddha, 300BC). By committing these words to memory, students are hopefully also absorbing their nonviolent message.

Moral Skits

One semester for the final assessment I had my students create and perform skits in English with a moral message. Through their performance they had to answer the question: How can we make the world a better place? Through creation of their skits they had to think about this question, discuss it with their peers, and come up with an answer. In the performances, they were able to share their answers with the rest of their classmates.

Evaluation

I have a small quiz at the beginning of each class. Students are responsible for taking the quiz of course, but also for checking their own work and recording their own scores. I have the students repeat after me, "I promise to take my quiz fairly," and after that I trust them completely and make no effort to prevent cheating. Furthermore, some of the quizzes are based on performance, recitation, or pronunciation, (for example, performing a line from the song *Where is the love?* in perfect time with the original), and the grading is somewhat subjective. In these cases, I often allow the students to evaluate themselves and award themselves the points they feel they deserve.

It is standard practice to watch students closely during evaluations to prevent against any cheating. Underlying this practice though is the assumption that students will cheat if given a chance. This assumption is in itself and act of violence. I think it is this assumption that leads some students to cheat in the first place. People often rise or fall to the expectations placed upon them.

Fortunately, it is still possible to use familiar educational structures to teach nonviolence. By using this familiar quiz structure, with the unfamiliar twist of trusting the students completely, I am hoping to raise their awareness of nonviolence.

After trying this system for a year, I gave an informal survey and asked about two hundred students anonymously if they took their quizzes fairly. They simply had to circle "yes" or "no". Unanimously they circled "yes" and many even penciled in "of course".

Experiential Learning

It is beneficial to think and talk about nonviolence, but it is far more meaningful to practice nonviolence. I have been very fortunate in my teaching situation to have the opportunity to organize several experiential learning programs. I have taken students for various volunteer work projects, from picking up trash for an hour in the local park, to spending a week shoveling snow for the elderly residents of an isolated village in rural Gifu, Japan. These projects had a natural language-learning component, because the participants were from several different countries. Exchange students from abroad could practice Japanese while Japanese students could practice English or other languages. More importantly, they could all work together to practice nonviolence.

Of course, these are all highly specific and personal teaching techniques. I hope that they give you some ideas of activities that may be applicable in your teaching situations for teaching nonviolence.

Part 3: Nonviolent teaching practices

Nonviolent teaching practices are even more important than nonviolent subject matter, and they can be used by all teachers of any subject. In the hands of a successful nonviolent teacher, any subject matter can be used to teach nonviolence. To give

structure to the complex subject of nonviolent teaching practices, I have centered my ideas around four quotations from some of history's greatest nonviolent thinkers, Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh.
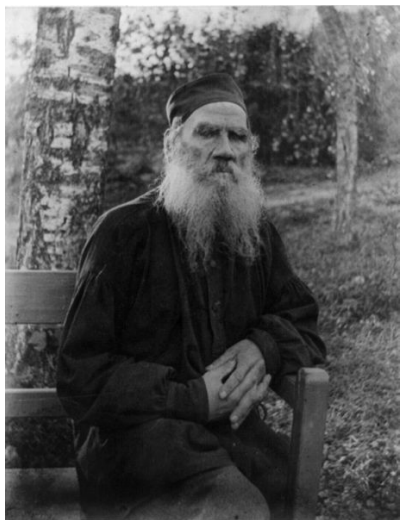
"There is only one time that is important-Now! It is the most important time because it is the only time when we have any power. The most necessary man is he with who you are, for no man knows whether he will ever have dealings with any one else: and the most important affair is, to do him good, because for that purpose alone was man sent into this life!"(Tolstoy, 2009)

-Leo Tolstoy
Three questions

Tolstoy (2009) was a Christian who saw god manifested in all acts of kindness and love between humans. Tolstoy's definition of "god" and the contemporary definition of nonviolence are similar. There is ample evidence of this in his short stories, such as *What men live by* (Tolstoy, 2009), and also in his nonfiction works such as *The kingdom of god is within you* (Tolstoy, 2011).

The above quote is from his short story *Three questions* in which a king attempts to find the answers to the following: What is the most important time? Who are the most important people? What is the most important work? A hermit who lives alone in the mountains shows the king the answers: the most important time is now, the most important people are the people you are with, and the most important work is to them good (Tolstoy, 2009).

Imagine a Spanish teacher. Let's call her Juanita. It is Friday afternoon and she is teaching the last class of the week. Her mind is already in her car driving away from the school on her way to meet a friend for dinner. She and this friend had an argument yesterday, and she is nervous but eager to speak with her to apologize and resolve their conflict. She watches each minute of the class slowly tick by.

This is a subtle form of violence against herself and her students. She has disengaged

from the present moment, and in doing so disengaged from herself and from the class. I suspect that all teachers have experienced this, and we will likely experience it again. But we can observe it in ourselves when we feel it happening try to do the opposite, by consciously returning ourselves to the present moment.

Within that present moment, the most important people are the people who are with you. The more she dwells on it, the more Juanita regrets what she said to her friend yesterday. This guilt about an event that happened in the past causes her to suffer. The students will sense this and they will also suffer because she will be unable to teach them with all of her energy. Nonviolence offers a way out. She can recognize her mind wandering towards other people, to the past and to the future, and consciously bring herself back to the present moment and to the students in front of her. The only connection that matters at that particular moment is her connection with her students.

While in the present moment, engaged with the people who are with you, the final nonviolent step is to do them good. Their happiness is also our happiness. Juanita's students are also tired after a long week. Their minds are also wandering in and out of the present, as they mentally begin their weekends. Juanita's job as a teacher requires her not only to bring herself back into the present, but to bring the students back into the present. If the students are not engaged in the lesson she laboriously prepared, it is time to change and improvise. She must constantly ask herself: what can I do to help these students? By asking this question deeply, and by honestly looking for the answer, she will return to the present moment, forget about her past regrets and future anxieties and reestablish her connection with the students. She will be helping them and she will be helping herself.

Ideally, all of us would practice nonviolence in every moment of our lives with every person we encounter. This is a noble goal to strive towards but exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, consciously practicing nonviolence for a 45 or 90 minute class period is not at all unrealistic. While teaching, we can mentally ask ourselves these questions: Am I engaged in the present moment? Am I focused on the students? Am I doing what is best for them? By asking these questions, and adjusting our thoughts and actions so that we can answer them in the affirmative we are on the path towards teaching nonviolence. If we practice regularly, these questions will become unconscious. As we have more success in teaching nonviolence for a single class period, we will begin to be able to practice nonviolence in other aspects of our daily lives.
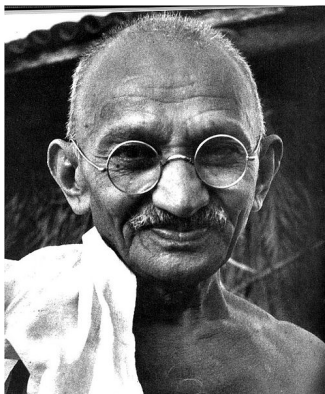
"Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual training through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher." (Gandhi, 1927, p. 283)

-**Mahatma Gandhi**
An autobiography: The story of my experiments with truth

Mahatma Gandhi (1927) wrote these words describing his attempt to organize education for the young people living on Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. (As evidenced by the name of Gandhi's experimental community, we can see how he was greatly influenced and inspired by Tolstoy's nonviolent thinking.) Students were taught vocational and physical skills through labor and chores, and intellectual and academic subjects through books and other traditional methods. The training of the spirit required something else.

Gandhi was speaking of the spirit in the broad terms. If we define the spirit as our internal thoughts, emotions, and intentions, then all people have a spirit, whether they are theists or atheists, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or of any other religious faith. Just as we need to exercise our physical bodies and intellectual minds, we also need to exercise our spirits.

For example, one simple spiritual exercise is to acknowledge negative emotions and try to convert them into positive emotions. Imagine a teacher who begins each class by greeting each student. Let's call him Dmitry. Instead of sitting at the front of the room calling role and somberly checking names off a list, Dmitry is on his feet with a set of cards with each student's name. As he calls the name, the students who are present raise their hand. He approaches them, greets them, and asks, "How are you?" He reminds himself to look into their eyes and ask them this question because he genuinely wants to know the answer, not simply because he wants them to practice English.

One of his students slept for two hours last night after washing dishes in a restaurant. On many levels he is exhausted and would rather be home and asleep. His first

inclination is to answer, "I'm exhausted." However, Dmitry has encouraged his students to answer this question positively, using a word such as "wonderful", "fantastic", or "amazing". He is not encouraging them to lie. He is encouraging them to look into themselves, and find the portion of their being which is genuinely wonderful, fantastic or amazing. However small that portion may be at a particular time, everyone has it within them. Dmitry is encouraging students to exercise their spirit by thinking positively and answering the question honestly.

Writing about education of the spirit, Gandhi also went on to say "It would be idle for me, if I were a liar, to teach boys [and girls] to tell the truth." (p. 283) Similarly, if Dmitry encourages his students to think positively, he must also think positively. That classroom should be the place that he wants to be. The students should be the people that he wants to interact with. The work he is doing should be the work that he wants to do.

Obviously, thinking this positively at all times is difficult. It is also difficult to run a marathon or to get a PhD in quantum mechanics. If people work towards these goals, they will become stronger in the process and hopefully they will be able to attain their goals someday. A single class can be seen as a session for exercising the spirit. Some sessions will be more effective than others, but if teachers approach class with the intention of exercising their spirit, in other words training themselves to think positively, then they are on the path to teaching nonviolence.
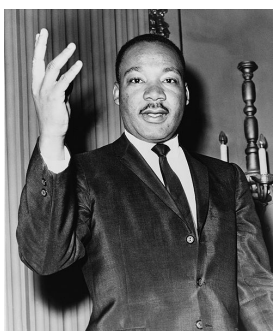
"In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action." (King, 1963, p. 189)

-Martin Luther King Jr.
Letter from a Birmingham jail

Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) wrote this letter from a jail cell after being arrested for leading a protest for civil rights. In his case, he was fighting against racial injustice in Birmingham, Alabama. As teachers, in a position of power, we must consider whether

we are a source of injustice in our classrooms.

An injustice that I have sadly committed is a negative feeling towards a particular student. Let's call him Kenji. Kenji consistently arrives late to class without preparing anything. He talks disruptively with the people around him, and he tries to surreptitiously send emails on his mobile phone. These behaviors are clearly not constructive and need to be addressed, but occasionally I have found myself with a feeling of anger towards Kenji himself as a person. This may be a natural response and yet it is a violent injustice.

The injustice identified, I must negotiate with myself. Am I doing something that is causing Kenji to behave in this way? How can I help Kenji to constructively modify his behavior? How can I structure my class to benefit him more? How can I address my internal thoughts to prevent myself from getting angry with him as a person?

The next step is self-purification. When I know that I will be seeing Kenji in the next class I take specific and concrete steps to prepare myself. Personally, I like to go outside, even if only for one minute. Breathing deeply and slowly, I imagine greeting Kenji with compassion.

Finally, I am ready to take direct-action in the classroom. Even if he is late, I greet Kenji, not only a smile but with a genuinely positive emotion. It may not work perfectly, but I will try my best. If I lose my temper and get angry with Kenji I can always try again in the next class.

The stage of self-purification will be different for every teacher, but it is of profound importance. It may be quietly drinking a cup of coffee, telling jokes with coworkers, watering plants, watching a favorite video on the internet, or whatever else needed to mentally prepare for a class. If I have not materially prepared for class then I may be faced with a difficult choice: do I prepare materials by hurriedly making photocopies or do I prepare my mind by engaging in self-purification?

The worst case scenario would be for me to frantically make photocopies, jam the machine, then begin kicking it and screaming obscenities at it and in the process, knock the coffee machine on to copy machine burning myself and destroying both machines in the process.

The best case scenario would be to combine the material preparations and the self-purification, calmly making as many copies as time allowed, but maintaining a peaceful and productive state of mind throughout. If the copy machine jams, I should lovingly try to fix it, caring for it deeply as an important tool of teaching. While tenderly taking out crumpled and ink-stained handouts, I breathe deeply and eagerly anticipate my upcoming class and my chance to meet Kenji. Thinking about Kenji does not detract from the bliss of the present moment that I am sharing with the jammed copy machine. Because I am contemplating the future with joy and positive intentions, it only adds to my happiness in the present moment.

Of course the best case scenario may not be possible. If I have a class with Kenji coming up and I don't have my copies made, and if I don't have the strength that day to combine self-purification and photocopying, I will opt for the former. I would rather completely change my plans and improvise an entire lesson, than walk into the class feeling irritated, rushed, isolated from others, and disassociated from the present. I have a nonviolent state of mind in the present moment somehow I will be able to teach nonviolence.

"In meditation also, we act according to the principle of nonviolence. This is because I know that I am happiness and that I am also suffering…we must have a nonviolent attitude with regard to our suffering, our pain. We must take care of our suffering the way we would take care of our own baby." (Hahn, 2006, p. 71-72)

-Thich Nhat Hahn
True love: A practice for awakening the heart

As a Buddhist, Thich Nhat Hahn advises us to be nonviolent to others and to ourselves (Hahn, 2006). To teach nonviolence, we must be able not only to forgive our students when they make mistakes, but also to forgive ourselves.

In the case of the hypothetical student Kenji, despite my best efforts at self-purification,

confronted with Kenji disrupting yet another class, I still might get exasperated and allow anger to arise within me. This anger will cause me to suffer, but I must deal with that suffering nonviolently. I must acknowledge the suffering and turn it into something constructive.

I have yet to meet a teacher who has never had a difficult class. Instead of being discouraged we can try to learn from these difficult experiences. In Buddhist thinking everything is interconnected and apparent opposites are really just part of a united whole. Our capacity to commit violence only exists because we also have the capacity to commit nonviolence. If we commit violence in a class, even just by thinking a negative though, we can recognize our error and strive to do the opposite in the next class. One of the wonderful things about being a teacher is that we will almost always have a chance to try again.

Take an imaginary teacher named Joanne for instance. Before class, she was looking on the internet and she stumbled upon an article called *Teaching Nonviolence*. She thought it was a bit idealistic and laughed skeptically as she read it, but nonetheless, she thought she would give some of the ideas a try. Joanne turned off the computer and stood by the window. Breathing deeply, she tried to focus on the present moment, and feel her profound connection with everything. Instead of thinking of the upcoming class as just another class, she encouraged herself to think of the class as a wonderfully important and meaningful event, a chance for her to exercise her spirit and to practice nonviolence.

Feeling exalted, she takes a last sip of tea and walks into the class with a smile. Kenji is on time, for once, and the moment their eyes meet, he looks at her with utter contempt, dramatically slouches back in his chair with an audible sigh, takes out his phone and starts composing a text message. Joanne feels a surge of anger, snatches the phone out of his hand, and hurls it out of the open window where it falls three stories and shatters on the parking lot. She decides that teaching nonviolence may be a great theory, but something that she can never do. Feeling that she has failed as a teacher she suffers deeply.

This of course is not the nonviolent solution. Breaking the phone is violent, but even more violent and potentially destructive is the doubt that Joanne allows to pervade her thoughts. She must deal with her own emotions and actions nonviolently. The phone is

broken and Kenji is likely to be upset. But that is all in the past. The important question is what does she do from now?

If she takes a nonviolent attitude towards her suffering, she can recognize that she is suffering because she has allowed self-doubt to pervade her thoughts. As she would care for her own crying baby, she must care for this suffering. She is experiencing self-doubt because she made a mistake and overreacted. What direct actions can she take to remedy that situation? She may have to apologize to Kenji and to the administration. She may have to buy him a new phone. As long as she is taking constructive actions, no matter how violent her actions in previous classes, she will be back on the path to teaching nonviolence.

Conclusion

At this moment you are on the path of nonviolence. Don't worry if you occasionally stray from it. You have the chance to walk on this path in every class with every student, and in every moment with every person you meet. Please enjoy every step of the journey of nonviolence.

Notes:

1   Dr. Michal Nagler of the University of California in Berkeley is one of the leading contemporary scholars of nonviolence. His courses, *Introduction to nonviolence* and *Nonviolence today*, are available through the Metta Center for Nonviolence website at: http://www.mettacenter.org/nv/resources/courses.

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Images

All images from *Wikipedia.* [online]. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page.

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Some practical issues in the design and operation of item bank calibrations. An experience in the context of Basque language assessment

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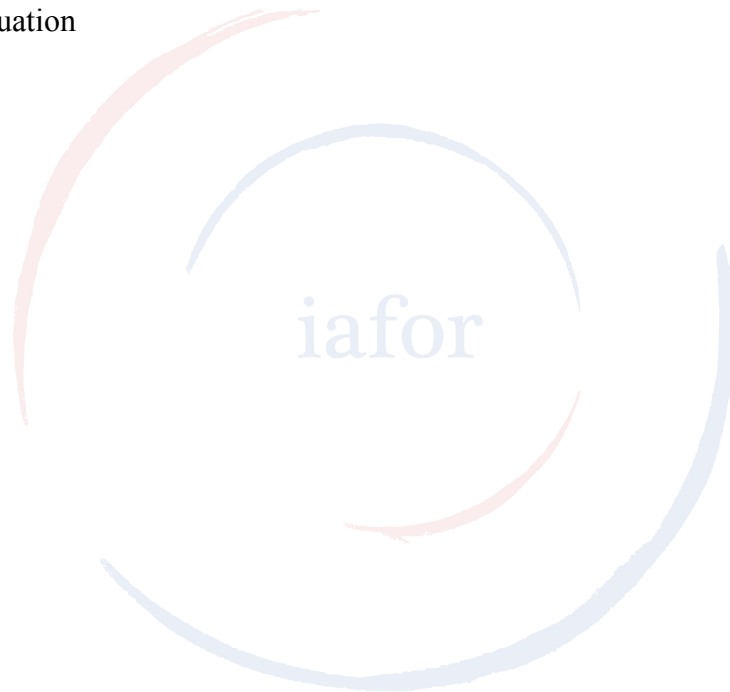
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Abstract

The developers of online language learning systems must be aware that every new learner has a different level of knowledge. Implementing Computer Adaptive Tests (CATs) is just one way to place incoming students at their appropriate level in the program. CATs emulate the intelligent behaviour of human evaluators because, depending on the previous responses given by the examinee, they dynamically select and administer the most appropriate items. In order for a CAT to be successful, these items have to be calibrated, which means that some parameters, such as their difficulty, must be previously estimated.

This paper presents our experience after having calibrated an item bank for the assessment of the Basque language. This item bank will feed the CAT generator that is intended to be the entry point to ELSA/Hezinet, an adaptive hypermedia system currently used for Basque language learning. The calibration process has been done in two complementary ways: guided by experts and by applying the psychometrical methodology.

We discuss some issues related to the calibration of the item bank that emerged from this work and that might be of interest to those who want to implement their own CAT generator. Some of the points treated here are the suitability of CATs for the assessment of a language, the assessment of the characteristics of the items (such as their quality or dimensionality), and main decisions to determine which calibration process best fits one's needs.

1. Introduction

Most educational systems are provided with a mechanism that assesses the progress of the students while acquiring knowledge. This is something critical to identify the success or the failure during the learning process. Actually, the developers of e-learning systems in general, and online language learning tools in particular, have to be aware of the fact that every new learner has their own level of knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to place the students at their corresponding stage, so they can progress properly as they interact with the e-learning system. Otherwise, students could get discouraged and lose interest.

Implementing Computer Adaptive Tests (CATs - Wainer, 2000) is just one way to place incoming students at their appropriate level in the program. Some e-learning systems and educative programs are based on this kind of adaptive evaluation, for instance, Cito's tests

of Dutch as first and second language (Eggen, 2003); eCAT, which assesses the written English level of Spanish speakers (Olea et al., 2004); Geroline, a Web-based course for beginner German (Heift and Schulze, 2003); ELSA/Hezinet, an adaptive hypermedia system for the Basque language learning (López-Cuadrado, 2008); and the TOEFL computerized placement test (Wainer and Wang, 2000).

CATs emulate the intelligent behaviour of human evaluators. In fact, they select and administer the next item dynamically, depending on the previous responses given by the examinees (i.e. those that really provide useful information about student's ability). One can find different theories that support the generation of CATs, as the Sequential Probability Ratio Test (Reckase, 1983), the combination of granularity hierarchies and Bayesian nets (Collins et al., 1996) or the Measurement Decision Theory (Rudner, 2002). However, the most used framework for computerized adaptive testing is the Item Response Theory (IRT - Lord, 1980), an item-oriented background that offers models that associate the ability of the examinee with the probability of a correct response. To choose the proper item from the bank, the CAT algorithm needs to know the values of some psychometric characteristics (called parameters) that feature the items. In terms of the IRT, this means that the item bank must be calibrated according to some model.

The most used IRT models are the 1-parameter logistic model (1PL - Rasch, 1960), which characterizes an assessment item by its difficulty, and the 3-parameter logistic model (3PL - Birnbaum, 1968), which also manages items' discriminative power together with the guessing probability. Both models are one-dimensional, since they take just one trait into account, concretely the ability that the items measure. However, to ensure the item bank will work properly, it is necessary to explicitly verify this and other IRT-related properties that will be discussed later, in section 4.

This paper is organized as follows: next section introduces the most used ways to carry out an item bank calibration, that is, using statistical procedures and with the help of experts; section 3 presents our experience calibrating an item bank for the assessment of the Basque language, both under the guidance of a set of experts and by applying the psychometrical (statistical) methodology. Section 4 summarizes the lessons learned during these developments and discusses some issues related to the calibration of our item bank that might be of interest to those who want to implement their own CAT. Finally, section 5 draws the main conclusions.

2. The item bank calibration

The calibration of an item bank consists in determining the values for the item parameters, in terms of the chosen IRT model. The two most common ways to obtain these estimations are based on statistical methods and the judgement given by a set of experts. The former, which in this context will be called IRT calibration, allows obtaining not only the difficulty of every item in the scale used by the IRT, but also their discriminative power and guessing factor. The expert-based calibration, the latter one, is recommendable to estimate only the difficulty of the items, since the measurement of the other parameters can be complicated, but it can be applied in wider contexts rather than IRT-based computerized adaptive testing.

The first step of an IRT calibration consists in gathering the responses given to the items by a large group of examinees, so that item parameters can be statistically estimated. If the 1PL model is used, a minimum of 100 or 200 responses per item is required (Wright and Stone, 1979), whereas a sample of at least 500 individuals is recommended for the 3PL model (Bunderson et al., 1989). To perform such a dense task (many items, many individuals), and also because of security matters, it is recommended to distribute the evaluation items into several test forms (called subtests) and apply them separately. These subtests should share a number of items, which are called anchor items. Once the subtests have been administered to hundreds of individuals, parameter estimates can be computed statistically and then, thanks to the existence of the anchor items, equated in a common scale (Kolen and Brennan, 1995). When planning an anchor design, it is very important to select a set of anchor items that is representative of the whole item bank, and to distribute the items in a proper way to obtain subtests that share the same specifications about both content distribution and proportions.

Expert-based calibration is useful when authoring and calibration processes are done using separate roles. This kind of calibration consists in asking one or more experts in the field to give their personal, subjective, estimations for the item parameters. According to the literature (Arruabarrena et al., 2003), it is recommended to gather responses from 5 to 7 experts per item. The expert-based calibration is suitable for the 1PL model, which handles only the difficulty of the items and can be considered as a variation of the 3PL in which both the discriminative power and the guessing factor are constant and equal, respectively, to 1 and 0. Once the questionnaires have been created and distributed, the responses should be gathered and filtered. It is very important to reach a minimum of 5 answers per item. Only then, the difficulty for each item can be computed, for instance, by maximum consensus or by a bounded mean estimator.

3. Our experience

We have calibrated an item bank for the assessment of the Basque language by following two parallel calibration processes: Cal-Exp, an expert-based calibration intended to obtain difficulty estimates for the items (Arruabarrena et al., 2010), and Cal-IRT, an IRT-based calibration based on the 3PL model (López-Cuadrado et al., 2010).

Cal-IRT performed two types of subtest administration: first, supervised sessions, which were carried out in laboratories at schools, academies and universities, and second, non-supervised administrations, in which volunteers completed a subtest through the Internet by their own. During supervised sessions the administrator was responsible for assigning the examinees an identification code (IC), so every individual would be identified and attached to a session. The supervisor also had to control whether the examinees matched some conditions of administration and, therefore, invalidate those that had not met them. Thus, whenever a group of supervised test form administrations finished successfully, both the laboratory session and the administration of the set of subtests had to be validated. In contrast, the individuals that filled up a subtest not linked to a supervised session were required to use their e-mail address or telephone number as IC. Furthermore, this IC was

later used to contact every anonymous volunteer and determine whether the conditions had been satisfactory or not, that is to say, to decide if the test administration had to be validated or rejected. Subsequently, any incomplete application was rejected, as well as those test forms having an unknown, invalid or meaningless IC, and those answered by individuals having acknowledged that they had completed their subtest without paying much attention, by chance, just to try the application, with continuous interruptions or even with some extra help.

Cal-Exp was also carried out in two stages: initially, the questionnaires were delivered and fetched face-to-face, directly to-from experts' workplace, but later we decided to send and receive them by post, once we had previously contacted them by phone or e-mail. Experts were required to provide three pieces of information per item: the correct answer of the item and their subjective estimates for its difficulty and its learning skill. Asking for more than simply the difficulty of the items was useful to detect anomalous situations, i.e. items that were answered incorrectly by an expert and items assessing an unclear learning skill.

At the present time we are working in the development of a calibration supporting tool that is expected to guide educators and content developers during the decisions needed to be made in the progress of the calibration (Armendariz et al., 2009). Either it is an expert-based or an IRT-based process, the help tool will show the user how the most significant variables of the process are related and how changes in one of them could affect the others.

4. Lessons learned

This section summarizes the lessons learned after having finished the two calibration processes regarding the item bank for the assessment of the Basque language.

4.1. Lesson learned 1:

The items to be calibrated should be of quality, up to date and homogeneously distributed along the difficulty scale.

This issue is critical in the particular case in which the resulting calibrated items are intended to feed a CAT, because these tests administer significantly fewer items than the ordinary paper-and-pencil trials. This means that much trust is placed in every single item. Moreover, the operation of the CAT depends on the answers given to any previously applied item, so the effects of including an erroneous or incorrectly functioning item in the bank could be critical. In addition, if the items are not homogeneously distributed along the difficulty scale, the CAT will not be able to deal with any possible response pattern, unless new items are calibrated and added to the bank.

The Basque language is continuously evolving since new regulations appear regularly trying to unify the dialects into a common language. Our initial item bank for the assessment of the Basque language was rather old, so we expected that some of the items would not be up to date due to the non-fulfilment of some recent grammatical rules. Thus, to ensure the correctness of the items, each of them was analysed by 2~4 reviewers, all of

which were either philologists or Basque linguists. After gathering their reports, a total of 265 mistakes were identified. Most of them were insignificant and their correction was automatic, essentially because they related to a typo and/or to the non-fulfilment of some punctuation or spelling rule. However, 76 severe errors affecting 56 items were found. They were, for instance, items that presented more than one possible correct answer, violations of new grammatical rules, ambiguities or lack of accuracy in the statement, even response options that, depending on the context, were all incorrect. Thanks to the contribution of the reviewers, most of these mistakes were rectified.

After having calibrated the item bank, we have found out that it will work better when assessing individuals with a low-middle level of knowledge of Basque language, since the distribution of the items was denser in these levels. As a result, we have planned to calibrate and include new items with high difficulty in order to obtain accurate ability estimates when assessing proficient examinees.

4.2. Lesson learned 2

Even then, 10~20% items will be removed for not passing the IRT model-fit analyses.

During a CAT-based assessment few items are administered, which is why the effect of erroneous items is especially critical. For this reason, it is necessary to remove from the bank any item that is inappropriate either from a didactic point of view or from the psychometrical perspective. The former can be found, for instance, thanks to the work carried out by the experts, whereas the latter can only be identified by means of reliability analyses of the responses gathered in the subtest administration stage. Some of these statistical studies are the identification of anomalous response patterns, classical reliability analyses such as the values of Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman–Brown coefficient computed to obtain the item-subtest correlation, item differential functioning analyses, the computing of goodness-of-fit indicators, and the assessment of unidimensionality. However, in the case of item banks that assess knowledge on a given language, in most cases the verification of the restriction of unidimensionality, which is imposed by the IRT model, causes no problem.

In the case of the Cal-Exp calibration, we defined some criteria to filter unreliable items and to preserve the quality of expert contributions. For instance, "*an item is not discarded, if at least 50% of the experts answer it correctly*" and "*a questionnaire completed by an expert is discarded if more than 25% of the given answers are wrong*" were included in the set of conditions. These criteria were used to build three data sieves that were consecutively applied. As a consequence of the filtering stage, 60 items were labelled "to be removed from the bank", as well as 5 complete questionnaires.

Similarly, as a result of the reliability analyses conducted in Cal-IRT, 46 items were removed from the bank for either having an item-subtest correlation value close to zero or presenting some differential functioning.

The results of these analyses imply that more than the 17% of the initial set of items should be discarded, which is an amount halfway between the 10% removed during the calibration

of the eCat item bank (Olea et al., 1996) and the 25% invalidated during the calibration, in similar conditions, of a bank used to assess school contents (García et al., 1999).

4.3. Lesson learned 3

Lessons learned 1 and 2 imply that the number of items to be calibrated should be large enough to (1) ensure a minimum of them pass the IRT model-fit analysis, and (2) minimize overexposure problems.

The fact that even one fifth of your initial item bank could disappear while calibrating is an important piece of information to take into account, particularly if you want to build a reliable and efficient CAT. So, it is important to begin a calibration process having an initial set of items significantly larger than the foreseen one.

Furthermore, as time goes, and more and more examinees are assessed by the CAT, overexposure problems can arise. This means that psychometrically better items are administered very frequently while not so good items are hardly ever used. As a consequence, the majority of the CATs generated will share most of their items, whose confidentiality will be quickly compromised. There are several modifications of the CAT algorithm that minimize the effect of this problem (see, for instance, Eggen, 2001), but there is no doubt that having a larger item bank will also help.

4.4. Lesson learned 4

Use an expert-based calibration for the model 1PL.

The difficulty estimates obtained through a psychometrical IRT-based calibration is comparable to the results of an expert-based calibration, provided that a minimum of 7 experts are enquired (Arruabarrena, 2010). There are not statistically significant differences in the difficulty values obtained by the different calibration procedures for the same item bank.

Since similar results are obtained when only the difficulty of the items is needed, it is better to carry out an expert-based process. The reason is that using experts is cheaper and consumes less time and human resources than implementing an IRT-based calibration (Arruabarrena, 2010). Taking as the starting point the costs related to both Cal-Exp and Cal-IRT, we have extrapolated them for different item bank sizes, and concluded that the costs difference, in terms of time, human resources and money, is larger as the number of items to be calibrated increases.

4.5. Lesson learned 5

When conducting an expert-based calibration, (1) be careful when selecting the set of experts, (2) contact them by (e-)mail, and (3) validate the results.

Before attempting an expert-based calibration, it is very important not only to ensure that a set of experts will be available for that purpose, but also that the so-called experts are

actually expert in the field. Otherwise, unreliable estimates will surely be obtained. Notice that an expert is someone that knows about the language that is assessed, but the other way round is not always true. In Cal-Exp, questionnaires were administered to both linguists and pedagogues, all them having experience in Basque language education.

Our experience says that, although the first contact should be face-to-face, once the working conditions have been established, it is better to contact them by (e-)mail. It is also recommendable, when possible, to contact an extra amount of experts to let them complete less questionnaires, because overloading a small number of people with too much work will imply a higher abandonment rate, especially if the experts are volunteers and therefore they are not paid for their service.

Finally, the results must be filtered and validated by means of some known estimators or indexes. In the case of the Cal-Exp calibration, we used Cohen's Kappa index to ensure that the inter-rate reliability of experts in their difficulty estimations was good.

4.6. Lesson learned 6

Use an IRT-calibration for the model 3PL.

If the items to be calibrated are true/false or multiple-choice questions, there is no need of experts to estimate their guessing parameters in a reasonably accurate way. Actually, assuming that all options are equally plausible, the actual values will be close to $1/n$ (where n is the number of response choices of the item): that is, 0.5 for a true/false question, 0.33 for a multiple-choice item with 3 options, and so on. However, for other types of assessment items, such as open-ended questions or checklists, it becomes very difficult to manually obtain estimates for their guessing parameters.

The same thing happens with the discriminative parameter, which is related to how well the item is able to differentiate examinees of slightly different ability. This value can hardly be estimated, unless some statistical procedure is applied. For this reason, if one wants to calibrate an item bank following the model 3PL, the method to be used is the one based on the IRT.

4.7. Lesson learned 7

When conducting an IRT-based calibration, (1) organize supervised laboratory sessions, (2) administer subtests to similar groups, and (3) use specific software for statistical tasks.

During the process Cal-IRT, the subtests were administered in two complementary ways. First, supervised sessions were performed in schools, academies and universities, and second, in non-supervised subtest administrations volunteers were allowed to complete a test without supervision.

To decide which way is the best to be applied in future IRT-based calibrations, not only costs in terms of time and resources should be taken into account, but also the implications of the validation criteria and the abandonment rate. Actually, in the case of Cal-IRT, 40%

of the individuals that started a non-supervised administration either did not finish it or failed to pass the validation process. In contrast, this rate was smaller than 3.5% when there was someone supervising the fulfilment of the subtest. This is why we consider that it is better, when possible, to arrange supervised laboratory sessions rather than allowing non-supervised subtest administrations.

The administration stage is probably the hardest one during the item bank calibration. It requires time and effort to apply so many items to many individuals, so it is necessary to dedicate much time to the design and administration of the subtests. As we have pointed out in Section 2, it is desirable all the subtests to be as similar as possible, and also the characteristics of the subtests and the item bank to be comparable (i.e. each one should cover all the levels of difficulty and knowledge in the same proportion). Moreover, each subtest should be applied to homogeneous groups with heterogeneous levels of knowledge.

Finally, one can find specialized software that is helpful to automatically carry out some of the statistical studies and tasks related to an IRT-based calibration. For instance, in the case of Cal-IRT, PRELIS (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993b) and LISREL (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993a) were used in the study of unidimensionality, as well as the program XCALIBRE (ASC, 1997), which computed the item parameter estimations and analysed the data-to-model fit.

5. Conclusions

The systems that use Computerized Adaptive Tests aim to measure the level of knowledge of the students in a specific domain by emulating the intelligent behaviour of human evaluators. In other words, these tests dynamically select the most appropriate item depending on the examinee's performance during the test. This means that if they give a correct answer then the next question will be slightly more difficult, whereas incorrect answers will be followed by easier items.

Nowadays CATs are used to assess almost any educational area (López-Cuadrado, 2008), from musical aptitudes to the level of English as foreign language. This kind of tests is suitable for language learning, since they give accurate results by administering few items. Actually, many of the existing CATs are related to the measurement of knowledge on certain language, like Cito's tests of Dutch as first and second language, eCAT, which assesses the written English level of Spanish speakers, Geroline, a Web-based course for beginner German, ELSA/Hezinet, an adaptive hypermedia system for the Basque language learning, and the TOEFL computerized placement test.

The IRT provides very powerful techniques to carry out the evaluation, particularly when using CATs, but it imposes significant constraints. The most important one has to do with the fact that, to identify the proper item from the item bank during a CAT administration, the implemented algorithm needs some parameters to be available, i.e. difficulty if the 1PL model is used, and difficulty, discrimination and guessing factor in the case of the 3PL model. The process in which these values are estimated is called calibration, and it can be done in two different ways: establishing the values of the parameters basing on judgements

from multiple experts, or using statistical procedures to obtain them from a sample of item administrations.

This paper has presented some lessons learned from the experience of having calibrated by both ways an item bank for the assessment of knowledge on Basque language, which we expect to be useful to those attempting to calibrate their own item banks.

The items to be calibrated should be of quality, up to date and homogeneously distributed along the difficulty scale. Even then, 10~20% items will be discarded for not passing the IRT model-fit analyses. This implies that the number of items to be calibrated should be large enough not only to ensure a minimum of them pass the IRT model-fit analysis, but also to minimize overexposure problems.

An expert-based calibration is recommended if the 1PL model is used to feature the items. In this case, it is important to carefully select the set of experts. We recommend any communication to be made by post or e-mail, and to methodically validate the answers given by the experts, discarding them when necessary.

An IRT-based calibration is the only choice for the 3PL model, mainly due to the difficulty in judging the discriminative power of the items. When conducting such a calibration, it is better to organize supervised laboratory sessions than to allow non-supervised subtest administrations. However, depending on the availability of human resources, this will not always be possible to achieve. If subtests need to be defined, it is important to arrange them carefully and administer them to similar groups of people. Finally, specific software such as PRELIS/LISREL or XCALIBRE is available to carry out statistical tasks that would be very hard to do otherwise, especially for those who do not have skills in psychometrics.

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Learning a Word:
From Receptive to Productive Vocabulary Use

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Learning a word: From receptive to productive vocabulary use

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary size has been the primary focus of recent vocabulary research (see, e.g., Nation 2001; Webb 2008; Zimmerman 2004). However, size alone does not make the vocabulary available for use, which shows that vocabulary knowledge is more than meaning and form of a word. Depth of vocabulary knowledge is also an essential part of the learners' language use (Read 2007; Ishii & Schmitt 2009). While size and depth are important indicators of a learner's vocabulary knowledge, they may not fully reflect the complex nature of vocabulary knowledge. Henriksen (1999) defined vocabulary knowledge as a multi-dimensional construct, comprising: (1) the partial-to-precise dimension; (2) the depth dimension; and (3) the receptive-productive dimension. The first two dimensions are associated with vocabulary knowledge comprehension while the third dimension reveals the ability of using the comprehended vocabulary knowledge. In order to understand the development of vocabulary knowledge from receptive to productive use, the partial-to-precise and depth dimensions should be included. The present paper will present the definition of vocabulary knowledge as a multi-dimensional construct and review the research into receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge development under this multi-dimensional framework. In addition, the paper will discuss, from the research findings, how the three dimensions should be integrated to understanding of vocabulary knowledge acquisition and the implications for vocabulary teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary knowledge is an essential part of literacy skills (Pulido & Hambrick 2008). The research into vocabulary development has received increasing attention in the second language acquisition (SLA) research in the last twenty years (Haastrup & Henriksen 2001; Meara 2002). Understanding the vocabulary knowledge and its development process contributes to the understanding of how second language (L2) learners process and produce the language. The research into vocabulary development in size (Laufer 1998; Laufer & Goldstein 2004; Webb 2008), depth (Tseng & Schmitt 2008; Pigada & Schmitt 2006; Waring 2002) and receptive to productive use (Laufer & Nation 1995; Henriksen & Haastrup 2000) has shown that the development on vocabulary knowledge is an incremental process (Henriksen 1999; Schmitt 1998, 2000). Knowing a word involves understanding of numerous aspects of the Vocabulary knowledge which is a multidimensional and complex construct (Henriksen 1999; Nation 2001; Read 2000).

VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE AS A MULTI DIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCT

Vocabulary knowledge, also referred to as lexical knowledge (Laufer & Goldstein 2004) and word knowledge (Laufer 1990), has been defined either as comprising of a number of very different sub-knowledge components (Laufer 1990; Nation 1990, 2001; Richards 1976; Ringbom 1987) or as a continuum of progressive degrees of knowledge (Faerch et al. 1984; Palmberg 1987).

When vocabulary knowledge is considered as a range of inter-related aspects of knowledge, researchers (Nation 1990, 2001; Richards 1976; Ringbom 1987) propose that knowing a word involves knowing the knowledge of the spoken and written form, morphological knowledge, knowledge of word meaning, collocational and grammatical knowledge, connotative and associational knowledge, and the knowledge of social or other constraints in use. In this definition, a better understanding could be drawn on how well a word is mastered because the tests target several components of knowledge. However, the number of words that can be tested is limited and the test therefore contains a small representative range of the vocabulary the test takers have (Laufer et al. 2004; Laufer & Goldstein 2004).

The continuum of progression approach considers that vocabulary knowledge is not an 'all-or-nothing' phenomenon (Laufer 1998), but starts from unknown to knowing, and develops to fully mastered level. Each of the word a learner knows can be located at a certain point in the continuum of word knowledge. In line with the continuum perspective, Henriksen (1999, p. 304) proposes three dimensions to look at vocabulary knowledge: (i) a partial-to-precise knowledge dimension where levels of knowledge are operationalized as degrees of understanding; (ii) a depth-of-knowledge dimension which reveals the multi-aspect nature of word knowledge, and extends to a word's syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations with other words; and (iii) a receptive-productive dimension which refers to the mastery levels of vocabulary knowledge reflected in the learners' comprehension and production abilities. Henriksen's proposal demonstrates the progressional process of learning a word. The first two dimensions are related to comprehension of word knowledge while the third dimension is associated with the ability to access and use a word.

The first dimension is partial-precise dimension. It shows that the knowledge moves from recognition to vague understanding of the meaning and later to the mastery of a precise comprehension. This dimension is related to the quantity of vocabulary knowledge (Qian & Schedl 2004; Zareva 2005). The quantity is studied as the learners' vocabulary size and their knowledge of the words in different frequency threshold. Vocabulary size of language learners offers information regarding learners' ability in reading (Laufer 1992; Qian & Schedl 2004), speaking (Daller et al. 2003; Hilton 2008), writing (Laufer & Nation 1995; Yu 2010), listening (Stæhr 2009) and general academic performance (Harrington & Carey 2009; Zareva et al. 2005).

Study shows that a productive knowledge of at least 3000 high-frequency English words will enable EFL learners to deal with university level reading tasks (Nation 1990). Sutarsyah et al. (1994) come to a similar conclusion suggesting that EFL learners need 4000 to 5000 words to read an economics textbook. Laufer (1992) suggests that a vocabulary size of 5000 words enables students to achieve a 95% coverage of a text that allows them to read independently. Hirsh and Nation (1992) suggest that learners need to be familiar with 97-98% of words in a text (i.e., 97-98% text coverage) for pleasurable reading to occur. If independent comprehension is based on knowing 98% of the running words in a text, then L2 learners need an 8000 to 9000 word-family vocabulary for comprehension of written text, such as newspapers and novels, and a vocabulary of 6000 to 7000 for spoken texts such as lectures and movies (Nation 2006). Webb and Rodgers (2009) suggested 5000 to 9000 word families provided 98% coverage of television programs in different genres.

The second dimension of depth is regarded as the quality of knowing a word (Read 1993). The depth dimension considers vocabulary knowledge development as network building (Haastrup & Henriksen 2000; Read 2004). It is assumed that words are stored in sets in the mind (Read 2004). The network building approach examines the number of words that could be linked and the strength of links (Meara & Fitzpatrick 2000; Meara & Wolter 2004). The more links between one word and another and the stronger are the links, the deeper the word is known (Meara & Wolter 2004). Under this network building approach, Meara (2009) proposes a slight different definition. He views the depth of knowledge as the interaction between individual words and claims that depth is regarded as the organization of words in the mental network. Learners with high vocabulary proficiency have denser and more organized networks than lower proficient language learners. Read (2004) concludes three basic relationships between words—paradigmatic (superordinates, synonyms), syntagmatic (collocates) and analytic[1] (words representing a key element of the meaning of the target word). The advantage of viewing depth of knowledge as a network building is that it provides an overview of a learner's state of vocabulary knowledge at certain point of time (Read 2004). The results from measurements of network building in lexical knowledge reveal a general state of learners' vocabulary knowledge rather than showing a detailed profile of how much each word is known (Meara 2009).

Receptive and productive dimension is the third dimension in vocabulary knowledge. Literature has various definitions of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. For example, Waring (1997) regards the ability to provide a specific first language (L1) translation of the second language (L2) word as the receptive knowledge, whereas the ability to provide a specific L2 equivalent for an L1 word as the productive knowledge. This concept is further developed by Laufer et al. (2004) who describe receptive knowledge as retrieval of the word form and productive knowledge as retrieval of the word meaning. In Webb's (2008) study, receptive vocabulary knowledge is the ability to recognize the form of a word and to define or find a synonym for it, while productive vocabulary knowledge is the ability to recall the form and meaning of a foreign language word. The common character of these definitions on receptive vocabulary knowledge is the ability to recognize the form and retrieve the meaning in listening and reading (Nation 1990). The translation task into L1 is used to verify this ability because the receptive knowledge is considered as a mental activity that cannot be measured directly. As for productive vocabulary knowledge, the main feature is the ability of production and use of the target language. It is what Nation (1990) defined as the ability to retrieve and produce the appropriate spoken or written form of a word in the target language to express a meaning by speaking or writing.

Different from the partial-precise and depth dimensions that are related to comprehension of word knowledge, the receptive and productive dimension reflects the ability to access the word knowledge and to use a word (Henriksen 1999; Zareva 2005; Zareva et al. 2005). Nation (2001) said that the use of a word is the reflection of the learner's comprehension of the word. Thus, the research into receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge is always studied in conjunction with the partial-precise (quantity) and depth (quality) dimensions.

RESEARCH ON RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY SIZE

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[1] The Analytic relations were included in the test development (Read 1993) but was later deleted in the test validation study of Read (1998).

Nation (1990) reported that according to modest estimates, high school graduates of English native speakers have mastered 18000-20000 word families. Much research on the vocabulary size of L2 learners (high school students, university and graduate students) around the world has shown that their vocabulary size is fewer than 4000 word families. For instance, Laufer (1998) found that on average Israeli high school graduates have a receptive vocabulary size of 3500 words families and a controlled productive vocabulary size of 2550. Nurweni & Read (1999) found that the Indonesian university students know an average of 1226 word families. Japanese university students had command of 2000- 3000 word families (Shillaw 1995; Barrow et al. 1999). From the perspective of productive vocabulary size, Lee and Muncie (2006) investigated the vocabulary use in compositions by high-school ESL learners with multi-L1 backgrounds. This study showed that although learners constantly use words from the 1000 to 2000 word level, their productive use of higher level target vocabulary improved and maintained after 14 days. Horst and Collins (2006) collected narrative texts produced by francophone learners of English (11-12 years old) at four 100-hour intervals of intensive language instruction. They found that after instruction, a large proportion of words from 1000-and 2000-level was evident in the learners' writing, but their reliance on both L1 vocabulary and cognates reduced. It can be seen that there was a big gap in vocabulary knowledge between English native speakers and ESL/EFL learners. The ESL/ EFL learners though have larger receptive vocabulary size, still relied heavily on the high frequency words in their productive (writing) use. Though it is not necessary for the non-native speakers to reach vocabulary competence of native speakers (assuming it were possible), the reported vocabulary size of these ESL/EFL learners will marginally enable them to cope with the university reading tasks (Nation 1990) but will not enable them to have independent comprehension on reading novels or watching TV programs (Nation 2006).

In terms of the relationships between the receptive and productive vocabulary size, there is a consistent research finding in the size of receptive and productive vocabulary that L2 learners' receptive vocabulary size is larger than their productive vocabulary size; and the larger receptive size L2 learners have, the larger the productive vocabulary size they are more likely to have in both ESL (Laufer & Paribakht 1998) and EFL context (Laufer 1998; Laufer & Goldstein 2004; Webb 2008; Zhong & Hirsh 2009). The finding supports Melka's (1997) claim that productive knowledge is more advanced and it is often acquired later than receptive knowledge. Consequently, vocabulary learning is predominantly receptive. From the perspective of the growth pattern, it is generally agreed that receptive vocabulary size grows faster than the productive vocabulary size, so the gap between these two types of vocabulary sizes decreases as study proceeds (Laufer 1998; Laufer & Paribakht 1998). However, Zhong and Hirsh (2009) revealed a different developmental pattern that the productive vocabulary size grew faster than receptive size after a four-month classroom instruction among a group of Chinese students whose English proficiency was at an intermediate level. The differing results suggest that vocabulary learning may be largely driven by needs when the learner's proficiency achieved a certain level (Laufer 1992) and may also be influenced by the learning tasks (Webb 2005, 2007, 2009). These two factors will be discussed later in the paper.

RESEARCH ON RECEPTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE VOCABULARY DEPTH
Examining receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge in the depth dimension usually looks at how L2 learners restructure the connections between words that they know, then comparing these connections with those of the native speakers (Haastrup & Henriksen 2000; Nadarajan 2008; Lessard-clouston 2006).

Haastrup and Henriksen (2000) tracked one group of 17 young Danish learners of English in an EFL context over three years to see the network building development of their vocabulary knowledge. Three sorting tasks were used to capture their vocabulary knowledge on the paradigmatic relations. Results showed no statistical significance on their vocabulary development on paradigmatic relations over three years of English study. It indicates that the network building development is a very slow process. They conducted a case study among two learners who did show improvement on their results from sorting tasks and found that these learners tended to acquire the in-depth knowledge of words that are at a high-frequency band and with similar formality with Danish. Since the study was conducted with adjectives only, it is hard to generalize the developmental pattern to other word classes.

Nadarajan's (2008) study looked at the in-depth vocabulary knowledge of different word classes among three groups of adult English learners at an advanced language proficiency level. The first two groups are students from the first and fourth year, respectively, of university study in an EFL context and the third group are college students in an English speaking country. Their results were compared to that of native speakers. The study found that having paradigmatic knowledge of words did not necessarily lead to the mastery of syntagmatic knowledge among non-native speakers, which is consistent with what Nation (1990) claimed that L2 learners tended to know more meanings than collocations. However, as English proficiency grows the gap between these types of relations in vocabulary knowledge narrows. It implies that with increasing years of study, the vocabulary knowledge becomes deeper. The study also showed that the meaning is a prerequisite for English learners to master the syntagmatic knowledge. It suggests that that in-depth vocabulary knowledge is required for word use.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING VOCABULARY

The aim of the paper was to present a multi-dimensional construct of vocabulary knowledge and review the previous research regarding the receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge under the three-dimensional construct (Henriksen 1999). It may be of researchers' and teachers' interest how to make a word available for receptive and more importantly, for productive use. However, the research into the size shows that the current development of vocabulary size falls short for the ESL/EFL learners to cope with the needs of English language usage in reading and listening for pleasure as well as in academic settings.

Taken into consideration the complex nature of vocabulary knowledge as a multi-dimension construct, the quality of a word should not be overlooked in the vocabulary teaching. L2 learners do need both quantity and quality of vocabulary knowledge to understand and express meaning in the interaction.

Research into the effectiveness of teaching and learning tasks may give some hints to teachers on how to improve the learners' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge. It is found that receptive learning contributes more to receptive knowledge, whereas productive learning more likely leads to increase in productive knowledge (Griffin & Harley 1996; Waring 1997). In Webb's (2005) study, he designed a reading task (reading three glossed sentences) and a writing task (sentence production) for two experiments among a group of 66 Japanese university students. The first experiment of comparing the receptive and productive tasks used within a same length of time suggested that receptive learning tasks may contribute not only to develop receptive knowledge but also lead to significantly greater increase in productive knowledge. His second

experiment investigated the effectiveness of these tasks when different time lengths were allocated. Results showed that productive learning outperformed the receptive learning in promoting productive knowledge. In Webb's (2009) later study, the effectiveness of receptive and productive word pair tasks were compared among a group of 62 Japanese university students. The receptive task required learners to look at the target English words and recalled its meaning in L1 while the productive task presented the target words in L1 and required learners to recall the English words. The results showed that receptive learning led to larger gains in receptive meaning while the productive learning led to larger gains in both receptive and productive of form, and in-depth productive knowledge. In practice, both receptive and productive tasks should be used for teaching vocabulary. However, teachers could use the receptive vocabulary learning tasks in the classroom when time is limited. In addition, productive vocabulary tasks can be the better choice than receptive tasks for home assignments because it yields better in more aspects of the vocabulary knowledge.

Besides teaching and learning tasks, personal factors like needs and motivation also influence the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge. Laufer (1991) investigated the development of expression among a group of L2 university students and found that under the same comprehensible input condition, those students who entered the university below the average language competence progressed better than those above average. It suggested that the advanced learners who can cope with university study and assignment tasks with their existing proficiency level were less motivated to further their productive vocabulary knowledge than those who struggled with their university tasks. The need to learn or to catch up with peers becomes one of the main motivations to improve the vocabulary knowledge. Research suggests that motivation influences a learner's self-regulating capacity which directly influences the involvement in vocabulary learning (Tseng & Schmitt 2008). In other words, learners with higher motivation tend to have stronger controls over the personal factors in vocabulary learning, such as commitment, metacognition and emotion. The stronger capacity of controls over these personal factors would lead to better strategic vocabulary learning. Therefore, from a teachers' perspective, it would be a good idea to offer rewards to learners who made improvements in the vocabulary study and provides incentives so as to motivate the learners in the future vocabulary learning. It is also important to let students understand that vocabulary development is a slow process and students should not be disappointed should they have not yet notice any improvement in their vocabulary use.

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Learning English at Elementary School
– From the Perspective of Elementary School Students –

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Abstract

Studying a second or a foreign language from an early age has been a hot topic not only in Japan but many countries around the world. In Japan, there has been a discussion on whether English should be taught at public elementary schools as an official subject or not for the last two decades or so. From April 2011, Japanese public elementary schools have started to teach English as on official subject. Although many teachers and researchers have discussed this issue, not many researchers or teachers have researched on how elementary school students feel about studying English from elementary school. A questionnaire was conducted to 45 6th graders to look into what they think about learning English from elementary school.

Background

In Japan, there has been a debate on whether English should be taught from elementary school for the last twenty years. In 1992, the first pilot schools started teaching English from elementary school in Osaka. Allen-Tamai (1995) questioned 133 private elementary schools and 86.9% schools answered that they taught a second language. However, considering that 98.3% of the elementary schools in Japan are public schools, it must be mentioned that the impact of introducing English classes to public elementary schools is great.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education, culture, sports, science and technology (MEXT) of Japan introduced the period of "integrated studies" in the New Courses of Study. "Integrated studies" was a period for each school to design their own curriculum based on the objectives stated by the MEXT. According to MEXT (2001), by engaging students in solving problems and applying knowledge gained throughout the curriculum, the goal for "integrated studies" was to increase the "zest for living". International understanding could be taught within integrated studies, and this is how English was first introduced to public elementary schools. In 2006, MEXT suggested once-a-week English classes which lead to 2008, when MEXT decided to have English classes for fifth and sixth graders at public schools. 2009 to March, 2011 was a time of change for the public schools to prepare to teach English as an official subject from April, 2011.

Reasons for starting English education at elementary school

The long debate about whether English should be taught from elementary school started for a few reasons. One reason was that the English skills of Japanese students were low compared to students from not only other Asian countries but students studying English as a second or foreign language all over the world. This has been a serious concern for teachers in the field of English education. Speaking is considered to be the most difficult skill for Japanese students, and the MEXT have tried to solve this problem by introducing oral communication classes in the English classroom. However, considering that English is taught at junior and

senior high school as a compulsory subject and many hours are spent on teaching grammar and reading, Japanese students do not do well on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Although TOEFL may not be the best way to measure and compare English skills and knowledge as there is a difference in the number of people who take the TOEFL test depending on each country, when looking into the data by Educational Testing Service, in average Japanese students obtain low scores on TOEFL compared to China, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan (Table 1).

	Year	Japan	China	Korea (ROK)	Taiwan
Listening Comprehension	1996-1997	49	52	49	50
	2005-2006	51	55	56	56
Structure and Written Expression	1996-1997	50	57	52	51
	2005-2006	50	57	57	52
Reading Comprehension	1996-1997	50	57	54	51
	2005-2006	49	55	52	51
Total Score Mean	1996-1997	494	555	518	507
	2005-2006	497	557	530	530

Table 1: TOEFL test data and score summary

Another reason Japanese parents wanted their children to learn English from elementary school was that many Japanese parents do not speak English well themselves, and have had a difficult time studying English during their school days. Many parents lack speaking and listening skills, and want their own children to learn how to communicate using the language. As there is a common belief that the earlier is better to study a language, many parents considered elementary school the best timing to start studying English. In a study by Torikai (2005), the question "should English should be an official subject at elementary school?" was asked to 10000 parents and 71% of the parents answered yes. To another question "should English be taught in some kind of way from elementary school?" 91.1% of the parents answered yes. It can be seen from these numbers that many Japanese parents were interested in their children receiving English education from elementary school.

However, there have been a number of researchers and teachers who have claimed the problems of introducing English to elementary schools as an official subject. In 2006, Otsu submitted a petition to the MEXT with 102 teachers and researchers who were involved in the symposiums he organized to discuss why English should not be made an official subject from elementary school. In this he stated that there is no data for "the earlier the better" when studying English in Japan. In Japan, only a few articles have discussed the effects of teaching

English from elementary school in Japan, and the results have been controversial. There is not enough research to show that teaching English from elementary school in Japan is effective. The government has not explained the goals of teaching English from elementary school and who is going to teach English from elementary school. A point is made about not having enough trained or certified English teachers at the elementary school level. In the recent years, teaching Japanese as a first language has been a problem in Japan too, and the connection between how Japanese education and English education are going to be conducted together has not been stated enough according to the petition.

Content of the English classes

Even with the objection of making English an official subject at public elementary schools by a number of researchers and teachers, English became an official subject from April, 2011. English is taught to 5th and 6th graders once-a-week at public elementary schools from 2011 which leads to a total of 35 classes per year. The teaching material is Eigo Note and the teachers who are teaching English are the homeroom teachers who the majority of are certified to teach at elementary school but not certified to teach English. ALTs (Assisted Language Teachers) who are usually native speakers of English and/or "local experts" are allowed to assist in the English classroom when available. "Local Experts" are volunteers who are proficient in English or who have had experience living abroad. However, not all schools have ALTs nor local experts teach or assist teaching English at public elementary schools. In data from MEXT (2006), only 3.7% of elementary school teachers were certified to teach English and Otsu has a point in elementary school teachers not being educated or trained to teach English.

Fenelly and luxton (2011) conducted a survey to 147 public elementary school teachers in Tokushima prefecture. They stated that only 9% of the teachers felt confident in their English teaching abilities. 72% answered that their English ability is not sufficient enough to teach English, and only 30% were confident in using Eigo Note as the material of the class. This is an article published in March, 2011, a month before English became an official subject at public elementary schools. More data is needed to see how elementary schools teachers are doing teaching English as an official subject from April, 2011.

Questionnaire

Although there has been long debate on whether English should be taught from elementary school in Japan, researchers have not discussed in detail whether elementary school children themselves are interested in learning English from elementary school. As they are the students who are learning English, there is a need to know what children think about learning English as a foreign language from elementary school in Japan. To research this, a questionnaire was

conducted to 45 6th grade co-ed private elementary school students. As English became an official subject from April, 2011, there are not any public elementary school students who have studied English as an official subject yet. This is why this questionnaire was conducted at a private school as the students who answered the questionnaire had English classes from first grade at their school. The questionnaire was given to them not only for this research, but to reflect on their English studies at elementary school at the end of 6th grade. English was taught once-a-week from 1st grade and twice-a-week from 4th grade. The classes were mainly conducted in English, but some teachers used Japanese in their teaching too. All skills were taught in the English classes but the main focus was speaking and listening. Phonics was also an important part of the curriculum and reading and writing were also taught from 4th grade. The questions were all in Japanese to make it easier for the students to understand the questions. The participants were told that they did not have to write their names on the questionnaire and what they wrote on their questionnaires would have nothing to do with their grades. The questionnaire was intentionally kept short so they could concentrate on their answers and consisted of 15 questions. Most questions on the questionnaire were yes/no questions or multiple choices except for a few questions which the participants were allowed to write their opinions.

Results and Analysis

The first question was "Do you like English?" and 71%, 32 out of 45 students said that they like English. Considering that all students have likes and dislikes with different subjects, it can be said that the majority of the participants enjoy English classes at elementary school. Question 2 was "Are you glad you studied English at elementary school?" All children answered (100%) yes to this question showing that the 6th graders all thought that studying English at elementary school was important. Questions 3 was "What did you enjoy the most in your English classes?" (Figure 1)
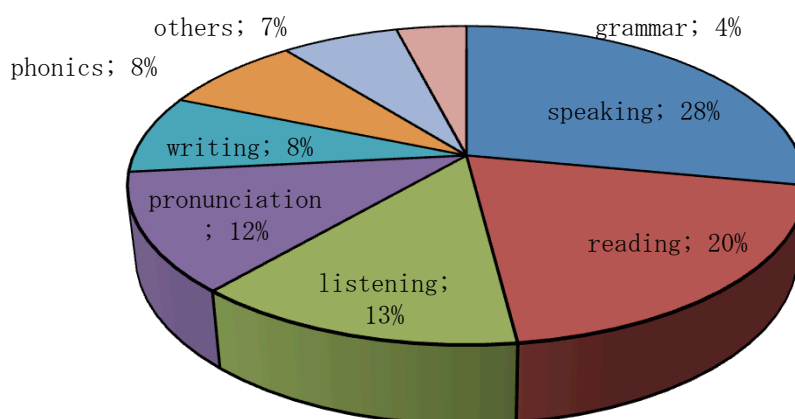
Figure 1. Q3 What did you enjoy the most in your English classes?

The main focus of elementary school English was speaking and listening at the school this questionnaire was conducted. However, the student learned phonics, reading, writing and in some cases a small amount of grammar in their classes. The most popular was speaking, next reading, listening, pronunciation and writing. Writing may have been difficult for some 6th graders, and this may be the reason why didn't enjoy it as much as speaking. As the teachers spent most of the time teaching speaking in their English classes, this could have led to why they answered that they enjoyed studying speaking English the most. Considering that speaking was the skill taught most during the English classes, it is meaningful to know that they enjoyed speaking most in their English classes.

The next question (Question 4) asked "What did you find most difficult in your English classes?" (Figure 2) As it could have been guessed from the last question, most students thought that writing was difficult. Next was phonics, and then interestingly speaking. This could mean that they enjoyed speaking in English, but at the same time some found it difficult in their English classes. If speaking is to be the skill most emphasized at public elementary schools too, there is a need to make sure that all students are enjoying studying speaking and consider it an important skill to be motivated to study during their English classes.
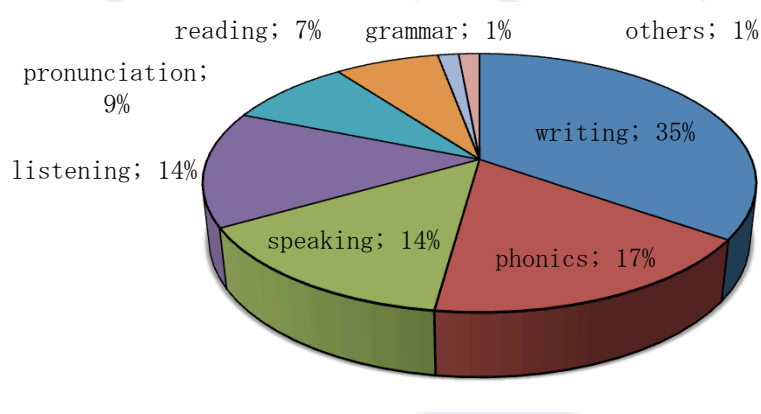
Figure 2. Q5 What did you find most difficult in your English classes?

Question 5 asked why they think that they have to study English from elementary school. For this question, they were allowed to write their own opinions. Some students wrote more than one opinion for this question as they were allowed to do so. Most of the 45 6th graders wrote that they thought that English is important for their future. Some answered that they wanted to be able to use English when they go abroad. Other opinions were that they wanted to be able to communicate with a foreigner and thought that English can be used all over the world. Others wrote that they thought that they have to study English from elementary school as they need to use English when they start working. To become a doctor, to use English to study

abroad, to help English studies at junior, senior high school and university were also answers given by the students. All of the 45 students had a clear and positive understanding of why they are taught English from elementary school.

Question 6 asked whether they thought English will be useful for their future. As in Question 2, all 45 students answered yes. This means that they all felt content about learning English from elementary school and also believed that it is important to study English from elementary school for their future.

Question 7 was a question which asked if they are interested in studying abroad in the future. 25 out of 45 (56%) students answered that they wanted to study abroad. It is interesting to note that all of the students think that English is important for their future, but not all of them were interested in studying abroad. Related to Question 7, Question 8 asked if they were interested in working abroad in the future. Only 40%, 18 out of 45 children answered yes to this question. Again, it is interesting that all of them think that they need English for their future, but less than half of the students want to use English when they start working. Their answers may be related to their age, but it can be said that approximately half of the students were motivated to study or work abroad in the future. It can be assumed that they are thinking of working in Japan in the future and believe that they will need English when doing so, but are not keen on studying or working abroad.

The next questions (Question 10, 11 and 12) asked about their English studies at junior high school. As this questionnaire was given to the students at the end of 6th grade, they were asked "Are you looking forward to studying English at junior high school?" (Question 10) 25 students out of 45 students answered yes (56%). As English is a compulsory subject at junior high school and senior high school in Japan, it is upsetting to know that only approximately half of the students look forward to English classes at junior high school when 71% of the students answered that they enjoy English at elementary school. To look into this question, the next question was given to the students. To the question (Question 11) "How do you think English classes at junior high school will differ from elementary school?" the students wrote different answers, but many were negative. They answered more grammar, more content, more writing, and that the speed of junior high school classes would be much faster than elementary school classes. There were also a few 6th graders who answered that English at junior high school would not be as fun as elementary school.

"What skill would you like to spend time studying the most at junior high school?" was the next question (Question 12), and the answers spread out a little, but 27% of the answers were speaking, 23% were writing and 20% were grammar. (Figure 3) It can be said that the skill

they enjoy most is speaking, and the skill they would like to study most at junior high school is speaking too. It would be meaningful to ask this same question to students who started studying English at junior high school to see whether the answers differ from students who studied at elementary school for future research.
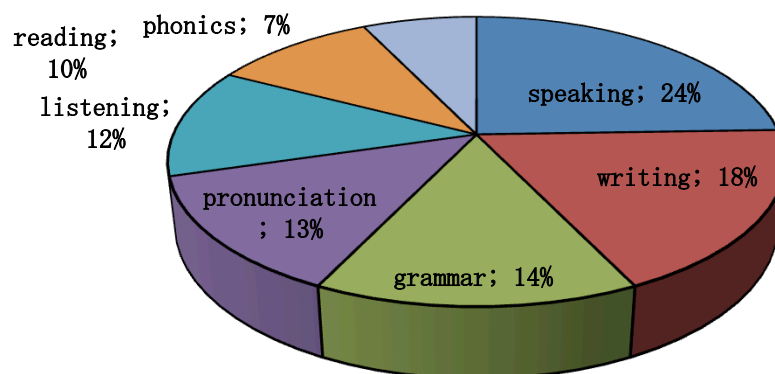
Figure 3. Q12 What skill would you like to spend time studying the most at junior high school?

Question 13 was "What would you like to improve most in English?" First was speaking, second was writing and third was grammar. This is similar to the results of what they want to spend time studying at junior high school. Again, speaking is the skill that the students want to improve the most. This could be related to Question 12 as students answered that they thought that they wanted to study English the most when they had difficulty communicating in English.

The next question (Question 14) asked what motivated the students to study English. The question was "When do/did you think you want to study more English?" The students could write their own opinions for this question, and most answers were related to other people not understanding the students. Some answers were, when a foreigner said "what?" to me, when I couldn't understand what a foreigner was saying, when my friend couldn't understand my English, and only one student answered that he/she finds it difficult to read in English so he/she wants to study more English. The 6th graders who participated in this research seemed to be very conscious about how others think about their English and are motivated to study English so they do not face difficulties communicating in English.

The last question (Question 15) asked the students what other languages they are interested in studying. The most popular was French, next Chinese, Italian, German, Korean. It can be said that they are interested in studying other languages too. It would be interested in looking into

why they are interested in studying these languages for future research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although 45 participants may be a small number to draw any conclusions, the majority of the 6th graders who answered this questionnaire enjoyed studying English at elementary school. They had a clear vision of why they have to study English from elementary school, and thought they needed it for their future. The skills they enjoy are from the most popular, speaking, reading and listening. On the other hand, the skills that they find difficult are writing, phonics and speaking. At junior high school, the skills that they wanted to improve the most were speaking, writing and grammar. Speaking was the skill that they enjoy studying the most and want to spend time studying at junior high school too. Only about half of the students answered that they were looking forward to studying English at junior high school and this may have been because they thought that English studies would be difficult at junior high school. It would be ideal for all for them to have a positive attitude towards studying English at junior high school. For future research, it would be interesting in knowing why they think English is important for their future. Is it their parents or teachers that tell them English is important for their future? Does this lead to their motivation to study English? There is also a need to look into why not all of them are looking forward to studying English at junior high school. This may be because that their image of English classes at junior high school is lots of grammar and writing, and that they have to learn much more at a faster speed. Although not all students were interested in studying and working abroad in the future, they were keen about improving their speaking skills so they communicate with people around the world. For future research, it would be interesting to ask the same questions to students who are studying or have studied English at public elementary schools, and also students in different countries such as China, Korea and Taiwan where English is taught as a foreign language too.

Implications for future research

Although there has been a long debate on whether English should be an official subject from elementary school in Japan, it has already started and if it is to go on, it should be done in a way which elementary school students enjoy. In this research, the results showed that the majority of students who answered the questionnaire enjoyed studying English from elementary school, and that all of the 45 students answered that they thought English is needed for their future. Another important finding was that all students felt content that they studied English from elementary school. If they are to study English from elementary school, they need to enjoy the classes and must be motivated to continue studying at junior high school and senior high school. However, in this research not all of the participants looked forward to studying English at junior high school, and this is another issue to be considered

when discussing English education in Japan. The worst situation would be 6th graders not being interested in studying English by the time they go on to junior high school. In this research the students enjoyed English classes and considered studying English important for their future. Does this continue during their years of studying English at junior high school and senior high school? Due to the lack of research, we are not sure if teaching elementary school is the key to improving Japanese people's English level yet. There is a need to research the difference between the English level acquired by students who received English education from elementary school and students who started at junior high school to discuss the positive effects of teaching English from elementary school. As this research focused on only 45 private elementary school students, there is a need to collect data from a large number of students who have studied at different public elementary schools. If English continues to be taught as an official subject in Japan, we need to continue research to discuss if English education is effective from elementary school and whether the students are enjoying their English classes.

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Appendix: Questionnaire given to participants in Japanese

（１）　英語は好きですか？　はい・いいえ

（２）　小学校で英語を学んで良かったと思いますか？　（はい・いいえ）

（３）　小学校の英語の授業で何が一番楽しかったですか？
(スピーキング・リスニング・ライティング・リーディング・フォニックス・文法)

（４）　英語で自分が苦手だと思うのはなんですか？
(スピーキング・リスニング・ライティング・リーディング・フォニックス・文法)

（５）　英語をなぜ小学校から勉強をするのだと思いますか？　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（６）　英語を勉強して将来役に立つと思いますか？　はい・いいえ

（７）　将来海外に留学をしてみたいと思いますか？　はい・いいえ

（８）　将来海外で仕事をしたいと思いますか？　はい・いいえ

（９）　将来英語を使う仕事につきたいと思いますか？　はい・いいえ

（１０）中学での英語の授業は楽しみですか？　はい・いいえ

（１１）中学の英語の授業は小学校の英語の授業とは何が違うと思いますか？　＿＿＿＿＿

（１２）中学では何に一番時間をかけて勉強したいですか？
(スピーキング・リスニング・ライティング・リーディング・フォニックス・文法)

（１３）英語で何を一番上達したいと思いますか？
(スピーキング・リスニング・ライティング・リーディング・フォニックス・文法)

（１４）あなたはどんな時にもっと英語を勉強したいと思いますか？＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（１５）英語以外の言語でどんな言語を勉強してみたいと思いますか？　＿＿＿＿＿

The study of ability to interpret conversational implicatures

in English of Thai EFL learners

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Pragmatics

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I. Introduction

A successful and effective communication requires not only linguistic competence, but also pragmatic competence which includes the ability to understand or produce meaning in communicative contexts. According to Lee (2002), native speakers of English usually use pragmatic strategies in order to play with words to achieve various communicative effects. For instance, in order to criticize something being discussed, people often do not say exactly what they intend to communicate as in the following dialogue:

George: So, what did you think of the house?

Sheila: *Well, it had a nice mailbox.*

George: Are there any other houses we can visit?

(Broersma 1994, p. 3)

From the above dialogue, Sheila does not directly say, "I don't like that house.", but she is damning the house with faint praise to imply that more important aspects of the house are not so nice. This kind of indirect speech is called conversational implicature (Broersma, 1994). Green (1989 cited in Bouton, 1994) considers conversational implicature as an ordinary conversational strategy which is part of proficient speaker's communicative competence. Yule (1996) explained that conversational implicature or implicature is an additional conveyed meaning and it needs to be interpreted based on contextual knowledge to be understood.

From a pragmatic point of view, it is therefore important for EFL students to be able to understand what a native speaker intends to convey. That means they have to recognize speaker's intended meaning conveyed in his or her literal utterance and then make an inference about a speaker's intention appropriately (Taguchi, 2005). Ultimately, this ability would help improve students' communicative skills as well as prepare EFL students to be a proficient language learner who is able to carry the effective and successful communication using an appropriate conversational strategy and know how to encounter with communicative situations that require interpretation.

To explain how conversational implicature works, Grice (1975 cited in Bouton,1994) notes that all participants in a conversation expect themselves and the others to conform to conversational maxims, which Grice defines as the Cooperative Principle which includes the Maxim of Quantity, Quality, Relation (Relevance), and Manner, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975 cited in Yule, 1996)

The maxims
Quantity
1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality Try to make your contribution one that is true.
1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.
Manner: Be perspicuous.
1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly.

Yule (1996) explains that in general people involved in a conversation are assumed to cooperate with each other by providing an appropriate amount of information, telling the truth, being relevant, and trying to be as clear as they can. However, when literal meaning of what people hear does not seem to have these characteristics caused by any apparent violation of the maxims, the hearer must infer that the speaker is implying something different and look for another meaning for what has been said (Grice 1975 cited in Bouton, 1994).

To understand conversational implicatures, contextual factors are taken into account. Grice, (1975) as cited in Bouton (1994), explained that in order to interpret implicatures accurately, the speaker and the hearer must share knowledge which include the utterance from which the implicature is to be interpreted; the roles and expectations of the participants in a conversation; the context of the conversation; and the world around them connected to their interaction. According to Jung (2002), the process involving inferencing is based on a set of rational and the Cooperative Principle, which all participants in the conversation are expected to observe for successful communication. Lee (2002) stated that assuming that a speaker in a conversation is being cooperative, an inferential process is then made based on shared cultural knowledge and presuppositions to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended message. In order to make sense of more than what is said, apart from knowledge of grammar and lexicon, Taguchi (2005) pointed out that other contextual knowledge such as schemata, cultural background, or knowledge of the world must be supplied, as well.

Conversational implicatures have different types and some types may be particularly difficult or easy for EFL students to understand (Boersma, 1994). This paper focuses on the ability of students to interpret different types of conversational implicatures in English. The ability to interpret English conversational implicatures refers to the ability to recognize a non-literal utterance in the form of implicature and to correctly understand the meaning that is not explicitly stated in an utterance.

II. **Previous Research**

Bouton (1994) reviewed the result of his study in 1986-1991 investigating the extent to which non-native English speaking international students can derive the same message from conversational implicatures in American English as native speakers do. His study was conducted by having the participants take a same test consisting of dialogues containing implicatures. In order to do the test, the students were asked to choose a correct interpretation from four interpretations following each dialogue. The results showed that non-native students performed significantly poorer in interpreting the implicatures than native students. The results also revealed that language background and cultural background could be factors underlying a person's ability to interpret implicature. However, another study of his done in 1990-1993 revealed that non-native students' proficiency in interpreting implicatures in English improved over the 17-month period of their stay in the target country. It is suggested that giving non-native students enough time to experience American culture increases their ability to interpret implicatures. Bouton further conducted a study to investigate whether explicit classroom instruction can enhance the students' ability to interpret implicatures in English. The study indicated that formal instruction was an effective approach to develop non-native students' proficiency in interpreting implicatures.

Boersma (1994) conducted a similar study to investigate whether learners of English as a second language can learn implicatures through explicit teaching. The subjects of his study were international graduate students with advanced English proficiency taking ESL classes at the University of Illinois. Explicit lessons on six types of implicatures were introduced and instructional materials were also prepared for the students. Through the explicit teaching of implicatures, the students were encouraged to analyze the implicatures and focus on the intended meaning interpretation within context where level of formality and relationship between interlocutors, cultural values, expectation, and intonation were taken into account. The results showed that implicatures could be taught with success, even though some types of implicatures were easier to teach than others.

Lee (2002) investigated the ability of Korean non-native speakers of English with high English proficiency to interpret conversational implicatures and compared with that of native speakers of English. She found a slight difference in the performance of the two groups. She pointed out that high linguistic proficiency would allow the non-native learners to derive the same meaning as native speakers. Nevertheless, there were some differences in the strategies employed to interpret implicatures by both groups. Some factors such as learners' knowledge of the culture that includes personal biases, stereotypes, and transfer of knowledge from the native culture can influence the performance in interpreting implicatures.

Taguchi (2005) examined second language learners' ability to comprehend conversational implicature of different types. Native English speakers and Japanese students of English participated in the study and their comprehension was analyzed in terms of accuracy and speed. The study indicated that high proficiency of English influenced the accuracy of pragmatic comprehension, but not the speed and there was no significant relationship between the accuracy and processing speed. The findings from the study suggested teachers not to expect the same rate of development in fluency and accuracy of pragmatic comprehension.

In fact, the study concerning pragmatic comprehension of Thai EFL students has not obtained much attention and emphasis. In order to obtain some insights into pragmatic

comprehension as well as their ability to draw a correct inference of Thai EFL students, this study therefore was conducted. It aimed to investigate to what extent Thai EFL students are able to interpret conversational implicatures and what factors underlie the students' ability to understand implicatures.

III. **Methodology**

Participants

The study included 40 Thai EFL students. All of them were second-year English majors at a Thai university. Their native language is Thai and they have been taught by native English teachers in some English courses, namely Aural-Oral I and II courses.

Instrumentation

The students' ability to interpret English conversational implicatures was assessed by a conversational implicature test consisting of 15 items. The test included different types of implicatures, namely a conversational expression or the Pope Question, understated negative criticism, relevance, irony, sequence, and the minimum requirement rule. Each item on the test consists of a situation, a dialogue and a question containing implicature that students were to interpret. The 15 test items were selected from those of the conversational implicature test items designed by Bouton (1994) and used by Lee (2002) in her study.

In order to obtain students' personal information and their general knowledge about language in use, the questionnaires were also used in this study. In addition, a think-aloud procedure was conducted in order to obtain information about the process of making inferences and the factors underlying the interpretation.

Procedures and Data Analysis

The students were given the conversational implicatures test and 40 minutes were allowed to complete the test. To give an answer, the students were to choose one of the four interpretations following the dialogue. The students were given one mark for each correct answer. The total scores therefore ranged from 0-15 on the conversational implicature test. Their test scores were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, namely percentage, mean, and standard deviation. After the test, they were asked to complete the questionnaires. After their tests had been marked, the students were randomly selected to participate in a think-aloud procedure in Thai to explain why and how they chose the answers. The data was recorded for analysis.

IV.   Results and discussion

Data from Table 2 reveals students' performance in interpreting conversational implicatures in English.

Table 2

Students' interpretation of conversational implicatures in English

Number of items	15
Mean score	4.5
Mean % correct	30.17
Standard Deviation	1.8
Range of raw scores	1-9

The range of raw scores suggests that there are differences between students' performance, however the standard deviation is very small. The mean score shows rather poor performance of the students in interpreting implicatures. It also appears that the student with the highest score (9) is the student having the highest average scores in all English courses, as reported in the personal information on the questionnaire. This shows the similar finding between this study and the study by Lee (2002), who found out that learners with high linguistic and pragmatic strategies are likely to make an accurate inference or be able to derive correct interpretation of the conversational implicatures. It can be said that the rather low mean score as well as the low raw scores on the performance in interpreting conversational implicatures may be due to the students' low English linguistic proficiency which inhibits them from making the correct inferences of the conversational implicatures in English.

Additionally, to find out what factors underlie the students' ability to understand implicatures, data from the think-aloud protocols shows the reason why many students were not able to choose the correct interpretation.

Some students said that they could not make any sense of the conversations or the situations given because of their limitation of lexical meaning. It can be said that lack of linguistic competence in terms of grammar or vocabulary can hinder the English comprehension. For example, in the expression "Is the Pope Catholic?", one student showed no knowledge about the word "Pope" or even "Catholic". Besides, some students accepted that drawing an inference of the conversational implicature in English was difficult and frustrating for them to do because they did not know the meaning of the words or phrases. Thus, it is not surprising that the students who cannot understand surface meaning or literal meaning are not able to draw non-literal meaning either. This fact explains why the students are not able to make satisfactory scores of the implicature test.

Table 3

Tabulations of responses according to the items in the conversational implicature test

Items	Types of implicatures	% of students with correct answer
(1)	Quantity-understated negative criticism	5
(2)	Quality-irony	30
(3)	Quantity-understated negative criticism	22.5
(4)	Quality-conversational expressions	17.5
(5)	Relevance	45
(6)	Quantity-be sufficiently informative	15
(7)	Manner-be orderly	32.5
(8)	Relevance	67.5
(9)	Quality-conversational expressions	30
(10)	Quality-irony	20
(11)	Quantity-understated negative criticism	12.5
(12)	Quantity-be sufficiently informative	50
(13)	Relevance	27.5
(14)	Relevance	25
(15)	Relevance	52.5

From Table 3, the highest percentage of correct answer was for item (8) concerning a relevance implicature. The test item (8) is shown below:

(8)   Frank: Where is Rudy, Helen? Have you seen him this morning?
Helen: There's a yellow Honda parked over by Sarah's house.

What Helen is saying is that………………

    a.   She just noticed that Sarah has bought a new yellow Honda.
    b.   She doesn't know where Rudy is.
    c.   She thinks Rudy may be over at Sarah's house.
    d.   She likes yellow Honda and wants Frank to see one.

This reveals that most students can interpret implicature based on logical reasoning without much difficulty. From the situational context given, they could easily arrive at the assumption that the yellow Honda belonged to Rudy. In the same way, from the study of Lee (2002) it showed that both native and non-native informants performed similar pragmatic strategies to arrive at the same interpretation of this kind of conversational implicature which appears to be logically universal in its use. On the other hand, some types of conversational implicatures may be found difficult by most students. According to the data from the think aloud procedure, conversational implicatures that are related to cultural values are difficult to interpret. Test item (1) is one example of conversational implicatures that cultural knowledge plays its role.

(1) Two teachers are talking about a student's term paper.

     Mr. Ranger: Have you finished with Mark's term paper yet?
     Mr. Smith: Yes, I have. I read it last night.

Mr. Ranger: What did you think of it?
Mr. Smith: Well, I thought it was well typed.

How did Mr. Smith like Mark's term paper?
a. He liked it. He thought it was good.
b. He thought it was important that the paper was well typed.
c. He really did not read it well enough to know.
d. He did not like it.

The understated negative criticism implicature of item (1) was said to be difficult by most students as they did not recognize the indirect criticism on the student's term paper indirectly commented by the lecturer. It appears that Thai EFL students generally hold a belief that a teacher is expected to say something reliable or behave well. This belief prevented most students from arriving at the right interpretation since they thought that the lecturer honestly praised for Mark's term paper even though it was just praise for a physically well-typed paper. The students also thought that the lecturer said so in order to save Mark's face as well as to give him some encouragement.

Another example for cultural values and experiences inhibiting the correct interpretation of implicature was shown in item (11):

(11) Two friends are talking about difference places to eat.

Robin: Have you tried the chili at Pedro's?
Rosie: Yeah. Just the other day.
Robin: How did you like it?
Rosie: I don't know. I don't think I'm a very good judge of chili.

How does Rosie like Pedro's chili?

a. We don't know. She doesn't say whether she liked it or not.
b. She can't really remember.
c. Really hot and spicy.
d. Not very much.

The obtained data showed that some students considered the utterance "I don't know. I don't think I'm a very good judge of chili." a way to avoid criticizing someone or something, not a way to criticize someone or something indirectly as the speaker intended to. It appears that in general most Thais try to avoid commenting someone especially a person with a higher status because it would be impolite and disrespectful to do so. The cultural differences and personal belief or experience therefore could be possible factors causing misunderstanding between people with different backgrounds. Therefore, it requires some knowledge about English or American culture and pragmatic skills to understand some types of implicatures and then to arrive at the correct interpretation.

Interestingly, one student mentioned that in order to understand a particular conversation with conversational implicature, she had to imagine how the dialogue would be like and how the interlocutors would express themselves in terms of tone of voice, intonation, facial expressions and the like. Lee (2002) mentioned that these kinds of suprasegmental features are considered important because they are used to carry meaning in addition to the lexicon. It may be said that not being aware of the role of suprasegmental features in

changing the meaning of the utterances or expressions could possibly lead to misunderstanding of the expression that implicature exists.

Furthermore, it is clearly seen that most students were not able to make a correct inference of the implicatures because they seemed to rely too much on translation strategy. For example, some students mentioned that they could understand the surface meaning of the utterances; however, they failed to realize meaning that is not explicitly stated. This fact emphasizes the failure of English language teaching in EFL setting which pay less attention to the study on pragmatics concerning contextual meaning.

The data obtained from the questionnaires and the think aloud process also showed that although some EFL students have experienced some implicature tests and they themselves have used a kind of implied meaning in Thai as a conversational tool, they have some difficulties to arrive at correct interpretation of implicature in English. Additionally, although the data showed that the participants realized some facts about the nature of the language; for instance, language can be influenced by levels of formality and relationship between interlocutors involved in the conversation or even language can be used differently in different contexts to convey some intended meanings of the speakers, most of them failed to recognize an implicature in a dialogue and were not aware of the speaker's intended meaning leading to misinterpretation of implicatures. This may be because Thai EFL students have not been supported with sufficient knowledge about pragmatic including English conversational implicatures and have not been taught and trained for how to make an inference based on contextual knowledge. According to Bouton (1994), explicit teaching of conversational implicatures could help promote the ability to understand implicatures. Through the explicit instruction equipped with adequate instructional materials and learning activities, the students can develop their pragmatic comprehension on implicatures. Provided that Thai EFL students underwent the explicit teaching of implicatures, they would be able to perform well enough in interpreting implicatures in English.

It is clearly seen that there are some factors involved in Thai EFL students' ability to interpret the implicatures. Students' linguistic competence seems to be a key factor that can facilitate or inhibit Thai EFL students from arriving at a correct interpretation of the English implicatures in the test. Knowledge about cultures as well as personal belief are also factors causing students to interpret the implicatures differently from English native speakers. Failure to make use of contextual cues and non-linguistic cues such as intonation and tone and placing emphasis on translation strategy can prevent the students from understanding the intended meaning, too.

Last but not least, the Thai EFL students' inexperience in implicature interpretation in English plus lack of a tenet of pragmatics into a language classroom can be said to make students unsuccessfully arrive at the correct interpretation. Some changes in pedagogy hence are required in order to promote better understanding of the meaning in contexts of Thai EFL students as well as to enhance the students' communicative competence to avoid the breakdown of communication.

V. Implications

To develop Thai EFL students' pragmatic competence as well as proficiency in interpretation of conversational implicature, explicit instruction of implicature is preferably recommended. Given the fact that explicit instruction of implicatures can be beneficial to Thai EFL students, teachers' role is necessarily important in making students aware of implicatures as normal tools of indirect communication in English. That means teachers should provide examples of different types of implicatures and more importantly sufficient practices to allow students to exercise inferential skills, and a discussion to deepen their understanding of reasons behind implicature employment should be included. Through explicit classroom instruction, EFL students will then be able to acquire the necessary strategies to manage communicative contexts where conversational implicatures may exist.

Besides, teachers should incorporate awareness raising activities on how stress, intonation, and tone of voice can provide clues for interpretation of implicature in conversation. Lee (2002) suggests that vocabulary and expressions are needed to be taught in full context with appropriate gestures, facial expressions, intonation and tone. Furthermore, teachers need to take into account the cultural knowledge enhancement in order to assure EFL learners of correct and appropriate interpretation of the meaning of an utterance in the context, since some types of implicature are required to make inferences based on cultural knowledge of the target language.

Since EFL classroom has a limited range of social interactions, preparing rich, meaningful and adequate input for EFL students is necessarily required. Using authentic texts to expose EFL students to language used by native speakers in a variety of contexts is very essential. Effective sources for authentic materials can be media clips from television shows or movies which are easy to access from the Internet (Lee, 2002). Other sources of language which is performed in real language contexts can be an email correspondence, advertisement, comic strips, or recorded conversations. Meaningful language in use, if appropriately selected and presented, shall give students an edge in pragmatic competence.

A successful communication requires linguistic as well as pragmatic competencies since they both are essential elements of foreign language teaching and learning. In cross-cultural communication, the process of making inferences of implicatures may be a problem preventing EFL students from achieving conversational goal. Therefore, in order to avoid communication breakdown as well to develop communicative competence of Thai EFL students, the study concerning pragmatic aspects including conversational implicature should be promoted in Thai EFL classroom.

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Title
"Teaching low-frequency vocabulary: how a language-learning computer game connects theory to practice"

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The paper discusses how a language-learning computer game is designed to put theory into practice. This academic resource facilitates the learning of low-frequency vocabulary – in this case, medication names for ESL university students.

Research shows that the intentional learning of key vocabulary is important to language learning. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, it is difficult for an international student to interact in the university setting and their learning can suffer as a result. This is particularly the case if a great number of unfamiliar terms are used in each educational encounter. This situation is compounded by the expectation that students will learn key vocabulary incidentally through academic pre-readings, despite the research demonstrating this to be an inefficient and inadequate method of learning. Intentional vocabulary learning is clearly needed, but is difficult to put into practice.

Repeated exposure to words is also theorised to be important to language learning; however, this is often difficult to put into practice for low-frequency vocabulary. Academic and profession-related terminology often involves low-frequency words. The ESL student who seeks to enter these professional areas often faces what seems an impossible task of learning an entire subset of language yet without the amount of exposure theorised to be necessary to this task. The language-learning computer game is designed, through connecting theory to practice, to allow multiple exposures to both written and spoken vocabulary.

This paper will expand on the above points and describe other ways through which a language-learning computer game can connect theory to practice.

Teaching low-frequency vocabulary: how a language-learning computer game connects theory to practice

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Introduction

Many international students find that they are unable to fully engage in their university studies and clinical placements because they have difficulties with language. The contributing factors are: the range of language registers they need to know (from colloquial to specialist language), the environment in which they interact (usually a noisy clinical placement or group-based tutorial/lab space), and the speed at which they need to communicate (quickly, accurately, and under pressure). Communication errors have serious consequences, such as when there is wrong dispensation of medications.

Often the students cannot understand low-frequency vocabulary in both speech and writing. They might not be able to distinguish the spoken word nor repeat it correctly, nor match the spoken form to its written form. They also have a general lack of familiarity with the vocabulary set and an inability to identify common word affixes and roots in medical terminology. The underlying causes are a lack of both focused vocabulary learning and exposure. Currently, students in the university system acquire low-frequency vocabulary from reading books, but in reality the rate of retention is very low for words acquired in this manner (Schmitt 2008, p.348). Similarly, the research on learning new words through general listening activities reveals a low uptake and rate of retention (Schmitt 2008, p.349). In contrast, research has shown that multimedia is superior to audio instruction for promoting listening skills (Brett 1997, p.39). Audio, accompanied by written text, has been found to improve both listening and reading ability. In one review of the use of technology in second language learning, it was found that speech, used alongside text, facilitates listening skills (Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002, p.260). Furthermore, students prefer computers to word lists or word cards (Nakata 2008, p.3). This is the starting point for the language-learning computer game called Medicina, one of eight in a suite of computer games designed to teach low-frequency vocabulary associated with health settings.

The Medicina game teaches medication names, a low-frequency specialised vocabulary. The game draws exclusively upon the Australian Prescription Benefit Scheme list. Medication names were selected if they met any of these criteria: (1) in the top 20 common prescriptions, (2) reported as having been confused in the clinical setting, (3) were identified as possibly confusable (according to its similarity to the orthographic and phonetic properties of other names). Indeed, a key aspect of the game is the grouping of medication names according to sound and spelling similarities. The game itself involves the student watching the computer screen, listening to a command to find a particular medication, and using a mouse to select the correct option among five bottles with different names written on them. The student has four seconds to complete this process, after which feedback is given about their choice, and points accumulated for correct answers. Not selecting an option, or choosing three incorrect answers, ends the game. Scores and usernames are displayed on the game's common scoreboard. There is an accompanying click-and-play list of the medication names used in the game, the "Medicina Cheatsheet", which is an important educational resource that supports the game when the student is too challenged and needs something which is not time-restricted.

While this teaching tool seems straightforward, there is a great deal of theory which determines each practical aspect of the game. The four main theories used in the design of the game are Nation's theory of knowing a word, Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, Hulstijn's psycholinguistic theory of automaticity, and Sweller's cognitive load theory for instructional design. We will discuss each of these in turn.

Word form and its role in learning new vocabulary

Paul Nation (2010, pp.26-8), in 'Learning Vocabulary in Another Language' theorises the different aspects that are involved in knowing a word: form, meaning, and use. Word form involves an understanding of the spoken and written forms and word parts: sound, pronunciation, appearance, spelling, the recognisable segments, and how they are put together. Word meaning involves knowing the definition, concepts, referents, and associations. Word use involves an understanding of grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use.

Using this model of segmenting vocabulary learning into stages, the research points to the need for different teaching approaches that respond to a student's level of acquisition. In a review of research on teaching second language vocabulary, Schmitt (2008, p.334) highlights how the research points to "the necessity of thinking of vocabulary learning in incremental terms" rather than asking for a uniform approach. Since it has been identified that the students are at the rudimentary level of acquiring familiarity with medication names, the Medicina game teaches the basic aspects of vocabulary knowledge: form.

In one-to-one diagnostic interviews with ESL students in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders University, a common issue that arises is a fundamental lack of knowledge of, and experience with, low-frequency vocabulary. Students complain that their lack of vocabulary hinders their ability to understand lectures and clinical facilitators. It makes sense that, without familiarity of low-frequency vocabulary, the student cannot progress to establishing meaning and use of words, and their learning suffers as a result. The game works exclusively on word form as a way to address this common problem and to prepare students for their academic studies. Once the students are able to access the language, they will be able to interact in the authentic learning opportunities that will establish word meaning and contextual use. Indeed, it is the job of the wider nursing curriculum to teach meaning and use.

Schmitt (2008, p.335) points out that within the research, it is typical to downplay or disregard problems with word form in order to focus on meaning. An explicit approach that focuses on form is most effective when starting to learn a word, partly because it enhances general word-knowledge beyond the one at hand (Schmitt 2008, p.334-5). Nation (2010, p.286) further recommends that readers should employ a range of decontextualization skills for new lexical information. Laufer (2009, p.341) similarly suggests that decontextualized vocabulary learning is effective for studying basic vocabulary quickly. Thus, contrary to common approaches to teaching vocabulary which focus on learning meaning only, it is a false economy to take instructional time away from learning vocabulary at the level of form. Indeed, Hulstijn (2001, p.285) theorises that when more attention is given to factors such as morphophonological, orthographic, prosodic, and intraword or interword relations, the result is better retention of new lexical information. Furthermore, the benefits of focusing on form usually spread across the learner's lexicon, since form-based information enhances meta-linguistic knowledge, which itself enhances general language ability, similar to how new grammatical knowledge expands a person's expressive repertoire.

The focus on form allows the Medicina game to comprehensively develop students' knowledge of both spoken and written word forms and the links between them. Furthermore, the gameplay requires the student to choose between existing confusable medication names and those selected for their capacity for L1 interference or phonetic similarity. This is a practice based upon the theory of language interference where the person's first language is said to interfere with their performance in the second language (Flege, Bohn & Jang 1997; Strange 2010). Furthermore, similar sounds may be confused within the phonological loop of the working memory (Baddeley 1990). It has been shown that giving students an opportunity to consciously attend to novel phonetic forms may be a way to enhance their learning (Pederson & Guion-Anderson 2010). Through the use of distractor items, which are chosen for their phonological or morphological features, the student is given the opportunity to develop bottom-up processing skills, where they develop the ability to distinguish between minimal pairs, gain exposure to phonemes not in their own language, and learn how certain sounds relate to which letter combinations in the medication subset of vocabulary. This is an important skill because whole word and word part recognition play an important role in reading fluency (Sadoski & Paivio 2004, pp.23-26). Over time, the student will become quicker and more efficient at reading medication names and eventually switch to using top-down processing, just like native speakers.

Input and Exposure

In Asher's theory of language acquisition, he asserts that learners should demonstrate their comprehension of language input by carrying out verbal instructions given by the teacher. The condition is that the language should be performed on some physical object, in this case a medication bottle, but without the student being required to speak. At this point, they are in the initial stages of learning the word. Indeed, there is no doubt that the student will be mentally rehearsing and repeating the word as they search for the matching bottle. Indeed, the game is intended to allow for a silent period, letting the student rehearse internally and privately before they are required to produce language. The game merely asks the student to explore the possibilities receptively. This can be related to the kind of output that Krashen (1982, p.61) feels would improve acquisition.

After reviewing the literature on vocabulary learning, Schmitt recommends that a good practice for learning programs is to have "a component based around maximising exposure and incidental learning" (Schmitt 2008, p.329). Krashen's input hypothesis can be used to expand on this idea. He argues that we acquire further language "only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now" (1982, pp.32-3). Often, the students who use the game are highly unlikely to have seen these medication names; thus, the presentation of each medication name extends them. Krashen (1982, p.58) theorises that low-frequency words will cause unnecessary difficulty for adults seeking comprehensible input. It is in this kind of situation, that the language learning teacher can do their best work: "the main function of the second language teacher is to help make input comprehensible, to do for the adult what the 'outside world' cannot or will not do", which in this case means to offer learners a simpler form (Krashen 1982, p.64). This game provides the kind of input, or exposure, that the Nursing student needs.

The question is, then, how many exposures are needed for vocabulary acquisition. Chang and Read's (2006, p.393) research shows that merely hearing the input twice improved performance on a listening comprehension task, even better than having vocabulary instruction. To promote incidental learning from reading, Webb's (2007) research suggests that significant increases take place after three exposures and continues to improve from there. After three presentations, learners gained significantly more receptive knowledge of orthography than after one

presentation, and after seven presentations learners gained significantly more productive knowledge of orthography than after three encounters. After ten encounters, receptive orthographic knowledge was 88% and productive orthographic knowledge was 77%. Thus, as Webb (2007, p.62) argues "by ten meetings with a word, there is the possibility that learners will be able to recognize its spelling and words that it is associated with". Webb's findings are similar to other studies. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) were less certain of when the acquisition of meaning took place, but they did find that the learning rate increased from 10 exposures or more. Brown et al (2008, pp.151-154) similarly found that about 10 exposures or more were most likely to get results, with familiarity with the words needing to take place before meanings could be remembered consistently. Taking other research on stages of acquisition into account, it is likely that before the requisite exposure are gained, familiarity with word form was being established. Indeed, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) argue that exposure had the most effect on form: "the results show that the lexical aspect that benefited the most was spelling". Schmitt's (2008, p.348) review of the literature reveals similar results as those found by Webb.

Automaticity

Automaticity is a key aspect of the Medicina game, assisting students to acquire a faster and easier recognition of words. According to Chapelle (2001, pp.69-70), student's attention can be directed towards a focus on word form, which this game seeks to do, by attentional manipulation. She draws upon Skehan's 1998 guidelines which recommend that the manipulation of student's attention can be achieved through time-based pressure, modified interaction, and stakes (Skehan, in Chapelle, 2001, p.49). Time-pressure is of greatest importance for the learning activity. The use of a set time-frame to complete each challenge compels students to concentrate on the factors that will produce success: in this case, attention to form. A variation of modified interaction is found in the action of the game (since the student must interact and get feedback on their interactions), and the stakes are built in through the scoring system and avatar responses/rewards.

The use of time-pressure has a second function of fostering language fluency in the student. Fluency is an elusive but essential aspect of good communication. Hulstijn (2006) argues that it is not sufficient to simply know vocabulary in order to produce fluent communication. There needs to be fairly rapid processing of vocabulary in order for fluency to occur. Hulstijn (2006) argues that "the recognition and retrieval of words needs to be automatized" (2006, p.711). Automaticity involves a 'resistance to the temptation to analyse language forms' and moves towards 'a relatively unlimited automatic mode of processing' (Brown, 2007, p.64). Automaticity occurs when it takes little time and effort to retrieve information, reaching a point of unconscious effortless processing of input (DeKeyser p.128). Sadoski and Paivio (2004, pp.11, 16-17) suggest that automaticity is achieved through improved representational processing, which greatly economises on cognitive resources.

While it is true that automaticity supports fluency, automaticity itself is dependent upon lower order processes such as word recognition. Thus, higher order processes rely on lower order ability, which echoes what has already been presented in Nation's theory of knowing a word. However, Nation did not factor in fluency as a necessary aspect, but Hulstijn does. In Hulstijn's investigation of the psycholinguistic mechanics of fluency in listening skills, he found that "lower-order processes of word recognition play a crucial role in these automatic processes, as it is at the level of words (i.e., lexemes) that forms are matched with meanings" (Hulstijn, 2006, p.708). Moreover, he similarly found for fluency in reading, that "word recognition is the most important factor" and "most deficiencies in literary skills are caused by problems at the lowest cognitive levels, in particular in the coding of acoustic, phonetic, and phonemic information" (Hulstijn 2006, p.709). Thus, Hulstijn comes to the conclusion that "an important element of

fluent language use is automatic word recognition" (2006, p.711). DeKeyser (2001, p.126), summarises the effect of this for ESL learning: "without automatization no amount of knowledge will every translate into the levels of skill required for real life use". Studies, such as the one by Akamatsu (2008), support the efficacy of word recognition training as a way to reach automaticity for low-frequency vocabulary. Hulstijn also offers a means to achieve fluency by highlighting how technology-based instruction can act as a vehicle to increase automaticity of vocabulary knowledge (Hulstijn 2000, p.36).

Finally, Sadoski and Paivio (2004, p.11) explain how the practice of combining the written and spoken forms of a word can improve automaticity: "If the visually recognized word was also familiar from speech, its associated auditory-motor phonological logogen usually would be activated rapidly in turn […] All this would be carried out in milliseconds and perhaps without conscious attention. If the visual word was not familiar, visual and phonological logogens at lower levels such as letter combinations would be activated, requiring more time and attention" (2004, p.11). The implication is that, after a period of time, it can be expected that repeated exposure will improve processing speed, but more importantly, the representational processing between the visual and phonological modalities should be strengthened. When familarity is achieved, it will be comprehensive, i.e. across modalities, rather than just remembering the spelling or the sounds. The game is designed for the purpose of giving repeated exposure to spoken and written forms as a method of reaching automaticity and fluency. Thus, as a teaching tool, the game can be used to improve the overall recognition speed of both written and spoken low-frequency vocabulary.

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive load theory informs a number of critical aspects of the game design. Cognitive load theory is premised upon the idea that a person uses a limited-capacity working memory to assimilate new information (Baddeley et al 1996). Since working memory can only process a certain amount of novel at a time, it restricts what can be encoded into long-term memory at any given time. A simplistic analogy for this model of memory is a computer, where the RAM is the working memory, and the storage space is the long-term memory. Our brains are much more complex than this, however a person can only attend to a certain number of items at the same time. Cowan (2001) suggests that we can hold in our mind only four meaningful chunks of information at a time. Sweller's (2010) cognitive load theory defines two kinds of loads on the working memory: intrinsic and extraneous. Intrinsic load refers to the complexity of the material to be learned and extraneous load refers to demands on working memory which is not due to the inherent complexity of the material. The idea is that the less working memory resources are devoted to extraneous load, the fewer the resources will remain to deal with the intrinsic load.

Intrinsic cognitive load is thought to be determined by element interactivity, where an element is defined as "anything that needs to be or has been learned" (Sweller 2010, p.124). In the game, the elements are phonemes and written morphemes. Element interactivity levels depend on the number of interacting elements and the connections needed to be made to other elements in order for the learning to take place. The vocabulary learning task in the game uses two modalities and one element needs to be contrasted to five other elements. Thus, the intrinsic load of the game is considered to be at a high level. In Sweller's cognitive load theory, he outlines a principle of managing intrinsic load that should be used in practice when a task is complex. This is called the "simple-to-complex strategy" (van Merriënboer & Sweller 2010, p.89). This involves the management of intrinsic load by initially simplifying the tasks and then adding more elements or interactions. DeKeyser (2001, p.138) summarises how this might work: "the smaller, lower-level chunks occur by far the most frequently, [and] they are the first to be learned" and "as these

newly formed time-saving devices are used very frequently, they lead to a dramatic improvement in reaction time". The idea is applied in the game through its focus on form rather than through the teaching of meaning and use, because the student needs to be equipped with the basic skills before they can apply them in complex situations. The idea is that additional elements and interactions will gained through use of the words in the student's wider nursing education and clinical placements, and this preparatory approach is typical of CALL approaches (Reinders & White 2010, p.63).

Even when intrinsic load is high, learning can also be maximised by using different modalities to provide input (e.g. listening to words and looking at a diagram). This is called the modality effect and it can be used to expand working memory capacity (Sweller 2010, p.135). Paivio proposes a number of modalities, among which includes visual, auditory, and haptic input (Paivio 1991, p.257). There is also evidence that the language has independent modality-specific representations (Sadoski & Paivio 2004, p.6). For example, there is a phonological store that can hold acoustic or speech-based information for 1 to 2 seconds. In the game, the phonological loop will be engaged as the student internally rehearses the spoken input while trying to find the written equivalent (Baddeley 1990). Furthermore, when the student is exposed to multiple modalities they are theorised to use different modality-specific memory stores. The computer game takes advantage of this optimization of learning by using three modalities of the verbal code, hopefully allowing maximum uptake into the memory. The modalities used in the game are visual (printed letters and word shapes), auditory (spoken words), and haptic (touching occurs through using an avatar, a projected identity operating within the game which is moved using the mouse and which grabs objects on a screen using a mouse click). Finally, students should like this approach, since they have been found to prefer reading while listening over single modality input and they make greater gains through this method (Brown et al 2008, p.156; Chang & Read 2009; p.660-2).

Conclusion

Norbert Schmitt, in his review article of instructed second language vocabulary learning, writes "the overriding principle for maximising vocabulary learning is to increase the amount of engagement learners have with lexical items" (Schmitt 2008, p.329). The game is based upon the students' concentration on engaging with words. Schmitt reminds us that the percentage of words that a learner must know in order to have good comprehension of a written text is 98% and of speech is 95% (2008, pp.331-2). In an academic context, the low-frequency words are most likely to be unknown and yet crucial to understanding. The students cannot perform academically and professionally without these words, and they need active participation to attain this vocabulary. The Medicina game is one solution to this problem. Thus, it can be said that the game is uniquely positioned to (1) provide the opportunity for students to encounter the words in written and spoken form, and (2) complete a language learning task, which hopefully (3) improves concentration on the words and their automatic processing while (4) reducing self-consciousness.

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Running head: IPA AND EFL

Infant Phoneme Acquisition Studies

and the EFL Classroom

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This paper will discuss the relationship between infant phoneme acquisition studies and teaching in an EFL context. It will start with an historical account of the developments in infant language acquisition studies. It will then discuss the theoretical implications of these studies and relate these findings to the EFL classroom. A number of questions are addressed. First, to what extent can second language learners' first language phonemic architecture be modified? Second, what do infant language acquisition studies tell us about the constraints that cause difficulties for such modifications? And third, what methodologies are the most effective for modifying a foreign language learner's native phonemic architecture? This paper will argue that explicit instruction at the segmental level is vital in an EFL setting. The final part of the presentation will discuss a classroom study the author conducted. This study not only demonstrates that segmental training can be successful but shows that students value such training.

Infant Phoneme Acquisition Studies and English as a Foreign Language:

The Classroom and Beyond

From babbling at the age of six months to full sentences at three years old, children are amazing language learners. How they accomplish this remains a mystery, but research has made huge strides in understanding the process. The theoretical implications of the research in infant language acquisition are extensive and reach into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This paper will explore these implications in strokes broad and detailed.

There are three not clearly separated parts to this paper. The first discusses the historical development of infant phoneme acquisition studies (IPA). The second overlaps the first and points to how IPA impacts theoretical issues important to English as a second language (ESL) and EFL. This paper will point out, for example, how IPA contributes, in no small way, to the discussion of whether language is innate and domain specific. It will also show how IPA intersects with the long-standing debate on the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH).

The third part of this paper will discuss what IPA means for teaching in an EFL context. In exploring what IPA implies about EFL, a number of issues will be considered. It will be shown that an infant's perception progresses from a language-general to a language-specific state. The task of a native language learner, then, can be characterized as a "mapping" of the native language (L1) phonetic system. In contrast, a non-native language learner must progress from a system mapped to the sounds of the L1 to one that can be tuned to the second language (L2). This paper will discuss what IPA tells us about the nature of the perception and production difficulties faced by L2 learners in this process. A number of questions will be addressed. First, to what extent can L2 learners' perceptual patterns be modified after the initial mapping? Second, what is the nature of the constraints that cause difficulties for such modifications? Third, if such modifications are possible, to what extent will the effect of perceptual learning be transferred to production? Fourth, what methodologies are the most

efficient for modifying an L2 learner's initial L1 phoneme structure? Going against current trends and the tenets of the Communicative Approach (CA), this paper will argue for explicit pronunciation instruction at the segmental level.

This paper will now discuss the development of IPA.

<center>Historical Theoretical Positions</center>

In the last half of the twentieth century, discussion of the development of language was shaped by the debate between nativist and behaviorist theory. In *Verbal Behavior* (1957) the behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner argued that language, like all animal behavior, developed in children as a function of external reinforcement. By Skinner's account, infants learn language in the same way a rat learns to navigate a maze, through stimulus and response, positive and negative reinforcement.

Noam Chomsky (1959), in a review of *Verbal Behavior*, took a very different position. Chomsky argued that reinforcement learning had little to do with humans' abilities to acquire language. He posited a language faculty or a module in the brain that was specific to humans and developed naturally in children. For Chomsky, language is a specialized skill, which develops spontaneously.

As would be expected, the two approaches created opposing theories of how infants acquire their native language. The positions varied strikingly with regards to (a) the initial state of knowledge (b) the cause of developmental change and (c) the role played by ambient language heard by the child. In Skinner's view, no innate information was necessary, developmental change was cause by reward contingencies, and language input could not, by itself, cause language to emerge. In Chomsky's view, infants possessed innate knowledge of language, development constituted growth of the language module, and language input triggered a particular pattern from among those innately provided.

As we will see, the last few decades have produced new data on language acquisition not predicted by either of these theories.

Emergence of an Academic Field: Phonemic Acquisition

In the 1970s researchers set out to evaluate the adequacy of Chomsky's nativist approach and speech perception and phonology became focal points. Chomsky argued that humans' innate constraints for language included specification of a universal grammar and phonetics. He states:

> The system of phonological rules makes use of the universal features in a fundamental way, but it is the properties of the systems of rules,… that really shed light on the specific nature of the organization of language. (Chomsky, 1968)

Researchers began looking for signs of the universal phonological rules Chomsky predicted. The reasoning was that phonetics, like grammar, demonstrates dual patterning. That is, a finite set of primitives (phonetic units) can be combined to create an infinite set of words just as a finite set of words can be combined to create an infinite number of sentences. Languages contain between twenty-five and forty phonetic units, and language perception requires learning which phonetic units are used in a particular language and mastering the rules for their combinations.

The research began with cross-language speech perception in adults, but questions regarding the development of speech perception in children naturally arose. In a landmark experiment in 1971, Peter Eimas was the first to actually test infant sensitivity to the sounds of speech. Remarkably, he showed that babies as young as one month old could differentiate the sounds /pa/ and /ba/. (Eimas, 1975) (see note 1 for information on methodologies; see note 2 for more on Eimas' experiment) .

Eimas' work was followed by a series of cross-language speech perception studies, which revealed that adults could only distinguish those phonetic contrasts that are used in their native language whereas young infants discriminate phonetic contrasts whether or not they are used in the language they are hearing. Researchers began to accumulate facts that suggested infants were able to discriminate both native and non-native contrasts equally well (see Saffran, Werker & Werner, 2006, for a summary). That is, infants can hear the sounds of any language. They are sensitive at the outset to a wide variety of phonological structures and so are prepared to learn any language to which they might be habitually exposed. Aslin and Pisoni (1980) encapsulated these results in their "universal theory" of speech perception.

<center>The Work of Dr. Janet Werker</center>

Clearly, adults cannot distinguish the phonemes of every language, so when the universal listening ability of infants was discovered the question that arose was at what age humans lose this discriminatory ability. The task of answering this question was taken up by many researchers, most notably Dr. Janet Werker at the University of British Columbia, in Canada. What Werker initially hypothesized was that the ability to discriminate non-native contrasts might be lost at puberty. What she found, however, was that the loss of discrimination occurs between six and twelve months of age. After one year infants have lost much of their ability to discriminate between sounds that are not important in their native languages (Werker & Tees, 1983) (see note 3 for more on the experiment).

In the years since this initial work, there have been a number of replications and extensions of this surprising finding (see Saffran *et al*., 2006, for a summary). Moreover brain imaging studies have supported Werker's claim. Cheour, Ceponiene, Lehtokoski, Luuk, Allik, Alho and Naatanen (1998) used the MEG imaging technique (see note 1) to confirm that the developmental changes in phonetic perception observed in behavioral experiments is mirrored in brain imaging parameters. That is, brain imaging has shown "that the MMN response is

present in 6-month-old infants for both native and nonnative contrasts, but that by 12 months

of age, the MMN response to the nonnative contrasts is no longer present" (Kuhl, Tsao, Liu,

Zhang & de Boer, 2001, p. 157).

Werker hypothesized that at ten or eleven months of age infants start focusing on the

sounds of their native language or languages, and begin to exclude the sounds they do not

hear in their surroundings. When an infant begins to focus attention on the sounds that are

crucial for distinguishing differences in word meaning in their native language, they lose the

ability to distinguish sounds not in their language. Werker's early research was taken to

strongly suggest that infants are born hard-wired to process the sounds of human speech.

They were seen as a confirmation of Chomsky's theory.

<div align="center">Developmental Change, Learning and Selection</div>

Early models of speech perception like Werker's were selectionist in nature. Influenced by

Chomsky, theorists argued, "that an innate neural specification of all possible phonetic units

allowed selection of a subset of those units to be triggered by language input" (Kuhl, *et al.*,

2001, p. 138). The notion was that linguistic experience produced either maintenance or loss

of innate abilities. Aspects of language stimulated by input were maintained; those not

stimulated by input atrophied.

As noted, Werker's claim that a perceptual shift occurred during an infant's first year was

supported by research, but as is the case with any complex paradigm, all the results did not fit

nicely together. Some revealing exceptions to the pattern appeared. Kuhl, Williams, Lacerda,

Stevens and Lindbloom (1992), for example, showed that vowels reorganize at a younger age

than consonants. Studies like this caused researchers to take another look at the data.

Werker's studies used a "threshold" measure of performance. They determined how many

infants passed a threshold at each age. When native-language contrasts were tested, a large

number of infants passed the threshold measure at both six and twelve months of age. When

nonnative contrasts were tested, infants passed the criterion only at six months of age; they failed at twelve months of age. This showed either maintenance or decline in non-native language abilities, but could not demonstrate growth. These methods, in other words, could not tell if infants listening to native language contrasts demonstrated developmental growth between six and twelve months, and this is critical, for a pattern of increasing performance would suggest that infants are learning something, not just maintaining what was innately given.

Kuhl, Deguchi and Hayashi (1997; cited in Kuhl *et al.,* 2001) showed a pattern of increasing performance on native contrasts over time, which suggested developmental growth rather than maintenance (note 4). Other research (see Kuhl *et al.,* 2001) made it apparent that an infant's development is more complicated than what a selectionist model would predict. Evidence began to suggest that maintenance alone is insufficient to capture the dynamics of infant speech perception. Maye and Weiss (2003) claim, "The process of an infant's developing perception of speech must … involve not only paring down of initially discriminable contrasts, but also enhancement of initially difficult contrasts" (p. 503). "The framework that emerges from this research," claims Kuhl (2000), "is very different from that held historically. Infants are neither the *tabula rasas* that Skinner described nor the innate grammarians that Chomsky envisioned" (p. 11856). Research, Kuhl claims, has discovered "a new kind of learning" (p. 11852). The data on infant's language acquisition accumulated since Werker's early work "has sent theorists back to the design board" (Kuhl, *et al.* 2001, p. 145).

Infant Phoneme Acquisition and Later Language Learning

The nativist approach, as mentioned before, holds that the initial speech perception capabilities of an infant reflect a special-purpose speech-processing module as proposed by Chomsky. They believe language is unique to humans and arises from innate structures. IPA

has shown they could be mistaken, at least partially, on both accounts.

One of the nativist arguments for innate learning is the claim that linguistic input does not provide the data necessary for the induction of adult grammar. The validity of this position, known as the "The Poverty of the Stimulus," (Chomsky, 1988) has been questioned by studies showing how infants exploit the distributional cues in speech. In a systematic, and remarkable, series of studies, Saffran, Aslin, Newport and various colleagues pieced together a picture that demonstrates the role of statistics in the way both infants and adults parse speech.

Saffran, Newport, and Aslin (1996) showed that adults were able to learn artificial words based solely on transitional probabilities between syllables. A parallel experiment, (Saffran, Aslin, and Newport, 1996) demonstrated the same was true of eight-month-old infants. Saffran, Newport, Aslin, Tunick and Barrueco (1997) showed that this sensitivity to the statistics of input does not require explicit attention, which is to say, the learning of words based on distributional cues can occur passively in both children and adults. Aslin, Saffran, and Newport (1998) focused on the question of precisely which factor was relevant and showed that only sensitivity to transitional probabilities could account for their results. Looking to see if this sensitivity was unique to language processing, Saffran, Johnson, Aslin & Newport (1999) showed that both adults and children can use the same probabilities to learn tone sequences. A related study by Hauser, Weiss, and Marcus (2002) showed that this ability is not unique to humans; primates are also sensitive to distributional cues.

In general, these studies demonstrate that linguistic properties can be learned from input alone. One need not presume the existence of innately specified hardware. Also, a growing body of research suggests that at least some of the learning mechanisms informing infant language acquisition are quite general; they are not domain-specific and not centered in a language acquisition device (LAD).

The tools of modern neuroscience have addressed this question and in discussing the results from brain imaging techniques, Kuhl *et al.* (2001) state that "one general finding stemming from these studies is that a much larger number of brain areas appear to be involved in language-processing than previously thought... These data … suggest that there is not one unified area for language generation, but that different cortical systems subserve different aspects of language processing and may be activated in parallel" (p. 157).

The debate about which aspects of language are uniquely human and uniquely linguistic has been complicated, moreover, by Chomsky's recent claim that the only aspect of language that is thusly unique is syntactic recursion. This view, which appeared in *Science* (Hauser, Chomsky & Finch, 2002), has been called a "major recantation" of his earlier nativist position (Goldberg, 2003). The debate, however, is not over. Pinker and Jackendoff (2005) take issue with Chomsky and call his view "unconvincing" (p. 231).

The importance of this argument for teachers of a second or foreign language should not be glossed over. It goes to the heart of the debate over how language learning occurs. If there is a special mental facility, an LAD, then learning language is discontinuous from the rest of the mind and should be treated significantly if not totally different from the acquisition of other skills. Krashen's (1982) well-known and long-held distinction between *learning* and *acquisition* is founded in the idea that there is a specific domain in the brain for language.

Others, however, claim language is not centered in the LAD, and hold that language learning is based on what Bates (1994) calls, " a relatively plastic mix of neural systems that also serve other functions" (p. 1). Likewise, the cognitive psychologist, John R. Anderson (1995) claims, "little direct evidence exists to support the view that language is a unique system" (p. 280). If this is the case, language might best be considered a skill like any other skill and taught with that in mind. This would imply that language skills could be learned, and

then automated through practice, an idea that runs counter to Krashen's *learning / acquisition* distinction (Krashen, 1982).

To be clear, this debate is far from being settled. The debate is mentioned here for two reasons: First, IPA will undoubtedly play a role in resolving this argument and so have a profound impact on issues pertaining to language teaching. The second reason the debate on language's innateness and/or domain specificity is discussed is to elucidate the context within which we should understand Kuhl's "new types of learning," to which we now turn.

<center>The Native Language Magnet Theory</center>

To answer the first two questions posed at the beginning of this essay: i.e., the extent to which a L2 learners' perceptual patterns can be modified after the initial mapping, and the nature of the difficulties for such modifications, we need a model that describes the state of a learners phoneme structure prior to L2 learning; several models describe this "initial state," (see Perceptual Assimilation Model: PAM; Best, 1994 and Speech Learning Model: SLM; Flege, 2003) but our purpose will be well served by using The Native Language Magnet Theory (NLM; NLM-e as proposed by Kuhl, Conboy, Coffey-Corina, Padden, Rivera-Gaxiola & Nelson, 2008, will be included in the symbol NLM). NLM conceptualizes an L2 learner's initial state and thereby describes the nature of the difficulties L2 learners are confronted with when hearing the sounds of the L2. NLM has also proven to be a successful model for perceptual training studies.

NLM tells us that the "new kind of learning" proposed by Kuhl falls between the theories of Skinner and Chomsky. It contends that infants have inherent perceptual biases that segment phonetic units without providing innate descriptions of them. It also holds that infants use inherent learning strategies that were not expected, ones thought to be too complex for infants to use (Kuhl, 2000). Together, these principles suggest that what is innate regarding language

is not a universal grammar and phonetics but "innate biases and strategies that place constraints on perceptions and learning" (p 11856).

NLM posits three aspects to the "new kind of learning" (Kuhl 2000, p. 11852). First, infants demonstrate excellent skills recognizing patterns in speech. They can sort vowels into categories and detect stress and prosodic patterns. Second, NLM claims that infants exploit statistical properties of language input (see the studies by Saffran and colleagues above.) The claim is that infants, before they learn the meaning of words, have already learned a lot about what is phonetically permissible in their native language. Third, and very important for our purposes, NLM claims that language experience "warps" perception. Experience, this argument holds, alters perception. "No speaker of any language," writes Kuhl, "perceives acoustic reality; in each case, perception is altered in the service of language" (p. 11853).

This odd and Kantian sounding statement is one of the most interesting organizing principles to emerge from her research. It explains how infants organize input to recognize similarities and form categories called a sound map.

<div align="center">Creating A Sound Map</div>

By the time an infant in an English speaking home is six months old it has heard hundreds of thousands of examples of the vowel sound /i/ as in "daddy," "mommy" and "baby." Researchers think that from these thousands of examples, babies develop a type of sound map in their brains that helps them hear the /i/ sound clearly. It can be said that babies create perfect examples of speech sounds with a type of target area around each sound. Once their sound map for /i/ is created babies can pick out the /i/ from the other sounds they hear.

These prototypes have a profound effect on how babies hear speech and how they babble (Kuhl *et al*, 2001). They help "tune" the child's brain for the language around them, so that they can hear the different sounds of speech clearly. By the time babies are six months old, they have developed a set of speech sound prototypes they can use as building blocks when

they begin to put together their own words, usually sometime around twelve months (Kuhl, *et al.*, 1992).

From a language-general starting point, monolingual perception has been shown to develop in accordance with the properties of the ambient language. Exactly what is innately given is unclear, but that phonetic structures are affected by experience and are influenced by the linguistic environment as a function of learning has come to be held as important by many in the field.

The next question is how these initial categories affect later language learning.

A Biological Critical Period or Interference

In his influential book, *Biological Foundations of Language,* Lenneberg (1967) proposed that language is constrained by biology. He claimed that language could be acquired only during a critical period in development, which lasts from birth until the onset of puberty. At the same time, Chomsky (1959) was arguing for a specialized, hard-wired, LAD. Although there are important theoretical distinctions between their stances, these ideas converged to lead to a consensus that biology and maturation constrain language acquisition.

Chomsky's views, as we have seen, are still vigorously debated. Lennenberg's theory, too, continues to be debated in the literature. Weber-Fox and Neville (1999) investigated neural activity while performing L2 tasks and claim:

> [Their] findings are consistent with the hypothesis that the development of at least some neural subsystems for language processing is constrained by maturational changes, even in early childhood. Additionally, our results are compatible, at least in part, with aspects of Lenneberg's . . . original hypothesis that puberty may mark a significant point in language learning capacity and neural reorganization capabilities" (p. 35).

The important qualifier in this are the words "development of at least some neural

subsystems for language processing" as it becomes very clear in the literature on the CPH that the somewhat dated notion of L2 acquisition changing suddenly at puberty is much too simplistic. The view that is emerging is that there may be different critical periods for different language skills, which change at different ages.

Werker and Tees (2005) point out:

> There is virtually no system for which some mechanism, at some level, cannot be found to allow further change beyond the point in time at which input would typically have the greatest influence. This can be seen at every level of analysis from the behavioral through the molecular (p. 242).

Although the term critical period is still widely used, in recent years many have come to favor the use of sensitive period (Tomblin, Barker, & Hubbs, 2007). Commonly, sensitive periods are defined as a time in development in which the organism is particularly responsive to experience. Alternatively a critical period is viewed as a time in development in which experience, or the absence of experience, results in irreversible changes in the brain. Sensitive periods, in contrast, do not necessarily result in a complete irreversible change in the brain. (Bruer, 2001, cited in Tomblin, *et al*, 2007). Werker and Tees (2005) go further: "to ensure that we are referring to a window that is more variable in onset and offset than a classic CP [critical period], … we will employ the term ''optimal period (OP).'' They then say, "Language involves many different subsystems including semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology - each likely with its own OP or interrelated set of OPs" (p. 234). The evidence for this, they claim, is "overwhelming" (p. 236).

The commonly observed and widely accepted notion that learning gets harder with age is not in question. The question is also not whether changes in attitudes or situation alter the learning process as one gets older. As Flege (2005) points out, one of the primary difficulties in evaluating the effect age has on learning a second language is that the learning process is

confounded by things like the learner's amount of exposure, attitude and motivation. This paper is not concerned with these factors. While important for a full understanding of L2 acquisition, considering these variables would take us into the political, and often contentious, realm of socio-linguistics. This paper deals with English in an EFL context and holds socio-linguistic factors to be a constant.

Concerned with what IPA has to say about fundamental changes in the learning process occurs at a fairly fixed age; that is, whether there is a closing of a biological "window of opportunity," our questions are about the possibility of, and the constraints upon, changing the phonemic mapping that occurs during an infant's first year. These concerns touch on two key issues in EFL; whether L1 and L2 acquisition are essentially the same process and whether the nature of L2 acquisition changes if the first exposure to the new language comes after a certain age. In practical terms, the importance of these questions cannot be exaggerated; they are central to the optimal age at which children should start learning foreign languages and to the best teaching and learning approach for all ages.

The question concerning us, then, is not if the ability to learn an L2 declines with age; that is uncontroversial. The question is the degree to which initial learning leads to what is called entrenchment, the process of constraining later learning (Tomblin, *et al.*, 2007). The question, more specifically, is the degree to which L2 learners can improve and, of course the role IPA plays in the debate.

Kuhl, Conboy, Padden, Nelson and Pruitt (2005), in a study linking infant speech perception to later language development, claim "critical period phenomena arise not from a genetically determined change in learning capacity at a particular age, but from entrenchment, which is the direct outcome of learning" (p. 258). They go on:

> a combination of maturation and learning, as observed in other
>
> species, is posited to govern the critical period for phonetic learning in human infants.

> Infants' early abilities to differentiate the sounds of human speech… may not only be
> the gateway to language but may also provide important insights into the long-
> standing issue of the critical period for language learning. (p. 259)

NLM (Kuhl *et al.*, 2001) claims that the creation of mental sound maps "commits" neural structure in some way and this "neural commitment to a learned structure interferes with the processing of information that does not conform to the learned pattern" (p. 161). Early learning, the argument goes, has committed neurons to a particular configuration, and the network has reached a point at which it can no longer revert to its original plasticity.

This L1 entrenchment causes sounds close to the prototype /i/, for example, to be heard as an /i/. This is what Kuhl (1991) calls the *perceptual magnet effect*. Once a sound category exists in memory, according to this theory, "it functions like a perceptual magnet for other sounds in the category" (p. 11853). That is, the prototype attracts sounds that are similar so that they sound like the prototype itself. This, NLM explains, is why Japanese, who do not have the prototype of the vowel of "bit" mapped in memory, tend to hear it as the vowel in "beat" which they do have mapped. This neural commitment to a learned structure, Kuhl (2000) argues, interferes with the processing of information and "initial learning can alter future learning independent of a strictly timed period" (p. 11855).

McClelland (n. d.) agrees. Discussing the results of a study he conducted of the /r-l/ contrast of English by native Japanese speakers he comments,

> The findings … suggest that there is considerable residual plasticity in the
> phonological systems of Japanese adults. Their failure to learn under normal
> conditions may reflect not so much a loss of plasticity as a tendency for the
> mechanisms of learning to maintain strongly established perceptual tendencies. (P. 20)

This view is striking in that it claims initial learning can alter future learning independent of a strict time period. The critical period, then, is not solely a matter of age, hormones, or the

brain's loss of plasticity. L2 learners need to develop new sound maps.

According to CPH the correlation between age and L2 attainment is generally negative, and the commonly held view of "the earlier, the better" has credibility. The situation of the EFL classroom, however, is somewhat different. Munoz (2006) points out that CPH is largely based on ESL research. That is, research done in English-speaking countries. In the EFL context, in which all English learning tends to take place in a classroom, age is less decisive than what the ESL-based research points out.

Recent evidence comes from Spain where the Barcelona Age Factor (BAF) Project began after the lowering of the starting age for learning English in schools. This resulted in two coexisting curricula with early and late starters. Munoz (2006) assessed various skills by means of a test battery administered after two hundred, around four hundred, and after seven hundred hours of instruction. Surprisingly, the late starters, those learning from eleven years old, always obtained higher scores than the group that began at eight years old. Munoz concludes that older learners progress faster than younger learners. Younger learners reduce this distance in the long run but there is no indication that they will outperform those who started at an older age. In a component of BAF that concentrated on listening, Fullana (2006) reports that early starters were more successful in discriminating sound contrasts than late starters, but that the results on production were inconclusive.

Also in the EFL context, Wang and Kuhl (2003) examined the perceptual learning of Mandarin Chinese tones by American English speakers aged six to fourteen years. The results showed a significant increase in identification ability across the ages with no abrupt decrease in the degree of improvement at pre-puberty and post-puberty as would be predicted by CPH. The researches concluded, "L2 speech learning is probably not a strictly timed developmental process with rigid cut-off periods, as claimed by the CPH, but is rather a function of experience and exposure" (p. 1539).

Munoz, Collins, White, Blaya, Torras Cherta, Naves and Celaya (n. d.) claim:

> …the potential advantage that younger starters may have in naturalistic acquisition settings… does not appear to be instantiated in foreign learning contexts with limited exposure. In sum, in the absence of significant input/exposure, no benefits appear to be associated with an earlier start. (p. 2)

The effects of CPH, which are obvious in L1 and ESL environments, do not seem to transfer to the EFL classroom. The CPH is about natural acquisition. It might be that the CPH is irrelevant to EFL unless certain conditions are met. As DeKeyser (2000) says, "Early age confers an absolute, not a statistical, advantage - that is, there may very well be no exceptions to the age effect," but "implicit acquisition processes require massive amounts of input, which only a total immersion program can provide, not a program consisting of a few hours of foreign language teaching per week" (p. 520).

In 1969, in a reaction to Lennenberg (1967), Scovel pointed out that adults are superior learners in areas such as literacy, vocabulary and syntax. Evidence points to this being the case in the EFL context. It could be that efficiency in formal language learning increases with maturation. Older students, that is to say, may have an advantage over learners under the age of twelve in the classroom situation (see Thompson & Gaddes, 2005).

It has been demonstrated that monolingual adult speech perception capabilities are sufficiently plastic to support the acquisition of non-native language sound patterns. Those who teach adults in an EFL situation will be heartened. Less heartening for those who teach children, plan elementary school curricula, or deal with national educational policy, it has also been shown that age and the CPH seem to be irrelevant to EFL unless certain criteria are met.

What the research in IPA implies for the teaching of foreign language perception and pronunciation will be discussed shortly. First, however, the importance of teaching pronunciation needs to be addressed.

Is Teaching Pronunciation Important?

Brown's (1991) observation that "pronunciation … is an aspect of language which is often given little attention, if not completely ignored, by the teacher in the classroom" (p.1) would surely seem strange to someone outside the field of language teaching. Isn't pronunciation an obvious area of language instruction, like kicking a ball is to coaching soccer? It does not seem so. Pronunciation, despite its essential role in language production, is, indeed, often ignored in the classroom. Hansen (1995) notes that segmental techniques, like drilling minimal pairs, have lost favor. Wei (2006) claims that although the importance of English pedagogies has increased, pronunciation teaching is not given enough attention, especially in Asian countries. A study by Derwing and Rossiter (cited in Ingram & Ngyuen, n. d.) claims that only eight out of one hundred intermediate ESL learners indicated they had received any pronunciation instruction, despite having been enrolled in ESL programs for extended periods of time.

A lack of teacher preparation may explain this. Research has shown that many ESL teachers have no formal preparation to teach pronunciation. Breitkreutz, Derwing and Rossiter (cited in Ingram & Nguyen, n. d.), for instance, reported that sixty-seven percent of ESL teachers surveyed in Canada had no training in pronunciation instruction. MacDonald (cited in Ingram & Nguyen, n. d.), moreover, cites several studies in Australia indicating that many teachers do not teach pronunciation "because they lack confidence, skills and knowledge" (p. 13).

This lack of teacher preparation may partially explain why pronunciation is largely ignored, but there are other reasons. One might be the influence of CPH; ESL teachers might avoid teaching pronunciation because CPH suggests adults cannot improve, or that the improvement will not be robust enough to be worth the class time. Another reason may be the tenets of the Communicative Approach (CA), which downplay any explicit instruction. As Silveira (2002)

points out, "Despite recognizing the importance of pronunciation teaching, the Communicative Approach followers tended to ignore it, or focus on the supra-segmentals" (p. 97). The universal appropriateness of CA has been a matter of debate, however, and while most writers ultimately support the method, many call for implementing the approach with adaptations for specific cultural contexts, particularly in Asia (see Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004). That is the position this paper takes.

It should also be pointed out that many of the ideas that guide language teaching come from ESL, not EFL, contexts. In an ESL classroom, which may include students of various L1s, it is difficult, if not impossible, to deal with specific L1-L2 pronunciation problems. The ESL influence might also explain why the teaching of supra-segmentals is the approach favored in most ESL textbooks. Most publishers hope to target learners from all over the world, and because they cannot meet all local needs, the details of L1-L2 linguistic differences are usually ignored.

The prevailing view, in any case, is that improvement in supra-segmental features has a direct correlation with the improved intelligibility of L2 learners (Saito, 2007). This paper argues, however, that in an EFL situation, where all the students speak the same L1, it is beneficial to work on problems at the segmental level. As Ohata (2004; cited in Saito, 2007) insists, although it is impossible for ESL teachers to cover the phonetic knowledge of all students from many different countries, "having such knowledge can be quite an advantage, especially for teachers working in an EFL situation" (p. 21).

Levis (2005) claims that the mainstream emphasis on supra-segmental aspects is not entirely valid because it is not based on sound research, and points out that a segmental focus makes a more important contribution to intelligibility. Neri, Cucchiarini, and Strik (2006) take a similar stance calling pronunciation error gravity hierarchies - i.e. the studies that show supra-segmentals to be more important for comprehension - inconclusive and suffering from

methodological problems. Jenkins (2005) reports that in a study conducted on dyads of non-native speakers, mistakes at the segmental level were the biggest source of problems. And according to a study by Riney, Takagi & Inutsuka (2005) the more attention given to individual sounds the better the intelligibility of the speech.

There are other very important reasons for explicit phonemic instruction. One, it is successful, as confirmed by studies in the area. Derwing and Munro (2005) emphasize the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction and Couper (2006) claims dramatic gains in student phoneme pronunciation after explicit classroom instruction. This success spawns other positive results. Vitanova and Miller (2002) report that improvement with segmentals can lead to a feeling of accomplishment and increased motivation.

Another reason to teach pronunciation is that it fits into what the students, particularly in Asia, may expect. Too often, and perhaps more often than teachers realize, our approach (which speaks to complaints against CA) leaves students confused about the roles of learner and instructor. In societies where teacher-centered classes are the norm, teacher-directed pronunciation practice might be more familiar, better understood (in terms of goals) and extremely appropriate given the students' assumptions and expectations.

The best argument for the explicit teaching of pronunciation however, arises from NLM's account of the mechanisms underlying speech perception. It is a view supported by a Hebbian model of learning. The claim, quite simply, is that explicit teaching, or at least some type of signal enhancement, is the only way L2 learners will ever learn to perceive or produce difficult L2 phonemes. They will not pick these sounds up from natural communication.

According to NLM, the L1 sound map changes how people perceive sound. We do not hear the spoken sounds directly, but filter them through the phonemic structures of our L1. As Kuhl (2000) claims, "infants' mapping of ambient language warps the acoustic dimensions underlying speech" (p. 11854).

McCandliss, Fiez, Protopapas, Conway & McClelland (2002) make a similar claim from a Hebbian perspective. They claim initial learning creates a strong tendency to treat non-native contrastive phonemes as a single phoneme from the listener's L1. L2 learners do not hear the correct pronunciation, so not only can they not learn the sound, but "this tendency may be self-reinforcing, leading to its maintenance even when it is counterproductive" (p. 185), which is to say, every time a non-native listener fails to distinguish a contrastive phoneme, it actually reinforces the cause of the problem. Thinking that students will learn to hear and pronounce the difficult sounds of English in a "natural" and communicative setting is misguided. It may even be working against their chances of ever overcoming their perceptual and productive problems. The "sad irony for an L2 speaker," as Ellis (2006) points out, "is that more input simply compounds their error; they dig themselves ever deeper into the hole created and subsequently entrenched by their L1" (p. 185).

McCandliss *et al.* (2002) demonstrated the problem experimentally. The Hebbian account predicts that subjects who receive exposure to stimuli perceived as the same, that is contrastive phonemes they could not distinguish, would fail to benefit from training, even with hundreds of exposures. In accord with this prediction, subjects trained on stimuli that were difficult for them to discriminate, showed no evidence of learning after three days of training. Subjects who receive exposure to stimuli that they could discriminate, exaggerated stimuli, "showed considerable gains in both identification and discrimination" (p. 93).

This paper will have more to say about the importance of enhancing sounds in order to make them salient when it discusses the most effective methods for changing an L1 learner's phonemic structure. A rather intuitive point is being made: if students cannot discriminate the sounds, hearing them repeatedly is of little help. To improve the perception of a difficult phonemic contrast, it has to be heard, and this demands making it perceptible. This Hebbian

account of the difficulties of learning an L2 is in accord with NLM and argues for explicit segmental training.

This is not to deny the importance of teaching supra-segmentals. This paper does not, as is often the case, want to throw out the baby with the bath water. Saito (2007) argues "that one must understand the segmental in order to be able to understand the supra-segmental fully" (p. 20). This paper agrees. Saito then goes on to say: "Considering communicative significance, phoneme awareness should be prioritized" (p. 20). While agreeing with the importance of teaching segmentals, this paper does not go so far as to prioritize them. The argument here is for creating a balance. In fact, as will be shown, segmentals and supra-segmentals can be taught together.

Finally, obvious in its absence, a major reason for the lack of pronunciation training in EFL classrooms may be the number of non-native teachers. We will consider this problem when discussing methodologies.

<center>Linking Perception and Production</center>

Using NLM as a conceptual model, this paper has described the L1 perceptual shift an infant experiences in the first year. It has also pointed out the nature of the constraints this shift poses to later learning as predicted by NLM. It will now turn to the third question posited at the outset: to what extent is improved perception linked to improved production?

NLM predicts a strong linkage between the perceptual representations, the prototypes formed during mapping, and oral production. In this respect, it is similar to the nativist position, which also argues for a close interaction between speech perception and production. A distinction can be drawn between NLM and the nativist theories, however, and the difference is development. NLM believes the connection is based on perceptual experience (Kuhl & Meltzoff 1996, cited in Kuhl, 2000). In this view, learning is based on experience not innate structures, and this guides the development of motor patterns. "Infants," Kuhl argues,

"relate the auditory results of their own vocalizations to the articulations that caused them, and this creates a connection between the two" (p. 11854).

The relationship between perception and production in adult L2 speech learning has been investigated in a number of studies (see Llisterri, 1995). Bradlow, Akahane-Yamada, Pisoni, & Tohkura (1999) trained eleven native Japanese speakers on the perception of English /r - l/ over the course of three months. The results demonstrate that even though the speakers were only trained on perception, their production of the /r/ and /l/ phonemes also improved dramatically. The researchers suggest, "the underlying mechanism that facilitates the transfer and retention of learning in the perceptual domain to the production domain is due to training-induced modifications to a common mental representation that underlies both speech perception and speech production" (p. 983).

Other accounts of the relationship between segmental production and perception have appeared in the literature. Pisoni (1995; cited in Flege, 2003) observed that the relation between production and perception is "complex" but that it nonetheless reflects the properties of a "unitary articulatory event." He concluded that talkers produce "precisely the same acoustic differences that are distinctive in perceptual analysis," and that the relation between speech production and perception is "unique" among category systems" (p. 4).

Llisterri (1995) points out the complicated interplay between perception and production and shows that the literature is often contradictory. For a little clarity, this paper points to Flege (2003) who states, "that moderate positive correlations exist between the production and perception of L2 phonetic segments by experienced L2 learners." The fact that some L2 learners showed more accurate perception than production is consistent with the hypothesis that L2 segmental perception "leads," that is may be more advanced, than segmental production. This also agrees, Flege claims, with "the results of laboratory training studies showing that gains derived from perceptual training may transfer to improved segmental production in the absence of production training" (p. 26).

The Explicit Teaching of Phonemes in the EFL Context

This paper has used NLM to characterize the initial phonemic mapping that occurs with L1. According to this model, the starting point of the neural system for L2 acquisition is, as Ellis (2006) points out, a "*tabula replete*" (p. 184). It has also been shown that NML conceives this mapping as a neural commitment that becomes entrenched with age and can interfere with L2 learning. While making L2 acquisition difficult, it has been established that plasticity remains well into adulthood and the sound map can be modified. In the previous section, it was shown that perception and production are linked. This paper will now investigate conditions under which phonetic learning can take place. That is (question four) - what are the best methods for modifying phonemic structure?

The argument will show the importance of making the target contrast salient through some kind of enhancement and discuss the importance of hearing numerous examples. This attempt to demonstrate the implications of IPA for adult L2 learning will start by discussing a training study by Zhang, Kuhl, Imada, Kotani and Tohkura, (2005).

What makes this study noteworthy is the fact that the researchers improved the ability of native Japanese speakers to discriminate the English phonemes /r - l/ by using characteristics of "motherese," the infant-directed speech parents and caregivers use when speaking to an infant. The theory informing the study is that circumventing the L1 "neural commitment" (the initial mapping of sounds at around twelve months of age) requires "enriched" exposure analogous to motherese. This idea of signal enhancement, mentioned previously in a Hebbian context, had also been found effective in treating children with language disabilities to improve their phonetic discrimination and language skills (Tallal *et al.*, 1998, quoted in Zhang *et al.*, 2005).

The study by Zhang, *et al.* was conducted in collaboration with researchers at Nippon Telephone and Telegraph in Tokyo and looked at whether Japanese listeners could be trained

to respond to the /r - l/ stimuli as linguistic signals, that is with the left-hemisphere of the brain (see Kuhl *et al.,* 2001, for an explanation of brain laterality and speech processing). The Japanese subjects heard /r/ and /l/ syllables with greatly exaggerated frequencies, reduced bandwidths, and extended durations, like those produced by mothers. Listeners also heard many different talkers, and the sounds were presented in many different vowel contexts.

After twelve hours of training the subjects showed over twenty percent improvement in discrimination. Also, pre-study and post-study MEG data revealed that the subjects treated more of the stimulus with the left-hemisphere of their brains. This indicates that increased linguistic, as opposed to purely auditory, processing was involved.

Another important point confirmed by this study is that exposure to multiple speakers, "high variability," as it is called, seems to be an effective way to increase perceptual learning and to ensure that the learning generalizes to novel (never before heard) listeners. An earlier study (Strange & Dittmann, 1984) had shown success in improving learners' ability to distinguish difficult contrasts, but could not provide evidence that the training improved recognition of stimuli beyond that provided in the study itself. Logan, Lively and Pisoni (1991) used the same words as Strange and Dittman, but produced by multiple talkers. The results showed that the subjects exposed to numerous speakers, or high variability, improved significantly in minimal pair identification when compared to subjects who only heard one speaker. Their claim is that the "modification of attention is… promoted by stimulus variability [which] provide[s] a representative sample of possible exemplars so that changes in the relative weightings of different acoustic cues appropriate to the novel categories can take place" (p. 883).

Kuhl (2000) considers it significant that infant directed speech contains both high variability and exaggerated speech. While recognizing cultural differences, Kuhl claims infant-directed speech is "altered at the phonemic level and these alterations …help the infant

learn (p. 11854). "Mothers addressing infants also increase the variety of exemplars they use," Kuhl, *et al.,* (2001) claims, "behaving in a way that makes them resemble many different talkers" (p. 155). Of course, in most situations, infants receive input from more than one source anyway.

The amount of exposure needed to improve discrimination is the next issue that needs to be addressed. It is an issue that will be carried to the next section.

<div align="center">Implications for the EFL classroom</div>

Readers may have noticed that the studies mentioned above were carried out in a laboratory. The question that naturally arises is: What do these lab-based studies with assumedly motivated volunteer subjects have to do with a classroom. It is a legitimate concern. To consider what a teacher might take away from lab-based studies, the author will look a more closely at the aforementioned study by Zhang *et al.,* (2005).

First, by highlighting phonetic learning Zhang *et al.* were able to examine issues of unusual theoretical importance: the CPH, the agents of neural plasticity, and the distinctiveness of linguistic systems in the brain. The MEG data, for example, show that the subject's brains began to process the input in a different, a more language-like, manner. This can be seen as confirming that neural plasticity was available well beyond puberty. (The subjects were between twenty and thirty years old).

One might also find evidence relevant to what Pinker and Jackendoff (2005) consider one of the most fundamental questions in the study of language, "what parts of a person's language ability (learned or built-in) are specific to language and what parts belong to more general abilities?" (p. 202). The MEG data is subject to interpretation, of course, but it may shed light on this important question.

When considering the implications of Zhang *et al.*'s (2005) study, it is important to note that it dealt with a very difficult learning situation; the case of native Japanese speakers and

the English /r - l/ contrast. This is an example of the most difficult kind of non-native contrast to acquire (for an explanation of why this contrast is so difficult, see Zhang & Wang, 2007). The problem native Japanese speakers have with the English /r - l/ is well studied and has served as a testing ground for different non-native speech training approaches. Zhang *et al.,* (2005), then, gives teachers the chance to compare approaches and to derive some general principles.

How might a teacher apply the data gathered from the research to an EFL classroom? First, when designing a teaching strategy for pronunciation, just like when planning a grammar strategy, it is important to consider the nature of the learners' task in terms of the degree of difficulty and the chances of success. With listening and pronunciation practice, it is essential to consider how English's phoneme structure relates to the phoneme structure of the L1. Think local, or as Robertson (2003) says, "training must be country specific, [pronunciation] materials and research must…stop focusing on the 'general' and start considering the 'specific'".

Choosing a less difficult contrast that students have a good chance of mastering, the author will use his experience teaching /b - v/, in a Japanese university classroom as an example of how Zhang *et al.*, (2005) might be put to use. The point that will be made is that laboratory-based studies give invaluable information but should not be taken as models for classroom activities.

Specifically, the amount of exposure the subjects need in order to improve their perception of /r - l/ in a lab is an indicator of the contrast's difficulty, of how much work is needed, and of how best to try to remedy it. Teachers need not replicate the study in the classroom. Teachers have students for semesters or an entire school year; departments have students a number of years. Enhanced exposure to difficult phonemic contrasts can be worked into daily classroom activities, a syllabus, or a curriculum and given in communicative ways.

The author introduces the /b - v/ contrast early in the course by writing word-pairs (in this example six with the contrast at different places in the word e.g., ban-van, saber-savor, curb-curve) in two columns on the board, one column under A and the other column under B. The teacher describes the contrastive articulation in terms of its relation to the L1, Japanese. The teacher then pronounces each word exaggerating the target phoneme. The students repeat the exaggeration. Next, the students write 1- 6 on a piece of paper. The teacher says one of the words and the students write either A or B depending on which column the word is listed under. The correct result is given, the pronunciation practiced again - with emphasis, questions answered. Students continue to play in pairs, one student saying the words and the other writing A or B. They then change roles. This gives additional listening as well as speaking practice. This may take fifteen or twenty minutes.

While the activity may be repeated at some point during the course, most of the exposure the students subsequently receive comes during more communicative activities. That is to say, the /b - v/ contrast is exaggerated (not always of course) during normal classroom administration. While giving instructions, explaining meaning-based activities, or during any other classroom discussion, the contrast can be enhanced, which can be taken to the absurd for comical effect. Of course, all the normal tools of pronunciation practice, tongue twisters, dictations and such, are also utilized. When practicing supra-segmental features, the students are reminded of the difference in articulating /b/ and /v/. In teaching the reduced "you" in "did you" as "dija," for example, the teacher can use "visit" exaggerating the sound of the/v/ to make it salient and pointing out the contrast to /b/. Clearly, blending can be practiced with attention given to the segmental features.

The contrast becomes part of the teacher's error correction repertoire. Applying the tenets of a form-focused approach (Long & Robinson, 1998), explicit error correction is considered appropriate in meaning-based contexts. Given the appropriate circumstances, an error will be indicated. As with any error, the teacher can simply tell the student that a pronunciation error has been committed. Since self-correction is the ultimate goal of feedback, however, it might

be better to repeat the incorrect sentence with some emphasis on the error (Did you play *bolleyball*?).

Likewise, facial expressions and /or gestures can be used. In the /b - v/ example, the author uses a gesture established during the introductory exercise, he bites his lower lip. This not only indicates that an error was made, but also pinpoints it. The effectiveness of using gestures to correct a pronunciation error was confirmed when a student used the lip-biting gesture to point out a pronunciation error her partner committed during a purely communicative task.

Clearly lacking in the author's classroom example is the high variability called for by the successful training studies discussed earlier. To reach a high variability threshold, the author uses a DVD[*] produced specifically to give listeners exposure to contrastive minimal pairs. A number of speakers pronounce different examples of a given contrast and listeners are given time to repeat it. The exercise takes no more than six minutes and can easily be worked into a CA class.

The use of DVDs can also give confidence to non-native English speaking teachers. As mentioned, a lack of confidence may be one reason there seems to be insufficient pronunciation practice in the EFL context (Ingram & Nguyen, n. d.). Using DVDs can help overcome this problem. Also, those with access to computers can use computer assisted language learning (CALL). Saito (2007) recommends the use of CALL in a paper that validates explicit phonetic instruction and the correction of segmental errors. Pointing out that it is very difficult to teach pronunciation and evaluate students in an explicit manner in the EFL setting, Saito claims computer-based phonetic instruction can help overcome these obstacles.

The teaching methods outlined above, emphasis of the target phoneme, high variability, and plenty of exposure, can be adapted to listening and pronunciation practice with various age groups. The phonemes chosen to teach and the technology used to reach a high variability

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[*] *The Sound of English* (aka-kara.com)

threshold, however, must take a number of factors into account. Along with the students' age and proficiency level, how the L1's phonemic structure relates to English's must be considered. Any material that "suggest a particular program is good for one and all," as Robertson (2003) concludes, "must be seen as inherently flawed" (conclusion, para. 1).

Summary

This papaer looked at the implications of IPA for teaching EFL pronunciation. Four questions were put forth. The first was the extent to which an L2 learners' perceptual patterns can be modified after the initial mapping of the phonemes. The second regarded the nature of the constraints that cause difficulties for such modifications. The third question dealt with the relationship between perceptual learning and speech production. The final question examined the methodologies that are the most efficient for modifying an L2 learner's initial L1 phoneme structure.

Using NLM as a conceptual model, this paper discussed how infants create a sound map from ambient language and how this sound map represents a neural commitment that interferes with later language learning. CPH was discussed and it was determined that this neural structure maintains plasticity well past puberty. A link was made between perception and production and, finally, methods that have been proven effective in training studies were pointed out. An example of how these methods might be put to use was provided. The last part of this paper discussed the possibility of very young (before five years of age) EFL learners mapping the sounds of English. It is argued that this is possible through the use of audio-visual devices.

This paper will close by paraphrasing a thought by Goodwin (2001): Our students not only need, but demand pronunciation instruction. This paper has shown a way to do it.

Notes

1. A number of methodologies to test infant phoneme acquisition have been developed. The two methods mentioned in this essay are used to determine whether an infant discriminates among auditory stimuli by determining if she responds differently to stimuli of different types.

High Amplitude Sucking Technique

High Amplitude Sucking Technique (HAS) is useful for experimentation on infants 6-months old or younger. The infant sucks on a nipple that is connected to a pressure transducer. A polygraph machine is used to measure the sucking. The change in sucking rate is correlated with the infants' sensitivity to sound changes

The Conditioned Head-Turn Technique

The Conditioned Head-Turn technique (CHT) is used more with infants aged 5 to 18-months. In this method, the infant sits on the lap of a parent and faces an assistant. Infants are trained that, if they turn their head to a light and a source of sound, they will see a moving toy inside. The light catches the infant's attention before the sound is produced. The order of the stimulus is then reversed; the sound comes first. Whether or not the infant responds by turning his or her head in reaction to the sound is the criteria for sound discrimination.

Brain Imaging

The brain imaging studies on infants commonly use EEG, fMRI and MEG. Magnetoencephalography (MEG), mentioned in this article, is an imaging technique used to measure the magnetic fields produced by electrical activity in the brain. MMN stands for "mismatch negativity" which is a response of the brain elicited by deviations from some regularity in the auditory stimulation.

These methods are non-invasive and cause the infant no discomfort.

2.   When the first studies of infant speech perception were launched in 1971, a number of studies had been published revealing that adults show categorical perception of speech, but not non-speech sounds. Adults, that is, presented with an equal step-size continuum of stimuli

spanning two phonetic categories (e.g., the voicing between /b/ and /p/) categorically labeled the first steps along the continuum as one phoneme (e.g., /b/), and then found a sharp differentiation point with the next phoneme. This perceptual skill is very important to language processing. There are tremendous variations in the way each individual phoneme is pronounced; phonemes in natural speech change as a function of the phonemes around it, speaking rate, and as a function of the voice of the individual speaking. Categorical perception allows listeners to treat these differences as equivalent, and thus to recover the word rapidly when listening to others speak.

Eimas and his colleagues (Eimas, Siqueland, Jusczyk, & Vigorito, 1971) published a study using the HAS (see note 1) method to demonstrate that 16-month old infants, like English-speaking adults, are better able to discriminate stimuli from the /ba/-/pa/ continuum that constitute between, rather than within, category differences These findings, showing better between than within category discrimination, were taken as evidence that infants also show categorical perception.

3. With the experimental data suggesting that infants perceive speech contrasts in a language-general manner, while adults are influenced by their native-language phonology, Werker and her colleagues (Werker & Tees, 1983) began a program to chart the time course over which humans begin to perceive speech like adults. In a developmental study comparing 6 to 8-month old English-hearing infants to both English-speaking and Hindi-speaking adults, Werker and Tees (1983) confirmed the general finding that young infants can discriminate a non-native consonant contrast which adults have difficulty discriminating.

Using a CHT (see note 1) procedure, Werker and her colleagues found that infants raised in English speaking households were able, at 6 to 8-months, to discriminate two Hindi contrasts (voiceless dental vs. retroflex stops) that English-speaking adults could not reliably discriminate.

In a follow up study, Werker and Tees (1984) found that, like English-speaking adults, older English-speaking children (aged four, eight and twelve) were all poor at discriminating the Hindi contrasts. Werker and Tees (1984) looked at three infant age groups (6 to 8, 8 to 10, and 10 to 12 months) and found they could perceive non-native contrasts, in both Hindi and the native American language Nthlakampx.

4. In two studies, one conducted using English /r/ and /l/ sounds with American and Japanese infants at 7 and 11-months, and one conducted using Mandarin Chinese sounds and American and Taiwanese infants, an identical pattern of findings was shown (cited in Kuhl, *et al*, 2001). At 7-months infants listening to native-language sounds performed identically to infants for whom the contrast was foreign. At 11-months a change occurred in both native and non-native discrimination. Infants listening to their native contrast showed a significant increase in performance, whereas infants listening to a foreign-language contrast demonstrated a decrease in performance. The data on native-language perception did not conform to a maintenance model.

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Cover Page

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The Interlanguage of English Articles
of Two Advanced Chinese Learners of English

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ABSTRACT

The complexity of English articles poses great challenge for L2 learners, especially those from [-article] languages. This paper reports findings from a study on the interlanguage of English articles for two advanced Chinese EFL learners by conducting error analysis and retrospective interviews, which tap into the participants' metalinguistic explanation of their choice of articles. In general, the results supported findings of previous L2 studies that: (1) their non-nativelike article uses are attributed to L1 transfer; (2) confusion of specificity and definiteness; and (3) misjudgement of countability of noun phrases. The present study also found some unique patterns: (1) the direct mental translation from L1 prevented learners from selecting correct articles; (2) the learners formulated some unique hypotheses; and (3) the complexity of writing tasks influenced the linguistic choice of articles. The article concludes by suggesting future directions.

INTRODUCTION

A growing number of Chinese students pursue studies in an English-speaking country. Often they find that one of the most difficult academic challenges they face is to express themselves in English writing. Among errors in writing made by Chinese students, the most frequent one might be English article errors. Although English articles, including *a, an, the* and the zero article (Ø), are commonly used words (Master, 1994; Sinclair 1991). they can be surprisingly complicated to use correctly. The master of English articles is especially difficult for learners whose mother tongues do not have an article system (known as [-article] languages), such as Chinese (Thomas 1989). In article acquisition studies, learners' errors have been a focus for a long time. By conducting error analysis (EA), it is believed that learners' interlanguage can be reflected (Selinker 1972). Adopting Bickerton's (1981) semantic wheel approach, the present study explores the interlanguage of English article use by two advanced Chinese EFL learners by combining error analysis and retrospective interviews.

The present study addresses the following research questions:
(1) What kind of article errors did the advanced Chinese EFL learners make in their academic writing processes; and what kind of metalingustic knowledge did the learners have in selecting articles?
(2) How similar or dissimilar are the patterns obtained from the present study to that of previous L2 article studies?

METHOD
Participants
Two advanced Chinese EFL learners participated in the present study. The demographic information and English proficiency of the two participants are presented in table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Information and English Proficiency of the Two Participants

Participant	A	B
Age	24	26
Education	Master of Media Practice	Master of Interactive Multimedia
Length of Learning English	about 11 years	about 13 years
Length in English-speaking Countries	about 6 months	about 11 months
IELTS	6.5	6

Data Collection Methods

The data collection method consists two parts. The first part is participants' academic assignments and the second is retrospective interviews. The two assignments are about the same length with 1, 279 and 1, 282 for participants A and B respectively. Retrospective interviews require learners to report their thoughts after they complete the task.

Data Collection Procedure

Each participant sent the researcher one latest assignment immediately after they typed it. The assignment was then sent to a native English speaker, who is also an experienced editor, to identify the mandatory use of articles without much delay. The identified article errors were numbered and brought to the participant shortly afterwards. In retrospective interviews, the researcher pointed at numbered article uses and asked the participant to explain thoughts during writing for articles choices without indicating the incorrectness. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and were tape-recorded.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in two steps. The first step was classification of article errors by using rubrics in traditional EA. The second step was the analysis of retrospective interviews by using content analysis, which is "a careful, detailed and systematic examination and interpretation" of unstructured word-based data in order to identify "patterns and themes" (Berg 2007: 303).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Answer to Research Question 1

Participant A made 18 article errors whereas participant B made 20 altogether. According to the rubric of traditional error analysis with English articles, the participants' errors were classified into four types: overgeneralization of Ø; overgeneralization of *the*; overgeneralization of *a*; and misuse *an* for *a*. The types of article errors of the two participants are presented in table 2 with frequency and percentage.

Table 2 Types of article use errors

Types of Article Use Errors	Participant A (frequency and percentage)	Participant B (frequency and percentage)
overgeneralization of Ø	8 (44.4%)	8 (40%)
overgeneralization of *the*	7 (38.9%)	10 (50%)

overgeneralization of *a*	2 (11.1%)	1 (5%)
misuse *an* for *a*	1 (5.6%)	1 (5%)

According to the information from retrospective interviews, the reasons for misuses of articles were categorized into six types, (1) L1 transfer; (2) ignorance of [HK]; (3) misjudgement of countability of NPs; (4) direct mental translation from L1; (5) specific hypotheses; and (6) mistake. The types of the participants' metalinguistic explanation of their article choices are presented in table 3 with frequency and percentage.

Table 3 Types of metalinguistic explanation of article choice

Types of Errors	Types of Metalinguistic Explanation	Participant A (frequency and percentage)	Participant B (frequency and percentage)
overgeneralization of Ø	L1 transfer	5 (27.8%)	6 (30%)
	misjudgement of countability of NPs	1 (5.6%)	1 (5%)
	specific hypothesis	2 (11.1%)	1(5%)
overgeneralization of *the*	ignorance of [HK]	5 (27.8%)	8 (40%)
	direct mental translation from L1	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
	specific hypothesis	2(11.1%)	1(5%)
overgeneralization of *a*	direct mental translation from L1	2(11.1%)	1(5%)
misuse *an* for *a*	mistake	1(5.6%)	1 (5%)

From the table above, we can see that the error of overgeneralization of Ø could be caused by the influence of the participants' mother tongue since Chinese does not use articles; it could also be caused by misjudgement of countability of NPs or some unique hypothesis formed by the participants. The results demonstrated that both of participants predominantly overgeneralized Ø due to L1 transfer, accounting for 27.8% and 30% respectively, and overused *the* caused by ignoring [HK] (in the context of writing, readers' knowledge), reaching 27.8% and 40% each.

Answer to Research Question 2

First of all, consistent with the findings of previous studies, L1 transfer resulted most prominently the overgeneralization of Ø since Chinese does not have an article system. Speakers of Chinese detect indefiniteness and definiteness of a referent mainly from the context (Li and Thompson 1991). For example, "The writer **interviewed Ø republican (interviewed *a* republican)** to get his point of views." The NP "republican" has a nonreferential [-SR,-HK] semantic context, however, she failed to supply the indefinite article *a*. When asked to explain, she commented that:"*I didn't think too much which article should be used, it's up to my intuition*."

Secondly, both the participants showed ignorance of [HK], which caused oversuppliance of *the* in [+SR, -HK] contexts. This finding is also similar to previous research results. For instance,

participant B seemed to use specificity [+SR] rather than definiteness [+SR, +HK] as a standard for her to choose articles, as can be seen in a sentence in her essay. "On Wednesday, after about half an hour talking with Linda, I understood that **the (a) better wa**y of fulfilling a project is collaboration." Participant B commented that "If I want to refer to something specific, I opted to use *the*." In the sentence above, she thought "better way" is a specific way she and her group members would take to complete their final project. What her intended to mean, however, was not shared by the potential readers of the essay.

Thirdly, the results of the study converged with previous findings that L2 learners' confusion of countability of NPs misguides their choice of articles. Take the sentence "The whole essay **denoted clear voice (denoted *a* clear voice)**." as an example to illustrate. When participant A to explain, her first reaction was to ask the researcher:"*Is voice a count noun or non-count noun?*" She then said:"*I am sure that it is uncountable when it refers to 'sound of a person'… But I am not sure when it is used in the sense of 'someone's opinion'…It looks like a non-count noun, so no article should be used, I think.*"

Besides similar results found in the present study compared with previous literature, some different patterns also emerged. The mental translation processes influenced their choice of articles. In the sentence "I believed the interface design should present an atmosphere which is **different from the commercial website (different with *a* commercial website)**.", participant B reported: *"I wanted to emphasize commercial website, not other kinds of websites. You know like … we say in Chinese 'na zhong shangye wangluo'* **['that (definite demonstrative) + kind (classifier) + commercial website']**. *It's kind of… **the** in English, you know."* She further commented: *"You know, I organized this sentence in Chinese first and then I translated into English in my mind, and for me 'na zhong shangye wangluo' is **the** in English."* From the comment, it seems that participant B equalized the structure "definite demonstrative + classifier" in Chinese to *the*. In fact, in the Chinese expression, the definite demonstrative "that" only constrains the definiteness of classifier "kind", but does not define a particular website" (Li and Thompson 1981).

Additionally, it was found that the participants formed some unique hypotheses in their interlanguage of English articles. These unique hypotheses and its corresponding examples were summarized in table 4.

Table 4 Unique hypotheses and examples

Unique Hypotheses	Examples
1. When a NP is modified by adjectives, it is unnecessary to use any articles.	e.g. After the first class, we **had face-to-face meeting (had a face-to-face meeting)**.
2. If two NPs are connected by a coordinating conjunction *and*, one article can modify both NPs.	e.g. On the second class, I presented the initial idea of my final project **to the group and supervisor (to the group and the supervisor)**.
3. When something is introduced for the first time, *the* must not be used.	e.g. In this book, **author (the author)** explains and discusses different art issues.

4. When something has been mentioned before, *the* must be used.	e.g. **The "Why Is That Art?" (Ø "Why Is That Art?")** can be used as theory to guide my interactive design.

In summary, employing retrospective interviews, which tapped the learners' own metalinguistic explanation of choice of English articles during academic writing rather than based on inference from the researcher, the present study supported the findings of previous studies on [-article] learners that their non-nativelike article uses are attributed to L1 transfer; ignorance of [HK], which led to confusion about specificity and definiteness; and misjudgement of countability of NPs. However, due to the nature of data elicitation method, which is more naturalistic and ecological, the present study also found some different patterns.

CONLUSION

Some limitations should be pointed out. First of all, the data from academic writing samples do not cover a wide range of article use (Mizuno 1985). In the future, academic writing could combine fill-in-blank techniques to elicit data. Secondly, article use in written data could also be compared and contrasted with data collected orally (Tarone and Parish 1988). Although the present study involves a small sample size, it could act as a model for TESOL practitioners to conduct such research with their own students as a way to find out learners' problems and to provide feedback with regard to article uses.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

AND STUDENT MOTIVATION IN STUDYING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Abstract

The study aimed at promoting the development of a more communicative academic

teaching philosophy by giving second language learners the opportunity to enhance their

cross-cultural communication awareness in that language. While little research has been done

in cross-culture awareness in Japan, this study was conducted during the integrated social

classes at one Japanese elementary school in order to arouse students' motivation and help

them to become familiar with the second language and culture. This study also examines the

positive impact of second language learners' cross- cultural awareness in the target language.

More specifically, the pedagogical desired outcomes include:

(1) exploring how students can increase their motivation in learning a foreign language by

engaging in the cross-cultural activity "Sister School Project",

(2) enhancing their learning motivation through a better understanding of the world in which

students live and the opportunity to see that they can be a positive influence in it.

The study involved 31 fifth grade Japanese elementary students. In addition to the fifth grade students who evaluated their experience both before and after the program, another 10 randomly selected sixth grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. The study took place at an integrated classroom at Higashi Ainonai Elementary School. Forty-eight lessons were planned, with the help of the Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT) and the author of this study, over a four-month period, according to the school curriculum. During the lessons the JHT and the author encouraged students to utilize a variety of language learning strategies that helped them to improve their motivation in studying the second language. Japanese students participated in a sister school project with Egyptian students of the same grade level. Data were collected through a close-end before and after questionnaire and an interview that quantified learners' level of interest and motivation in participating in this learning program.

With regard to the first outcome about increasing students' motivation in learning a foreign language, the students' use of different strategies appeared to assist them in creating a good learning environment and improving their interest in studying that language. The

students' use of self-evaluation and their positive attitude in learning appeared to assist them in

understanding the global situation in a positive way. By the end of the study, the students were

better able to participate and express their ability and knowledge in the target language and had

improved motivation. It appeared that this cross-cultural activity had both a cognitive and

effective impact on students' ability to use a second language.

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Introduction

Today, because of the great effort of international education communities in increasing second language learners' motivation and their global understanding, a great number of scholars argue for the development of an integrated learning style. Despite this, little research has been done on cross- cultural awareness in Japan. This study was conducted during integrated social classes at a Japanese elementary school in order to arouse students' motivation and help them to become familiar with a second language and culture. This study also examined the positive impact of the second language learners' cross- cultural awareness in the target language.

It has been proposed that learners of a second language (L2) have two kinds of language proficiency: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1984). These two forms of language were later referred to as "social language" and "academic language" (Cummins, 1991). In order to apply both effectively in the academic curriculum, L2 learners need to make use of different intercultural learning activities that will expose them to a foreign

language and help them to become familiar with foreign life and culture in the "Period for

Integrated Study".

According to different human developmental theories, Piaget (1929) in his third

stage, "Concrete Operations, aged 7- 11", stresses the importance of conversation and a mature

understanding of cause and effect relationships. Erikson (1963) in his fourth stage "Industry

Versus, aged 6 – 12" also describes developing skills. He concludes that learners seek to

become industrious in all areas of life. Both theories seek to quantify the developmental stages

that humans pass through. Therefore, teachers and parents should provide great encouragement

to elementary students to avoid slowing down their thoughts and even retarding their creativity

Today, because of the great effort of international education communities in

highlighting the role of developing internationalization and cross-cultural communication

among L2 learners, L2 learners' ability is increasing worldwide. To communicate

internationally inevitably involves communicating inter-culturally, which may lead students to

encounter cultural differences.

This study therefore intends to provide a means to improve the social, cultural and academic enlightenment of Japanese "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) learners through a sister school activity. The study emphasizes the critical role of introducing different cultural norms into the EFL classroom to create effective EFL learners through a variety of practical strategies. It also re-affirms how language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language. The study describes how EFL learners in Japan discover some unique ways of increasing their motivation to learn English through cultural exchange with a different country. The author believes that teaching English in the shape of "Cross-Cultural Communication" can create a better understanding of the world.

A communicative exchange activity is an effective method in teaching foreign language at the elementary level. Children can increase their English output and widen their international learning experiences. It is hoped that the activity presented here can spread to more schools in Japan to assist EFL learners in understanding and appreciating cultures and people different from themselves.

Problem statement

Is there a relationship between cross-cultural communication activities and student motivation in studying English as a foreign language? In order to a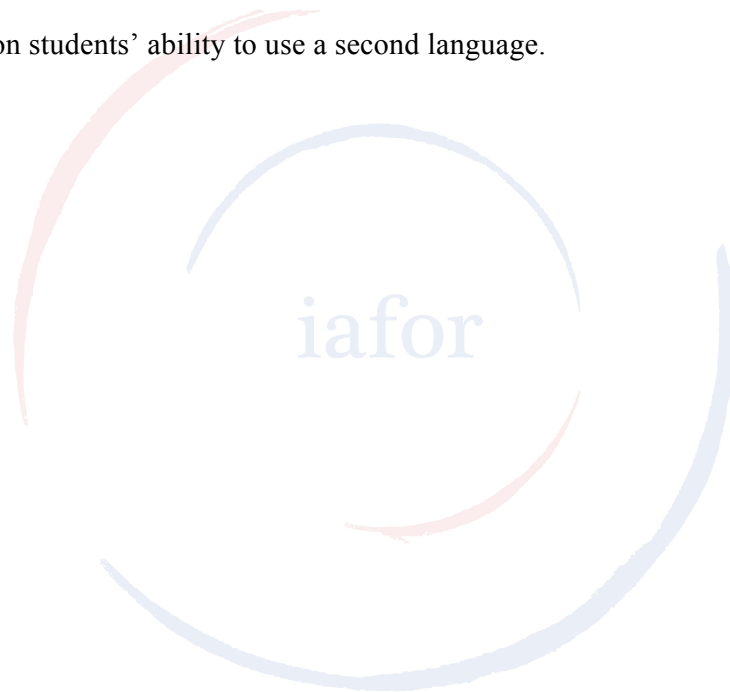nswer the above question, this study investigates other questions. First, is cross- culture a useful tool to conquer ignorance, bridge cultural gaps, and to create international friendship? Second, "what are the students' reactions to a different culture in order to improve their global understanding? To measure both questions, learners, teachers and school principals' feedback and comments were collected before and after the study was conducted.

Literature review

International communication inevitably involves communicating inter-culturally, which leads students to encounter cultural differences. Many of the learning devices applied during the integrated social classes at Japanese elementary schools are used in order to arouse students' motivation and encourage them to be familiar with a second language and culture.

School -to-school contact can be an effective teaching method that determine the enhance of the second language learners' cross- cultural awareness in the target language. While little research has been done on cross-cultural awareness in Japan, the author believes that the activities detailed in this study should be useful to second language learners.

Intercultural learning and communication

Foreign language learning is comprised of several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own culture or another culture (Dimitrios 2001). Dimitrios (2001) concluded that effective communication is more than a matter of language

proficiency and that, apart from enhancing and enriching communicative competence, cultural competence can also lead to empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote objectivity and cultural perspicacity. Many scholars proved the effective impact of intercultural learning and awareness in improving the learning process. Byram (1994) states that the recognition that cultural learning is an integral part of foreign language learning is quickly taking hold among language teachers. Hadley (2001, p.345) asserts the concept of culture and languages are inherently interconnected and should be taught together. He claims "two widely-held beliefs among foreign language professionals [are]: 1) that language study is an essential component in the curriculum, in part because it can lead to greater cross-cultural understanding, and 2) that language and culture are inseparably intertwined", cited in Williams (2006, p.32).

Cross-cultural awareness

Cross- cultural awareness helps L2 learners to develop their thoughts and learning sensitivity. Milton Bennett's (1993) six-step Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity contains four steps whose application to the classroom has been explored by

Janet Bennett (1993). In *denial,* learners believe that there are no real differences in cultures. In

defense, learners believe that their culture is exalted and the second culture is denigrated. In

minimization, the learners accept that differences exist. At the stage of *acceptance*, the learners

recognize the logic of another culture. By focusing on the learner's development of

intercultural sensitivity, students will improve their self- awareness and teachers can observe

students' intercultural enhancement. Tomalin & Stempleski, (1993, pp.7-8), modifying

Seelye's (1988) 'seven goals of cultural instruction in developing learners' awareness:

- to help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.
- to help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
- to help students to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in the target culture.
- to help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
- to help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
- to help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.
- to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Cross- cultural awareness as a bridge

Cross- cultural awareness links the target language with learners' own cultural views. Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language. In fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural context in which the language occurs (National Standards, 1999). Brown (2000, p200) points out that "while some aspects of language do seem to provide us with potential cognitive mindsets, there are still numerous universal properties of language. So the good news is that although learning to think in another language may require a considerable degree of mastery of that language, it does not mean having to learn how to think all over again". Brown also indicates that the challenge that second language learners have is to identify what can be retained from their native language and culture as valid in speaking the second language and functioning within that culture, as well as what needs to be learned. Byram & Flemming, (1998), pointed out that given the direct link between language and culture, both teachers and learners need to be mindful of those culture-specific meanings reflected by the language, as well as being attuned to the culture of a social group in a particular

time and space. In addition to that, Morgan and Cain, (2000) described possible relationships

and a link between language and culture. They state that language creates cultural categories,

and culture shapes language.

Cross- cultural awareness and international understanding

Cross-culture connects learners' integrated study with qualities and abilities of

international understanding. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. (1998) states that

great emphasis will be placed on the education that encourage children to appreciate different

cultures open-mindedly and develop capabilities and abilities to live in harmony with people

of different cultures and customs. Bagley and Hunter, (1992) claimed that students have much

more knowledge of international events and that there is an increased student awareness of the

emergence of a global society. We would say that international understanding through

cross-cultural activities help students develop the ability to express themselves and also

deepen their interest in, and understanding of, cultures and life in other countries.

Cross- cultural awareness and school curriculum

For a better understanding of the value of culture in school curriculums, teachers

can seriously help learners develop their global language awareness by analyzing the relationship between language and culture in the target language. Effective curriculums encourage students to engage in an active involvement in both learning process and the assessment target program. In this case students will take responsibility for their own language development. Clouston, (1997) in his guidelines for the L2/FL classroom summarizes that students will indeed need to develop knowledge of and about the L2 or FL culture, but this receptive aspect of cultural competence is not sufficient. Learners will also need to master some skills in culturally appropriate communication and behavior for the target culture. Finally, cultural awareness is necessary if students are to develop an understanding of the dynamic nature of the target culture, as well as their own culture. Certainly, the goals for culture teaching and learning may vary between L2 and FL contexts.

Hanvey, (1976, pp.44-56) raises a critical question, which is" does cross-cultural awareness matter?" His reply is "yes, cross-culture awareness does matter". Hanvey's viewpoint is based on cultural differences between nations. Hanvey also describes four levels of cross-cultural awareness:

- awareness of superficial or visible cultural traits: stereotypes;
- awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own; you are frustrated and confused;
- awareness of significant and subtle cultural traits that contrast markedly with one's own; you think about it and start to ask questions and understand;
- awareness of how another culture feels from the standpoint of the insider: cultural immersion.

Robert Kohls' (1994) descriptors of culture are an entry point for students to learn about the world and other cultures. Conflict can arise when different cultures with different points of view meet to solve common problems. An awareness of such differences is the key to cross-cultural understanding. Kohls provides a listing of what some cultures believe in and what most cultures believe in.

Cross- cultural awareness and motivation

There is no doubt that intercultural learning function as an effective learning device in raising learners' motivation. Developing intercultural learning within the context of the foreign language learning experience can help students acquire the ability to understand and adapt to differences as well as the ability to be flexible and open when facing new experiences. According to Gardner (1985), a highly motivated individual will; (1) enjoy

learning the language, (2) want to learn the language, and (3) strive to learn the language.

In order to foster motivation among L2 learners, Bransford, Sherwood, Hasselbring, Kinzer, and Williams (1990) suggested that learners must be able to practice language in multiple contexts in order to bridge domains and foster active abstractions of concepts learned. This definitely will help learners recognize the relevance of different learning skills or knowledge. Again Gardner states that an integrative, oriented learner would likely have a stronger desire to learn the language, have a more positive attitude towards the learning situation, and be more likely to expend more effort in learning the language.

The aim of these activities is always to increase students' awareness and to develop their curiosity towards the target language and culture, their own language and culture, and in helping them to make comparisons among cultures. By all means, the goal here should be to enrich students' experience and to make them aware of the global society of which they are a part. This leads us to the fact that cross-cultural communication is a useful tool to conquer ignorance, bridge cultural gaps, and to assist in creating international friendship. The study attempts to highlight the effective relationship between cross-cultural communication activities

and student motivation in studying English as a foreign language.

Operational definitions

Beginning in April 2000, elementary schools in Japan were allowed to introduce

a new "Period of Integrated Studies " (Sougou in Japanese) into their curriculum. Then, in April

2002, all elementary schools in Japan were required to do so. The Period of Integrated Studies

is a period that has been allocated for cross-curricula study. One of the suggested areas that can

be covered in this period is international understanding (kokusai rikai).

Research hypothesis

The author noticed that there is little probability of elementary students

acquiring satisfactory cross-cultural awareness and communicative ability under the

traditional integrated teaching styles used in Japan. It is hypothesized that students who are

exposed to the cross-cultural communicative activities used in this study will have higher

academic achievement and a more positive attitude toward English and global

understanding.

Participants

The participants in this study were divided into 2 categories;

- 30 fifth grade Japanese students acted as the main participants of this study.

- 10 sixth grade Japanese students who had a yearlong experience in this activity.

The main participants in this study were 30 fifth grade Japanese elementary students in an integrated study classroom in a rural school in Kitami city of Hokkaido Prefecture, Japan. There is only one-fifth grade class, and students had the same Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT) for all their classes and also met with the author once or twice a month. The students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years of age. There were 15 males and 15 females in the class. None of participants had any previous formal experience in cross-cultural communicative activities before taking part in this Sister-School Project.

Methodology

The study was conducted over a four-month period, according to the school curriculum. During the lessons the JHT and AET (the author) encouraged students to utilize a variety of language learning strategies that helped them to improve their motivation in studying the

target language. Japanese students participated in a sister-school project with Egyptian

students of the same grade level. Data were collected through a close-end before and after

questionnaire that seeks to quantify the learners' level of interest and motivation over the

course of the study.

In addition to the fifth grade students who evaluated their experience both before and

after, another 10 sixth grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their

experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. They ranged in age from

11 to 12 years. Five males and five females were randomly selected to be interviewed by the

author.

The data used to evaluate the program was derived from the use of a short

questionnaire administered both before and after the project was conducted. Other data was

derived from the use of an interview with sixth grade students. More comments and

feedback were collected from the teacher and the school principal through a questionnaire.

A pre-test questionnaire form was checked by the teacher and the school principal before

being delivered to participants. The *Before* questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed to

the fifth grade students just prior to beginning the activity. The *After* questionnaire

(Appendix 2) was distributed to both fifth and sixth grade students at the same school at the

end of project. Both the researcher and the participants knew each other for over a year

from working together inside the school.

The participants were first given the *before* questionnaire before exposure to the

cross-cultural activity. After a four-month period, they were given the *after* questionnaire after

they had already experienced and finished their task. Our hypothesis was that after participating

in this activity the participants would become more motivated and culturally

aware of their own culture and others'. Scoring the questionnaire and interview (using a Likert

scale format) we derived an average scale for the students' motivation subdivided by male and

female, and a weighted average of both. Then we compared the average motivation before and

after for both male and female to see if there is a significant difference in their responses.

Instruments

The questionnaires and interview (Appendix 1, 2 , 3 and 4) used in this study was

designed by the author and divided into four categories; (1) questionnaire A/5 (Appendix 1)

was for fifth grade participants *before*, (2) questionnaire B/5 (Appendix 2) for fifth grade same

participants *after*, (3) interview questions (Appendix 3) for sixth grade participants who had a

previous experience in this activity a year before, and (4) questionnaire C/T an before/after

questionnaire (Appendix 4) for the teacher and the school principal.

Questionnaire A/5 *"Before* process" includes two sections. Section (1) presents participants'

background. Section (2) is divided into two parts; A & B. Part A presents participants' interest

in this activity. It contains a question (Why did you join this project?) with 6 possible responses.

Participants were free to select as many responses as

they wanted. The rational behind this question is to see the purpose of joining the project and to

understand students' knowledge and attitudes before participating in the task. Part B consists of

7 rating statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format (None – Little –

Average – More – A Lot) (See Appendix 1). The statement items were based on Hanvey's

 (1979) four levels scheme for measuring cross-cultural awareness. The questionnaire also

evaluates participants' attitudes toward their own culture, Egyptian culture, cross-cultural

awareness and improvement in general knowledge.

Questionnaire B/5 "*After* process" includes two sections. Section (I) presents

participants' background. Section (2) is divided into two parts; A & B. Part A presents

participants' rating interest after finishing their tasks. It consists of 7 rating statements arranged

in a 5-point Likert scale format (None – Little – Average – More – A Lot). The

rational behind this part is to observe if there is significant change in participants attitude

and learning awareness after completing their tasks. Part B consisted of 3 questions rating

statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format, ranging in (None – Little – Average –

More – A Lot). The rational of this part is to measure the impact of this study on the

participants' awareness and motivation. (See Appendix 1)

The interview is for sixth grade participants who had previous experience in

this activity from a year before. Ten randomly sixth grade participants, five males and five

females, took the interview with the author. The rational behind this interview is to see the

impact of this study after a year had passed. (See Appendix 2)

Questionnaire C/T is an After/Before questionnaire for the teacher and the school

principal. It is based on rating statements arranged in a 5-point Likert scale format (Strongly

Agree - Agree - Neither Agree or Disagree - Disagree -Strongly disagree). (See Appendix 4).

This questionnaire was divided into four sections. Section 1 is an introduction, which indicates

students' personal & background information. Section 2 and 3 are based on Hanvey's (1979)

scheme for measuring cross-cultural awareness. Section 2 and 3 were to measure "*Before &*

After" observations, section 4 for overall comments.

Project agreement and goals

The author designed the project agreement (Appendix 5) used in this study. It

consists of three sections; (1) the goals of the program, (2) the ideas to fulfill these goals; (3)

the conditions of the agreement.

Procedure

The study took place in a full 45-minute period study in Higashi Ainonai Elementary

School. Forty-eight lessons were planned by the author of this study, in conjunction with the

Japanese Homeroom Teacher (JHT), over a four-month period according to the school

curriculum. During the lessons the JHT and the author encouraged students to utilize a variety

of language learning strategies that helped them to improve their motivation in studying the second language. Japanese students participated in a sister school project with Egyptian students of the same grade level. The program was divided into the following ten steps;

Step one; "History of the project"

In 2004, the author introduced the outline of the cross-cultural program to both schools in Japan and Egypt. Both school administration members appreciated the new idea. They expressed a strong desire to support the program. Later the author designed the project agreement and prepared both English and Japanese versions. There was no need for an Arabic version since the Egyptian school had already been participating in the same cross-cultural activity with an American school. A draft of the project agreement was sent to both school principals to add their final comments. They both agreed to participate.

In Egypt

In February 2005, the author visited the Egyptian school to get the final approval. The author had a strong relationship with education in Egypt as he used to teach at Egyptian schools before coming to Japan. The Egyptian school participating in this project was selected

because of its long experience with cross-cultural activities. This school has been engaged in a similar program with an American elementary school since 2000. The Egyptian school had arranged official approval from the Egyptian Board of Education. Finally the Egyptian school signed on both English and Japanese versions.

In Japan

In March 2005, the author visited the Japanese school to get the final approval. Since this was the first experience for the Japanese elementary schools in that area to be engaged in a cross-cultural activity with a foreign school, some routine processes had to be taken before the final approval was given. Both English and Japanese versions of the program outlines and project agreement were submitted to school administration members. They presented the program to the teachers and students' parents. Then they took the matter to the local Board of Education in order to get the final approval.

Step two; "Introduction stage"

The author and Japanese homeroom teacher (JHT) set the plan within the expected period of time. Four months were divided into 48 regular classes. 3 classes a week as follows:

In October, the project was first introduced to the fifth grade participants. The *Before* questionnaire "Japanese version" was distributed to them in a full 45 minute class. The previous work of the sixth grade was also introduced to the fifth grade participants. Students were able to understand the task and they were excited to start the program.

Step three; "Discussion and grouping stage" from October to November

Participants had a discussion and divided their tasks. Participants were divided into five groups; A, B, C, D, E. Group A was to prepare information related to their school such as; school location and school events. Group B was to prepare information related to the map of Japan. Group C was to prepare information related to the climate and the structures of Japanese housing. Group D was to prepare information related to students' handmade artwork and school photos. Group E was to prepare a video of how to make Japanese traditional paper craft.

Step four; "Doing tasks individually" from November to December

Each group distributed tasks to each member. Participants worked individually to collect much information. They used school tools such as the internet, books from the school library as well as interviews with school teachers. Students decided to have a regular meeting

with the JHT and the author at the end of a month to review their progress.

Step five; "Doing tasks in groups" December

Participants gathered the target information. They sat in groups and selected

the best information to represent the whole class. The JHT and the author continually

followed and observed the students' work and their level of motivation. The JHT and the author

talked with all groups and gave some feedback.

Step six; " Presentation and evaluation" January

Through 3 integrated study (Sougou) classes (45 minute for each), 25 minute was

given to each group to present their ideas and information. While a group was presenting, other

groups took notes and evaluated those ideas. At the end of three classes and after all

groups had received feedback from each other, each group selected their final data to submit to

their teacher.

Step seven; January

Each group studied the other groups' feedback and put their final touches to their

tasks. A final meeting was arranged with the JHT and the author to check all ideas. The JHT

and the author gave them positive comments and feedback on their process and way of

handling their tasks.

Step eight; Beginning of February

The JHT received all students' work and did the entire official mailing process.

Step nine; Feedback and interviewing

The author interviewed 10 6th grade students at their school to evaluate their yearlong

experience in this project.

Step ten; Receiving the Egyptian school materials and feedback

One month later, the fifth grade Egyptian students sent their materials and feedback

after receiving the Japanese materials. The JHT, the author and students met together to enjoy

the Egyptian feedback.

Students' applied learning strategies

The teacher and the author had been observing students' attitude and reactions while

they were processing their tasks. The participants' attitudes and reactions had gradually

changed from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. Students also showed their positive

learning attitudes during both individual and group work. The following tables will explain

other strategies used in this study. Table 1 is a demonstration for a Task-Based Strategy. Table

2 is a demonstration for Metacognitive Learning Strategies. These tables provide names of the

strategies and descriptions of the strategies applied.

Table1

Task-Based Strategies	
Strategy	**Description**
Access Information Sources	-Participants used the internet and interviewed teachers
Cooperate	-Participants worked with others to complete tasks. - Participants gave and received feedback.

Table2

Metacognitive Strategies	
Strategy	**Description**
Organize/ Plan	- *What do participants do before they start?* -Participants planned the task. -Participants set goals. -Participants planned how to accomplish the task.
Manage Your Own Learning	- *What do participants do while they are working on the task?* -Participants focused their attention on the task.
Monitor	-*How do participants make sure they are doing the task correctly?* -Participants checked their progress on the task.
Evaluate	-*What do participants do after they have finished the task?* -Participants had self-evaluations. -Participants had group evaluations.

Results

The researcher selected three of seven statements asked in the *Before* questionnaire

A/5 and *After* questionnaire B/5 that were regarded as pertinent to this study. The statements

were:

Statement # 1: My interest in joining the Sister School Project

Statement # 2: My information on Egyptian culture and lifestyle

Statement # 4: My interest in improving my English

The questionnaire results Before/After and the results from question number 1

below supported our prediction that L2 Japanese elementary learners' motivation in this

program has increased. In *Before*, 27 out of 30 or 90% chose Average, while 3 out of 30 or

10% chose Little. In *After*, 16 out of 30 or 53.3% chose More and 14 out of 30 or 46.7% chose

A lot. The results therefore support the hypothesis that cross-cultural communication is an

effective tool in learning L2 and highlights the significant role of this study in arousing

students' motivation in learning L2. (See Table 3).

The results of question number 2 in *Before* showed that 12 out of 30, or 40%, rated

"Average", and 18 out of 30, or 60%, rated "Little". In *After*, 2 out of 30, or 6.7% , rated

"Average", 26 out of 30, or 86.6%, rated "More", and 2 out of 30, or 6.7%, rated "A lot". The

results here show participants gained more cultural knowledge through this program and helped

them to fill the information gap in their curriculum. The results of question number 4 in *Before*

revealed that the majority, 29 out of 30, or 96.7%, chose the "Average" rating and *After*

revealed that all students ,(100%) chose the "More" rating. The results here indicate the

attitudes of L2 learners toward improving their English. In summary, it would appear that in

these three questions, this study improved Japanese L2 learners motivation culturally and

educationally.

Table 3

Table 3 (Total scoring)

None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot	How do you rate the following statements?	None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot
Before Rating (1-2-3-4-5)					(N = 30)	After Four Months				
	3	27			My interest in joining the Sister school project				16	14
	18	12			My information on Egyptian culture and lifestyle			2	26	2
		29	1		My information on Japanese culture				28	2
		29	1		My interest in improving my English				30	
	24	6			My interest in talking to foreigners				26	4
			30		My interest in English class					30
	16	14			My interest in international news				25	5
Before %					(N = 30)	After Four Months%				
None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot	How do you rate the following statements?	None	Little	Aver.	More	A lot
	10	90			My interest in joining the Sister school project				53.3	46.7
	60	40			My information on Egyptian culture and lifestyle			6.7	86.6	6.7
		96.7	3.3		My information on Japanese culture				93.3	6.7
		96.7	3.3		My interest in improving my English				100	
	80	20			My interest in talking to foreigners				86.7	13.3
			100		My interest in English class					100
	53,3	46,7			My interest in international news				83.3	16.7

In addition, the randomly selected sixth grade Japanese elementary students at the same school evaluated their experience with the program, which they had completed a year before. The 6th grade weighted average rating was taken as the result of interview questions responses. As in Figure 2, it appears that there is still high motivation after a year of this program. The results of the interview question extra statement in *Before* "My motivation to study English at Junior H.S "revealed that this study had an impact on the learning motivation helped in bridging between the elementary stage and junior high stage.

Figure 1
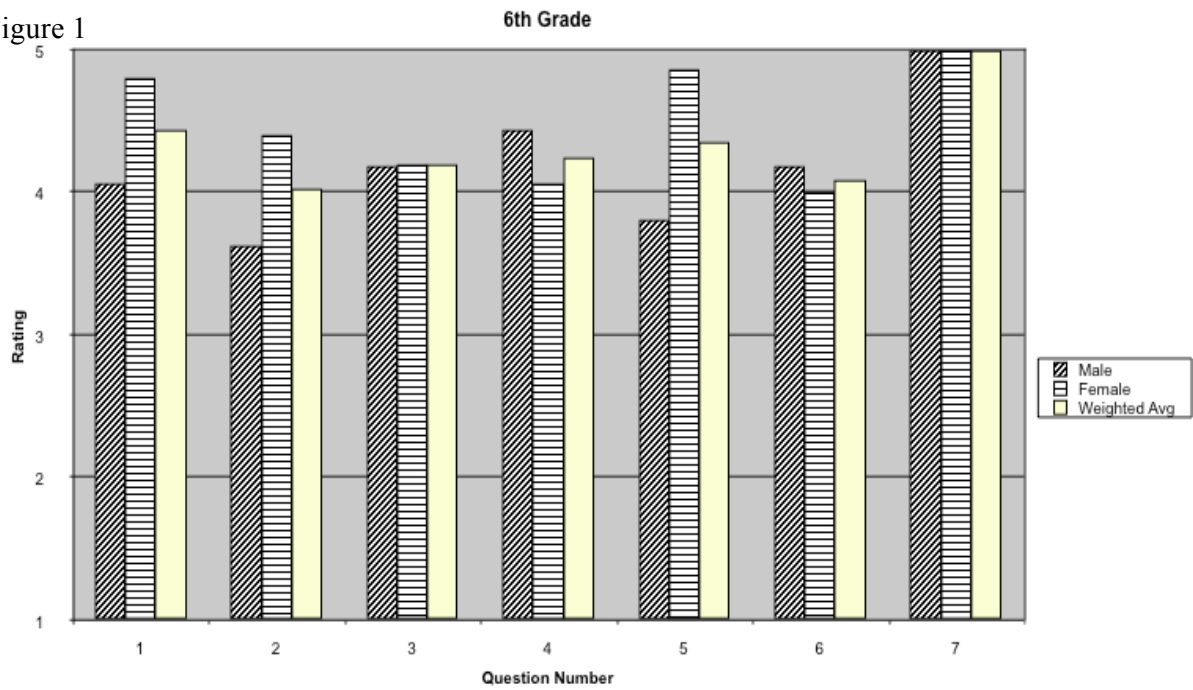
A comparison between females and males

In a brief comparison between the average responses of the females and males, this

study revealed a significant difference between the responses as to gender.

(See Figure 2).

Figure 2
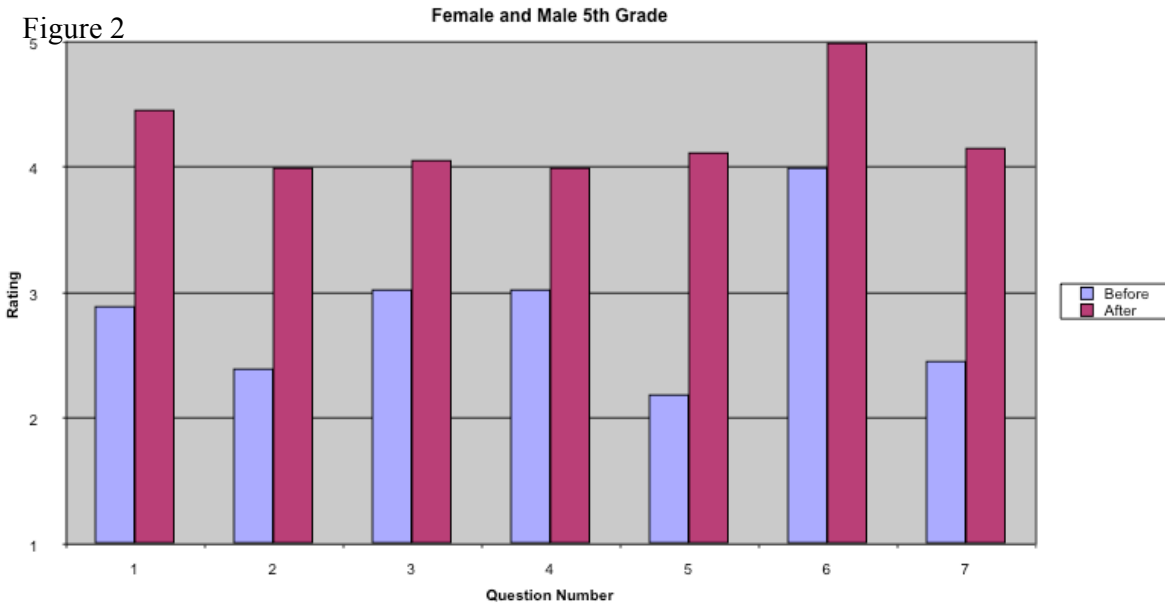
The D/T questionnaire (Appendix 3), for the teacher and the school principal, reflects

the school administration members' viewpoints on the impact of this project. The author was

interested in showing the teacher and the school principal responses as a guide to the impact of

this project. In Table 4, both the teacher and school principal did not have much confidence on

the usefulness of this project. In Table 5, and after watching students' interaction, they started

to feel the value of this project. In Table 6, their confidence in the understanding of the

usefulness of this project rose. Table 7 states their overall comments

on this project. They concluded their opinions after observing students' reactions and learning

attitudes. All the responses assist the idea of arousing students' learning

motivation through engaging in this cross-cultural project.

Table 4

Statements	Before	
	School Principal	**Teacher**
Learners see the culture as bizarre	Neither	Neither
Learners need to be aware of their culture well before they cooperate with other culture	Neither	Neither
Cross-cultural communication increases students' learning desire	Neither	Agree

Table 5

Statements	After	
	School Principal	**Teacher**
Learners see the culture as insiders	Agree	Agree
Learners use different strategies to achieve their goal,such as developing self-awareness, developing learning attitude, developing learning behavior and self-evaluation	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cross-cultural communication is a useful learning device to create and assist international friendship	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cross-cultural communication increases students' learning motivation	Agree	Strongly Agree

Table 6

Statements	Overall Comment	
	School Principal	**Teacher**
Since students entering this cross-cultural communication project, their understanding of multicultural issues has	Agree	Agree

increased		
Students experiences at this project have helped them become knowledgeable about social issues in their society and others from a different society	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think students' cultural values influence their classroom behaviors (e.g., collecting data, asking questions, interacting in groups)	Agree	Agree
I believe the classroom experiences at this project help students become more comfortable interacting with people from different cultures	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I think developing students' cross-cultural communication is needed in school curriculum	Agree	Agree

Table 7

Final comment on the sister school project	
School Principal	-Students had a useful experience and enjoyed more learning time. -This cross-cultural experience will help students to be more international thinker.
Teacher	- Students had a great learning time in participating in this project. - Students were active and creative. - Students' attitude and behavior were positive.

Reflection

The goal of this project is to teach the cultures in English to enhance students'

English language ability as well as provide information to students in order to develop

inter-cultural awareness and to prepare them to become world citizens. This project included

experiences that promoted reasoning, problem solving, decision-making, study skills and

developing intercultural thinking. The *Before* and *After* outcomes showed some clear

differences in students questions and knowledge revealed a significant difference through their

conversation with the author. (See Table 8).

Table 8

Before	After
-Is there T.V in Egypt?	-Wow! Egypt is just like Japan.
-Do students go to school on camels?	-Many international car brands in Egypt.
-Is there winter season in Egypt?	-Winter is cold in Egypt. "That's interesting!"

Discussion

This study sought to develop learners' intercultural and social dimensions.

Intercultural learners need some awareness and motivation that there is more to be known and

understood through the learning process. Promotion of skills, attitudes and values lead to a

significant learning environment. Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, (1997) claimed that

"developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognizing that the aims

are: to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence; to prepare them

for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people

from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviors; and

to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience".

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between

cross-cultural communication and learners' motivation in studying L2. The researcher was also

interested in whether or not Japanese elementary L2 learners' motivation and awareness of

foreign cultures could be increased through cross-cultural activities. This study did enrich the

skills, attitudes and values of some Japanese L2 learners towards learning the L2 and culture.

As a result of this study, the researcher has come to the following conclusions:

First the researcher was able to support a strong relationship between the cross-cultural

communication and studying the L2. Additionally, the researcher was able to show a significant

shift in cultural awareness and increasing sensitivity among the participants in this study.

Second, this study has suggested that the Japanese L2 learners feel more at ease with other

cultures. The *Before* and *After* questionnaires showed a significant change in information about

culture. Before, they saw the foreign culture in the Egyptian culture as bizarre. After

completing this study, participants came to see the culture as experts. Additionally, the

reflection mentioned in this study showed the information gap of the participants and how they

are in need of more cross-cultural communication.

Finally, the study supported the participants in developing different strategies to

achieve their goal, such as developing self-awareness, developing learning attitude, developing

learning behaviors and self-evaluation. To conclude, the author believes that the classroom

experiences in this project helped students to become more comfortable when interacting with

people from different cultures.

Recommendations

The researcher makes the following recommendations to L2 educators who desire to enhance their students' cultural awareness and learning motivation in the L2 classroom:

1. Whenever possible, try to have your students experience a cross-cultural communication activity and associate with other international societies.

2. Try to create an interesting learning environment for your students that they can enjoy it more and keep their positive attitude alive.

3. Whenever possible, encourage students to use a variety of strategies to achieve their goals.

4. Help students to value learning and develop themselves to be self-thinkers.

5. Continue to teach and conduct action research projects as a means of self-improvement and professional development.

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Appendix 1

Sister School Project (A/5)

Student Survey "Before"

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who spent their valuable time in completing this survey. This survey is for measuring students' interest, understanding, motivation, awareness and improving studying a second language through the cross- cultural communication activity "Sister School Project". Your great support is highly considered as a useful resource for my practicum.

This survey is divided into two stages. Stage one is an introduction, which indicates students' personal & background information. Stage two shows students' interest *Before /After* joining Sister School Project. Stage two includes part A & B.

I. Personal & Background information

Gender: **Male** ◯   **Female** ◯   **Age**:_____

Nationality:_____   **Grader**:_____

II. Before process;   " 5th grade *Before* Only"

(This section shows students' interest before joining Sister School Project)

A. Why did you join this project? (You can mark one or more)

1- It is a required project at my school.   ◯

2- To study more about other cultures.   ◯

3- To improve my English writing.   ◯

4- To have international friends.   ◯

5- To introduce my culture to others.   ◯

6- To enjoy studying with my classmates.   ◯

B. How do you rate the following statements? (Please circle one rate out of five)

1- My interest in joining the Sister School Project;

         1   2   3   4   5

2- My information of Egyptian culture and lifestyle;

         1   2   3   4   5

3- My information of Japanese culture;

         1   2   3   4   5

4- My interest in improving my English;

         1   2   3   4   5

5- My interest in talking to foreigners;

         1   2   3   4   5

6- My interest in English class;

         1   2   3   4   5

7- My interest in international news;

         1   2   3   4   5

Appendix 2

<p align="center">Sister school project (B/5)</p>

<p align="center"><u>5th grade After</u></p>

How do you rate the following statements? (Please circle one rate out of five)

2- My interest in joining the Sister School Project;

1	2	3	4	5

2- My information of Egyptian culture and lifestyle;

1	2	3	4	5

3- My information of Japanese culture;

1	2	3	4	5

4- My interest in improving my English;

1	2	3	4	5

5- My interest in talking to foreigners;

1	2	3	4	5

6- My interest in English class;

1	2	3	4	5

7- My interest in international news;

1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 3

Sister school project (C/6)

6th grade *After a yearlong* (Interview questions)

A. How do you rate the following statements? (Please circle one rate out of five)

3- My interest in joining the Sister School Project;

       1   2   3   4   5

2- My information of Egyptian culture and lifestyle;

       1   2   3   4   5

3- My information of Japanese culture;

       1   2   3   4   5

4- My interest in improving my English;

       1   2   3   4   5

5- My interest in talking to foreigners;

       1   2   3   4   5

6- My interest in English class;

       1   2   3   4   5

7- My interest in international news;

       1   2   3   4   5

B. Extra statement

My motivation to study English at Junior H.S;

       1   2   3   4   5

Appendix 4

<div align="center">

Before and *After* survey (D/T)

"For Teacher & Principal"

</div>

Research: **"Relationship between the cross culture communication activity and the motivation of students' English ability"**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who spent their valuable time in completing this survey. This survey is for measuring students' interest, understanding, motivation, awareness and improving in studying second language through a cross- cultural communication activity. Your great support is highly considered as a useful resource for my practicum.

This survey is divided into four stages. Stage one is an introduction part which indicates students' personal & background information. Stage two and three are based on Hanvey's (1979) scheme for measuring cross-cultural awareness. Stage two and three are to measure "Before & After process", Stage four is for overall comment.

Please note that this survey includes 4 pages.

I.   **Personal & Background information**

                                      Date: /   /

Gender: **Male** ◯   **Female** ◯

Nationality:_____

Educational Teaching experience years _____

Previous Teaching subject (only for principle):_____

Years of taking part in this project:

First time ◯   **Second year** ◯   **Third year** ◯   **Othe**r_____

Lived abroad: Yes ◯ **(Years abroad_____)**   **No** ◯

II. Before process;

(This section is to measure the "Before process" of learners' cross-cultural awareness. Could you mark one out of five opinions below?)

How much do you agree with the following statements?

4- Learners see the culture as bizarre.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

5- Learners need to be aware of their culture well before they cooperate with other culture.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

3- Cross-cultural communication increases students' learning desire.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

III. After process;

(This section is to measure the "After process" of learners' cross-cultural awareness. Could you mark one out of five opinions below?)

How much do you agree with the following statements?

1-   Learners see the culture as insiders.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

2- Learners use different strategies to achieve their goal , such as developing self-awareness, developing learning attitude, developing learning behavior and self-evaluation.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

3- Cross-cultural communication is a useful learning device to create and assist international friendship.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

4- Cross-cultural communication increases students' learning motivation;

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

IV. Your overall comment on the sister school project by monitoring students' cross-cultural interaction.

1- Since students entering this cross-cultural communication project, their understanding of multicultural issues has increased.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

2- Students experiences at this project have helped them become knowledgeable about social issues in their society and others from a different society.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

6- I think students' cultural values influence their classroom behaviors (e.g., collecting data, asking questions, interacting in groups).

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

7- I believe the classroom experiences at this project help students become more comfortable interacting with people from different cultures.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

8- I think developing students' cross-cultural communication is needed in school curriculum.

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neither Agree or Disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

○   ○   ○   ○   ○

7- Your final comment on the sister school project;

_____

_____

_____

Many thanks for your kind cooperation in this project.

Appendix 5   **Sister School Agreement "Sample"**

This "Sister School" cross- cultural program was initiated in 2005 in order to promote friendship and international understanding between Japanese and Egyptian schools.

The goal of the program

1- Let both sets of students feel the other culture close through their direct contacts.

2- Stimulate the students' curiosity to study English.

3- Strengthen the students' wish for world peace by sharing knowledge.

The Idea to fulfill these goals

1- A pen pal program supported by both schools.

2- Regular exchanges (once or twice a year) of students' produced materials.

3- E-mail communication under the control of both school administrations.

The conditions of the agreement

1- The fifth grade elementary students are designated as the target group of this program.

2- Each school shall be responsible for the cost of sending students' materials.

3- This program starts from the month both schools sign this agreement.

4- This agreement shall remain in force until terminated by either party by giving a written notice to the other party or informing the coordinator of this program directly at least 30 days in advance.

Hereby_____ (Japanese school) and _____(Egyptian school) do proclaim themselves Sister Schools, and declare their intent to abide by these guidelines indefinitely under the supervision of the coordinator and the founder of this program.

Principal "Egypt" _____Principal "Japan" _____

Coordinator _"The author of this study"_

ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES USED BY NON-ENGLISH MAJOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT BURAPHA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

It is well established that successful L2 readers employ an array of reading strategies while reading. In Thailand, many university exams depend heavily on reading. If Thai learners do not have good reading skills they will face numerous academic difficulties in reading. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the use and non-use of reading comprehension strategies in English as a foreign language. The results were reported by four hundred and one Thai undergraduate first year regular program students and three hundred and ninety-three Thai undergraduate first year special program students. The subjects surveyed were considered to have low-level proficiency in English according to their English performance from English Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET). The questionnaires were analyzed in order to show the presence and absence of reading strategies use during the pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages. The findings indicated: 1) reading strategies were often applied by both regular and special program students; 2) using schemata and reading without looking up every unknown word in the dictionary were sometimes used; and 3) there were significant differences with regards to strategy use between regular and special program students. The outcome of this study may facilitate EFL teachers to provide a suitable teaching framework for their learners.

Introduction

As Thailand's education system continues to grow English is seen as an important foreign language. Many bilingual schools are opening, and many universities offer international programs in which English is the first language of instruction. Having the necessary English skills to compete in the job market and to pass the entrance and exit exams is important for Thai students.

When students graduate from their high school, they need to pass an entrance exam to study at the top class universities, and English reading features heavily in this exam. Once at university, both governmental and none governmental universities require that all students study English in foundation courses, some of which are reading based. At Burapha University, the Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, has designed a foundation English curriculum for the first year, non-English major students. This curriculum is based on integrated skills, including reading, which is an important part of the curriculum. Students have to take reading based tests and are assigned to

read one extensive reading novel. In addition to this, there are online reading activities every semester for English 101 and English 102.

Many students face numerous reading difficulties and every academic year many students score low or fail the exam, so they have to reenroll in the course. As a result of this, the Department of Western Languages has to accommodate the failed students by offering them summer courses. Unfortunately, enrollment in the summer courses is limited. Some students do not find places, and have to wait for the next semester. When students do not know how to read, they are discouraged to study English and certainly they will not be able to pass the course. After the mid-term exam result, many of them withdraw from courses. Due to the reasons above, this study needs to investigate if the first year students use or do not use English reading comprehension strategies to comprehend texts. Moreover, the results from this study will help English teachers to become aware of their students' reading strategies and, hopefully, the students will become more successful in educational settings.

Overview of Reading Comprehension Strategies

Reading

Goodman (2000) suggests that reading is a receptive, psycholinguistic process. It starts with linguistic representation encoded by a writer, and ends with reader constructed meaning. Reading is a process where the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought.

Reading comprehension

There are two-models of reading comprehension, '…the text model and the situation model" (Grabe, 2009: 46). The text model calls for understanding what the text itself is trying to communicate and the situation model calls for the reader to integrate background knowledge with text information to interpret the text. For example a reader combines background knowledge with the context to comprehend reading, or predicts and infers to improve word-recognition process. In addition, Alderson (2000) presents two levels of reading understanding; literal understanding and text understanding. Gray (1960) suggests that readers learn to understand texts literally first, then infer the meaning, then critically and evaluate text. Actually, the exact nature of reading is still not fully understood.

Reading comprehension strategies

Specific actions or techniques that readers report using in order to achieve the goal of reading comprehension before, during and after reading English text (Chinwonno, 2001).

Pre-reading comprehension strategies

Specific actions or techniques that readers use before their reading, such as skimming, scanning or looking at the pictures (Wenden, 1987).

While-reading comprehension strategies

Specific actions or techniques that readers use while they read. For example, the readers skip the unknown words or they may use dictionary to find the words' meaning.

Post- reading comprehension strategies

Specific actions or techniques that readers use when they finish reading to check their understanding such as writing the conclusion, rereading the part that they don't understand.

Models of reading process

1 Bottom up models or data-driven models: these lower-level reading processes generally mean decoding the text at the word and sentence level, which means recognition of words, ability to match the word with its sound, knowledge of sentence construction, and syntax (Stanovich, 1990).

Word recognition

Word recognition is crucial to fluent reading. Recognizing a word involves "the interaction of activated orthographic, phonological, and semantic and syntactic processes" (Grabe, 2009: 46). In other words, a reader must know the shapes of the letters, the sounds of the word, the general meaning of the word, and also the place the word has in the syntactic structure of the sentence. Word recognition is connected to the readers' vocabulary knowledge. Another aspect of word recognition is knowledge of the affixes involved in making words, inflection and derivation (Grabe, 2009).

Contextual clues

Guessing from context is sometimes referred to as inferring word meaning from context. Inferring means to hypothesize, test, and revise (Rapaport, 2009). Wenden and Rubin (1987) found in their reading research that successful readers guess from context unknown vocabulary. Research in L1 vocabulary acquisition considers inference to be a process that never stops once started, assuming the word is met again in the future. A native speaker will be introduced to a new word in school, and then be exposed to it in varying context, which builds a complete idea of what the word means. Rapaport (2009) points out that inferring means the initial meaning assigned to the word need only suffice in providing ease of reading at that moment in time (Rapaport, 2009).

Nagy (1997) also stresses this point. Inferring does not mean complete learning of the words in the sense of having a rich, full, retainable, retrievable knowledge of the word. Rather, inferring means assisting in the reading process in order to make it less awkward and wearisome (Rapaport, 2009). Nagy (1997) sees inferring as basically aiding comprehension of the text, a much more pragmatic goal than full word knowledge. Rapaport (2004) suggests that context encompasses three items: cotext refers to all the text surrounding an unknown word, prior knowledge refers to world knowledge, and new knowledge refers to knowledge acquired from the reading process. These aspects operate simultaneously in the inferring process. Context clues can be categorized into four general types; discourse, syntactic, morphological, and typographical. Discourse based clues include cause and effect, temporal, explanations, deictic pronouns and comparison and contrast structures. Syntactic clues

include part of speech, morphological clues consist of prefixes, suffixes and roots, and typographical clues include punctuation (Kruse, 1979; Rapaport, 2004). Perhaps the most well known formula, as cited in Walters (2004) is Clarke and Nation's (1980) step by step guide, which recommends in general terms, that students are instructed to firstly identify the part of speech of the target word, and after this try to relate it to other words in the clause. For example, if the unknown word is a noun they can ask: is there an adjective describing it? If the target word is not a word but a phrase then this is not so easy. Students are then asked to look for clues in the sentential and supra sentential cotext. Only then should they assign a tentative meaning, which should be the same part of speech as the target word.

Willingham (2006) reveals that some strategies like prediction, summarization, and comprehension monitoring have solid evidence and numerous studies to back up instruction, yet inferring word meaning does not. Willingham (2006) looks at five hundred studies conducted over twenty five years to back up his claim. Out of five hundred published, peer reviewed studies, only three of them dealt with inferring from cotext, so the research is only just beginning in this area. The rare, empirical studies looked at by Walters (2004) did reveal some evidence for lower level student improvement.

2 Top down models: refers to the textual level and the readers' comprehension level. These higher-level processes include skimming ahead in the text for important information, understanding the discourse of the text and recognizing main points. Top down reading comprehension would also include linking ideas from different parts of the text. In top-down models, the reader is not only the active participant, but he or she also processes information and makes predictions. Everything in the reader's background knowledge plays a significant role in the process (Carrell, 2000).

Schemata

Background knowledge or world knowledge is what readers know before they interact with what they read. As Devine (1986) puts it, "The term *prior knowledge* refers to all the knowledge of the world readers have acquired in their lives" (Devine, 1986: 25). Activating background knowledge or prior knowledge can influence reading comprehension because the students will relate their life experiences to what they read. Prior knowledge facilitates the readers to comprehend the text more. At the same time, if they have wrong prior knowledge, they might misunderstand the text, so the teacher needs to help activate readers' schemata and provide them with the correct knowledge before reading.

Skimming

Good readers have a purpose for their reading and do not read just for the sake of reading, so they have goals when they read. The various purposes for reading are many: reading for information (scanning and skimming), reading for quick understanding (skimming), reading to learn, reading to evaluate, reading for general comprehension, which includes reading for entertainment.

Skimming is a strategy used in conjunction with the readers' purpose for reading. When reading a text closely and in detail, readers do not skim – they only do this to search for relevant information, to build up rough ideas of content. In order to skim a text, a reader must have reached a reasonably high level of reading skill. Skimming includes: reading the title; this can build background knowledge and activate predictions. Skimming also includes

reading the first sentence in each paragraph to build an idea of what the paragraph is about and also reading any headings or sub-headings which may help the reader predict what will come in the text (Anderson, 1999).

Prediction

As Duke and Pearson (2002) explain, based on think aloud studies, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come. Duke and Pearson (2002) state that predicting is making guesses about what will come next in the text you are reading. It is clear that prediction is connected to background knowledge and connected to top-down reading comprehension. Another side to predicting what will come next is verifying your prediction. Prediction can be connected with text organization. Prediction might also be connected to vocabulary. For example the reader sees the text which is about the solar system, so he or she predicts there will be some mention of the planets and possibly something concerning distances, or atmosphere of the planets.

3 The term Interactive models

When the reading process happens, the readers do not use only top-down model or bottom-up model to deal with the text. They integrate both models. Efficient and effective reading needs both top-down and bottom-up strategies to operate in an interactive model. According to Grabe (1991) interactive generally means the interaction between the reader and the text, the communicative process of interacting and understanding what has been written. It also means the combination of top down and bottom up skills used simultaneously to read.

Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study aims to investigate the use and non-use of reading comprehension strategies by first-year, non- English major students in three stages: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. This study addresses the following research questions:

> *Research Question 1: What reading comprehension strategies do the students use?*
> *Research Question 2: What reading comprehension do the students not use?*
> *Research Question 3: What are the significant differences with regards to strategy use between regular and special program students?*

Method

1. Pilot Study

Fifteen pilot subjects from regular program and fourteen pilot subjects from special program were asked to answer the questionnaire. The students from various faculties were asked to respond to a questionnaire in the classroom. The first pilot study provided valuable information regarding the time needed to finish the questionnaire. Besides, the pilot study confirmed the participants understood the instructions and the questions. Moreover, the subjects' response on the reading comprehension strategy questionnaire was used for

checking the validity and reliability coefficient of the research tool. The result of the pilot tool indicated that the reliability coefficients of the reading comprehension strategies had the Cronbach alpha .88 (r = 0.88).

2. Participants

The students from both programs were randomly selected from every faculty. The stratified random participants from each faculty were randomly chosen: three hundred an seventy three regular program students and three hundred and sixty two from special program students. They are considered to have low-level proficiency in English, according to their English Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) scores for regular program, which ranged from 0 up to 45. For special program, first year students are obligated to enroll English I automatically. In order to clarify, regular program students are those who pass the national entrance exam and so enroll in the regular program at Burapha. On the other hand, special program students do not pass the entrance exam. However, they can still study at Burapha University but only in the evening and on the weekends. In addition, special program students are required to pay double the regular program tuition fees. Both programs use different curriculum but the same course books and have the same teachers. The criterion is regulated by the Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University.

3. Instruments

The Thai version of the reading strategy questionnaire was designed to investigate reading comprehension strategy use. The twenty reading strategy questions were adapted and developed from Phakiti (2006), Chinwonno (2001) and Ozek and Civelek (2006). The attitudinal scale, a five point categorical scale, was designed to measure reading strategies in three stages: pre-reading, while reading and post reading. The questionnaire has two main parts. In the first section, participants need to write the name of their faculties. In addition they were asked to divulge personal information such as what sex they are. The second part is the reading strategy questions. Respondents were asked to tick a statement which best describes their frequency of strategy use: 5=always, 4= often, 3= sometimes, 2= hardly ever, 1= never. The questionnaire was distributed to collect quantitative data of learners' strategy use.

4. Data-collection procedures

The study was conducted in July 2010 before mid-term examinations. All subjects were asked to respond to the reading comprehension strategy questionnaire in their English I classroom. The research assistant distributed the questionnaires to regular program students in the morning and special program students in the evening. The questionnaires were handed out to the students when they took a fifteen-minute-break for the first part of their three-hour English I class. After all participants had completed the questionnaire, all questionnaires were

collected and the data was keyed into the computer by a research assistant for further analysis.

Results and Discussion of the Study Surveyed

Research Question 1: What reading comprehension strategies do the students use?
Research Question 2: What reading comprehension strategies the students do not use?

Table 1: Reading comprehension strategies reported by both regular and special program students

Reading Strategies		$\bar{x}$	N	S.D.
Pre-reading	1. Looking at pictures and try to guess how they are related to the text	4.07	794	.706
Post-reading	2. Rereading the text to remedy comprehension failures	3.87	791	.877
Post-reading	3. Summarizing the main idea	3.86	792	.788
Post-reading	4. Rereading the text to remember the important points	3.83	793	.839
Pre-reading	5. Read the title and imagine what the text might be about	3.81	794	.712
While-reading	6. Having a picture of the event in the text in mind	3.80	792	.841
While-reading	7. Guessing the unknown words from the context clues	3.75	794	.855
While-reading	8. Skipping some of the unknown words but still comprehend the text	3.73	793	.859
While-reading	9. Relating the text to background knowledge about the topic to remember important information	3.65	791	.764
Pre-reading	10. Thinking about the previous knowledge on the topic of the text	3.58	791	.795
Post-reading	11. Checking the reading part relating to background knowledge	3.56	793	.837
While-reading	12. Making guesses about what will come next based on the information already given in the text	3.53	793	.804

Pre-reading	13. Reading every first sentence of each paragraph to understand the general idea	3.53	794	.846
While-reading	14. Taking note on the important points of the text	3.52	791	.901
While-reading	15. Pronouncing the unknown words	3.48	793	.845
While-reading	16. Paying attention to grammatical structures of phrases and sentences	3.45	791	.835
While-reading	17. Reading without translating word-for-word	3.45	792	.891
Pre-reading	18. Skimming the text quickly to get the gist	3.43	792	.811
While-reading	19. Classifying the words according to their grammatical categories	3.38	792	.834
While-reading	20. Reading without looking every unknown word from dictionary	3.03	793	1.040

The results in **Table 1** indicate the mean and standard deviation of the participants frequently reading strategies for pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

Pre-reading

Student most frequently cited using the reading strategies of: (1) Looking at pictures and try to guess how they are related to the text ($\bar{x} = 4.07$; S.D.= .70), (5) Reading the title and imagine what the text might be about ($\bar{x} = 3.81$; S.D.= .71), (10) Thinking about the previous knowledge on the topic of the text ($\bar{x} = 3.58$; S.D.= .79), (13) Reading every first sentence of each paragraph to understand the general idea ($\bar{x} = 3.53$; S.D.= .84), and (18) Skimming the text quickly to get the gist ($\bar{x} = 3.43$; S.D.= .811).

While-reading

The most often used reading strategies for while-reading were (6) Having a picture of the event in the text in mind ($\bar{x} = 3.80$; S.D.= .84), (7) Guessing the unknown words from the context clues ($\bar{x} = 3.75$; S.D.= .85), (8) Skipping some of the unknown words but still comprehend the text ($\bar{x} = 3.73$; S.D.= .85), (9) Relating the text to background knowledge about the topic to remember important information ($\bar{x} = 3.65$; S.D.= .76), (12) Making guesses about what will come next based on the information already given in the text ($\bar{x} = 3.53$; S.D.= .80), (14) Taking notes on the important points of the text ($\bar{x} = 3.52$; S.D.= .90), (15) Pronouncing the unknown words ($\bar{x} = 3.48$; S.D.= .84), (16) Paying attention to grammatical structures of phrases and sentences ($\bar{x} = 3.45$; S.D.= .83), and (17) Reading without translating word-for-word ($\bar{x} = 3.45$; S.D.= .89).

Post-reading

Reading strategies survey revealed for post-reading were (2) Rereading the text to remedy comprehension failures ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87; S.D.= .87), (3) Summarizing the main idea ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86; S.D.= .78), (4) Rereading the text to remember the important points ($\bar{x}$ = 3.83; S.D.= .83), and (11) Checking the reading part relating to background knowledge ($\bar{x}$ = 56; S.D.= .83).

Strategies sometimes used for while-reading

Reading strategies used sometimes for while-reading were (19) Classifying the words according to their grammatical categories ($\bar{x}$ = 3.38; S.D.= .83) and (20) Reading without looking up every unknown word from a dictionary ($\bar{x}$ = 3.03; S.D.= 1.04).

Table 2: The significant differences between regular and special program students

Research Question 3: What are the significant differences with regards to strategy use between regular and special program students?

Reading Strategies	Curriculum	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
1. Looking at pictures and try to guess how they are related to the text	Regular	4.13	.688	401	2.288	.022*
	Special	4.02	.721	393	2.287	.022
2. Rereading the text to remedy comprehension failures	Regular	3.95	.855	399	2.889	.004*
	Special	3.78	.891	392	2.888	.004
3. Summarizing the main idea	Regular	3.89	.753	401	.875	.382
	Special	3.84	.822	391	.874	.383
4. Rereading the text to remember the important points	Regular	3.90	.824	401	2.358	.019*
	Special	3.76	.850	392	2.357	.019
5. Read the title and imagine what the text might be about	Regular	3.80	.727	401	-.122	.903
	Special	3.81	.697	393	-.122	.903
6. Having a picture of the event in the text in mind	Regular	3.86	.796	401	2.203	.028*
	Special	3.73	.881	391	2.200	.028
7. Guessing the unknown words from	Regular	3.82	.872	401	2.120	.034*

the context clues	Regular	3.82	.872	401	2.120	**.034**
	Special	3.69	.834	393	2.121	
8. Skipping some of the unknown words but still comprehend the text	Regular	3.79	.845	401	2.131	**.033***
	Special	3.66	.869	392	2.130	**.033**
9. Relating the text to background knowledge about the topic to remember important information	Regular	3.69	.759	401	1.295	.196
	Special	3.62	.769	390	1.295	.196
10. Thinking about the previous knowledge on the topic of the text	Regular	3.59	.760	400	.528	.598
	Special	3.56	.829	391	.527	.598
11. Checking the reading part relating to background knowledge	Regular	3.58	.800	401	.507	.613
	Special	3.55	.875	392	.506	.613
12. Making guesses about what will come next based on the information already given in the text	Regular	3.55	.761	401	.495	.621
	Special	3.52	.846	392	.495	.621
13. Reading every first sentence of each paragraph to understand the general idea	Regular	3.56	.820	401	1.166	.244
	Special	3.49	.872	393	1.165	.244
14. Taking note on the important points of the text	Regular	3.49	.912	400	-1.013	.311
	Special	3.55	.890	391	-1.014	.311
15. Pronouncing the unknown words	Regular	3.48	.837	401	.197	.844
	Special	3.47	.855	392	.197	.844
16. Paying attention to grammatical structures of phrases and sentences	Regular	3.44	.811	400	-.384	.701
	Special	3.46	.861	391	-.383	.702
17. Reading without translating word-for-word	Regular	3.53	.920	400	2.497	**.013***
	Special	3.37	.854	392	2.499	**.013**

Reading Strategies	Curriculum	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	N	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
18. Skimming the text quickly to get	Regular	3.47	.785	400	1.340	.181

the gist	Regular	3.47	.785	400	1.340	.181
	Special	3.39	.836	392	1.339	
19. Classifying the words according to their grammatical categories	Regular	3.32	.826	401	-2.126	**.034***
	Special	3.45	.839	391	-2.126	**.034**
20. Reading without looking every unknown word from dictionary	Regular	3.08	1.104	401	1.425	.155
	Special	2.98	.970	392	1.427	.154

The results in **Table 2** reveal that both regular and special program students practiced reading strategies significantly different at p < .05. (1) Looking at pictures and trying to guess how they are related to the text p= .02, (2) Rereading the text to remedy comprehension failures p= .00, (4) Rereading the text to remember the important points p= .01, (6) Having a picture of the event in the text in mind p= .02, (7) Guessing the unknown words from the context clues p= .03, (8) Skipping some of the unknown words but still comprehend the text p= .03, (17) Reading without translating word-for-word p= .01 and (19) Classifying the words according to their grammatical categories p= .03

Regular program students reported using more strategies than special program. Only (19) Classifying word according to the grammatical categories was reported more often used by special program students.

Pre-reading

There is only one reading strategy in this step which was significantly different. Regular program ($\bar{x}$ = 4.13; S.D.= .68) reported using (1) Looking at pictures and trying to guess how they are related to the text   (p= .02) more than special program ($\bar{x}$ =4.02; S.D.= .72).

While-reading

In term of reading strategies used for while-reading, there were three strategies with significant differences. Regular program students reported using more strategies than special program. These included (7) Guessing the unknown words from the context clues (p= .03), regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.82; S.D.= .87, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.69; S.D.= .83, (8) Skipping some of the unknown words but still comprehend the text (p= .03) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.79; S.D.=. 84, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.66; S.D.= .86, (6) Having a picture of the event in the text in mind (p = .02) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.86; S.D.= .79, special program: $\bar{x}$ =3.73; S.D.= .88, and (17) Reading without translating word-for-word (p= .01) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.53; S.D.= .92, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.37; S.D.= .85.

There is only one reading comprehension strategy that special program students more strongly used than regular program students for while-reading: (19) Classifying the words

according to their grammatical (p= .03) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.32; S.D.= .82, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.45; S.D.= .83.

Post-reading

The results in **Table 2** indicate as well that there were two significant differences among regular and special program students for post-reading. Regular program students reported using more strategies than special program. These were (4) Rereading the text to remember the important points (p=. 01) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.90; S.D.= .82, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.76; S.D.= .85, and (2) Rereading the text to remedy comprehension failures (p= .00) regular program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.95; S.D.= .85, special program: $\bar{x}$ = 3.78; S.D.= .89.

Conclusion

This study presents information about Burpaha University regular and special program student's English reading comprehension strategies used during silent pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading stages of comprehension. The findings suggest the strategies of reading without looking up every unknown word from a dictionary and classifying the words according to their grammatical categories need to be developed for Burapha students. Using a dictionary may mean the reader spends double time reading, whereas guessing meaning from context would speed up reading. Guessing the words from contextual clues and word recognition can help the reader to understand word meaning to comprehend the text. At the same time, the study shows the differences in the use of English reading comprehension strategies among regular and special program students. These findings may make teachers more aware of learners at different reading proficiency levels, and may also provide a teaching framework to help learners become more successful readers. Teachers may incorporate explicit reading strategy instruction into part of their lesson.

However, it is pertinent to point out certain limitations in this study. Before answering the questionnaire, the students should have been asked to do a reading test, and then answer the questionnaire immediately after the test. Using this method might have helped students get a clearer picture of what they do when reading. Besides, some readers may think they used the reading strategies in the questionnaires, but in fact may not use them. If they had done a reading test before, they would realize which strategies they used or did not use. Moreover, the results of the test would then show the correlation between the correct answers and the strategies used, the wrong answers and the strategies not employed.

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In an EFL setting, what factors affect students' learning of target language pragmatics?

Gabrielle Wallace

In this paper, I will explore whether pragmatics can be successfully acquired in an EFL setting. Although typically an ESL environment is thought to be superior to an EFL environment for learning language, especially the pragmatics of a language, the following studies show that this is a sweeping generalization and not necessarily true. Furthermore, some think than a lack of exposure to the target language in an EFL setting hinders students' development of pragmatics. However, the majority of SLA studies agree that pragmatics can be acquired successfully in an EFL setting if the instructor teaches it explicitly. In fact, research shows that explicit pragmatics instruction can be more effective than implicit pragmatics instruction. Additionally, it seems that a learner's intrinsic motivation to learn the language and to acculturate has an important effect on his success in learning the target language pragmatics, perhaps more so than whether the learning environment is ESL or EFL.

Taguchi shows us that for acquiring pragmatics, an ESL setting is not necessarily better than an EFL setting, but that each setting may contribute to different learner outcomes. In his study, both EFL and ESL students' accuracy and comprehension speed for pragmatics increased. However, students in the EFL environment improved their accuracy more than the ESL students. Conversely, students in the ESL environment increased their speed more than the EFL students. Also in his study, ESL learners recognized a considerably higher number of pragmatic errors than grammatical errors, compared with EFL students. Taguchi found that greater practice means greater performance speed. Although not officially documented, because of the nature of the setting Taguchi assumes that students in the ESL environment had more opportunities to practice English.

As Krashen's input hypothesis states, input must be comprehensible to have any benefit to the learner. If input in an ESL environment is not comprehensible to a student, then according to Krashen the student would not gain from it. Even if the ESL student is saturated with input, only a fraction of it may be comprehensible, depending on the student's level. Therefore, the ESL environment may be more similar to the EFL environment than previously thought.

Neither the ESL nor the EFL students received explicit instruction in pragmatics in Taguchi's study. If not explicitly taught pragmatics, an ESL learner must be able to "notice" form-meaning connections in speech acts. In an EFL environment, a teacher has to provide input or else the students do not have a source to observe pragmatics. However, this is changing as the internet and other media provide more opportunities for exposure to the target language culture. However, even in the ESL environment, students need to actively seek out opportunities to observe and practice the target language. We can not assume that the students spend more time speaking with native English speakers

than with their Japanese-speaking peers. Students have to be very motivated in order to break away from the L1 group in a study abroad ESL environment.

Motivation is a psychological force that helps people achieve a goal. In second language acquisition, this goal may be total fluency in the language, communicative competence or just basic survival skills. Integrative motivation (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) is identified as the learner's desire to be part of the target language community. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is the desire to gain something practical from the study of a second language. In effect, the target language becomes a tool to achieve something else, perhaps in academics or a career. Clement (1980) says the learner needs pressure and desperation to learn the language fast. Ishihara found that students who were motivated to learn English because of interest in the culture excelled at pragmatics.

Taguchi states that in the realm of speech acts, conventionalized expressions were the most difficult for students to learn, such as relevance expressions like "Is the Pope Catholic?". For Japanese students, direct expressions were easier to understand pragmatically than indirect statements. This is interesting considering Japanese is a high-context language that relies on context and indirect language. Indirect refusals were easier to understand than indirect requests and opinions, perhaps because of the similarities in Japanese pragmatics.

Implications are that in the course of L2 development, speed and accuracy may not develop in parallel and different environments may support different aspects of pragmatic comprehension ability. Students need practice connecting form and meaning in order to develop pragmatic understanding.

Ishihara writes about the teaching and assessment of L2 pragmatics. The goal of the study was to find out how teachers can assess pragmatics. It can be difficult to assess pragmatics because of their slippery nature and the interlocutors' individual personalities and social backgrounds. Because of this, students were given freedom in their responses as long as they could explain their choices pragmatically. In her study, students are explicitly taught English pragmatics and are asked to respond to situations and explain the pragmatic reasoning behind their choice of response. The study focused on students' awareness of how they sounded pragmatically in the L2 and how to communicate their intended meanings successfully in the L2 community. The instructor used performance-based assessment, such as role plays with real-world tasks. However, due to the low level of students English ability, they were allowed to write some responses as well. The instructor put emphasis on the process as well as on the product, and gave the students feedback along the way on what the students were able to do and what they needed to work on.

Sasaki shows in his comparison study between questionnaires and role plays that EFL students produce different responses depending on the format of their response. In role plays, students gave longer responses and a larger number and greater variety of strategies/formulas than production questionnaires. Specifically, students used alerters such as *excuse me* or *hello* more in role-plays, which they have to do to get the

interlocutor's attention, which they do not have to do in writing. This study focused on two speech acts: request and refusal.

Ishihara draws upon Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*, the notion that cognitive development occurs through language-mediated activity in interaction with others with more advanced cognitive ability (such as a teacher or a more capable peer) (Vygotsky, 1978). More capable peers may also provide scaffolding for other students. So, Ishihara concludes that pragmatics *can* be taught in an EFL context.

Ishihara's questions included, "How can the development (or lack thereof) of learners' pragmatic competence as assessed by a classroom teacher be characterized?" The pragmatics focused instruction provided in the classroom centered on request discourses, but the pragmatics of giving commands, asking for permission, and making invitations, were addressed within the oral skills component of the class. Teacher and self-assessments were included.   Some points assessed were: overall directness, politeness, formality and tone, choice and use of requesting strategies, and overall comprehensibility of the speaker's intention.

Because of explicit instruction in target language pragmatics, students discovered that English contains highly courteous expressions, similar to Japanese honorifics and realized that they need to learn various English expressions for authentic, appropriate communication. Also, "awareness of the potential match and mismatch between a speaker's intention and a listener's interpretation is also shown in the great majority of students reflections." The students learned about specific pragmalinguistic details, such as the level of politeness, directness and formality of imperatives with *please;* the modals *could, would* and *may*; and the functions of request mitigators.

Ishihara highlighted two students in a case study. One of them, Jun is a motivated active learner planning to study abroad. He achieved a great degree of pragmatic learning during the course. In contrast, a student with similar TOEFL scores but slightly advanced oral English ability at the beginning of the course, Yu, disclosed a belief that he needed to "live abroad to be able to learn English." He appeared to be much less motivated and even distrustful of formal instruction. In fact, the result was that Yu progressed "minimally" when compared with Jun. "Yu's pragmatic language use reflected less successful learning than Jun's, even when the same instructor mediation was available. Jun took advantage of the instructor's modeling and internalized it more fully, whereas Yu disregarded the instructor's efforts. As a result, "Jun was able to demonstrate self-regulated use of supportive moves immediately after the mediated interaction, whereas Yu did so only modestly." Indeed, Jun's high engagement in dialogic interaction with the teacher regarding the instructional content was in stark contrast with Yu's disinterest and lack of trust in the value of classroom language learning.

Because pragmatics is part of intercultural communication, language learning involves learning a new culture and constructing a new L2 identity. "Instruction in pragmatics in the classroom, particularly a FL context, can function as a scaffolded process of socialization into an imagined L2 community" (Norton, 2001). Learning L2 pragmatics lets students interpret others' language below the surface level and also lets students construct their own L2 identity based on the L2 pragmatic norms.

Jung also supports this idea that L2 pragmatic competence should be discussed in terms of intercultural competence involving the learner's continuous identity and attitude formation. The emerging notion of intercultural competence is important. L2 pragmatic learning is synonymous with L2 culture learning. Culture learning essentially involves the learner's continuous construction and modification of a worldview. A learner's level of achievement in L2 pragmatic acquisition is better discussed in terms of the degree to which the learner is able to transcend the boundaries between his ego in order to acquire the target language. The concept of intercultural competence effectively brings together issues of language learning and culture learning, thus providing a more balanced model for L2 pragmatic development. Intercultural competence is the fundamental basis of L2 pragmatic competence.

Continuing with the theme of an L2 identity, Yihong et al. studies the relationship between English learning motivation types and self-identity changes among university students in the People's Republic of China. As Chang states, learners develop a new identity when they learn another language and its pragmatics and culture. Students' self-identity change was organized into six predefined categories: self-confidence, subtractive (native language and cultural identity are replaced by the target language), additive (coexistence of two sets of languages, behavioral patterns and values, each specified for particular contexts), productive (command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other_, split (the struggle between the languages and cultures gives rise to identity conflict), and zero changes. Also, students' motivation types were organized into seven types: intrinsic interest, immediate achievement, individual development, information medium, going abroad, social responsibility, and learning situation. Intuitively, intrinsic interest was correlated with productive and additive changes, which are seen as the most positive changes since they add to the student's existing identity. In this way, the student becomes bi-cultural. According to Gardner, there are two major types of motivation: *instrumental*, when a student uses the language as a tool to achieve something else like a successful entrance exam or career, and *integrative*, when a student wants to become part of the target language community. Yihong finds that the more interested one was in the target language and culture (integrative motivation), the more likely he or she was to experience productive and additive changes in self-identity, which are considered the most positive changes according to Yihong's options. Also according to Yihong's study, some instrumental motivations such as test scores, learning situation and going abroad seemed to have negative effects on cultural self-identity, that is subtractive and split changes. A student's motivation for learning the language seems to be an important factor in the outcome of the students language learning and L2 identity formation. The self-identity issue is as important in EFL as in ESL contexts, as Yihong shows that EFL learners as well as ESL learners experience identity change related to studying the L2.

In another study on explicit pragmatic instruction, Riddiford and Joe track the development of skilled migrants' sociopragmatic performance over 12 weeks from the classroom to the workplace. This study was done in an ESL setting. The research focused on requests in workplace interaction. The Workplace Communication Program for Skilled Migrants at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, was designed to assist unemployed and underemployed skilled migrants to develop their sociopragmatic

competence, in order to increase their chances of gaining employment in their chosen professions. Research shows that role-play test results more closely resemble authentic situations than discourse completion tasks, since these only elicit what participants think they would say in a situation. There are several studies that show a mismatch between native speaker and nonnative speaker perceptions of the context variables in a range of situations and speech acts. Thus, the selection of an inappropriate response may not be the result of lack of awareness of suitable forms and style, but of a difference in perception of the type of response that the situation requires. Retrospective interviews provide insights into these perceptions. Participants recorded their daily face-to-face interactions as a measure of success of teaching, in order to minimize interference from the research team.

The situations that skilled migrants found most challenging were those involving status difference, both upwards and downwards. At first, participants were aware of a small selection of forms of politeness strategies such as *excuse me* and *please*. At the later stages of the study, please and excuse me were not used at all, and a greater use of internal modifiers such as openers (I wonder if you could?), softeners (possibly, if possible), more appropriate attention getters (for example the use of someone's first name instead of dear), pronoun shifts (I or we instead of you – I wonder if we could contact these people.) A greater use of external modifiers such as preparators before the request (Can I have a quick word?), grounders and explanatory information before the request: There is an urgent task from the CEO. Over time, participants awareness of context variables increased. After classroom instruction and workplace experience, there were changes in the perceptions of the significance of status differences, as well as the level of imposition of the request. Role plays by the end of the study revealed more responsiveness to the addressee as illustrated by the use of small talk, increased use of personal names, more strategic use of pausing and sighing and greater use of turn-taking. The typical participant had been living in New Zealand for several years but had had little success in finding suitable professional employment prior to joining the course.

Riddiford and Joe's work shows that despite the fact that skilled migrants had lived in New Zealand for several years, they had very little sociopragmatic knowledge until after completing a 12-week course in that subject at the Workplace Communication Program for Skilled Migrants at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Therefore, we can see that pragmatic skills can be better and more quickly understood when explicitly taught, even in an ESL setting where learners are able to observe sociopragmatic discourse all around them in daily face-to-face interactions. These interactions may assist learners to practice what they had learned in class, but the fact is that they were unable to successfully communicate in an appropriate way before taking the class in sociopragmatics. As an example, one student said she was aware of the impact of classroom instruction on her pragmatic competence. The language choices that "Helena" made in the workplace also reflect her classroom learning. She has adopted the phrase *I wonder/was wondering* from her classroom learning, and it has now entered her spontaneous language. This contrasts with Helena's comments about her lack of ability to make a polite request prior to attending the program. However, she is also aware that her socio-pragmatic competence were still developing.

These results provide evidence of the teachability of sociopragmatic competence. In particular, the results indicate that participants developed a greater ability to accurately analyze and appropriately negotiate requests.

Kubota and McKay explore English as the international language of communication at a global level and the international community at a local level in a rural community in Japan. They ultimately conclude that in this setting and given limited time and access, the pragmatics of language and ability to negotiate meaning are more important than studying a language directly. They discuss to what extent English actually does serve as a lingua franca in multilingual, internationally diverse communities. As Kubota and McKay find out, in increasingly diverse cities in the world, English may not be the local lingua franca. However, Japanese residents who wish to study a foreign language are split between the prestige of studying English and its practicality on a global level and the practicality of studying Portuguese, Thai or Chinese, the languages local immigrants. English may be essential for global communication in business, but often English is not the language that connects local people.

Many people who immigrate do not speak English as an L1 and were not educated to speak English as an L2. In Japan, one common misconception is that all foreigners will understand English because it is the Lingua Franca of international business. This leads to a kind of "double monolinguism" where people are expected to speak Japanese, English or both, but not any other languages even if they are represented in the local community. The authors suggest an interesting alternative, which would be to place more emphasis on competency for negotiating and adjusting linguistic conventions according to the particular situation, purpose and interlocutors from diverse L1 backgrounds. "drawing on extralinguistic cues, identifying and building on shared knowledge, gauging and adjusting to interlocutors' linguistic repertoires, supportive listening, signaling noncomprehension in a face-saving way, asking for repetition, paraphrasing and the like." (seidlhofer, 2004, p.227) In other words, it is most important that learners study first about pragmatics and later about language-specific grammar.

In a study that explores the social microcosm of the classroom itself, Chang explores how group dynamics, including group cohesiveness and group norms, affect an individual EFL learner's motivation. In a classroom environment, the EFL learner's experience is not only individual, but part of the social interactions in the group (meaning the class as a whole). The results from questionnaires show that there was a slight to moderate correlation between group processes (group cohesiveness and group norms) and students' level of motivation (self-efficacy and autonomy). As teachers, Chang notes that we may teach the same material to different classes with varied responses from each class. Each class group has its own particular identity that determines a certain kind of classroom climate. The groups with a more positive identity created a supportive classroom climate that was enjoyable. As Dornyei (2007, p. 720) affirms, "the quality of teaching and learning is entirely different depending on whether the classroom is characterized by a climate of trust and support or by a competitive, cutthroat atmosphere." Since most learning situations, especially in classrooms, take place in groups, the interactions learners have with their teachers and classmates are bound to have a significant effect on them. (Ushioda, 2003). It is important that EFL teachers pay

attention to group dynamics in class and provide opportunities at the beginning of a course to establish a positive group dynamic, perhaps by engaging in ice-breaker activities or positively reinforcing a good work ethic among students.

Within an Asian context there is greater collectivism, so the group influence would be further emphasized. Group cohesiveness is characterized as how well group members get along, how they share ideas, participate and work together. According to Clement, Dornei & Noels, 1994, group cohesiveness can lower learners' affective filters. Group norms are group rules accepted and respected by all group members. They can reinforce group members' desire and need to perform well and provide boundaries, which facilitate learning. Students' conformity to group norms can provide positive pressure on others to perform well. Students may adjust their behavior to group norms – positively or negatives. The power of the group should not be underestimated.

Learners' L2 motivation is also considered an important factor; self-efficacy and learner autonomy are parts of motivation. Self-efficacious learners set higher goals for themselves; they are more readily engaged in challenging tasks, adopting effective learning strategies, investing more effort and feeling less frustrated. Learner autonomy and motivation are intertwined forces affecting the L2 learning. Learner autonomy is learners taking control of their own learning. Students decide how and what they learn, which increases motivation. Students are responsible for their own learning, so they have higher motivation. Without sufficient motivation, learning does not take place (Donyei, 2001). So you cannot learn a language simply by sitting in class without any motivation. Students who spent more class hours together were more cohesive, but being together as a group over a longer duration does not necessarily lead to greater cohesion. Learners who believed that their group was cohesive or had positive group norms might have had higher self-efficacy and demonstrated more autonomous behaviors, both of which could be signs of high motivation.

However, there are many factors related to motivation. A cohesive group's members may pay close attention to each other and have positive interactions. Being in a cohesive group motivates students to study harder than they would have on their own. Some learners said that while the learner group was an influential factor, it was not as important as their own determination. Being in a positive group at a younger age is more important because learners are able to be more self-motivated when they are older. Younger learners are more easily influenced by others. The quantitative data confirm the hypothesis that group processes correlate with some aspects of L2 motivation. However, the most important factor influencing their L2 motivation was still their own determination.

In a different study about form-meaning connections, Williams researches whether these connections can be learned implicitly when the relevant aspects of form and meaning are attended but the relationship between them is not. His findings were negative, that the majority of learners did not successfully associate animacy with the correct determiner, or form and meaning. A few learners "noticed" the relevance, then worked out the rest of the system, which suggests an interaction between implicit and explicit processes. Could this mirror the connection between the set phrases used as speech acts in certain contexts? Perhaps the majority of learners are unable to make the

form-meaning connection and therefore need to be explicitly taught. Ellis claims that implicit learning of word forms is possible, implicit learning of form-meaning associations is not. Therefore, learning of form-meaning associations with pragmatics should be explicitly taught.

Another factor in learning language and pragmatics in EFL and ESL is a student's age. Munoz writes about the differences that exist between an EFL and an ESL environment and age effects in SLA. Studies of formal learning in EFL settings to date have only provided evidence of the older learners' initial rate advantage. They learn faster than younger starters with the same amount of instruction time. The initial rate advantage is also observed in situations in which older learners begin instruction in the foreign language later than younger learners. In these cases, as Krashen (1979) observes, the common finding is that children who start learning the foreign language later eventually catch up to those who begin earlier. These findings can be explained by the fact that adults possess metalinguistic knowledge that helps them to analyze their L1 and L2 in terms of grammatical structures. Similarly, older students who begin studying English in an ESL setting have greater gains in the beginning, but fall short compared with younger learners when we look at ultimate attainment. This could be due to the Critical Period Hypothesis, in which it is believed that there is a period prior to puberty, during adolescence where children are able to acquire language with more ease. Since in EFL settings the input is less, and if younger learners learn more in an ESL setting, we could logically say that younger learners pick up more implicitly and older learners rely on explicit learning and their metalinguistic knowledge.

However, in EFL school settings, Harley (1998) notes that "the additional time associated with an early headstart has not been found to provide more substantial long-term proficiency benefits." In contrast, studies comparing early and late immersion students in Canadian immersion programs have observed long-term benefits, particularly in oral communication. An early starting age produces long-term benefits when associated with greater time and massive exposure, as in immersion programs, but not when associated with limited time and exposure, as in typical foreign language learning classrooms. Another way to look at this is that the learner gains in an EFL setting are sometimes interrupted by the educational system itself, since foreign language is often not required past secondary education.

Lastly, Kasper discusses some differences between ESL and EFL learners and acquiring pragmatics in English. For example, a group of EFL students in Hungary rated grammatical errors higher than a group of ESL learners in her research, who in turn scored higher on pragmatic appropriateness judgments than the EFL learners did. Her findings strongly suggest that pragmatic and grammatical awareness are largely independent. If a student knows English grammar, he is not necessarily going to have competence in English pragmatics. As far as an order of acquisition, some studies state that grammar precedes pragmatics, but other studies say the order is reversed. One observation we can make is that request speech acts can incorporate modals and the order of acquisition for request speech acts and the verbs used is maybe>think>can>will>would>could. Nevertheless, just because a student had learned modal verbs in a grammatical sense does not mean that the student was able to use these

verbs pragmatically in request speech acts. In another study that Kasper mentions, Satomi Takahashi (1996) finds that advanced Japanese EFL students prefer to use shorter statements when making requests, even though they had been taught longer, more complex forms of English that would be considered more polite for making requests.

We know that advanced grammatical ability does not automatically mean competence in pragmatics. However, Kasper states that advanced acculturation is strongly associated with pragmatic and interactional competence.

A strong general trend emerging from these studies on pragmatics is a distinct advantage for explicit metapragmatic instruction, irrespective of such factors as the specific pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic learning objective, L2, learns' L2 proficiency level, their L1 background, or length of instruction.

As Kasper points out, EFL teachers do not necessarily need to be native speakers, but need to have been socialized in the target language setting long enough to draw upon those social norms.

In an FL classroom context, the learners may have limited contact with the L2 community. However, using a situational approach with simulated scenarios or role play, can be used as a practical start in teaching pragmatics along with learners' occasional participation and observation of the target language community outside of the classroom. The research shows that pragmatics can be successfully taught in an EFL setting.

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Writing in a Foreign Language: Chinese Students' Perspective on their Writing Process in Portuguese

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Topic: writing

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Introduction

The relationship of students with writing is often seen in the perspective of the mother tongue. Through writing, people in general, including students, gain access to functions, such as expressing, exploring, recording and reporting feelings, ideas and information. These functions can be activated either in the subject's first language or in a foreign language, within the limits of the proficiency level in different languages. However, in most cases, writing in a foreign language at school is mobilized only with the purpose to show the domain of that language to the teacher or as a way to learn, to practice that language. Nevertheless, the access to the functions of written texts is not hindered in the case of learning a foreign language, provided that this guidance is adopted in their teaching and that students are offered the opportunity to participate in situations that mobilize the use of that language, whether with communicative purposes or in a perspective of expression and systematization of knowledge through writing.

Performing functions is linked to the axiological dimension of the relationship with writing, i.e. to the dimension concerning the values that the subject attaches to writing in his life. In addition to this axiological dimension, other dimensions are present in the relationship with writing: the ideational or conceptual dimension, the praxeological dimension and the affective dimension (Chartrand & Blaser, 2008, Chatrand & Prince, 2009). The ideational or conceptual dimension refers to ideas and representations that the subject has built on the requirements of writing, and the ways that can be followed to achieve them, i.e. to develop writing skills, particularly in school. The praxeological dimension relates to the specific activities and operations that subjects carry out while writing, as well as to the moments and situations where they write. The affective dimension includes the feelings and the emotions that the subject experiences during writing activities and in relation to writing, in general, conditioning the attitude of adhesion or rejection towards writing.

These dimensions of the relationship with the writing – axiological, conceptual, praxeological and emotional – are likely to be activated in any writing activities, whether in the first language (L1), or in the second language (L2) or foreign language (FL). Being aware of the relationship that the subject establishes with writing, in its various dimensions, will make possible to check i) which functions the individual assigns or mobilizes for writing (axiological dimension), ii) which conceptions he built about the requirements of written texts and their use (conceptual dimension), iii) what are the activities, processes, operations, or factors that the subject is aware of and therefore may intentionally seek to control, during

writing tasks (praxeological dimension), and iv) which feelings, emotions and attitudes that writing activities give rise, influencing subject's commitment and attitude to carry out the task (affective dimension).

In the process of teaching and learning, taking into account these dimensions will make possible to act intentionally in order to: i) extend the range of written functions that the student has access to, or making salient, for each case or writing task , a specific function that may be found in that task, ii) evaluate the conceptions of the subject concerning writing and lead to reconceptualizations, if necessary, iii) consciously incorporate into the writing process, specific sub-processes and operations, considering the text genres and the particular situation in which the written text will be used; iv) build positive feelings and provide tools or strategies for overcoming the difficulties that are the source of the negative feelings and the rejection attitude in relation to particular writing tasks or to writing activity in general.

The relationship to writing can vary, considering the different subjects, the evolution over time of the same subject, but also the different genres of text, the different situations or contexts in which writing tasks are included and the purposes they pursue. One factor of variation is also the opposition first language / foreign language. In this case, one challenge to overcome will be the greater difficulties that students experience when writing in a foreign language. Being aware of the subject's relationship to writing, also in the case of a foreign languages, will allow the intentional action that has been referred to in the preceding paragraph, in order to improve this relationship considering its various dimensions. The awareness or knowledge that we have in mind is the awareness by the student himself, which can be made known to the teacher and considered in the teaching-learning process. Considering the point of view of the students (writers) leads to take their attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and experiences in relation to writing as a basis for make decisions about the adoption of teaching strategies. On the contrary, frequently, the strategies are adopted from outside (Petric, 2002), from the point of view of the teacher, based on general assumptions, or assuming the supremacy of one specific literacy, taken as "the literacy" without considering the personal relationship that student establishes with literacy and with the strategies adopted in the process of teaching and learning writing.

As Hyland (2000) states, a challenge of teaching writing is taking into account the perceptions and practices of writing that students bring with them ("...to address the perceptions and practices of writing that students may bring with them", Hyland, 2000:145). Hyland (2006:116) emphasizes the notion of specificity, which must be considered when planning the process of learning a foreign language. This notion is consistent with the S of the word Specific in ESP [English for Specific Purposes]. Hyland (2006) calls attention to the "specificities" that each community and context bring to literacy, and to the need to take into account the "specificity" of the literacies that students already bring with them ("Only by taking the notion of specificity seriously can ESP find ways to undermine a 'single literacy' view and to replace 'remedial' approaches to teaching with those that address students' own perceptions and practices of writing", p. 116).

The relationship to writing in a foreign language, especially in the context of language learning, has, immediately, the specificity of considering the role that subject's first language, L1, can play in the process. Writing in a foreign language joins to the process of writing the issue of mobilising composite linguistic resources, i.e. the presence of L1 in conjunction with the resources of L2 that the writer already masters, in order to reach a linguistic representation. While in L1 this representation is done by enabling resources which express or reshape thought, in L2 the resources making possible a direct way to linguistic expression are not always available. In such cases, the representation of reality and knowledge is sought

through L1. Each particular language is not a nomenclature, applied from outside to reality, but it is a system (in the perspective of Saussure, 1971) or a game (in the perspective of Wittgenstein, 1985), with its own internal rules, which play a role in the actual construction of knowledge, and conform it to some extent with their representation. This makes mediation of L1 more difficult and requires i) the domain of relations between L1 and L2, and ii) the progressive building of direct links to the specificities of the system of linguistic representation of L2 (words, phrases, syntactic constructions, etc.., with their own semantic and pragmatic contours).

In van Weijen et al. (2009), we find the analysis of the use of L1 while writing in L2, by university students, whose level of proficiency in L2 (English) is at level B2 of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). According to Weijen et al. (2009) and to the review of studies they perform, the activities in which subjects may use L1 during the writing process are diverse and cover the whole process: generating ideas or content, planning, solving linguistic problems, stylistic choices, back-tracking, metacomments ... The study of Weijen et al. (2009) showed that "L1 use varies between writers, although all writers use their L1 while writing in L2 to some extent" (p. 245), which is consistent with results from other studies (Knutson, 2006; Wang and Wen, 2002). The analysis of Weijen et al. (2009) also showed that "some activities, such as Selfinstructions and Metacomments are more likely to occur in L1 than others" (p. 245).

The use of L1 is therefore a specificity to be taken into account when considering the relationship to writing in a foreign language. The individual variation that also occurs in relation to this aspect strengthens the need to consider the specificity of the subject's relationship with writing, in order to found the teaching-learning strategies and in order to extend this relationship to new possibilities, considering the different dimensions (affective, axiological, conceptual and praxeological).

The present study aims to understand the relationship to writing of a group of Chinese students learning Portuguese in Portugal for a period of two years, as part of their course of Translation and Interpretation Portuguese / Chinese. This knowledge should help to understand how these students build their relationship with writing in Portuguese, considering its different dimensions, maintaining their specificity as foreign language writers. On the other hand, this knowledge should help to gain access to dimensions that their stay in Portugal can promote, through participation in the uses of the written language in the community in which they are.

Method

Corpus

This study is based on a corpus of texts collected through a metawriting task conducted in Portuguese in Portugal. The general topic of the text was "What happens when I write?" This task was performed by several populations, including the group of Chinese students of the course of Translation and Interpretation Portuguese / Chinese and the Portuguese students attending the Early Childhood and Primary Teacher courses. In the case of Chinese students the topic included the specification concerning the Portuguese language: "What happens when I write... in Portuguese? This topic was complemented by some additional guidelines related to the procedural and affective dimensions: "What happens when you write a text / in Portuguese)? In writing your text on this subject, you may wonder what you do, what happens

before you write, while you're writing and after you have written... And also how you feel. Also you can say if you like to write and why."

The text production task was performed during Portuguese Language classes, in the case of Chinese students and during the classes of Methodology of Language Teaching in the case of Portuguese students. The task was conducted by the teacher of the classes. The topic of the task was congruent with the content of these subjects. Nevertheless, the teacher made explicit that the texts would be collected for research purposes, besides the reflection that they should give rise in order to approach the issues of writing process and composition. The task was introduced by the teacher and performed within the time of a standard lesson, about fifty minutes. However the students were free to finish and deliver their text earlier. In the case of Chinese students, they were allowed to use the dictionary.

The text that was elicited may be included in the reflexive genre. It takes the subject's experiences in order to reach generalizations, seeking to organize and systematize these experiences. In this case, writing is the medium of expression and the object of thought. This genre involves operations of reflection and generalization over multiple experiences of writing, a movement from the particular to the general with the purpose of grasping the most salient features of writing experiences and the most prevalent feelings and behaviours in those experiences. However, particular experiences are not necessarily excluded, since these may be mobilized to illustrate the general aspects referred to or to focus on specific challenges of certain writing tasks. The movement may then also be from the general to the particular (Barbeiro, 2011).

In total, there were 48 Chinese students who performed the task, 30 were attending the second year and 18 the third year of the course. In the case of Portuguese students, the number of texts obtained was higher; however, in this study, we randomly limited the number of texts included in the corpus to 48. Considering gender, the majority of the authors are females (38 girls and 10 boys in the case of Chinese students, and 45 girls and 3 boys in the case of Portuguese students).

Analysis

The main objectives of the analysis were to identify the dimensions of the relationship with writing emerging in the corpus, to verify their salience and to search for differences between the group of Chinese students, who learn Portuguese as a Foreign Language, and the group of Portuguese students, for whom Portuguese is their first tongue. The dimensions are based on those proposed by Barré-De Miniac (2000, 2001) and, more directly, on those of Chartrand and Blaser (2008) and Chartrand and Prince (2009) mentioned above.

In order to perform the analysis, the allocation of textual units to categories and the comparison between the two groups (L1 and FL), the unit corresponding to the clause was taken as the fundamental basis of the analysis. The clause allows the representation of processes, participants and circumstances (Halliday, 2004). The fundamental analytical operation was to allocate the processes (and the corresponding clauses) to the dimensions of the relationship with writing that have been considered.

For each dimension we undertook a more specific analysis (considering specific subdimensions or axes). While for the main dimensions, we followed the pre-set categories, according to the review of literature, for the subdimensions we adopted an approach closer to the data, following the perspective of the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1977; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, we searched for salient axes emerging from the data of the groups,

considering the number of occurrences. Based on this salience in one of the groups we will also check the data of the other group to verify if that aspect reaches a similar emphasis.

Results

The results concerning the distribution of processes (units of analysis) for the different dimensions of the relationship with writing are presented in Graph 1.
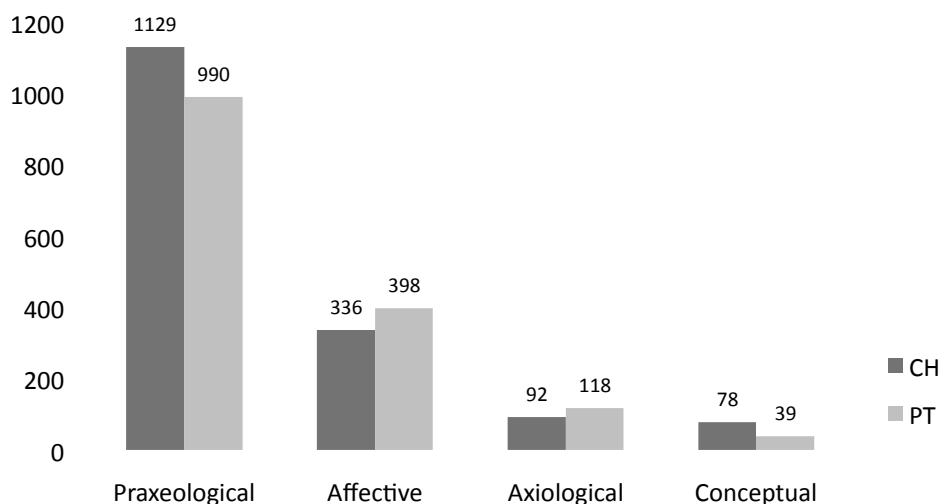
Graph 1 – The prominence of the dimensions of the relationship with writing: distribution of processes (clausal units) – Chinese (FL) vs. Portuguese (L1) students

As can be seen in Graph 1, the relative prominence of the different dimensions with writing is similar in both groups. The praxeological dimension is largely predominant, in accordance to the nature of the writing task, which presented a particular focus on the procedural aspects. In the group of Chinese students the weight of this dimension is even greater than in the group of Portuguese students (1129 units, corresponding to 69.1% and 990 units corresponding to 64.1%, respectively). In the affective dimension the order of the two groups is reversed (336 clausal units, 20.6%, for Chinese students and 398, 25.5%, for Portuguese students). The axiological dimension presents the same order (with close proportions, 5.6% and 7.5%, respectively). Regarding the conceptual dimension, the group of Chinese students has a higher number of occurrences (78 vs. 39, corresponding to 4.8% and 2.5% respectively).

From a global point of view, considering all the units of analysis, there are no significant differences between the averages of two groups (mean 34.1 clausal units for CH group and 32.2 for the PT group (the data present a normal distribution, and the result of the statistical t test for independent samples is t=.781, p=.437). Considering the different dimensions separately, for praxeological and affective dimensions, which also have normal distributions, the statistical t test also reveals the nonexistence of significant differences between the two groups (t=1.588, p=.116 for the praxeological dimension, and t=-1.318, p=.191, for the affective dimension). With regard to conceptual and axiological dimensions, which do not have a normal distribution, the nonparametric test Mann-Whitney U establishes as non-significant the difference between the two groups in the case of the axiological dimension (U=1,034.000, p=.368) and as statistically significant the difference between the means of the two groups considering the conceptual dimension (U=1,470.500, p=. 05).

Therefore, in relation to the distribution of processes (clausal units) by the different dimensions of the relationship with the writing, the results show significant differences only in the case of conceptual dimension. The Chinese students devote more processes of their texts to reflection about the requirements of writing (in Portuguese). For other dimensions, it is necessary to perform a deeper analysis, looking for differences between the two groups. The next step of the analysis looked for differences considering subcategories or axes emerging from the data of the two groups. In the sections below we will present the results of this narrower analysis, considering the different dimensions.

Praxeological dimension

The praxeological dimension, the most prominent one, presents some axes that stand out because they receive the focus of attention of both the Chinese students (FL) and Portuguese students (L1). Among these axes, there are activities related to the writing process (expressed by verbs like *pensar* [*think*], *organizar [organize]*, *pesquisar* [*research*], the verb *escrever* [*write*] itself, the verbs *ler* [*read*] and *reler* [*reread*], *rever* [*revise*], *check*, etc.).. As can be seen in Part I of Table 1, the reference to the procedural operations largely looms both in the texts of Chinese and Portuguese students. Although presenting a lower relative weight, other axes have an similar weight in the two groups: the is the case of reference to the normative nature of writing, considering mainly spelling and syntax, and the mention to text as a linguistic unit, from the point of view of its coherence, structure and features of different genres.

On the other hand, as can be seen in part II of Table 1, there are axes with different frequencies in the groups. Among these axes, we find some that we will focus on here: collaboration, self-assessment of the writing and the text by the student, the reference to instruments and auxiliary materials mobilised during the writing process, the consideration of factors associated to the communicative nature of writing, namely the reader.

Table 1 – Parallel (I) and contrasting (II) axes of praxeological dimension

	Axis	Chinese students (FL)		Portuguese students (L1)	
		No.	(%)	No.	%
I	Writing operations	669	59.3	622	61,0
	Norms	56	5.0	39	3,8
	Text unit	74	6.5	54	5.3
II	Collaboration	22	1.9	0	0
	(Self-)evaluation	35	3.1	8	0.8
	Instruments	70	6.2	10	1.0
	L1 use	76	6.7	—	—
	Reader consideration	5	0.4	30	3.0
	...				

In contrast to the group of Portuguese students the reference to collaboration, as part of the process of textual production, is present in the group of Chinese students. In the texts of the corpus, these students refer to requests for help and collaboration that they do. Through these demands Chinese students intend to solve linguistic problems and improve the overall quality of the text. They are addressed to the Portuguese teachers, but also to Portuguese students, their roommates or school friends. The Portuguese teachers and students are asked questions concerning the Portuguese language, while the reference to the cooperation of Chinese

classmates focuses on issues of content, particularly with regard to the topics that could or should be addressed in a particular text.

The purpose of language learning leads Chinese students to adopt a (self)assessment attitude during the writing process. This attitude is based on the awareness of the difficulties of Portuguese and on the probability of occurrence of language errors. It is guided by the commitment and the intent to improve writing.

The dictionary is an auxiliary resource largely mobilised by Chinese students during the process of writing in Portuguese (46 of the 70 references to the auxiliary resources of writing concern the dictionary). In addition to the dictionary, the pencil and the pen are referred to, with their traditional uses associated to drafting and writing a clean version of the text. The computer, a writing tool, is also mentioned. Regarding the content, the references are made to books on the topic of the text and to the Internet, as a source of research.

One of the issues in focus in our study is the role of L1 (Chinese) in the process of writing in Portuguese. The reference to the mobilisation of Chinese emerges in the corpus especially in regard to the operations of generating ideas, i.e., students think in Chinese in order to translate/write in Portuguese (30 occurrences). This use of L1 is presented as a strategy, but also as a limitation, as shown in the following excerpt from the text of a Chinese student:

> 1. (...) existe um fenómeno que fazerem tradução entre duas línguas, significa que pensam e constroem uma frase portuguesa ou criam uma opinião principal sempre com uma maneira de língua materna. Portanto, os textos não são "verdadeiros", ou seja, não são feitos pelas frases genuínas portuguesas. Eu também faço assim. [*There is phenomenon that consists in translating between the two languages, it causes that one thinks and constructs a Portuguese sentence or one expresses an opinion always following the way adopted in the mother tongue. Therefore, the texts are not "genuine", in other words they are not like the genuine Portuguese sentences. I also do it.*] (Chinese Student 005)

The association of generating ideas or thinking in Chinese (L1) prior to writing them in Portuguese to a limitation is confirmed by statements from other Chinese students. In fact, they say that they also try to think in Portuguese or that they are already able to think in Portuguese, contrarily to what happened at earlier stages of learning.

The axes we have referred to in the preceding paragraphs present a higher number of occurrences in the texts of Chinese students, revealing features that are likely to be specific of writing in a foreign language. Concerning the last axis of Table 1, referring to the communicative aspect of writing, specifically to the addressee or text reader as a conditioning factor, the values of occurrences are reversed: this subdimension emerges more often in the texts of Portuguese students. Taking account of the reader, their knowledge, their status and anticipating the interpretations he will make emerge in a much more prominent way in the texts of students in this group (L1). In the case of Chinese students, the few occurrences assigned to this axis reflect the school context of learning Portuguese. In fact they refer to the teacher as the reader of the text. On the contrary, in the texts of Portuguese students, the reader is a generic entity, about which students reflect, strengthening the need to ensure text comprehension. In order to reach comprehension writers must be able to anticipate, during the writing process, the features of the intended readers and adapt language accordingly.

Affective dimension

As noted earlier, the affective dimension is more salient in the texts of Portuguese students. The primary axis of analysis concerning this dimension reflects the attitude of subjects towards writing: positive attitude oriented to adhesion, which is expressed by verbs like *gostar, adorar…* (*like, love,…*), or negative attitude oriented to rejection which is expressed negatively *não gostar* (*do not like*, *do not love*) or by verbs such as *detestar* (*hate*).

The number of units expressing a positive attitude to writing emerges with a higher level in the case of Portuguese students (L1), as can be seen in Table 2. With regard to the negative attitude, the number of occurrences is similar in both groups.

The other point of analysis within this dimension refers to feelings and emotions experienced during writing, which may also have positive, negative or neutral orientations. The major contrast occurs in relation to the emotional experiences with negative orientation. The values are high, both in the case of Chinese students and in the case of Portuguese students, 56% and 31% respectively.

Table 2 – Affective dimension

	Pos. / Neg. Values	Chinese students (FL)		Portuguese students (L1)	
		No.	(%)	No.	%
Attitude	Positive	46	13.4	88	23.0
	Negative	15	4.5	14	3.5
Emotional experiences	Positive	80	23.8	153	38.4
	Neutral	7	2.1	45	11.3
	Negative	188	56.0	125	31.4

In the case of Chinese students, the most crucial factor to the emotions experienced during the writing process consists of the difficulties they find (64 occurrences), which have often their origin in limitations concerning language skills. In the case of Portuguese students, the difficulties are also present (32 occurrences), but their roots are mainly linked to uncertainty.

The range of emotions and emotional experiences referred to in the texts is large, especially in the texts of Portuguese students (L1). Some aspects mark a difference between the two groups: writing as an experience that gives access to an autonomous and liberating universe mobilising imagination and creativity is present in a relevant way in the texts of Portuguese students (20 occurrences), on the contrary this aspect is practically absent in the texts of Chinese students.

Axiological dimension

The results concerning the analysis of the axiological dimension draw different profiles between the two groups, considering their perspectives on the functions or purposes of writing, as can be seen in Table 3. For the group of Chinese students (FL), learning the language itself emerges as the most salient purpose. This learning purpose is also presented in the L1 students' texts, but in a broader, transversal way in relation to the different disciplines. Writing contributes to knowledge through the organization of knowledge and the challenge of activating and representing knowledge.

The most prominent function in the case of L1 students is the expressive function. For these students, writing is associated, in a relevant way, to the expression of feelings and emotions, acquiring a cathartic value. Expressing personal ideas, feelings and emotions on paper has the

virtue of remaining reserved, if this is the writer's decision, protecting the subject of criticism and censure from others.

Table 3 – Axiological dimension

Writing Functions	Chinese students (FL)		Portuguese students (L1)	
	No.	(%)	No.	%
Learning	63	68,5	15	11.0
Personal expression	21	22.8	83	68.6
Communication	2	2.2	8	6.8
Recording	6	2.1	2	1.7
Consciousness	0	—	10	7.6
Hobby	—	—	2	1.7

The references to the communicative function of writing do not stand out in the texts of the corpus, despite its presence in everyday life and although this function is implied when the text finds a reader. It can be present when the subject mobilises other functions such as learning and personal expression. However, in the texts of these students, including L1, the function that occupies the foreground is the expressive function. The moment of writing, when the writer expresses their feelings and ideas, stands out in relation to the possibility of making the text accessible to others through reading.

The permanence of writing makes it a means of recording facts and information for future use. Another function that arises in the case of L1 students is consciousness rising. Writing is not limited to transcription of something that writers were already aware of, with cathartic or registration purposes. It allows the discovery and awareness of new aspects in relation to what we know, feel or think. Finally, the writing also appears referred to as a hobby, in the group of L1 students.

Conceptual dimension

In the conceptual dimension the specificities of the perspectives adopted by Chinese students (foreign language) and Portuguese students (first language) are also clearly marked. Within this dimension, in the case of Chinese students these aspects become salient: the differences between the two languages, Portuguese and Chinese (27 occurrences), and the strategies to learn Portuguese language, namely writing. The characteristics of Portuguese language pose some challenges to Chinese students, particularly in the domain of grammar. The subject's conceptions also extend to the strategies that must be adopted to achieve learning: the most prominent strategies are the practicing writing; learning grammar; reading texts in Portuguese and memorising specific words and expressions for reuse in other texts.

In the case of Portuguese students, the conceptual dimension is marked by the contrast between writing and speaking (36 cases). For the majority, writing arises as a more demanding mode of expression compared to speaking, namely face-to-face conversation.

Conclusion

The analysis of the corpus revealed similarities and differences between the group of Chinese students, for whom Portuguese is a foreign language, and the group of their Portuguese schoolmates. The task that was adopted in this study elicited in both groups the capacity to

make explicit students' reflection about the writing process and the cognitive, linguistic or material operations that must be carried on in order to produce the intended text. Certain differences arise, considering the procedural or praxeological dimension. The writing process in Portuguese (as a foreign language) of Chinese students involves the use of support tools, mainly the dictionary. Benefiting from the immersion context this process can also mobilise the help from Portuguese teachers and Portuguese schoolmates or roommates. It requires a higher level of attention to language during the task, implying a conscious control or evaluation of the text that is being written. The focus of writing activity is the linguistic product, seeking for correctness. Its reader is mainly the teacher, whose function is also to correct the written text. In contrast, in the case of Portuguese (L1) students the reader arises as an entity that conditions what is being written.

The affective dimension reveals the effort that writing in Portuguese implies for these students burdening the process and resulting in the emergence of a high level of negative emotional experiences during the writing process. The negative values of these experiences are counterbalanced by the attitudinal position which is mainly positive and committed with learning aims, in order to benefit from the stay in Portugal.

The commitment becomes salient when we consider the axiological dimension. While the most relevant function of writing for Portuguese L1 students is personal expression, in the case of FL students the most relevant function for the tasks of writing that they perform is learning to write.

In the conceptual dimension, the specificity of the groups also arises. In both groups the conceptions concerning writing and writing functioning and writing learning are marked by contrasts: in the case of L2 (Chinese) this contrast emerges between the two languages; in the case of the Portuguese students writing is viewed in contrast with speaking.

In sum, these results give rise to some challenges, if we want to take full advantage of the stay of Chinese students in Portugal. Besides occasional collaboration that already happens, according to these students, promoting the participation in communicative projects, which can be carried out in cooperation with Portuguese students, will give Chinese students access to new functions and new audiences besides the teacher. In this process, personal expression of ideas, thoughts, feelings and life experiences or memories will also be mobilized, increasing the contribution of these students to the school community.

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Teaching Vocabulary:

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&
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&
Pronunciation problem

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Teaching and learning native-like pronunciation is one of the most complicated but significant features of EFL/ESL teaching and learning. Good pronunciation can promote language learning whereas poor pronunciation can lead to a great hindrance in L2 learning. However, due to its complexity, pronunciation has been looked upon as part of language teaching which has been ignored, but it deserves to receive more attention. Based on the BBC/Persian report, in EFL and ESL teaching, spelling and meaning are usually given priority and are clarified for language learners, while pronunciation is treated as less important information and is given focus after spelling and meaning. This paper deals with the aspects of phonetic properties particularly those of pronunciation and stress in the learning of English among Iranian learners. The result of this study, which includes a test administered to Persian learners of English in Iran, reveals that language learners should be exposed to correct pronunciation of lexical items with the proper stress prior to spelling and translation of the word in the native language; that is, pronunciation and stress should be given priority to spelling and meaning in EFL/ESL teaching and learning. Otherwise, language learners meet some serious problems in pronunciation and the use of stress due to negative imprints from the previous learning of incorrect pronunciation and improper stress pattern.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the teaching of vocabulary beyond the elementary levels is limited to presenting new items as they appear in written or oral texts. This indirect teaching of vocabulary assumes that vocabulary expansion will happen through the practice of other language skills, which has been proven as not conclusive to ensure vocabulary expansion.

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that vocabulary teaching should be part of the syllabus, and taught in a well-planned manner and on a regular basis. Lewis argues that vocabulary should be at the center of language teaching. He (2007, p. 83) states that "language consists of grammatical lexis, not lexicalized grammar".

Radford (2004, p. 181) states that "acquisition of vocabulary is indispensable in the learning of a language. This idea lends support to the existence of the Projection Principle wherein all lexical information is syntactically represented". This simply means that the lexical item cannot be used in sentential constructions among students if knowledge thereof is absent.

Furthermore, Wealand (2007, p. 216) maintains that "knowing a word does not simply mean recognizing it in a written or spoken text". He maintains that "to know a word involves having more detailed information about that lexical item, such as meaning, pronunciation, stress, spelling, grammatical form, level of formality, connotations, collocations, associations and others".

2. The Importance of Pronunciation

As individuals, we always learn to speak earlier than learning to read and write. Learning a language means to perform the sounds, utterances, and the words properly and correctly. One of the general goals in the L2 learning, maybe the most important one, is to speak the target language accurately and fluently like native speakers.

When we talk to other people in English, the first thing they notice, which can create good impression about the quality of our language ability, is our pronunciation. Poor and unintelligible pronunciation will make unpleasant and misunderstanding for both speakers and listeners. In addition, it is clear that limited pronunciation skills will make learners lose their self-confidence and result in negative influence for learners to estimate their credibility and abilities (Morley, 1998).

Lund (2003, p. 16) pointed out, "pronunciation is the only aspect of language that calls for a close interaction between the cognitive and physiological processes. In acquiring new sounds, we are also dealing with a complex re-organizing of the articulatory processes". Good English pronunciation will make people understand you easily and be willing to listen to you. Contrarily, poor English pronunciation may confuse people and lead to an unpleasant talking and misunderstanding, even if you used advanced English grammar or vocabulary. Therefore, we can use simple words or grammar structures to make people understand you, but we cannot use simple pronunciation.

According to Gelvanovsky (2002), pronunciation has an important social value, which means that it should be related to prestige, such as intelligence, professional competence, persuasiveness, diligence, and social privilege. Pronunciation can provide information about the speaker's geographical and social origin, and in most cases it is the most salient characteristic of non-native speakers. Some studies also find that pronunciation usually relate to the indispensable factors for socio-economic success: intelligence, professional competence, persuasiveness, diligence, social privilege, and so on (Hudson, 1980; Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994).The importance of pronunciation was emphasized by many learners, teachers, and researchers, but it should be noted that language learners always have some difficulties with pronunciation. A lot of researchers contribute to find the factors that affect pronunciation from various perspectives, such as physiology, psychology, and linguistics.

When teaching vocabulary, teachers are expected to expose language learners to at least four most important pieces of information, that is, pronunciation, stress, spelling and meaning. But as it was mentioned before, of these pieces of information, spelling and meaning are usually given priority and are clarified for language learners. On the other hand, pronunciation and stress are treated as less important information and are given focus after spelling and meaning.

The result of the test on a group of Iranian learners of English conducted in this research has revealed that this way of presenting lexical information can bring about some serious and long-lasting problems in pronunciation and the use of stress for language learners. Evidently, pronunciation and stress play important roles in communication, and any problem with either one of the two can make a word very difficult to understand, and may even prevent communication from taking place.

3. Literature Review

What should be drawn to one's attention is that, in the process of communication, pronunciation plays a crucial role, since successful communication cannot take place without correct pronunciation. Poorly pronounced segments and suprasegments may have the result of disorienting the listener and inhibiting comprehension.

Research in pronunciation is a hot issue in second language acquisition (SLA), and a great number of researchers attempted to find the affecting factors for pronunciation. Among these studies, some studies focus on the learning age's affecting for SLA (Harley, 1986; Mackay, Flege, & Imai, 2006); some studies addressed the length of residence in the target language country (Flege, Bohn, & Jang, 1997; Flege & Liu, 2001), and other studies focus on the frequency of using L2 (Flege, Mackay, & Meador, 1999).

Kenworthy (1987) listed the factors affecting native-like pronunciation. These variables include native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and

language ego, motivation, and concern for good pronunciation. Incontestably, it is not easy to give an intact list for affecting factors in pronunciation.

Among innumerable researchers, age seems the indispensable topic for pronunciation. Most of the research (e.g., Flege, 1999; Moyer, 2004) have been used as evidence to support the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967). The general consensus was the younger the better. Younger children learn L2 more easily and quickly than older children (Mayberry & Lock, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2008).

Some studies consider the factors other than age (Moyer, 2004; Scovel, 1988). They focused on the differences of individual language learners in second language phonological competence. However, some factors have not been explored extensively in L2 pronunciation research, for example phonological memory.

Recent research has demonstrated that acculturation may play a prominent role in learners' language acquisition (Hamers, 1994; Toohey, 2001; He, 2006). Among these studies, some researchers argue that attitudes towards the target language and target community may affect L2 proficiency (e.g., Hamers, 1994; Toohey, 2001) while others indicate that learners' attitudes do not affect L2 proficiency. Also, Norton & Toohey (2001) reported that social factors may influence children' L2 acquisition.

As we know, different research methods and different research contexts result in different findings. However, we recognized that there may be other factors affecting pronunciation. Based on the research, this paper attempts to analyze the influence of spelling in learning pronunciation as well as the interference of the L1 stress pattern into L2.

3.0 Objectives of the Test

The main objective of the test is discovering the influence of spelling in learning pronunciation as well as the interference of the L1 stress pattern into L2. Furthermore, it is aimed to find solution(s) to these supposed problems. Therefore a test was designed and administered to the two different groups of language learners in two different ways following questions in mind.

1. *How is learning of the pronunciation of a lexical item influenced by its spelling?*

2. *How does the stress pattern of L1 interfere with learning of stress pattern of the L2?*

3. *Is it possible to solve the above supposed problems by presenting the word information in reversed order? That is, presenting pronunciation and stress prior to spelling and meaning.*

4. The Test

In the administration of the test, we selected 40 students through simple random sampling from four secondary schools in different areas of Qom. All the participants were of the same sex and age. They were in the third year of their secondary school. None of the participants had studied English language in other institutions, so their knowledge of English was limited to what they had learned in the past two years secondary school. They were divided into two groups by random. They were introduced to 20 new lexical items in one session. The number of lexical items was limited to 20 in order to prevent the subjects getting bored and keep them fully concentrated during the test. All the twenty English lexical items chosen for the test were new to the students, which meant that they had not yet been taught how to pronounce them.

Teaching the 20 new lexical items to each group was done in two different methods. For the first group, the English lexical items and their equivalents in Persian were written on the board one by one and the students were asked to figure out the pronunciation and read the word aloud. By this, we were aiming to let the mispronunciation (due to the spelling of the word) and the incorrect stress pattern

(due to the interference of the mother tongue) goes to the short term memory. Following this, the same 20 English words with the correct pronunciation and correct stress pattern were read to the class and the students were asked to correct themselves.

For the second group of subjects, we articulated the words one by one with correct pronunciation and proper stress before exposing the students to the written form and the Persian equivalents of the words. We asked the students to focus their attention on the proper pronunciation of the word and the correct place of stress, and then repeat the words. By doing so, we intended to ensure that the correct pronunciation and correct stress pattern find a place in the short term memory. We followed this procedure for teaching all twenty lexical items. Following the test, we asked the students to practice the pronunciation and stress of the twenty lexical items as they would be examined in near future.

After a month, we evaluated the results of these two different vocabulary teaching methods to find out whether there were differences in the levels of learning in the two groups. We wrote the words on the board once again, but this time, we tested the students individually in a classroom. After each student was tested, he was led to another room to prevent them from exchanging information with those who were still waiting to be tested.

The lexical items selected for the pronunciation and stress test have been listed in the following table.

1. ✂Giant	6. ✂Honor	11. ✂Schedule	16. ✂Odor
2. Ar✂chaic	7. ✂Courage	12. ✂Stingy	17. ✂Massage
3. ✂Feature	8. la✂goon	13. ✂Patron	18. ✂Navy
4. ✂Peasant	9. ✂Budget	14. ✂Preface	19. ✂Pupil
5. ✂Poison	10.✂Violence	15. ✂Distant	20. ✂Petrol

Table1. lexical items selected for the pronunciation and stress test.

The following table represents the results of the pronunciation test.

Table 2. Results of the Pronunciation Test

lexical items	Group 1			Group 2		
	wrong	correct	no answer	wrong	correct	no answer
1. giant (n)	8	1	11	6	9	5
2. archaic (adj)	11	3	6	4	13	3
3. feature (n)	8	5	7	4	14	2
4. peasant (n)	6	2	12	5	11	4
5. poison (n)	5	1	14	8	10	2
6. honor (n)	10	4	6	10	9	1
7. courage (n)	13	3	4	2	13	5
8. lagoon (n)	7	7	6	1	16	3
9. budget (n)	11	6	3	3	14	3
10. violence (n)	7	2	11	3	11	4
11. schedule (n)	6	3	11	5	13	2
12. stingy (adj)	8	8	4	2	17	1
13. patron (n)	6	2	12	7	9	4
14. preface (n)	15	0	5	6	10	4
15. distant (n)	12	1	7	4	10	6
16. odor (n)	16	2	2	9	11	0
17. message (n)	11	4	5	6	8	6
18. navy (n)	9	6	5	2	16	2
19. pupil (n)	12	3	5	4	14	2
20. petrol (n)	13	2	5	6	14	0
Total	184	65	141	97	242	59
	(46%)	(16.25 %)	(35.25%)	(24.25%)	(60.5 %)	(14.75)

The following table represents the results of the stress test.

*Table 3. Results of the Stress Test**

Lexical items	Group 1		Group 2	
	wrong	correct	wrong	correct
1. giant	5	4	5	10
2. archaic	11	3	2	15
3. feature	8	5	4	14
4. peasant	7	1	5	11
5. poison	2	4	5	13
6. honor	8	6	9	10
7. courage	12	4	6	9
8. lagoon	0	7	0	17
9. budget	11	6	6	11
10. violence	5	4	5	9
11. schedule	6	3	8	10
12. stingy	10	6	6	13
13. patron	7	1	7	9
14. preface	15	0	8	8
15. distant	10	3	6	8
16. odor	17	1	11	9
17. message	11	4	7	7
18. navy	12	3	6	12
19. pupil	12	3	8	10
20. petrol	11	4	8	12
Total	180 (46%)	72 (18%)	122 (30.5)	217 (54.25)

* The items not articulated by the participants in the test have not been
   taken into account in the evaluation of the stress test.

5. The Results of the Test

The result of the test shows that the pronunciation errors committed by the second group of language learners, who were taught the twenty lexical items in reversed order, are 22.25 % less than those committed by Group I. The students in Group II scored 44.5 % more correct answers than those of Group I. Some participants in each group could not decide on the correct pronunciation of some lexical items. The words which remained unarticulated by participants in Group II are 20.5 % less than those in Group I. Furthermore, the findings of the test also reveals that the correct answers for the stress tests scored by Group II are 36.25 % more, and their errors are 15.5 % less than those by Group I.

The results mentioned above, reveals that the students' pronunciation of the words is greatly influenced by the written forms. This happens when the language learners are exposed to the written form of the word before the proper pronunciation is taught.

The results of the tests also showed that the learning of the stress pattern is, to a great extent, influenced by the first language. The language learners unconsciously apply the L1 stress rules to the L2, for example, instead of putting the stress on the first syllable of the English nouns, the stress is applied to the last syllable. This occurs especially when the learners have the opportunity to see or hear the English word before being taught the correct stress rules.

Finally, the results of the test administered to the second group of language learners showed that the above problems can be prevented by presenting the lexical information in reversed order; that is, by teaching pronunciation and stress pattern prior to exposing the student to the spelling and meaning of the English words.

6. Teaching New Lexical Items

Understanding how our memory works might help us to find the reasons behind this difference in learning in the two groups and inspire us to create more effective ways to teach vocabulary. Based on the research carried out by Grains (1986), it seems that learning new lexical items involve storing them first in our short-term memory, and afterwards in the long-term memory.

When the teacher writes an English word and its transcription in the L1 before articulating it, the students would unconsciously, try to guess its pronunciation. But as the spelling of the English words rarely corresponds to their pronunciation, and because of the interference from the mother tongue, the guesses are usually incorrect. The incorrect pronunciation and improper use of stress are unconsciously stored in the short term memory. Later, when the teacher presents the word with the correct articulation, this second pronunciation finds a place in the short term memory as well.

 Kellogg (2007, 216) states that, "if you learn A, then B, when you try to recall B, A interferes. The learning of A interferes with the learning of B. Moreover, if you have learned A very well, and B only half as well, A will be recalled more easily than B." Accordingly, if we consider the incorrect pronunciation, learned first, as A and the correct pronunciation as B, when the language learners come across the word in a written text, both pronunciations are recalled and the incorrect pronunciation, which (in the students' mind) corresponds with the spelling, is retrieved more easily than the correct one.

As stated by Stahl (2005, 36), "students probably have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in their long-term memories. This does not mean mere repetition or drill of the word, but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts". Therefore, when there are two pronunciations or degrees of stress for one word in the short term memory, a correct and an incorrect one, both can be passed into the long-term memory because of being retrieved repeatedly when the word is seen in different

contexts. The storage of both pronunciation and stress in the long-term memory may result in problems in pronunciation and the use of stress which sometimes take a lot of time and effort to resolve. In such cases, as a remedy, the teacher can help the language learners by reinforcing the correct form and weakening the error stored in the memory through using some teaching techniques. But the experiment shows that, in some cases, the learners cannot decide on the correct form, in spite of the various curative measures taken by teachers. It seems there are still imprints from the previous learning that prevent the correct forms from being acquired or retrieved from memory. These negative traces are sometimes stamped indelibly on the memory and create long term problems for the language learners.

7. Prevention of Errors

"Prevention is better than cure" as the saying goes. Therefore, when an error has been identified, it is easier to prevent it from recurrence. As soon as the teacher is aware of the problem and its cause, he/she must take measures to "cure" it and better still to "prevent it from happening" with appropriate teaching techniques.

The outcome of the test administered to the second group of subjects reveals that the pronunciation and stress errors can be prevented, to a great extent, by changing the order of the pieces of information presented to the language learners. This means that the teacher must articulate lexical items with correct pronunciation and stress before exposing the students to the written form and its translation in the first language. By doing this, the language learners will have no opportunity to make a possible wrong guess. Instead, they will learn the pronunciation presented by the teacher as the sole pronunciation. When the teacher writes the word on the board, the students will try to develop an association between the spelling of the word and its correct pronunciation. In this way, whenever they come across the written form of the word, there is merely one pronunciation available in the memory to be retrieved.

The problem encountered in the use of stress is somehow different from pronunciation. This is evidence of the fact that the linguistic habits the student has

acquired from his first language interfere with the establishing of new habits in the learning of the foreign language. According to Newmark as cited in Lester, 211, "it is at this level of instruction that the task of learning the new language becomes the task of fighting off the old set of structures in order to clear the way for the new set" (Lester: 211). When introducing new vocabulary, the teacher can integrate stress into the teaching of pronunciation. But it is better to explain the types and degrees of stress clearly, since the students tend to ignore the stress used by the teacher and, instead, apply the stress patterns of their first language to the L2 words. One preventive measure the teacher can take is to teach the learners the correct stress patterns of the English words before they are given the word equivalents in their first language. In this way, the teacher can prevent the stress rules in the L1 to interfere with those in the L2.

Evidently the teacher is not the single source from which the language learners can acquire new lexical items. In other words, there are more words to be learned than can be directly taught in even the most ambitious of course on vocabulary instruction. Studies on the teaching of vocabulary reveal that most of the vocabulary is acquired through indirect exposure to words. Language learners can acquire vocabulary incidentally by engaging in rich language activities at home and in school, for example, listening to books being read aloud to them, and reading widely on their own. In the case of hearing a new word, when listening to oral discourse or talking to a friend, the language learner must be very attentive to the correct form of pronunciation and stress pattern before looking for the written word. When coming across a new word in a written text, the language learners are advised to refer to a dictionary for the correct pronunciation and stress pattern rather than trying to figure out the pronunciation and stress of the word on their own.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, this article deals with the teaching of pronunciation and stress among Persian learners of English as a Foreign language. Interference of the L1 is best shown in the spelling of the foreign words which reflect the phonological patterns of learners' mother tongue. In this regard, the teaching of the phonetic aspects of the language is vital in the learning of a language. This study offers teaching techniques to overcome the problems of learning pronunciation and stress in the English language. This is done by pronouncing the lexical item with the proper stress followed by the spelling and translation of the word in the native language. Storing these learned language properties in the long term memory is helpful in acquisition of L2 vocabulary. One of the most crucial elements is the availability of a native speaker of English acting as a "model" for the students. In the absence of such a "model", the use of authentic material for the teaching of listening and pronunciation skills would be helpful.

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Prosody training and instruction in listening strategies in EFL classrooms

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1. Intoduction

Several models have been proposed to explain how the listening process functions. One of the earlier models to have been suggested was the bottom-up model. In this model, listeners build understanding by starting with the smallest units of the acoustic message (i.e., individual phonemes). These are then combined into words, phrases, clauses, and sentences (Flowerdew & Miller 2005: 24). Some studies reported that bottom-up processing plays a larger role than top-down processing (see below) in listening performance of L2 learners on test items (e.g., Tsui & Fillilove, 1998).

However, other scholars have argued that effective listeners use the top-down model more than the bottom-up one (Chamot et al., 1999; Vandergrift, 1997). This model presupposes the use of previous and background knowledge to predict content (e.g., Ross, 1975; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1994). This approach emphasizes the listener's knowledge of the topic or theme of discussion and the situation in which it is being discussed as much it does as the actual words heard.

Still others argue (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) that the most effective listeners employ both processes (the interactive model). The interactive model assumes that listening involves both bottom-up and top-down processing (e.g., Higuchi, 1997; Buck, 2001; Takefuta & Mizumitsu, 2005; Cleary et al., 2007; Wilson, 2008; Field, 2008; Asano, 2008).

This study discusses how second language (L2) listeners can most effectively improve their listening abilities. I argue that training to employ both bottom-up and top-down processing is beneficial to English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners. I will first show that learners benefit from bottom-up training, based on data I have collected (section 2). I will also show that to improve listening–comprehension ability in a foreign language, training in top-down processing is also beneficial to EFL learners (section 3). I then argue that training to use both processes (i.e., adaptation of the interactive model) may be the most effective way to improve EFL learners' listening abilities. Finally, I outline a teaching program based on the model (section 4).

2. Instruction in prosody for bottom-up processing

2.1 Background

It has been suggested that the acquisition of second-language phonology can be facilitated when input-comprehension is enhanced by perceptual training (Flege, 1987; Bongaerts et al., 1997). Furthermore, Gilbert (1987), among others, argued that instruction in prosody, called a prosody-oriented approach in this study, is more effective than a traditional segment-oriented approach, which usually focuses on minimal-pair drilling of individual sounds (see also: de Bot & Mailfert, 1982; Chun, 1988; Morley, 1991; Brown, 1992; Watanabe, 1994; Gilbert, 1995; Moyer, 1999; Pennington & Ellis, 2000; Akita, 2001, 2005, 2006). Although the importance of explicit training in prosody (rhythm and stress patterns) has been acknowledged by researchers, it has generally been ignored in foreign-language classrooms (Leather, 1983; Pennington, 1989; Morley, 1994). Several studies have discussed the desirable content and presentation of a pronunciation-teaching program (see e.g., Gilbert, 1987, 1993 a, 1993b, 1995; Pennington, 1989, 1998; Morley, 1991; Brown, 1992; Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). However, these researchers have failed to provide empirical evidence to support their views. Further, although a number of textbooks placing emphasis on prosody training have been published (e.g., Tsuzuki, 1992; Morley, 1994; Gilbert, 1995; Takagi, 1996), few authors have provided quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching methods presented in these works.

2.2 Data-collection procedure

The present paper presents an experimental study conducted in a regular classroom setting. Changes in the perception and production abilities of Japanese learners of English were examined by using two instructional procedures, the segment-oriented approach and the prosody-oriented approach. The changes in the perception abilities of the participants will be reported in subsection 2.3, and the relationship implied between the Global Foreign Accent and L2 production will be reported in subsection 2.4. It is shown that training in bottom-up processes can effectively improve L2 learners' perceptual and production abilities. On the basis of the study results, I propose prosody training to be the most effective way to promote the use of bottom-up processing.

Participants were 71 freshman university students in Tokyo; the study adopted a pretest–treatment–posttest–delayed posttest design. In accordance with Pennington (1998) and Gilbert (1995), the two instructional procedures, the segment- and prosody-oriented approaches, shared the following features: (1) a focused program of pronunciation teaching, with (2) various aspects taught one step at a time. I also included a control group, a feature that was not present in Ueno's (1998) study. Therefore, there were two treated groups—the segmental group ($n = 23$) and the prosody group ($n = 27$)—and one control group ($n = 21$).

During the experimental teaching sessions (90 minutes × 12 sessions), identical teaching material was used for each group, in order to standardize the input received by the participants.

Furthermore, the basic teaching procedures were identical for all three groups: listening-comprehension exercises, dialogue practice, and role-playing. In a nutshell, the only treatment difference among the groups was that the prosody group received instruction on syllable structure, stress, and reduction, while the segmental group received training on discriminating and articulating individual sounds, for example, /r/ vs. /l/. The control group participated in extra conversation exercises.

In class, the first 30–35 minutes were dedicated to explaining the vocabulary, grammar and meaning of the listening-comprehension exercises. The next 15 minutes were for dialogue practice using the textbook. For the last 40 minutes or so, the three groups received different instructions. The control group participated in extra conversation exercises, often using supplemental materials. For example, one day, participants in the control group learned how to order food, and a worksheet containing useful expressions for ordering food was provided. The segmental group received training on discriminating and articulating individual sounds, with particular attention paid to contrasts that are difficult for Japanese learners. For example, using the same dialogue as the control group (ordering food), I gave instructions on how to pronounce English voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/, focusing on aspiration in word-initial positions ([p^h], [t^h], [k^h]). The prosody group received prosody-focused instructions. I explicitly explained the relevant phonological differences between Japanese and English. Instructions covered syllable structure, stress, reductions such as the use of weak forms, deletions, assimilations, and linking (see below for details).

A dictation test was conducted to test the participants' perceptual abilities. The test consisted of 30 sentences covering six aspects of phonology, with five sentences for each aspect. Aspects investigated were: (1) phoneme distinctions (e.g., *We'll /s<u>e</u>nd/~/s<u>a</u>nd/ it carefully*); (2) reductions (e.g., *Get <u>it from the</u> kitchen*); (3) deletion (e.g., *He grabb<u>ed</u> the money*); (4) assimilation (e.g., *I<u>s</u> she your mother?*); (5) unexploded plosives (UEPs) (e.g., *Can I have the whi<u>te</u> tie, please*); and (6) linking (e.g., *How did you come <u>about?</u>).* In the production test, participants were interviewed individually in a sound-treated room and asked to read out the aforementioned 30 test sentences [production data (i)] as well as a minute-long dialogue [production data (ii)]. Analyses of perception data and production data (i) will be reported in subsection 2.3, and analysis of production data (ii) will be reported in subsection 2.4.

2.3 Results of perception data and production data (i)

Regarding perceptual abilities, no significant differences were observed among the groups in either the pretest, posttest, or delayed posttest. Posttest changes in each experimental group were statistically examined, and it was found that all three groups exhibited significant improvement (see Figure 1).
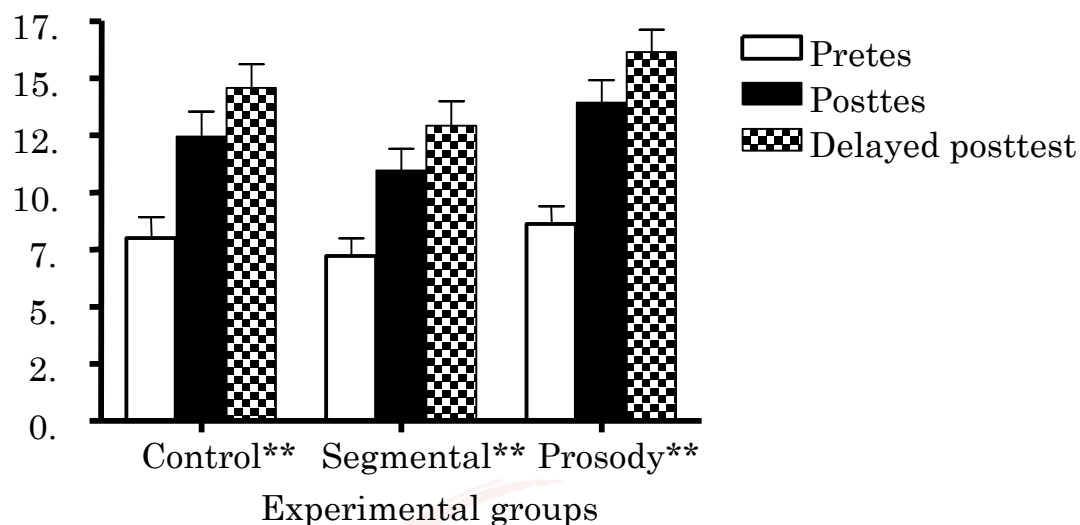
Figure 1: Improvement in perceptual abilities

On the other hand, for production abilities, a significant difference was observed among the groups in the posttest and the delayed posttest (which was conducted six months after the treatment). In the posttest phase, while the control group and the segmental group did not exceed the significance level of $p = < 0.05$, the prosody group exhibited significant improvement, as shown in Figure 2. The prosody group showed improvement in the two posttests; in other words, the posttest performances were sustained in the delayed posttest, which was conducted half a year later. Detailed results are reported in Akita-Orii (2007).
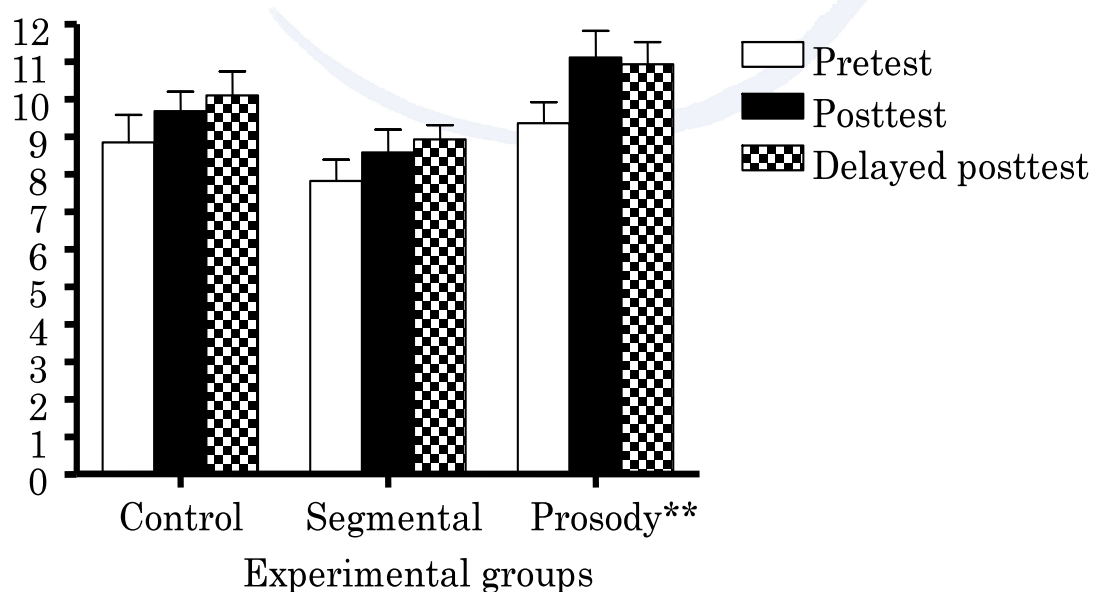

Figure 2: Improvement in production abilities

2.4 GFA analysis [production data (ii)]

Three native-speaker (NS) raters with an applied-linguistics background rated production data (ii). The pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest data were randomized. A minidisk (120 minutes in duration) was prepared for grading, containing 210 30-second clips of dialogues (70 participants[1] × 3 test sessions), plus grading time (12 seconds per participant). Raters were three male American TEFL professionals and were asked to assign ratings based on the Global Foreign Accent rating of the participants.

Global Foreign Accent (GFA) is an impressionistic judgment of overall nonnativeness of pronunciation. See Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1992) for the effects on GFA different types of phonological instruction. Studies investigating GFA and L2 production cover topics including VOT of Japanese EFL speakers (Riney & Takagi, 1999); liquid identifiability and accuracy (Riney & Flege, 1998); and acquisition of flap in EFL learners (Riney et al., 2000).

The four categories used in rating GFA were as following: (1) segmental: segmental deviation involves errors in consonants and vowels such as the substitution of one sound for another or the modification of a sound (e.g., *this* [dɪs]); (2) suprasegmental: errors in prosody mainly involving deviation in patterns of syllable structure, stress, or intonation, as well as possibly timing, phrasing, rhythm, and reduction/assimilation processes. For example, syllable-structure errors may involve the addition or deletion of a segment or syllable or syllable or the reordering of the internal segmental structure of syllables (e.g., *street* [sɯtori:to]); (3) fluency: voice quality, voice projection, speed, and timing of pauses; (4) overall: the extent to which a rater judges second-language speech to be different from native-speaker norms.

After the raters had heard the 30-second clip of a participant's production, they were instructed to begin grading immediately. In order to ensure fairness in judgment, the raters were asked to set aside time (120 minutes) to grade the dialogues of all the participants at a single stretch (taking a 5-minute break in the middle, if necessary). If they felt that the grading time was too short, they could pause the minidisk, grade the participant, and then restart the minidisk to continue grading the next participant. The raters were instructed to grade each participant on the grading sheet provided, using a 9-point scale (0 = not native-like; 9 = native-like). They were encouraged to employ the entire scale while grading. In this paper, I will only report the scores obtained for the fourth category—overall accentedness.

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[1] It should be noted that the number of participants in the prosody group has been reduced from 27 to 26; the former is the number of participants that I had in the data collection reported in subsection 2.3. This was done because the quality of the recording of one of the participants was found to be poor, and hence, it was excluded from the GFA analysis.

After rating the speech samples (the scores of the three raters were averaged) to equalize the difference among groups, pretest scores were matched. The number of participants analyzed was therefore 11 for the control group, 15 for the segmental group, and 16 for the prosody group. An ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was performed in order to compare the three experimental groups and determine whether there was a significant difference among them, as shown in Figure 3. A significant difference was observed in the posttest for the segmental and prosody groups, as shown in Table 1.
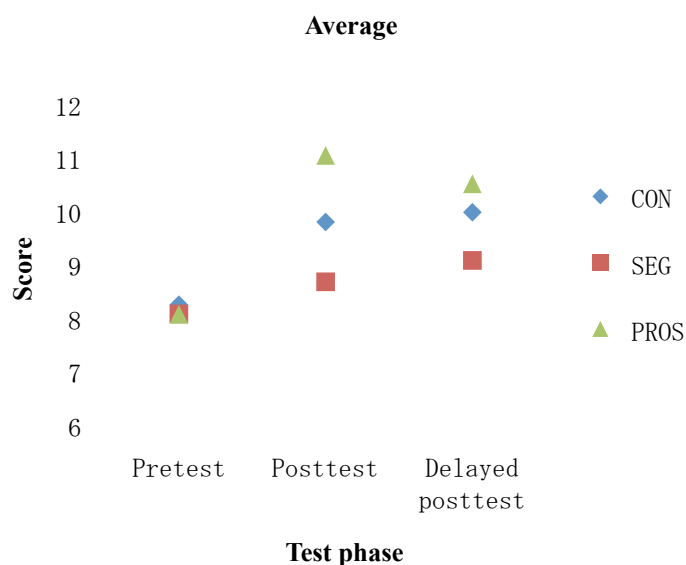
Average

Figure 3: Overall accentedness

Table 1. ANCOVA (covariate: pretest)

	Posttest	Delayed posttest
CON vs. SEG	$p = 0.209$ (ns)	$p = 0.220$ (ns)
CON vs. PROS	$p = 0.251$ (ns)	$p = 0.532$ (ns)
SEG vs. PROS	$p = 0.039$ (*)	$p = 0.130$ (ns)

(*: significant; ns: non-significant)

A two-way ANOVA was performed to evaluate the overall changes, and as a post-test, a Bonferroni test was employed to determine the precise location of the differences. In the production posttest phase, while the control group and the segmental group did not exceed the significance level of $p = < 0.05$, the prosody group exhibited significant improvement.

Table 2. Bonferroni (prosodic group); *n* = 16

(I) Test	(J) Test	(I) Test	(J) Test	(I−J)	*p*-value	
Posttest	Pretest	11.063	8.094	2.969	0.002	[**]
Delayed posttest	Pretest	10.531	8.094	2.437	0.013	[*]
Delayed posttest	Posttest	10.531	11.063	-0.531	1.000	ns

The prosody group showed improvement in the two posttests; in other words, the posttest performances were sustained in the delayed posttest half a year later. Detailed results are reported in Akita-Orii (2008).

In sum, changes in the perception and production abilities of Japanese English learners were examined, and it was shown that training in prosody can effectively improve L2 learners' perceptual and production abilities to a greater degree than can other types of instruction (those given to the control group & segmental group) Therefore, I propose prosody training to be the most effective way to promote bottom-up processing.

3. Listening-strategy training for top-down processing

Researchers have shown that effective listeners used the top-down process more than the bottom-up one (Chamot et al., 1999; Vandergrift, 1997). The top-down model presupposes the use of previous and background knowledge to predict content. (e.g., Ross, 1975; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1994). It has been suggested that instructing L2 learners in how to use listening strategies may help them improve their listening–comprehension abilities. For example, Flowerdew & Miller (2005) outline a strategy-based approach to the teaching of listening. They outline the stages of a listening lesson in a course specially prepared for first-year engineering students in a Hong Kong university.

Vandergrift (1997) says that students are exposed to a wide variety of listening strategies in three categories, namely meta-cognitive strategies, socio-affective strategies, and cognitive strategies. Students should be well aware of the nature of each type of strategy and should also be able to establish links between alternative strategy solutions. In a nutshell, the instructor starts with an orientation to motivational management to create motivation for listening, and students are encouraged to try to grasp the general idea of the material (directed attention). After receiving some general feedback, students are encouraged to selectively attend to important information. Although there is an exhaustive list of listening strategies suggested, introducing them all in the same classroom is difficult due to time constraints. Below, the strategies most widely used and considered most successful are listed, based on Vandergrift (1997) and Flowerdew & Miller (2005).

Table 3: Listening strategies

Directed attention	Learners must pay attention to the main points in a listening task to get a general understanding of what is said.
Selective attention	Learners pay attention to details in the listening task
Verify predictions	Guessing the content of the text
Linguistic inferencing	Guessing the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words.
Voice inferencing	Guessing by means of the tone of voice.
Inferencing between parts	Making use of certain words in the text that may not be related to the task to get more information about the task (i.e., the teacher points out that information at the beginning of the text will help the learners understand the later sections of the text. Examples might include discourse markers, organization of paragraphs).
Personal elaboration	Learners use prior personal experience to comprehend the task.
World elaboration	Learners use their worldly knowledge to comprehend the task (e.g., at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher activates the learners' schemata on certain topics by asking general questions about a topic).
Questioning elaboration	Learners question themselves about what they do know and what they do not know about the topic.
Note taking	Learners write notes as they follow some spoken text.
Cooperation	Learners work together to pool their comprehension.

As Field (2008: 308) argues, the general principle behind this strategic training is that strategies should be introduced individually and explained to learners explicitly (raising awareness) and that those strategies should then be practiced in controlled tasks (strategy practice). As the learners' familiarity with the strategies improves, they should be encouraged to consciously choose among the strategies in a less controlled context.

4．Listening comprehension training based on an interactive model

Rumelhart (1975), among others such as Buck (2001), Takefuta and Mizumitsu (2005), Cleary et al. (2007), Wilson (2008), Field (2008), and Asano (2008), claimed that listening comprehension is the result of an interaction between a number of information sources. This idea is often referred to as an interactive model (process). Originally developed within the context of reading, Rumelhart (1975) argued that language is processed simultaneously at different levels, ranging from phonological and syntactic (i.e., bottom-up processes) to semantic and pragmatic (i.e., top-down processes). Rumelhart (1975) used a speak-aloud technique to find out what informants understood from the text, and what informants hypothesized what

would happen next and how they modified their hypothesis as they continued reading. He concluded that both the top-down and bottom-up processes were used to understand the text.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989) found that effective listeners employ both the bottom-up and top-down processes. They found that ineffective listeners used only the bottom-up approach to comprehend the text. For example, they tend to focus more on a word-by-word level. On the other hand, effective listeners were able to attend to larger chunks of information and focus only on parts that were essential for understanding the text.

As Flowerdfew and Miller (2005) say, "the important advantage of the interactive model over hierarchical models, whether they be bottom-up or top-down, is that it allows for the possibility of individual variation in linguistic processing." From a methodological point of view, this approach can accommodate learners, who prefer using one type of processing. Furthermore, instructing both processes can give learners a chance to experience the less-preferred process.

Higuchi (1998) claimed that L2 learners should be instructed to use both the top-down and bottom-up processes with a healthy balance. He argued that if learners rely too much on the top-down listening process, they might dismiss new information due to over-reliance on prior knowledge and assumptions and might fail to "notice" the new information in the listening material. He concluded that a balanced interaction between the top-down and bottom-up listening processes is needed for successful listening. He proposed that instructions on bottom-up processing should be included in high school English teaching. He argued that teachers should explicitly instruct various phonological processes such as reductions, elisions, assimilations, liaison, and weak syllables. To train learners in the bottom-up process, he suggests dictation activity. For the top-down listening process, he outlines ideas that can be incorporated into the syllabus, such as pre-listening activity, note-taking, and T/F questions. However, the author did not provide quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of his teaching method nor present a complete syllabus suitable for an interactive model.

Top-Up Listening 1-3 (Cleary, Hoden, and Cooney, 2007) is one of the very few teaching materials published that includes exercises to promote both the top-down and bottom-up listening processes. The text book is a skill-based one built around topics and themes selected for teenagers and young adults. The textbook is designed to develop top-down processing, including listening for main points, for general understanding, for specific information, and inferencing.

Listening Clinics (Haider, 1985) highlights high-frequency phonological points. Here, students focus on weak forms, assimilation, liaison, and intonation. It is unfortunate that the authors have

not examined the effectiveness of the textbook with experimental study.

Ogasawara (2001) is one of the few researchers that report the effectiveness of the teaching method based on an interactive model. He carried out a longitudinal study in the listening comprehension classes of two universities. The control group (2 classes) engaged in only the top-down activities, and the experimental group (2 classes) engaged in both the top-down and bottom-up activities. Based on a pretest/posttest study, the author found a general tendency that the experimental group, which received instructions based on an interactive model, showed significant improvement as compared to the control group. The study is insightful in that they provide qualitative data to examine the effectiveness of the teaching method. However, different textbooks were used for the two experimental groups, and therefore, the informants received different inputs during the class. It is desirable that the input received by the informants be equalized. A delayed posttest is also needed to see if the posttest performances are sustained after the experimental teaching.

I propose a teaching program based on the *interactive model* that incorporates prosody training (bottom-up) and instruction on listening strategies (top-down). Using a self-developed listening textbook on travel English and an accompanying CD, an experimental study is carried out with three groups at a university in Tokyo: (1) bottom-up and top-down, (2) top-down only, and (3) control (dictation activity). In a three-month intermediate level listening comprehension class (90 minutes x 13 weeks), all three groups were taught using the same textbook to equalize the input received. In class, different listening comprehension exercises and instructions were given depending on the group. A web-based test to measure the participants' listening abilities is conducted on three occasions (a pretest in April, a posttest in August, a delayed-posttest in October). The results of the study will be reported in Orii-Akita and Oga (2011, to appear).

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