

acl 2014

The Asian Conference on Language Learning

actc 2014

The Asian Conference on Technology in the Classroom

雲花月 永年
為之



Official Conference Proceedings

ISSN: 2186 - 4691

acll2014

actc2014



“To Open Minds, To Educate Intelligence, To Inform Decisions”

The International Academic Forum provides new perspectives to the thought-leaders and decision-makers of today and tomorrow by offering constructive environments for dialogue and interchange at the intersections of nation, culture, and discipline. Headquartered in Nagoya, Japan, and registered as a Non-Profit Organization (一般社団法人), IAFOR is an independent think tank committed to the deeper understanding of contemporary geo-political transformation, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERCULTURAL

INTERDISCIPLINARY

iafor

The Executive Council of the International Advisory Board

IAB Chair: Professor Stuart D.B. Picken

IAB Vice-Chair: Professor Jerry Platt

Mr Mitsumasa Aoyama

Director, The Yufuku Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

Professor David N Aspin

Professor Emeritus and Former Dean of the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia
Visiting Fellow, St Edmund's College, Cambridge University, UK

Professor Don Brash

Former Governor of the Reserve Bank, New Zealand
Former Leader of the New National Party, New Zealand
Adjunct Professor, AUT, New Zealand & La Trobe University, Australia

Lord Charles Bruce

Lord Lieutenant of Fife
Chairman of the Patrons of the National Galleries of Scotland
Trustee of the Historic Scotland Foundation, UK

Professor Judith Chapman

Professor of Education, Australian Catholic University, Australia
Visiting Fellow, St Edmund's College, Cambridge University, UK
Member of the Order of Australia

Professor Chung-Ying Cheng

Professor of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, USA
Editor-in-Chief, The Journal of Chinese Philosophy

Professor Steve Cornwell

Professor of English and Interdisciplinary Studies, Osaka Jogakuin University, Osaka, Japan
Osaka Local Conference Chair

Professor Michael A. Cusumano

SMR Distinguished Professor of Management and Engineering Systems, MIT Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

Professor Dexter Da Silva

Professor of Educational Psychology, Keisen University, Tokyo, Japan

Professor Georges Depeyrot

Professor and Director of Research & Member of the Board of Trustees
French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) & L'Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris, France

Professor June Henton

Dean, College of Human Sciences, Auburn University, USA

Professor Michael Hudson

President of The Institute for the Study of Long-Term Economic Trends (ISLET)
Distinguished Research Professor of Economics, The University of Missouri, Kansas City

Professor Koichi Iwabuchi

Professor of Media and Cultural Studies & Director of the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Australia

Professor Sue Jackson

Professor of Lifelong Learning and Gender & Pro-Vice Master of Teaching and Learning, Birkbeck, University of London, UK

Professor Sing Kong Lee

Director, The National Institute of Education, Singapore

Professor Sir Geoffrey Lloyd

Senior Scholar in Residence, The Needham Research Institute, Cambridge, UK
Fellow and Former Master, Darwin College, University of Cambridge
Fellow of the British Academy

Professor Keith Miller

Orthwein Endowed Professor for Lifelong Learning in the Science, University of Missouri-St. Louis, USA

Professor Kuniko Miyanaga

Director, Human Potential Institute, Japan
Fellow, Reischauer Institute, Harvard University, USA

Professor Dennis McInerney

Chair Professor of Educational Psychology and Co-Director of the Assessment Research Centre
The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong SAR

Professor Ka Ho Joshua Mok

Chair Professor of Comparative Policy, Associate Vice-President (External Relations)
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong SAR

Professor Michiko Nakano

Professor of English & Director of the Distance Learning Center, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan

Professor Baden Offord

Professor of Cultural Studies and Human Rights & Co-Director of the Centre for Peace and Social Justice
Southern Cross University, Australia

Professor Frank S. Ravitch

Professor of Law & Walter H. Stowers Chair in Law and Religion, Michigan State University College of Law

Professor Richard Roth

Senior Associate Dean, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University, Qatar

Professor Monty P. Satiadarma

Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in Psychology & Former Dean of the Department of Psychology and Rector of the University, Tarumanagara University, Indonesia

Mr Mohamed Salaheen

Director, The United Nations World Food Programme, Japan & Korea

Mr Lowell Sheppard

Asia Pacific Director, HOPE International Development Agency, Canada/Japan

His Excellency Dr Drago Stambuk

Croatian Ambassador to Brazil, Brazil

Professor Mary Stuart

Vice-Chancellor, The University of Lincoln, UK

Professor Gary Swanson

Distinguished Journalist-in-Residence & Mildred S. Hansen Endowed Chair, The University of Northern Colorado, USA

Professor Jiro Takai

Secretary General of the Asian Association for Social Psychology & Professor of Social Psychology
Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Nagoya University, Japan

Professor Svetlana Ter Minasova

President of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies, Lomonosov Moscow State University

Professor Yozo Yokota

Director of the Center for Human Rights Affairs, Japan
Former UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar

Professor Kensaku Yoshida

Professor of English & Director of the Center for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in General Education, Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning

Osaka, Japan 2014

Conference Proceedings 2014

ISSN – 2186-4691

**© The International Academic Forum 2014
The International Academic Forum (IAFOR)
Sakae 1-16-26-201
Naka Ward, Nagoya, Aichi
Japan 460-0008
ww.iafor.org**

Table of Contents

<p>0010 <i>Enhancing the Pronunciation of English Suprasegmental Features through Reflective Learning Method</i> Tono Suwartono</p>	p1-p11
<p>0020 <i>Current Trends in the Use of Student Input in Teacher Evaluation in Universities in Mainland China</i> Changrong Xie Dave Towey Yixuan Jing</p>	p12-p21
<p>0029 <i>Musicians in the Language Classroom: The Transference of Musical Skill to Teach a "Speech Mode" of Communication</i> Kim Rockell Merissa Ocampo</p>	p22-p41
<p>0037 <i>Sociolinguistic Predictors of Language Deficits in Pre-school Children with and without Immigrant Background</i> Eugen Zaretsky Harald Euler Katrin Neumann Benjamin P. Lange</p>	p42-p53
<p>0040 <i>Promoting Problem Based Learning (PBL) in ESL Classroom at UniKL MITEC</i> Farah Idayu Mohd Salleh Jamilahtun Md Ghazali Shazwa Nabila Mohd Raidzuan</p>	p54-p63
<p>0045 <i>Integration of the Intercultural Approach in the Higher Education Context: Why and How?</i> Béatrice Cabau</p>	p64-p72
<p>0053 <i>A Language Awareness Project for the Primary School EFL Classroom</i> Sabrina Bechler</p>	p73-p84
<p>0054 <i>Learners' Strategy for the Assessment of their Small Group Presentation in the EFL Class</i> Yoshihiko Yamamoto</p>	p85-p101

- 0079
Analysis of Graduate Students' English Learning Strategies at Eastern Asia University
Amporn Srisermbhok p110-p122
- 0080
Reading Can Be Fun-through Readers' Theatre
Yu-hsuan Huang p123-p136
- 0104
Teenagers Activity through Computer Based Language Learning
Mohammad Hannan Mia
Atikur Rahman
Md Noor Hossain
Mohammad Abdul Mannan
Zainab Ismail
Fariza Md Sham
Razaleigh Muhamat Kawagit, p137-p142
- 0108
An Analysis of Third-Year English for International Communication Students' Summary Writing
Phanlapa Khathayut p143-p150
- 0111
Genre, Multimodality, and Language Education: A Performative Perspective
Jianxin Liu p151-p166
- 0123
Effects of Chinese Reading and Writing Instruction: Case Study of a Technology University
Pai-Lu Wu
Hsiu-Chen Lin
Yu-Ren Yen
Ching-Hwa Tsai p167-p179
- 0137
Is Bilingualism the Answer to Linguistic Sustainability in Plurilingual Societies?
Oscar Gallego p180-p185
- 0140
The Impact of a Five-day English Summer Camp on the Conceptions of English Learning of EFL Elementary Students in Taiwan
Lim Ha Chan p186-p204
- 0158
Impact of Online News Stories on English Vocabulary Learning
Araya Vithsupalert p205-p210
- 0162
Teachers' and Students' Views on the MOI Fine-tuning Arrangement in Hong Kong
Edward Y.W. Chu p211-p231

- 0164
Scaffolding Strategies as Part of Writing Process: to Improve Academic Writing Skill in Higher Education
Hui Lin Teh p232-p242
- 0174
Influence of Drastic Shifts in Russian Society and Global Social Changes as Well on the Development of Modern Russian Language for Special Purposes (LSP) in the Field of Construction
Ivan Lykov
Zhanna Khramushina
Stepan Lykov
Larisa Lykova p243-p258
- 0179
Language Policy in Modern Kazakhstan
Svetlana Zhanabayeva
Meirimkul Tuleup
Aktoty Suranshiyeva p259-p268
- 0182
Teaching Specialized Languages: Case Study of Kazakhstani Students' Opinion
Rashit Zagidullin
Aliya Zagidullina p269-p280
- 0190
Analyzing Oral Reading Fluency: Exemplifying Students' Needs for a Reading Instruction
Rania Boudaoud p281-p289
- 0200
An Assessment of English Writing Instruction in Taiwanese High Schools
Chingya Chiu
Jialing Chen
Fengcheng Chiang p290-p314
- 0220
A Preliminary Investigation: Innovative Learning Pedagogy with Mobile Communication Technology for Listening and Speaking Skills in Chinese as Foreign Language
Choy Khim Leow
Wan Ahmad Jaafar Wan Yahaya
Zarina Samsudin p315-p325
- 0221
Creating a Cross-cultural Dialogue on Literature: A Study on the Approaches and Outcomes of Using Technology-enhanced Literature Circles with Taiwanese and Japanese EFL University Students
Wan-Lun Lee p326-p331

- 0238
Using E-learning in Acquiring Japanese Listening Material Predicting Strategy
Vera Yulianti
Bembi Mulia Ramadhani
Rahmalia Arifin
Wening Gayatri p332-p336
- 0239
CBI Method: An Approach to Teaching English at a Vocational University in Indonesia
Nurmala Elmin Simbolon
Greg Restall p337-p350
- 0264
An Analysis of the Correlation between Gender and Learning Style in Second Language Acquisition: A Case Study
Magdalena Trinder p351-p360
- 0275
Improving Learning and Teaching for Undergraduate Students Using Constructivist Approach
Krittawaya Thongkoo
Nopasit Chakpitak
Kannika Daungcharone p361-p365
- 0286
Teachers Cognition on Teaching Reading Strategies and Their Instructional Practices
Hazel Joaquin
Editha Magallanes p366-p389
- 0297
The Employment of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by ELT Students
Sümeyra Bagatur p390-p402
- 0309
Using the L1 in L2 Teaching and Learning: What Role Does Identity Play?
John Trent p403-p423
- 0315
Strategies in Learning and Producing Lexical Intonation of Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language by English L1 Learners
Richard LaBontee p424-p440
- 0320
Exploring Online Newspapers to Improve Law Undergraduates' Ability to Express Opinions Critically
Faridah Musa
Sithaletchery Krishnaier
Maryam Mohamed Amin
Wee Siok Eng
Nuretna Asurah Ahmad p441-p452

- 0354
*Supporting Language Learners Autonomy in Higher Education:
The Self-Study Hour at The University Of Nottingham Ningbo China*
Giovanna Comerio
Filippo Gilardi p453-p463
- 0359
Specifics of Corporate Discourse Role Structure
Vera Kuznetcova
Karina Borovikova p464-p468
- 0361
Interactional Strategies in Topic Development
Karina Borovikova
Vera Kuznetcova p469-p473
- 0366
Language Learning Strategies Used by Saudi Arabian EFL Learners
Hind Aljuaid p474-p496
- 0367
*Connecting Japanese Nursing Students with the Asian Community through
Explicit Instruction of Pronunciation Peculiarities Among Asian Speakers of English*
Eric Fortin p497-p504
- 0397
*Word Choice, Semantic Prosody, and Collocation Behavior:
A Corpus Based Analysis of the Phraseologies of Clever and Smart*
Omar Abouelazm P505-p518

Enhancing the Pronunciation of English Suprasegmental Features through Reflective Learning Method

Tono Suwartono, Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, Indonesia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0010

Abstract

Suprasegmentals are of paramount importance in spoken English. Yet, these pronunciation features are marginalised in EFL/ESL teaching-learning. This study was aimed at raising English suprasegmentals through reflective learning method. The Kemmis & Taggart's model of action research was adopted. The study involved twenty-four undergraduate students at Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, Indonesia. The investigation contained two cycles. Data were gathered through observation, recorded conversation, diary, interview, and test. Overall, the study has shown that reflective method using video integrated into communicative activities enhanced students' pronunciation mastery. Interestingly, some students' pronunciation to a great extent sounded "more English".

Key words: suprasegmentals, reflective, involvement, monitoring, evaluating

Pronunciation might be the most marginalised in the teaching and learning of English, in spite of a key role this language aspect plays in spoken communication. The neglect for teaching pronunciation may be due to the apparent complexity of English pronunciation and a misconception about what the content of a pronunciation course should be and about the way pronunciation should be taught. Within this “Cinderella” aspect of language, perhaps segmentals are luckier, in that they are more taught and better researched than suprasegmentals. However, suprasegmentals are worthier of attention mainly because these features contribute heavily to intelligibility in spoken English and convey better impression of the speaker (O’Neal, 2010: 65-87). It means improving the pronunciation of English suprasegmentals can facilitate communication, boost self esteem, and possibly lead to a better future. Therefore, within the context of spoken English communication, suprasegmental features should be given priority or, at least, equality.

Apart from the significance of wisely treating English suprasegmental features, several problems emerged in the author’s teaching of suprasegmental features: uninteresting lessons, lack of listening to model activity prior to production practice, greater portion of teacher talk time, and too much drill. A formative test on connected speech showed a very low result, with only one student (4.16%) achieving existing standard. An effort to solve the problems was made through the adoption of reflective learning method using video as a reflective tool incorporated into oral communicative language activities.

The term ‘reflective’ (as it appears in ‘reflective learning’), used interchangeably with ‘reflection’ in the educational context, is associated with deep learning. In deep learning, the intention of the learner is to develop a personal understanding of the material and relate it to what is already known. In other words, experience is central in reflective learning. It has something to do with Kolb’s concept of experiential learning, in which the learner’s immediate experience is taken as the focus of learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process (Benson, 2001: 38).

Dewey, as cited by Hillier (2002: 17-18) identified five general features of reflection or reflective thinking: (1) perplexity/doubt due to the fact one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose character is not fully determined; (2) conjectural anticipation, i.e. a tentative interpretation of the elements; (3) examination/exploration or analysis of all attainable considerations which will define and clarify the problem at hand ; (4) consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis; and (5) taking one stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action, doing something overtly to bring about the anticipated result and thereby testing the hypothesis. This implies that the act of reflecting is not just a simple rushing into a trial-and-error approach. It is a way of minimising surface approaches.

In connection with the teaching of the pronunciation of English suprasegmental phonemes, being engaged in reflection process students will make use of existing experience for testing ideas and assumptions exploratively. They, though in uncertain situations or in trouble with such features (e.g. intonation, rhythm, and stress) which are indisputably commonly considered complicated to master, will strive for a solution, a commitment to continuous learning by seeking new ideas, evaluating and

reflecting on their impact and trying out new practices and ways of learning to improve their own effectiveness in the learning environment.

Cercone (2008: 137-159) notes that adults need to self-reflect on the learning process. For this, she suggests that instructors provide ways most possible for learners to engage in metacognitive reflection such as the use of logs and reflective journals. In the present study, video is chosen to help create a condition which best favors reflective learning. Video has fixative property, with which it can record, save, and reproduce information when needed (Suwatno, 2012: 63-68). With these characteristics students can utilize video to record, play and replay events.

In recounting situations, the immediacy of the moment recorded in video is not lost, as is the behavior in relation to the emotion/feeling. This provides the opportunity to talk through the experience. In this way, the adult learners/students can be motivated to learn by internal rewards, such as increased self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment. By using the recorded communicative events, students have video feedback on their development. This also highlights their strengths, which often they find so easy to ignore. They can then modify their behavior accordingly, either in isolation or with support of teacher and/or peers. Facial expressions and gestures that often accompany accented utterances will be of special interest to students. This all helps raise learners' awareness. True, awareness develops in adult but not in child (Thompson and Gaddes, 2005: 1-5). However, degree of reflectivity can be boosted with reflection process. It is for this reason teachers should promote and take control over students' reflection process so that their self-awareness becomes optimized. With adequate awareness learners are able to self-monitor and self-evaluate their own learning. Monitoring and evaluating is an essential element of reflection process.

Reflection is even stronger when the learning of suprasegmental pronunciation is incorporated into oral communication activities that include both reception and production practices. By playing a target model recording, for instance, students can listen and watch and get insight into target linguistic and nonlinguistic (nonverbal) input that is useful for their production. Alip (2009: 133-138) argues for the value of receptive activity prior to productive task in the teaching of English suprasegmentals pronunciation. A seemingly similar study by Wulandari et al (2008: 1-10) has shown that teaching English pronunciation using audio visual aids resulted in improved suprasegmentals, notably intonation and stress. The current study was aimed at describing the raising of English suprasegmental features through reflective learning method and finding out whether improved pronunciation of these features can be achieved through this method.

METHOD

The main goal of this research study was to improve the teacher's own instructional practices. Action research was chosen because it is a type of practioner research that is used to learn and improve classroom practioner's own teaching activities (Gay and Airasian, 2000: 593). The Kemmis and Taggart's model of action research was adopted. The study involved twenty-four second semester students of Class C2 at the English Language Education Department of Muhammadiyah University of Purwokerto, Indonesia attending Pronunciation 2 course in the 2011/2012 academic year. As part of an initial reflection of the teaching practice, a preliminary observation

was conducted by a colleague in the author's pronunciation class to record the pre-intervention condition and help identify problems. The collaborative study contained two cycles, each of which comprised three weekly a hundred-minute sessions.

The colleague participated in most activities of the research. Main learning activities/tasks in each session covered listening to target model, rehearsing monologue or a dialogue, video-recording, and playing video clip. Scripts were provided just to help the students memorise what to say. Videos available on the campus language labs' computers were made use to facilitate reflection process in the part of students.

Two types of data were gathered: data on teaching and learning process and data on learning outcome. The research qualitative data included teaching and learning activities, teacher's behavior, and student's behavior and perception, while the quantitative data dealt with the test result. Qualitative data were elicited through observation, reflective diary, and interview, while the quantitative data were collected through recorded conversation task and test.

Observations were done by the colleague using checklist. The students were provided with small notebooks for writing diary and given necessary direction. Interviews with some students were carried out by the colleague in order that the interviewees felt freer in giving response. Monologue or dialogue practice video clips handed in by the students were reviewed, scored and then given written or oral feedback. Tests were administered before and after each cycle and rated by the colleague and the author independently. The technique employed in the test was reading aloud. A right answer was scored 1, whereas a wrong answer 0. To reduce inconsistency, both raters equipped themselves with guidelines developed beforehand.

Qualitative data were analysed via analytic induction methods to identify common themes and to extract narratives of experience. Quantitative data were analysed to calculate statistical frequencies, percentages, and means. Triangulation – more than one methods of investigation – was employed to establish validity of the research (Bryman, 1988: 131-134), namely investigator triangulation and method triangulation.

FINDINGS

In regard to the use of reflective learning method in this research study, the intervention was a successful attempt to improve the pronunciation of English suprasegmental features. Reflective learning method using video integrated into communicative, meaningful language activities has encouraged student involvement in the learning process. Involvement was primary concern of the pre-intervention condition. Student involvement increased as most observed behavior was detected during teaching-learning process. Behavior that fostered student involvement included answering questions, spontaneously responding learning tasks, seriously doing in-class works, and completing learning tasks on time. Figure 1 shows the average occurrences of each type of behavior per cycle.

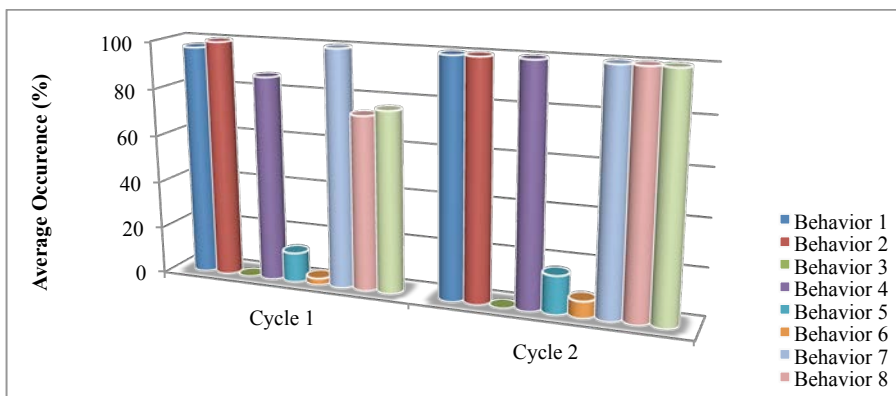


Figure 1. Number of Occurrences of Behavior by Type per Cycle

Until the end of intervention implementation, three types of observed behavior: student question raising, feedback giving and self-criticism or self-correction remained a problem even though certain effort had been taken. Within six sessions no students seemed to show initiative for raising questions (behavior 3) and a few gave feedback to peers (behavior 5) and commented on own performance or self-corrected own errors (behavior 6).

Dealing with student learning process, in first cycle the indicator against agreed criteria for success of intervention: students’ activity in following the teaching-learning process reaches an average of at least 60% was not fulfilled ($57.37\% < 60\%$). Minor revisions in intervention implementation eventually brought about better teaching-learning quality in second cycle. As can be seen from Figure 2 below, number of behavior identified from session to session tended to increase.

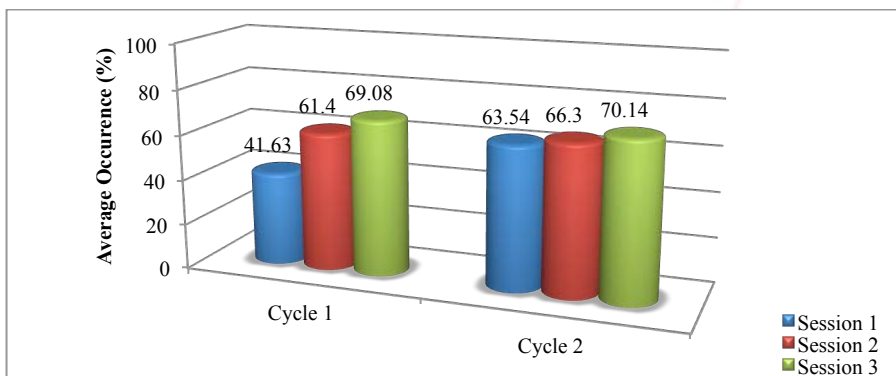


Figure 2. Number of Occurrences of Behavior per Session

It is interesting to see that a majority of the students gave positive response to the instruction adopted. Based on the data elicited through diary, five to six categories of response have been identified, as illustrated in the figure below.

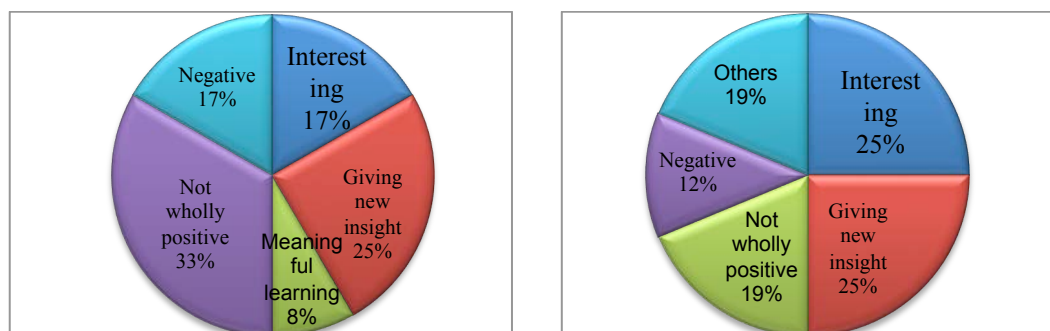


Figure 3. Sample of Student Responses to the Instruction

“Not wholly positive” constituted responses that contained partly negative responses. “Others” were responses that seemed irrelevant or did not fall into any category already mentioned, for example notes on stress patterns, or personal health. Figure 3 above shows that positive responses make up around 50 to 83 percent of the whole responses at the end of first cycle (left) and 50 to 69 percent at the end of second cycle (right).

The improved learning process was followed by a rise in learning outcome. From the pre-intervention formative test result (baseline), it was revealed that only 4.16% of the students passed, i.e., those achieving a score no less than 50 (left). It rose sharply up to 65.21% in first cycle, and increased to 73.9% in second cycle. The average score reached was 16.25. It increased up to 53.7 in first cycle, and slightly went up to 57.17. It means the students’ pronunciation mastery improved from cycle to cycle. Since the other indicator against preset criteria for success of implementation intervention was: 60% of students get minimum score of 50, this standard had already been met in first cycle. Figure 4 shows the students’ pronunciation mastery before and after intervention.

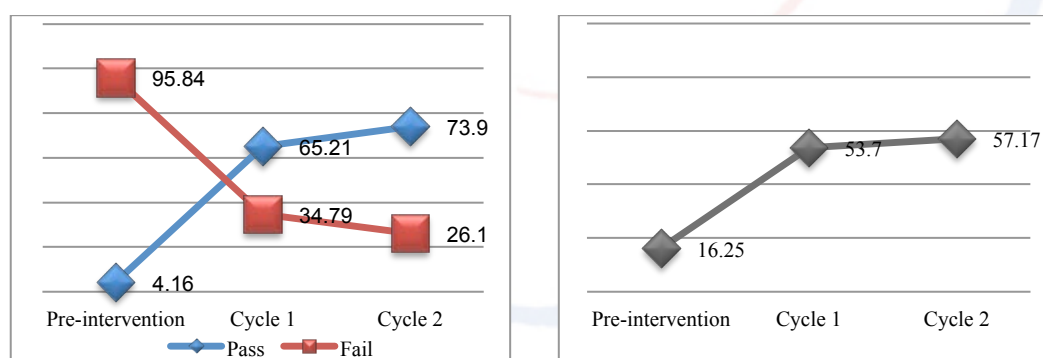


Figure 4. Students’ Pronunciation Mastery of English Suprasegmentals

It is wise to value the gain from first to second cycle, as the material taught in second cycle, i.e. stress, is considered more complicated compared to the one taught in the previous cycle, i.e. intonation. A student commented in native language in the diary: “... Today I am learning the stress of English. I think it is more complicated than intonation...”

Within two cycles the students’ result of doing in-class learning tasks reached an average score of 3.86 (using a 5 point scale), whereas the outside class work

conversation recordings submitted in the last session of each cycle showed some students' pronunciation has been much better than ever before the intervention was adopted. Their speech became no longer flat, filled with intonation and stress. Better segmental and suprasegmental features (i.e. connected speech) that had been previously poor were also heard in their speech. In short, students' pronunciation to a some extent sounded "more English".

DISCUSSION

The improved student involvement in the learning process after reflective learning method was adopted was thought to be attributable to the opportunity for using language through listening to/watching target models activity prior to production. In addition to insight into the target language in use, the students took advantage of the spoken texts as aural linguistic input along with nonlinguistic input, such as facial movement and gestures for use in production later. This could raise self-confidence in giving oral response. Having listened to native speaker target models recording, the students almost spontaneously and enthusiastically answered questions asked by the teacher about the recording. That is why, when listening to a segment of video file containing news reading whose speech was too fast for his/her level, a student wrote the following complaint in native language in the diary: '*...but when the video was being played I could not follow a lot just because it was too fast, so I could not catch the words.*' This means the necessity for a better teaching preparation in order that learning is optimum. However, the listening/watching activity prior to productive activity was a quite useful receptive skill practice to the students. This is in line with what Alip (2009: 133-138) argues for in another section of this article.

The students also benefited from the teaching and learning method that provided pronouncing experience in oral activities, though just rehearsing a monologue or dialogue in front of video camera. Pronunciation teaching was not explicit any more. Instead, it was immersed in spoken communication activities. This is highly consistent with the views of many researchers and experts, including Derwing (2009: 24-37) that teaching pronunciation should be integrated into oral communication skills. When making a video clip task came, the students looked eager to respond it and busy as well as serious to rehearse the text, record, review and correct their own production. Noise and serious faces were all the atmosphere of the class during this period of recording making. This was the impact of active involvement in doing learning tasks, which was rooted in reflective learning process created. The students became accustomed to recognising suprasegmental features produced by speakers in the target model video files, then trying out the ways the speakers pronounce the suprasegmentals, critically reviewing production (i.e. comparing own production to target model) and self-correcting or mutually correcting with peers in teaching and learning activities.

Interestingly enough, this part of the lessons was always longed for by the students. A student wrote this: '*Making a video clip, it is fascinating. I can express...*' While making a recording, the students listened to/watched themselves on the computer monitor verbal as well as nonverbal expressions produced. Having finished recording, they immediately replayed their recording (perhaps more than once), critically reviewed their speech and nonverbal expressions, quite possibly remembered prior errors, and corrected or refined them. In other words, the students carried out self-

monitoring and self-evaluation for the pronunciation of English suprasegmental phonemes: on-line listening or monitoring (while speaking), off-line monitoring (after speaking), evaluating (whether criteria are being fulfilled), and correcting orally. With pronunciation model as found on the recording that was played before conversation recording activity (and already available on each lab's computer in the last session), it was assumed that progress checking process or monitoring and evaluating learning the pronunciation of suprasegmental phonemes, i.e. English intonation and stress patterns, by the students went on well.

As adult learners, the students took advantage of the development of self-awareness in the form of self-monitoring and self-evaluation, that does not exist in children (Thompson and Gaddes, 2005: 1-5). Their self-awareness was fostered by reflective learning method adopted. Self-monitoring and self-evaluating was associated with ability to manage learning (Wenden, 1991: 25-28). In the teaching of suprasegmental pronunciation adopting reflective learning method, most of the students perceived that they were self-aware of what was going on during, after and before learning. A student commented: *'My speech is a mess, but I am trying again. Honestly, I want this way of learning to take place so often that I get accustomed to speaking English, instead of nontarget-like English.'* Some students not only expressed learning difficulty being encountered, but also a clear plan, as in the following *'...today's lesson is confusing because verb and adjective stress seems uncertain. Need to learn much from dictionary, the internet, or wherever...'* The students' capacity for managing their own learning has developed fast; hence, it is not hard to assume that the students' learning and practice has extended to outside classroom context.

One concern that emerged in the intervention implementation was the absence and lack of occurrence of those three types of observed behavior, in spite of a particular effort done. However, relative to cultural perspectives, perhaps it is understandable. Indonesia has emerged as one of the most collectivist societies (Giles, 2003: 1-6). According to Lee (2011: 75-81), in most collectivist cultures the people worry about losing face. Student culture exerts a potent effect on behavior in class. Taking this perspective into account, quite possible students in the current study were afraid of losing face, so they avoided asking questions. If they asked questions it could mean showing-offs. If a student asked questions in class, it may also have been regarded as losing face because it indicated that only he/she was not able to follow the lesson.

A student commented: *'I am still a bit confused, but if I want to ask a question to Mr. Ton using English I am afraid of making mistakes.'* This was written in the diary in the last session of second cycle. It was a proof that the effect of the culture was so strong that the students got upset and forgot they later had been permitted to ask in native tongue, and on a piece of paper if intended.

In a previous study at secondary level, the similar crisis of self-confidence to ask questions had been resolved through encouragement and material reward, i.e. snack (Suwartono and Mayaratri, 2011: 24-31). Nonetheless, this was not fully applied to the present research considering that it would not work equally well to adult learners. Giving extra points was chosen instead. Asking questions in class needs strong courage. A less self-confident student would rather wait than ask a question even when he/she does not understand something. This hinders learning, as things

remained puzzled. Some data elicited through diaries also led to a conclusion that some students still encountered learning difficulties.

Still according to Lee, in collectivist cultures quite rarely students in class would take the initiatives; usually they just keep silent. They are often reluctant to answer questions, do not express their opinions freely in class. Bearing the finding above in mind, those three types of culturally bound behavior are a challenge which faces teacher-researchers, in this case those who work in the context of Indonesia.

The problems that emerged in the pre-intervention condition were no longer found in the teaching-learning of pronunciation of English suprasegmental phonemes through reflective learning method. Previously, the “menu” of classroom activity was not appealing; after reflective method was applied, the students perceived that the classroom instruction was fascinating. The students had received inadequate listening to model activity prior to production practice; in the reflective learning, on the other hand, listening to/watching short segment of video file was a routine. Additionally, the greater portion of teacher talk time, too much drill, and teacher-centered activity in the former teaching-learning process was replaced by communicative, meaningful teaching-learning process through conversation video recording task in reflective learning practice.

The better learning quality by using reflective method has impact on students’ mastery of suprasegmental features being taught. Sufficient result of doing in-class learning tasks has affected their performance in completing outside-class task. An outside class pair-work conversation recording made by two very weak students in first cycle, for example, contained mostly accented and connected utterances. Even, in second cycle outside class work conversation video clips, another student managed to use intonation, stress, and connected speech nearly perfectly. With this improved use of intonation, stress, and connected speech, most students’ pronunciation of English was to some extent no longer a strong Indonesian or Javanese accent. Their utterances were less spoken in monotonous and melodies of varying kinds became more often heard, with the voice rising and falling. In other words, their pronunciation sounded foreign-accented to some degree, “more English”. In a previous study on connected speech by the author, it was revealed that songs helped students learn English connected speech (Suwartono, 2012: 149-151). It shows how creativity in the part of teacher is vital.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

To sum up, overall, the reflective learning method using video incorporated into oral communication activities has improved student learning process of English suprasegmental phonemes. The method adopted has boosted students’ involvement in learning the pronunciation of English suprasegmental phonemes. The students got involved in adequate language practice and monitoring as well as evaluating their own learning. In addition, a majority of the students gave positive response to the instruction adopted.

The students’ pronunciation mastery of English suprasegmental phonemes considerably increased and reached the preset standard. With sufficient improvement in the mastery of suprasegmentals, notably intonation and stress, the conversation

video clips handed in have apparently shown that most students' English pronunciation to some extent sounded "more English."

Implications and suggestions in light of the key findings of this research are the following:

1. As action research is unique within its context, for college instructors of English who face a similar problem teaching suprasegmental features, reflective learning method is a recommended solution to such problem adapted to existing condition.
2. Teachers of English should care enough for suprasegmental features, that are important to improve communicative competence yet have been so far neglected.
3. Finding a way to encourage learners of English to convey intention through questions, comments, ideas is a challenge that faces instructors of English at tertiary education in Indonesia.
4. Creativity and innovation is quite needed by teachers, including teachers of pronunciation. Through this being essentially naturalistic action research study, they can autonomously sharpen their creativity, innovation, critical thinking and reasoning skill while their students learn naturally. The present study provides a starting point and framework of such research.
5. Students are hopefully inspired with the learning experience obtained from the lessons. Then, with the reflective learning experience, they creatively initiate search for relevant ways to learn pronunciation on their own. Let's say, for instance, the use of video feature on cell-phones to make video clips. Control over own learning in class that extends to outside class like this often leads to the growth of learner autonomy, as whether being aware or not learners feel committed to their own learning.

REFERENCES

- Alip, F. B. 2009. Introducing Segmental and Suprasegmental Aspects of English Phonology to Indonesian Students. *Proceedings of the 2009 UAD TEFL National Conference*.
- Benson, P. 2001. *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bryman, A. 1988. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Cercone, K. 2008. Characteristics of Adult Learners with Implications for Online Learning Design. *AACE Journal*. Retrieved on April 23, 2013 from <http://www.editlib.org/d/24286>.
- Derwing, T. M. 2009. Utopian Goals for Pronunciation Teaching. *Proceedings of the 1st Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference*. Iowa: Iowa State University.
- Gay, L. R. and Peter A. 2000. *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

- Giles, S. 2003. Social Support Provision and Cultural Values in Indonesia and Britain. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 34(10): 1-6.
- Hillier, Y. 2002. *Reflective Teaching in Further and Adult Education*. London: Continuum.
- Lee, J. 2011. English Learning Styles of Students from East Asian Countries: a Focus on Reading Strategies. *International Education Studies* 4(2): 75-81.
- O'Neal, G. 2010. The Effects of the Presence and Absence of Suprasegmental on the Intelligibility and Assessment of an Expanding-Circle English According to Other Expanding-Circle English Listeners. *JAIRO (Japanese Institutional Repositories Online)*. Retrieved on April 12, 2013 from http://www.dspace.lib.niigata.ac.jp:8080/dspace/bitstream/.../1/15_65-87.pdf.
- Suwartono, T. and Puspita M. 2011. Handling the EFL Students' Crisis of Self-confidence to Ask Questions. *Sino-US English Teaching* 8(1): 24-31.
- Suwartono. 2012. Songs Helped Them Learn the English Connected Speech. *Proceedings of International Conference on English Language and Literature (ICELL, Hyderabad, India)*.
- Suwartono. 2012. Pengembangan Media VCD Konteks Pertanian pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Aspek Mendengarkan dan Menulis Pengumuman di SD/MI Kelas IV Semester 2. *Seloka: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* 1(1): 63-68.
- Thompson, T. and Matt G. 2005. The Importance of Teaching Pronunciation to Adult Learners. *Asian EFL Journal* 2: 1-5.
- Wenden, A. 1991. *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy: Planning and Implementing Learner Training for Language Learners*. Hertfordshire: Prentice-Hall Europe.
- Wulandari, A., Malikatul L. and Aryati P. 2008. Improving Students' Pronunciation Using Audio Visual Aids (AVAs) at the Fifth Year of *Al-Azhar Syifa Budi* Elementary School of Surakarta in Academic Year 2007/2008 (a Classroom Action Research). *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra* 20(1): 1-10.

Current Trends in the Use of Student Input in Teacher Evaluation in Universities in Mainland China

Changrong Xie, Guangdong University of Science and Technology, China
Dave Towey, The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, China
Yixuan Jing, United International College, China

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0020

Abstract

The People's Republic of China (PRC) higher education (HE) sector has seen dramatic growth over the past twenty or so years. Higher education institutions (HEIs) in China, and elsewhere, have increasingly been including student feedback on teachers' work as a significant factor in evaluating teacher performance. This feedback often has serious implications regarding the teacher's employment situation, including promotion opportunities. The use of student feedback has eroded the traditional stereotype of teacher's authority and dominance in the classroom, and is consistent with the philosophy of democratizing education. More importantly, it is perceived as helpful to the improvement of teaching quality. With any tool or instrument, however, its effectiveness will depend on the manner in which it is employed; therefore appropriate guidelines and methods need to be developed for feedback systems. This paper reports on the current usage of student feedback mechanisms in tertiary-level education in the PRC, and offers some suggestions for how changes may be made which would enhance their effectiveness and increase their usage.

Keywords: Higher Education, Mainland China, PRC, Student Feedback, Teacher Evaluation.

Introduction

This paper looks at some of the changes which have been taking place in the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the past three to four decades, including the economic developments to date, and also some of the predictions for future economic direction. Linked to the future economic development are changes taking place in higher education (HE) in the PRC, including an increasing place for student feedback in teacher evaluation.

Some form of student feedback system (SFS) is reportedly used in all PRC higher education institutions (HEIs), but the systems and their application vary considerably, with some reports of cases where the SFS is used to obtain feedback, but the feedback itself is not included in teacher evaluation (ZJNU 2011); and other reports of the feedback having a significant impact on a teacher's overall evaluation, becoming a very intimidating part of the teacher's professional life, but generating complaints of both misuse and unfairness (EOL 2012).

One suggested reason for the variation in application, and perceived fairness, of the SFS is the scarcity of scholarship on how best to implement such systems (Guo 2010). In many cases, student feedback channels are not apparent, and mechanisms are ad-hoc. A clear and scientific method and application of SFSs would not only enhance the quality assurance and teaching in PRC HE, but would also offer opportunities for international comparison and investigation.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, the background to the paper is presented, including China's economic growth, and some recent changes in higher education. Section 3 describes teacher evaluation in the PRC. Section 4 looks at student feedback as part of teacher evaluation in Chinese higher education, and Section 5 concludes the paper.

Background

As discussed in Towey (2014), China has seen incredible economic growth over the past thirty years, fuelled by a manufacturing industry boom that may now be coming to an end (The World Bank 2013). Although it has been argued that the best hope for continued economic growth may involve the Chinese economy changing from manufacturing to a more service-oriented economy (Brown 2012, Morrison 2013, Phillips 2012), a challenge to this is a current, and foreseen, shortfall in an appropriately skilled workforce, especially in terms of a tertiary-level educated population (Marsh 2012, Ray et al. 2012). Figure 1 shows the predicted 2020 Chinese labour demand and supply (by education level), according to which the PRC will face a shortage of university and vocational labour of about 24 million workers (Chen, Mourshed & Grant 2013). To address this, China has initiated strategies to enhance its HE provision.

Changing PRC HE Landscape

Higher education in the PRC refers to that "conducted on the basis of the completion of senior middle-school education" (PRC MoE 1998), and PRC higher

education institutions (HEIs) have gone through several changes since Chinese liberation in 1949. Private HEIs which were not wholly funded by the government were halted immediately after the foundation of the PRC, resulting in

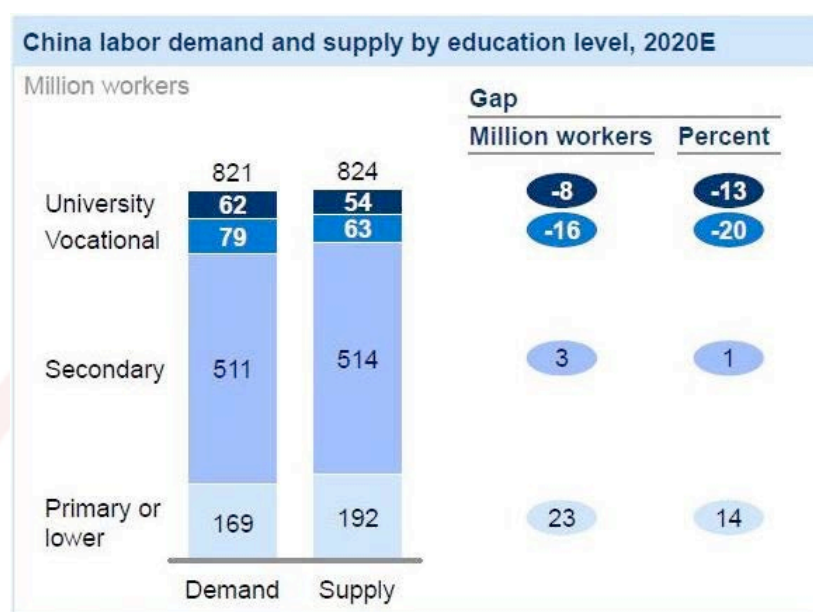


Figure1. Predicted 2020 PRC labour demand and supply, by education level (from Chen et al. 2013, p.4)

all those remaining being fully funded public institutions, a situation which remained unchanged until the reform and opening up of Chinese education in the 1980s (Zhou & Li 2006).

An interesting feature of recent PRC educational reforms has been the focus on tertiary level, rather than on primary or secondary (Li, Whalley, Zhang & Zhao 2012). These reforms have included a number of projects aimed at enhancing the quality and prestige of some of China's universities, such as: Project 985, Project 211, and the C9 League (CEC n.d., Lixu 2004, Sainsbury 2009, THE 2011). These projects, by making additional resources available to some key universities, have attempted to increase the *quality* of some of the PRC higher education.

Since joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the PRC has allowed foreign investment in the education sector in the form of Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools (CFCRS), which require a partnership with a Chinese institution. According to KPMG (2010, p.13), at the end of 2009 there were about thirty approved Sino-foreign joint venture universities operating in China, and about 350 approved Sino-foreign programmes leading to foreign degrees. By 2013, the number had grown to 775 approved projects (QAA 2013, p.6), and Tsang (2013, p.655) quotes estimates of over a thousand foreign institutions expressing interest in establishing private universities in the PRC.

Increasing Student Voice

Significant changes have been taking place in education around the world, especially in higher education (HE).

Some of the most striking of these changes might be categorized as a switch from the traditional “sage on the stage” role of teachers to a more “guide on the side” (King 1993). Teachers, especially in HE, can no longer expect to be able to come to lectures prepared only to speak about their chosen topics. An ability to facilitate and encourage learning is increasingly demanded by the student body. As HE fees have increased, and in the UK, for example, have increased substantially over the past two decades (HEFCE 2011), the consumers of HE, the students, have been calling for increased accountability in the HEIs: if students need to pay a large amount of money for their education, they are quite justified in asking for assurances that there is value in this expenditure. The student voice has been increasingly heard.

As the philosophy underlying teaching has been moving increasingly towards a more “student-centered” approach, feedback from students has been identified as an essential part of the quality assurance implemented by HE administrations. Student feedback systems (SFS) are being used by most, if not all modern HEIs (Peng 2006).

It has been suggested that student feedback was originally solicited and used by teachers to enhance the quality of their own teaching (TEP 2013). Teachers could inquire of students what the most useful things they had learned were, or what suggestions or criticisms they may have (ITL n.d.).

Zhao (2011) has argued that student feedback should be used as a tool to help guide teaching.

PRC HE Teacher Evaluation

In higher education, in both the PRC and elsewhere, there have traditionally been three main categories within which a teacher would be evaluated for things such as contract renewal or promotion. There were: scholarship (including things such as publications, grants, consultancy, etc.); administration and citizenship (including things such as course leadership, department headship, etc.); and teaching. Obviously, different HEIs have different weightings and application for these categories, with research-intensive institutions perhaps focusing more on scholarship, and those with a teaching-orientation being more concerned with quality of teaching.

Danielson (2001) has stated that teacher evaluation systems can be developed to both enhance teachers’ professional growth and to benefit students’ learning. Usually, there are various forms of teacher evaluation, including classroom observation, evidence collection in portfolios, professional conversation, and examination of student achievement (Danielson 2001) — teaching is a multi-dimensional social activity which demands multi-dimensional approaches to measure it.

Teacher evaluation can be considered as either formative or summative. Formative evaluation investigates ways to improve teaching, and includes things such as

constructive feedback and suggestions; summative, in contrast, aims to measure teaching to determine whether or not the performance is satisfactory, and can be strongly related to tenure, bonus, promotions, and even just contract continuation (Namaghi 2010, CAS 2007). Teacher evaluation in the PRC can also be categorised in these two ways, with formative evaluation usually being conducted by the teachers themselves, and summative by the HEI administration.

HEI administrations need to be able to measure teacher performance systematically in order to monitor the teaching quality of the institution. As part of this, student feedback is usually gathered at the end of the semester, often through an online system. This, however, has led to reports of the feedback being applied in a “black box” manner, with suggestions of both misuse and abuse (Zhao 2006).

Zhou & Feng (2011) have argued that teacher evaluation should also include the opinion and feedback from the subordinates, colleagues and experts in the same discipline.

There is a current lack of clear details regarding how to best obtain and apply HEI student feedback in the PRC. The anecdotal and published evidence suggests that feedback has often been over-applied or even misused, with detrimental results in some HEIs (Sun, Tian & Zhang 2011). An overall mechanism to effectively and fairly evaluate teachers' work is something very desirable, both to protect teachers and to promote quality teaching.

PRC Teacher Performance Evaluation Challenges

Lv, Feng & Ma (2011) observed that student feedback on teachers can be influenced by, amongst other things, the subject difficulty, the year/standing of the student, their major, and the number of classes being taken.

Yang & Jin (2011) identified three limitations to the teacher performance evaluation in the PRC. Firstly, teachers are evaluated by their teaching work- load, research and publication, mentor workload, etc, which are measured quantitatively. With emphasis on the amount of work, teachers may attach too much importance to the accumulation of work instead of its quality. Secondly, teachers are evaluated once every year, which may not be a sufficient measurement of teachers' work. Teachers work, especially the teaching, tends to have a long-term outcome, the measurement of which also needs to be longer-term. Thirdly, teacher performance evaluation may be conducted by administrators to reward some so-called well-performing teachers, which is regarded by teachers as a kind of administration-manipulated measurement. The true value of teacher performance evaluation, however, is to improve the teacher performance based on the outcome of the evaluation, something which may often be ignored.

In light of all these identified problems in teacher performance evaluation in PRC HEIs (Yang & Jin 2011), an evaluation system incorporating both quantitative and qualitative perspective has been called for.

PRC HE Student Feedback

Currently, student feedback data falls into two categories: qualitative and quantitative. The first is usually collected through interviews conducted between administrators and students, and also through some online system; while the second is often obtained by questionnaire, either paper-based or online.

Although interviews can provide some very useful information, there are some disadvantages, including that the number of students that can be interviewed is limited, therefore posing a risk that the opinion obtained from the small proportion of the students be taken as that of the entire group. Furthermore, interviews conducted without teachers present may lead to some mistrust or uneasiness on the part of the teachers.

Some form of student feedback system is reportedly used in all PRC HEIs, but the systems and their application vary considerably.

Many types of online student feedback software can collect the data in an efficient way, including collection of opinion from an entire population or group, enabling relatively easy statistical processing of the quantitative data. The qualitative data, however, is often less easily processed, sometimes reportedly collected without clearly distinguishing individual from group opinion.

The concept of student feedback seems to be a western notion that is being brought into the PRC, and like many other imported ideas, may face obstacles in the Chinese context which are less of an issue in the western world. As Wang (2006, p.4) says, current Chinese education may appear influenced by Confucian philosophy, but in some cases commentators have reduced this “complex tradition [...] to a simple stereotype.” Liu & Littlewood (2012, p.374) go further, saying that Confucian values have become “a convenient explanation for any observed or actual behavioural trait.” Nonetheless, some characteristics of learners in the PRC, particularly suggestions of students being less likely to speak out, or to challenge the teacher, mean that student feedback systems here cannot simply mimic those from the west.

As higher education further develops in the PRC, it is anticipated that use of student input in teacher evaluation will also increase. It will be essential for this input to be gathered and applied in a transparent manner, failure to do so will likely only compound current mistrust and reports of system abuse.

There has been debate about whether student feedback can authentically reflect teaching performance, and investigation into its validity and reliability (CAS 2007), with two main approaches to student evaluation of teachers being suggested: through students unions, or directly from students themselves. Several disconnects between teacher and student expectations regarding impact of feedback have been identified: according to CAS (2007) only 32% of students thought that it would affect teachers; compared with 70% of teachers who believed it would. Furthermore, when evaluated unfairly, 65% teachers would choose to keep silent, with only 11% expressing themselves publicly, and 24% protesting in a written form.

Based on the current situation of teacher evaluation in the PRC, approaches to

increase the effectiveness of student feedback systems need to be strengthened.

Administrators can further include teachers, who are the objects of the evaluation, in the conduct of teacher evaluation. Furthermore, more flexible tools, such as portfolios and conversations, should be adopted. Finally, more detailed and transparent analysis and application of data should be promoted, with further consideration of the many different factors affecting teacher performance.

Conclusion

Continued economic growth in the People's Republic of China (PRC) may require a move to a service economy, something which will necessitate an increase in the number of workers with a higher education or vocational training. Provision of higher education in the PRC has been undergoing a number of changes, and in the PRC, as elsewhere, emphasis has been switching to a "student-centered" approach, including the use of student feedback on teacher performance.

In the PRC, teacher evaluation based on student feedback is still far from mature, still facing many deficiencies, including from data collection, processing, interpretation, and application. Student feedback, however, plays an increasingly significant role in teacher evaluation and will impact on the employment of the teaching staff. Therefore further study on how to conduct and use the evaluation based on student feedback is necessary.

Acknowledgements

This research was partly supported by a Conference Grant from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, and a grant from Beijing Normal University–Hong Kong Baptist University: United International College (RO/1112/UICRG-2a).

References

- Brown, A. (2012). A Changing Chinese Economy Can Aid American Manufacturing, *Forbes* (March 07, 2012). Available from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/abrambrown/2012/03/07/a-changing-chinese-economy-can-aid-american-manufacturing/> (Accessed 30 April 2014).
- CAS (2007). A Scientific Assessment System is Needed for Teacher Performance. Available from <http://tinyurl.com/mzthn3z> (Accessed May 02 2014), [Chinese Language].
- CEC (n.d.). China Education Center Ltd.: Project 211 and Project 985. Available from <http://www.chinaeducenter.com/en/cedu/ceduproject211.php> (Accessed 23 July 2013).
- Chen, L.-K., Mourshed, M. & Grant, A. (2013). The \$250 billion question: Can China close the skills gap?, *McKinsey on Society* (May 2013). Available from <http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/china-skills-gap.pdf> (Accessed 25 July 2013).

Danielson, C. (2001). New Trends in Teacher Evaluation, *Educational Leadership* 58(5): 12–15.

EOL (2012). Disputes surrounding Teacher Appointments and Protection. Available from http://teacher.eol.cn/jiaoshiweiqian_9522/20120223/t20120223_744143.shtml (Accessed 26 April 2014), [Chinese Language].

Guo, T. (2010). An Analysis on the Problems in Teacher Evaluation in Tertiary Education Schools, *Journal of National Academy of Education Administration* 2010(2): 59–61. [Chinese Language].

HEFCE (2011). Recent History of Higher Education in England. Available from <https://www.hefce.ac.uk/about/intro/abouthighereducationinengland/historyofheinengland/> (Accessed 30 April 2014).

ITL (n.d.). Gathering and Acting on Feedback. Available from <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/feedback/gatheringfeedback.htm> (Accessed 26 April 2014).

King, A. (1993). From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side, *College Teaching* 41(1): 30–35. Available from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/87567555.1993.9926781> (Accessed 30 April 2014).

KPMG (2010). Education in China, KPMG. Available from <http://www.kpmg.com/CN/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/Education-in-China-201011.pdf> (Accessed 23 July 2013).

Li, Y., Whalley, J., Zhang, S. & Zhao, X. (2012). The Higher Educational Transformation of China and its Global Implications, *The Globalization of Higher Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, chapter 10, pp. 135–162. Available from <http://books.google.com.hk/books?id=qe2R7YrNj-sC> (Accessed 23 July 2013).

Liu, N. & Littlewood, W. (2012). Why do Many Students Appear Reluctant to Participate in Classroom Learning Discourse?, *System* 25(3): 371–384.

Lixu, L. (2004). China's Higher Education Reform 1998-2003: *A Summary*, *Asia Pacific Education Review* 5(1). Available from <http://eri.snu.ac.kr/aper/pdf/Vol%205%20No%201%20July%202004%20PDF/02.Li%20Lixu.pdf> (Accessed 23 July 2013).

Lv, Z., Feng, W. & Ma, C. (2011). The Comparison of Students' Feedback on High School Teachers' Work, *Jiangsu Science and Technology Information* 2011(2): 7– 10.

Marsh, P. (2012). Skilled Workers Shortfall of 40m Forecast, *Financial Times* (November 18, 2012). Available from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/13e0ae56-316f-11e2-b68b->

00144feabdc0.html#axzz2ZrA5Znwe (Accessed 23 July 2013).

Morrison, W. M. (2013). China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States, (RL33534). Available from <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf> (Accessed 23 July 2013).

Namaghi, S. A. O. (2010). A Data-Driven Conceptualization of Teacher Evaluation, *The Qualitative Report* 15(6): 1504–1522. Available from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ914020.pdf> (Accessed 26 April 2014).

Peng, Y. (2006). On the Model of Assessment of Teaching Quality Through Students' Evaluation in Higher Education, *Researches in Higher Education of Engineering* 1(1): 36–38. [Chinese Language].

Phillips, M. (2012). China Eyes Services Sector of Economy, *The Washington Times* (July 07, 2012). Available from <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/7/china-eyes-services-sector-of-economy> (Accessed 23 July 2013).

PRC MoE (1998). General Provisions, *Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, Chinese Ministry of Education, Beijing, Article 2. Available from http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2803/200905/48454.html (Accessed 13 September 2013).

QAA (2013). *Review of UK transnational education in China 2012: Overview*, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/TNE-China-Overview.pdf> (Accessed 03 July 2013).

Ray, R. L., Mitchell, C., Abel, A., Phillips, P. P., Watson, A., Weddle, B., Hancock, B. & Lawson, E. (2012). *The State of Human Capital 2012: False Summit*. Available from http://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/dotcom/client_service/Organization/PDFs/State_of_human_capital_2012.ashx (Accessed 02 May 2014).

Sainsbury, M. (2009). China Establishes Group of Ivy League Universities, *The Australian* (November 04, 2009). Available from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/china-establishes-group-of-ivy-league-universities/story-e6frg6so-1225794050411> (Accessed 23 April 2014).

Sun, X., Tian, N. & Zhang, T. (2011). A Study of the Problems in Teacher Evaluation in Chinese Tertiary Education Institutions and the Solutions, *Heilongjiang Science and Technology Information* 2011(29): 132–133. [Chinese Language].

TEP (2013). *Using Student Feedback*. Available from <http://pages.uoregon.edu/tep/resources/assessment/usingfeedback.html> (Accessed 26

April 2014).

THE (2011). *Eastern stars: Universities of China's C9 League Excel in Select Fields*, *Times Higher Education* (February 17, 2011). Available from <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/415193.article> (Accessed 23 April 2014).

The World Bank (2013). *China Overview*. Available from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview> (Accessed 23 April 2014).

Towey, D. (2014). *Meeting the Higher Education Needs of Mainland China*, in K. S. Yuen & K. C. Li (eds), *Inaugural International Conference on Open and Flexible Education (ICOFE 2014)*, *The Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China*, pp. 322–332.

Tsang, E. Y.-h. (2013). *The Quest for Higher Education by the Chinese Middle Class: Retrenching Social Mobility?*, *Higher Education* (March, 2013): 1–16. Available from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9627-7> (Accessed 23 April 2014).

Wang, T. (2006). *Understanding Chinese Culture and Learning*, *The Australian Educational Researcher* pp. 1–14. Available from <http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/wan06122.pdf> (Accessed 12 March 2013).

Yang, L. & Jin, H. (2011). *The Study on Teacher Performance Evaluation in Colleges*, *Science and Technology Information* 33: 44–45. [Chinese Language].

Zhao, F. (2011). *Performance Examination and Performance Evaluation: Connotation, Value, Relation and Transformation*, *Journal of Beijing Administrative College* 2011(2): 47–51.

Zhao, G. (2006). *A Study on the Assessment of our Country's College Teachers' Work*, Master's thesis, Yanshan University. Available from http://d.g.wanfangdata.com.cn/Thesis_Y1114812.aspx (Accessed 07 May 2014), [Chinese Language].

Zhou, C. & Li, G. (2006). *A Literature Review on Contemporary Chinese Private Tertiary Education*, *Journal of Hunan First Normal College* 6(3): 74–75.

Zhou, S. & Feng, J. (2011). *On the Construction of the PCA-Based University Teachers' Performance Assessment Index System*, *Journal of Nanjing University of Science and Technology* 24(3): 90–95.

ZJNU (2011). *Regulations for the Evaluation of Teacher Performance*. Available from <http://xddwx.zjnu.edu.cn/ArticleOne.aspx?id=446> (Accessed 26 April 2014), [Chinese Language].

Musicians in the Language Classroom: The Transference of Musical Skills to Teach a “Speech Mode of Communication”

Kim Rockell, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Merissa Ocampo, Hokkaido University, Japan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0029

Abstract

While EFL instructors come to the classroom from a variety of backgrounds, little is known about skill transference to a language teaching environment. Motivated initially by the authors’ personal experiences using music to teach English, this article presents the results of a recent research that evaluated the effectiveness of musical skill transference in EFL teachers in Japan in 2012. For this purpose, a heuristically constructed list of musical skills or qualities was first offered by way of exploring the links between music and language, and highlighting important areas for music’s potential application. Encouraged by the research findings, a fresh approach to the application of musical skills termed “RMR” (Rhythmic/Melodic Recalibration) is advocated. This approach can assist teachers to develop the ability to use music more confidently when teaching English. The paper also explored the perception that EFL teachers in contemporary Japan were successfully managing the reapplication of core musical skills, in particular, to teach “speech mode of communication”.

Keywords: music, language, skill transference, TEFL, teacher education/development

Introduction

The communicative power of both language and music provide an evocative area of enquiry that has long fascinated scholars. Frequently compared, since both are “temporally organized, with the relevant structure unfolding in time” (McMullen & Saffran, 2004, pp. 289-290), the capacities of music and speech appear to overlap significantly. Writing from a musicological perspective Nettl (2005, p. 51) cautiously suggested: “Without pretending that language and music are of the same cloth, there are sufficient similarities to have permitted ethnomusicologists to take certain cues from the study of language in its structure and as a symbolic system to gain insight into the world of music”. Cross described “music” and “language” as “culture-specific categories of communicative interaction that are distinguishable by being at opposite poles of the capacity for unambiguous reference” (2012, p. 24). Meanwhile, cognitive scientists continue to probe the “vexing issue” of modularity of mind, considering how specific cognitive processes, such as those involved in musical activity, are tied to specific domains of the human mind (McMullen & Saffran, 2004, p. 290). The issues surrounding the music/language nexus [link or connection] are clearly many and complex, confirming that this research area continues to be of increasing significance.

For the authors of the current article, the link between music and language came into focus while teaching English as a foreign language in Japan during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Both authors have significant and practical experience teaching English in Japan as well as some formal training. However, both authors hold doctorates in areas not directly related to TEFL.ⁱ This professional situation not only demanded personal effort in affecting the skill transfer to a language-focussed environment but also drew attention to the process of skill transfer itself. After several personal encounters with musicians teaching English in Japan, it became clear that the way EFL teachers in Japan are managing the transference and application of musical skills to a language teaching environment demands further investigation.ⁱⁱ

Widespread anecdotal evidence endorsing the use of music in language classrooms around the world, including Japan, was reported by Li and Brand (2009). At the same time, these authors lament the lack of empirical studies such as their own, which is focused on the use of music with Chinese learners of English. Unlike Li and Brand’s, this study does not set out to demonstrate whether music is an effective tool in the language classroom. Nor does it emphasise the importance of singing, song writing or lyric deconstruction as “the most common interdisciplinary language learning approaches involving a musical basis” (Cotton, p. 8). Rather, as indicated, the focus is on teachers and their transference of a wide range of musical skills to the teaching of language. Such a transfer is an example of the kind of pro-active engagement in the knowledge economy proposed by Vella (2007). Skill transference was recently investigated in a study by Cullen and Mulvey (2012), but these authors focussed on language learners rather than teachers and not specifically on musical skills. In the present study, the way musical skills, in particular, help a teacher to be effective when using conventional modes of instruction, or expanding on these through the application of musical strategies, was examined. The effectiveness of musical skill transference was also evaluated.

The term “musician”, open to universally broad application, is necessarily delimited. It is restricted here to mean musicians from a Western stream of musical activity. The

facile use of the word “music” or “musician” in studies linking music and language may be of as much concern to musicologists as assumptions about, and an overly simplistic view of, musicality or musical skill. While a historical view of musical ability conceptualised it “in relation to aural abilities” (Hallam & Shaw, 2002, p. 102), the idea of musical skill as a “social construct” has been considered more recently (Nettl, 2005, p. 56). In an attempt to present a more sensitively nuanced view, we propose the following heuristically based list of musical skills, which formed the basis of the areas interrogated in the current study. Each skill area is then discussed, and its potential application in the language classroom highlighted:

Six Musical Skills or Qualities

1	A well developed sense of rhythm	1 and 2 refer to acuity in processing sound, “the substance of expression” in language and music (Wilkins, 1974, p. 1).
2	Sensitivity to pitch and intonation	
3	Demonstrative in speech and/or gesture	3 and 4 are aspects of performance practice which can be related to the more recent view of musical ability and a social construct.
4	Skilful in facilitating interaction	
5	Pre-disposed to comprehend grammatical analysis	5 and 6 are patterns of thought and behaviour connected to the formal study Western music
6	Self disciplined and independent	

A well developed sense of rhythm

Musical activity promotes the development of a strong rhythmic sense (Drake, Jones, & Baruch, 2000, p. 279). By singing, playing, listening and notating rhythmic patterns, a musician becomes keenly aware of factors such as relative duration, internal logic, and stress and accent within phrases. This predisposes musicians to be able to perceive accent clearly within sentences and lead rhythm drills effectively. They have the potential to present, model and drill language almost like a musical conductor, indicating stress and accent in a variety of interesting ways. When teaching a stress-timed language such as English (Il iukien 2005) to Japanese learners whose mother tongue is fundamentally different in this regard, rhythmic sense is of particular importance (Tajima, Zawaydeh, & Kitahara, 1999, p. 4).

Sensitive to pitch and intonation

Musical activity promotes sensitivity to pitch and intonation patterns (Bolduc, 2008). In addition to the diatonic patterns of Western music, the process of globalization has enriched the palette of sounds available to listeners in the Anglophone world (Stokes, 2012). Increasingly, world music and jazz have become course components of undergraduate musical degree courses (Green, 2012). Just like rhythm, relative pitch

level and intonation curvature are intrinsic to effective communication in English (Clennell, 1997). This ranges from standard examples, such as rising intonation in forming yes/no questions, to the many other ways utterances can be nuanced by varied intonation (Bolinger, 1985). Musicians can potentially consider utterances purely melodically, keenly sensitive to the pitch fluctuation in spoken language. They also have the potential to communicate them to students in a variety of ways. These include conducting, using *sol-fa* gestures and modelling language at a slow speed in order to demonstrate less immediately obvious pitch-glides.

Demonstrative in speech and/or gesture

The performance-oriented nature of much musical activity has the potential to promote the development of demonstrative speech and gestures. Singers, in particular, must enunciate clearly (O'Dea, 2000), but instrumental performance also involves demonstrative physical behaviour (Vines, Wanderley, Krumhansl, Nuzzo, & Levitin, 2004). This can be applicable in contexts ranging from the most intimate to appearances in front of large audiences. With a strong connection between musical study and music performance activity (Broughton, Stevens, & Malloch, 2009), tertiary training in music also encourages the development of these skills since “content of a practical nature appears to dominate the undergraduate curriculum” (Schmidt, 1989, p. 54).

Although it can be argued that demonstrative and stylized speech-models are unnatural, and therefore misleading for language learners, the theatrical delivery of target language models have the potential to better engage and maintain students' attention. Regardless of the individual instructor's theoretical orientation towards speech-model presentation, musicians have the potential to easily and effectively present target language in a demonstrative manner.

Skilful in facilitating interaction

Many musicians have experience in choirs, orchestras, chamber music ensembles and contemporary bands (Boespflug, 1999). Careful cooperation, coordination and communication between members are vital in each of these activities. Through group music making musicians can learn a variety of ways in which participant interaction can effectively be facilitated (Seddon & Biasutti, 2009). In the language classroom it is often necessary to organize students into pair work, small groups or split-class activities (Long & Porter, 1985). A directive role is also called upon when facilitating games, songs, role-plays, dances and other learning tasks. Musicians are potentially well equipped to deal with these responsibilities.

Predisposed to comprehend grammatical analysis

Musicians encounter harmonic analysis as part of formal musical training as well as when engaging with chord sequences while playing popular music or jazz. Both these harmonic processes involve the recognition and naming of individual chords and understanding of their function within a musical phrase. These ideas are analogous to the recognition and classification of an individual part of speech or language unit and to the function of the words as part of a sentence (Nettl, 1958). Besson and Shön (2001, p. 232) found that “general cognitive principles were involved when aspects of syntactic processing in language are compared with aspects of harmonic processing in music”. McMullen (2004, p. 296) referred to Chomsky's concept of “universal

grammar” and found that musical and linguistic systems have an “infinitely combinatorial nature”. The broad similarities between musical and linguistic analytical processes potentially give musicians a cognitive advantage when approaching grammatical analysis, and a freshness of approach toward grammatical problems (Steedman, 1984, pp. 52-77).

Self disciplined and independent

The study of a musical instrument or voice demands dedication to regular, individual practice (Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, & Moore, 1996). Musical study has also been recognized as encouraging self discipline and independence (Dai & Schader, 2001). As one EFL teacher with experience in Japan, and who now runs her own school in Canada commented: “Teachers with a strong musical background tend to be very diligent and reliable. I think this is due to the dedication required in order to learn an instrument or from the commitment necessary when joining a choir, band or orchestra.”¹ Most language teachers are required to spend time outside class preparing lesson plans, props and materials or doing assessment, evaluation and marking.² Many musicians are used to individual practice and study so they also potentially have the self discipline and independence necessary to effectively carry out the solo tasks required of language teachers.

The skills and qualities described above make up a relevant, transferable set of skills based on a broad conception of musical ability. Although this list seems to strongly suggest that musical skills are important and valuable in teaching language, there has been insufficient research in this area as pointed out earlier. At the end of 2012, the authors conducted a study described in the following section. It is hoped that this study might encourage more investigation into the language/music nexus and music and language education.

Musical Skill Transference Project 2012

Objective(s)

The primary aim of this study is to gain insight into teachers’ perceptions of the process of musical skill transference, and the application of musical skills to language learning in present day Japan. The study examined:

- Teachers’ perceptions of musicians as effective language instructors in Japan and their implications in the hiring process
- The transference of general musical skills and qualities, examined from the perspective of the authors’ heuristically constructed list of skills
- The effectiveness of a range of specific musical techniques in the classroom
- The use of melody and rhythm to teach intonation and stress

In examining these areas, the study aimed to pin-point those musical skills and techniques that teachers considered most important and effective. The study also sought to discover whether there are significant variations between the perspectives of

¹ L. Hurcomb, Pre-study questionnaire, 19 October 2010.

² Fieldwork observations: 2004-2006, Hokkaido and 2006-2008, Saitama, Yokohama and Okayama, Japan.

native and non-native English speaking teachers, and between teachers with and without formal musical backgrounds.

Method

During November and December 2012, a questionnaire (see appendix one) was distributed, both manually and electronically, to thirty English teachers who are currently active in Japan. Respondents were requested to return their answers by 30 December 2012, which marked the end of data collection for this phase of research.³ The questionnaire had a basic, tripartite structure, examining: (A) general musical skills (B) the application of specific techniques, and (C) other general information including perceptions of the hiring process, as well as more questions about the use of melody and rhythm in language teaching.

Because the primary objective was to examine teachers' perspectives, interrogating the "etic" dimension of musical skill transference (Nettl, 2005), a self-assessment questionnaire was considered most appropriate. Such an approach is particularly useful when examining people's feelings about their jobs, and the "inter correlations amongst various feelings and perceptions" (Spector, 1994, p. 390). The questionnaire elicited responses ranging from "poor" to "excellent", which tended to indicate areas of stronger interest or concern. There was also room for respondents to add their own more detailed comments or ideas.

Participant Profiles

The English teachers in this study came from a variety of academic backgrounds. Those who claimed to have undergone some certified musical training had studied English, theatre, TESOL or social work as a major. Teachers self-identifying as non-musicians without musical training came from disciplines such as engineering and economics. Half of the participants were native-speakers of English. This group included a larger number of teachers who self-identified as musicians than was found within the non-native speaker group. In the course of their careers, most respondents had encountered at least two or three musicians teaching English. Two non-native teachers even claimed to have met nine or more musicians who were working as English teachers in Japan.

All non-native speakers (NNS) and most native speaker (NS) respondents viewed a musical background as being a strength when applying for a position as an English teacher in Japan. The expressed opinion was that Japanese people love music and therefore enjoy learning through music. In terms of securing their current placement, however, very few teachers were able to claim that musical ability was an important factor and their employer knew about their musical ability when they were hired. Only half the participants perceived musicians as capable English teachers. This view was stronger among NNS teachers who self-identified as musicians than among NS musician teachers.

Musical ability and experience was considered most helpful in the language classroom when it helps teachers use chants and increases their awareness of stress and rhythm in spoken language. This was particularly so in the case of NS teachers.

³ Although the initial minimum goal from this group was twenty participant responses, only sixteen teacher had completed their answers by the cut-off date.

Performance ability was also seen as directly applicable. The expressed view was that musicians, as well as artists, can “think a little more creatively, enhancing the classroom experience”.

Findings: Self Assessment of General Musical Skills and Qualities

In terms of general musical profiles based on the six skills or qualities presented earlier, teachers with a musical background, as might be expected, provided the most confident appraisal. These teachers were strong in all areas, but particularly confident in “facilitating interaction”. Those participants self-identifying as non-musicians, however, emphasised ability in grammatical analysis, sense of rhythm and self discipline in their general musical profiles. This is demonstrated in figure 1 below:

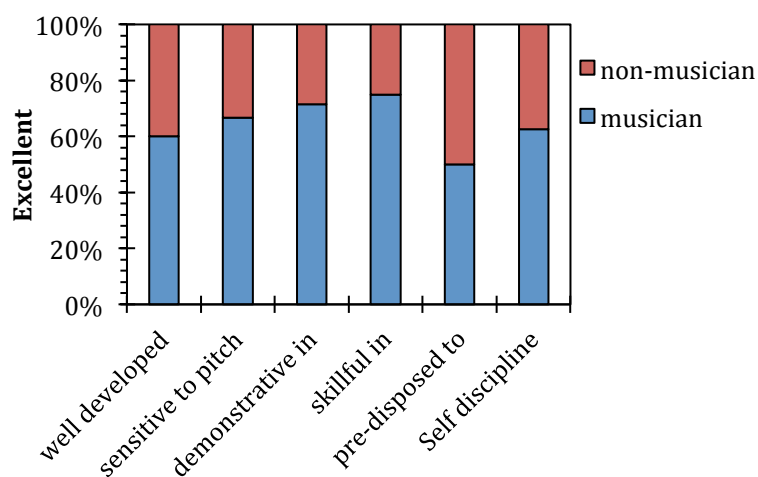


Figure 1. Self assessment of the six musical skills and qualities by musicians/non-musicians

When comparing an excellent skill appraisal between NS and NNS, however, it became clear that NS teachers are far more confident with rhythm, pitch and intonation than their NNS teacher counterparts (see figure 2).

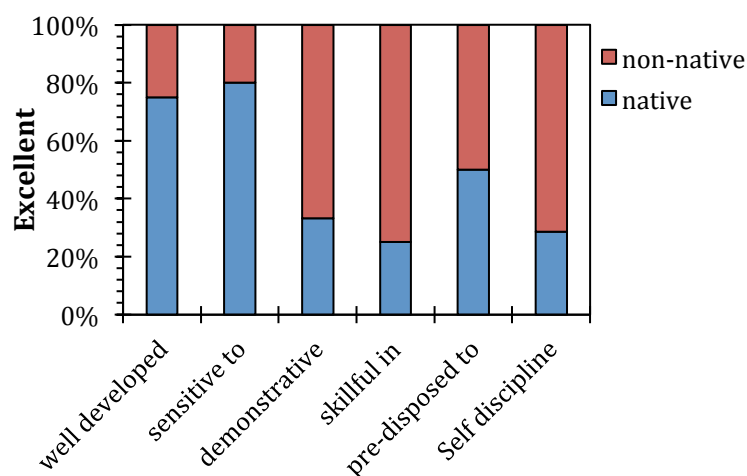


Figure 2. Self assessment of the six musical skills and qualities by native/non-native

Direct and Indirect Use of Music Skills in the Classroom

In terms of indirect application, the respondents in this study considered the indirect application of music as most effective in helping to improve students' memories and assisting them to relax during lessons, harnessing music's affective power (McMullen & Saffran, 2004). The power to induce relaxation was rated higher by NS while NNS teachers stressed memory improvement. The direct use of music skills in the classroom was seen by the majority of both NS and NNS teachers as being most effective in helping students to improve their listening and speaking skills. However, this view was held more strongly by NS musicians than by NNS musicians. Half of the respondents also claimed to use music as a way of awakening students' attention or "switching on the English brain" before class, but very few applied music directly as a motivation tool.

Other examples of the direct application of music included:

- Increasing the sense of "fun" enjoyment and excitement in lessons,
- As a cognitive break during lessons,
- Helping to teach vocabulary where word appeared in "snippets from songs",
- Helping students learn about the culture of English speaking countries by using Christmas songs or folksongs which relate to reading material text and illustrations.

Effectiveness of Specific Musical Techniques in the Language Classroom

In addition to general ideas about the use of music, this study probed the effectiveness of a detailed, though not exhaustive, list of varied musical techniques. Most of these techniques rely on melodic and rhythmic ability (presented as numbers one and two of the list of six musical skills or abilities listed earlier). Techniques examined in the study appear both below and as appendix one part B:

a. Syllable stress marking	h. Tap on desk	etc
b. Feeling the beat by sounding the word out	i. Clap the hands	m. Humming
c. Using a percussion sequence	j. Play a simple instrument to emphasize loudness	n. Hand gestures to indicate pitch change
d. Using an open and closed palm	k. Use a rubber band as a visual image for the length of variation in syllables	o. Directive gestures
e. Finger snapping	l. Use kazoos (an instrument you play by holding it to your lips)	p. Counting/reading aloud
f. Foot tapping/foot stomping		q. Using the metronome
g. Body percussion		r. Ensemble experience
		s. Use of words and Mnemonics

Variation appeared between the profiles of musician and non-musician and NS and NNS teachers in terms of the application of these skills. The following six techniques were given the highest ratings by musicians and appear in order of importance. The majority of these relate directly to intonation or stress (pitch or rhythm):

1. Ensemble experience
2. Feeling the beat by sounding the word out
3. Syllable stress marking
4. Using a percussion sequence
5. Directive gestures
6. Hand gestures to indicate pitch change

Of these six, the same first four techniques were also most highly appraised by NS respondents. However, NS teachers appeared less confident about using simple idiophones or gadgets in the language classroom, giving only an average self-appraisal for the use of rubber bands, kazoos or the metronome.

Non-musicians gave the most confident self-appraisal for the application of rhythmical skills, such as using the metronome, feeling the beat by sounding the work out, finger snapping, body percussion (as well as playing a simple instrument and humming). More detailed variation in skill transference appraisal can be seen in the following series of graphs (see figures 3 to 8 below):

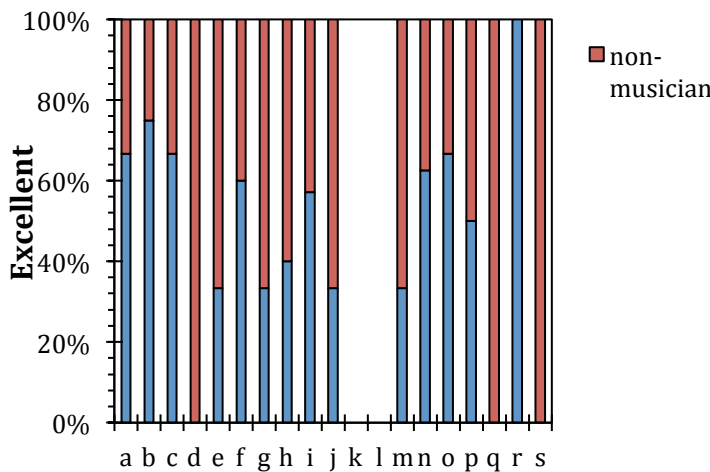


Figure 3. Excellent transference appraisal: musicians/non-musicians

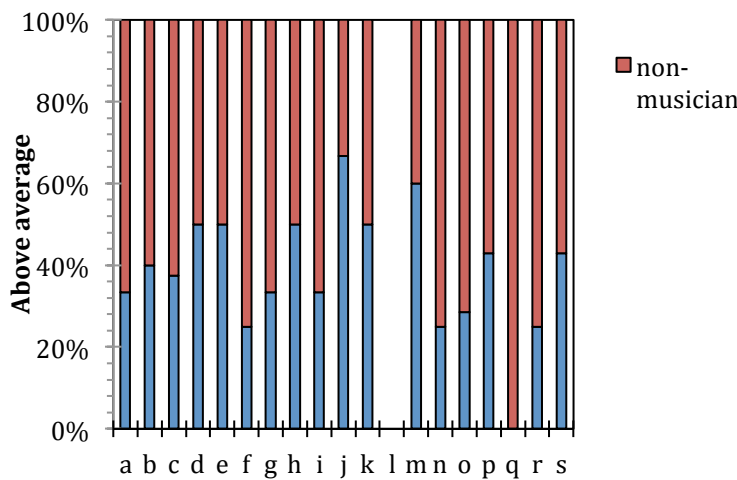


Figure 4. Above average transference appraisal: musicians/non-musicians

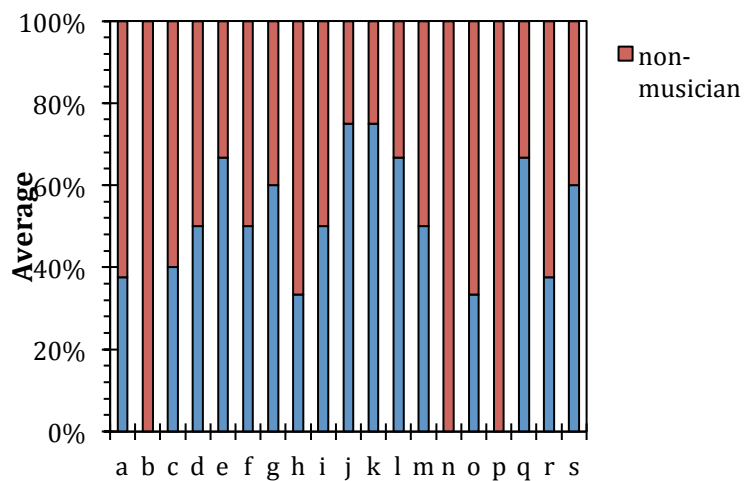


Figure 5. Average transference appraisal: musicians/non-musicians

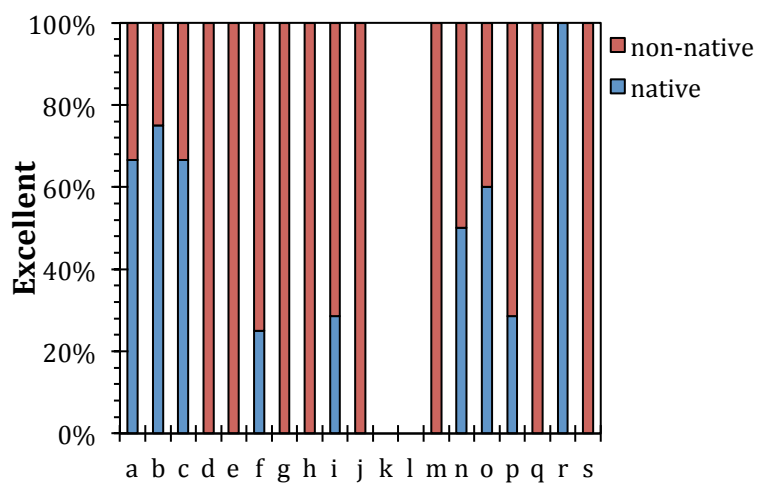


Figure 6. Excellent transference appraisal native/non-native

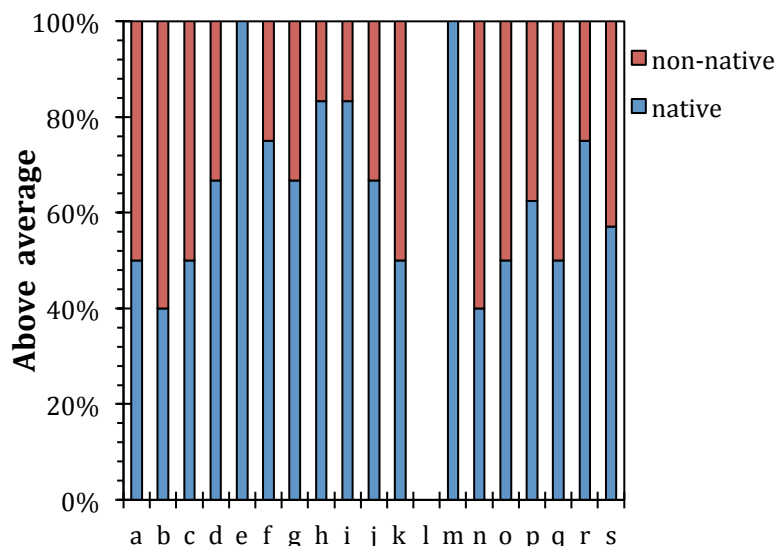


Figure 7. Above average transference appraisal native/non-native

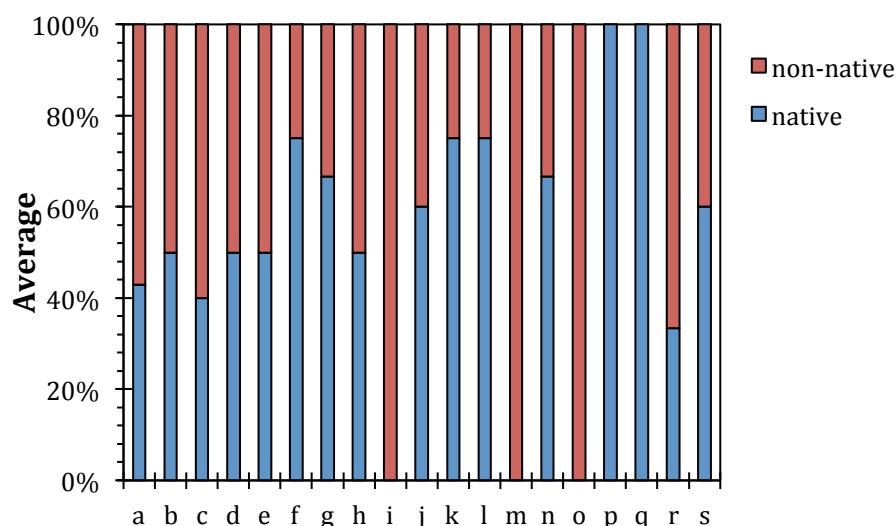


Figure 8. Average transference appraisal native/non-native

Use of Melody as a Tool to Improve Spoken Contours

Anticipating the possibility that a direct connection between melody/rhythm and intonation/stress, an aspect brought into focus by Suzuki and Kawai (2009), might be highlighted by this study, these areas were further interrogated in the questionnaire. In terms of practical application, only half of NS respondents and half of NNS respondents claimed to have used melody as a tool to improve spoken contours. Interestingly, however, while all NS teachers who identified as musicians used melody in this way, NNS musicians did so to a much lesser extent. Meanwhile, one NS respondent claimed that intonation is “the most important aspect of pronunciation and can have a huge effect on communication”.

Approaches included:

- “Melodicizing” a word within a sentence by clapping or performing dance movements simultaneously with the particular word,
- Drawing attention to intonation rises and falls by asking students to use their hands to indicate rises and fall of tone and then exaggerating these details in songs.

Use of Rhythm drills to Improve Syllable Stress

Over half of NS teachers and all NS musician teachers had used rhythm drills to improve syllable stress. Only half of NNS teacher used rhythm drills in this way and, interestingly, NNS speaking musicians to a much lesser extent. The concern was expressed that because of the innate “shyness” of some adult Japanese learners of English, rhythm drills involving clapping can only be done with “more expressive people”.

Approaches included:

- Chants conducted with rhythm programmes,
- Chants conducted with gestures,
- Use of rap songs.

The use of rap songs was described by a non-native speaking teacher. At the same time, this teacher showed no concern that ebonic materials, lyrics based on the “style of English spoken by a majority of African-Americans” (Collins, 1999, p. 201), might be at variance with standard patterns of English pronunciation.

General Findings and Implications for Teacher Development and Training

This study revealed that musical skills are applied in broad and various ways in the language classroom, including subliminally for mood control and enhancement. However, participants considered the links between rhythm and stress as well as between melody and intonation to be the most important. While all teachers appeared generally confident when applying various rhythm techniques, the use of melody to improve intonation contours was used to a much lesser extent particularly by NNS teachers. The confirmation of strong links between rhythm and stress, and between melody and intonation suggests that language teacher training programmes need to emphasize these elements when dealing with music.

The differences that emerged between NS teachers and NNS speaking teachers also have strong implications for teacher development and training language teachers to use music. NNS appear to need much more extensive practice in employing rhythm drills and chants. It is vital that a systematic approach be developed to assist NNS teachers in managing these skill areas effectively. At the same time, NS teacher trainees need to be made more aware of the broader educational potential of music, including its potential to enhance memory. Variation between NS and NNS teachers also brings to light the importance of emphasising cultural sensitivity when training language teachers. This is especially so since many of these trainees will go on to work in a wide variety of different cultures and in different parts of the world. The study also showed that musical ability doesn’t currently influence the hiring decisions of employers in Japan. However, perhaps as a result of this study, the benefits of

music could be stressed, encouraging more musicians to enrol in professional language teacher training courses.

In Japan, a significant body of teaching material has been developed by Graham (2002) and there is “a plethora of educational literature and web-based materials discussing the use of songs in the ESL classroom” (Li & Brand, 2009, p. 74). Nevertheless, there is still a pressing need for an approach that helps teachers apply musical techniques systematically, specifically addresses melodic as well as rhythmic elements, and can be applied to any kind or length of text. In answer to this need, the authors propose RMR (Rhythmic/Melodic Recalibration), which is an experimental method outlined in the following section. This approach was previously used by one of the authors in several Tokyo universities between 2006—2008. Prompted by the findings of the current research, a streamlined version of RMR is presented below. The authors consider that this approach would be of great benefit to language teachers, students and teachers in training.

RMR (Rhythmic/Melodic Recalibration): A new, strategic avenue for musical skill transference

Step One

The first stage in RMR is to extract an underlying rhythmic pattern from target language or text and present it to students as a percussive sequence. To do this, basic syllable stress is identified and marked as in the example below (figure 9), where stress or accent is indicated by a black triangle above the syllable:

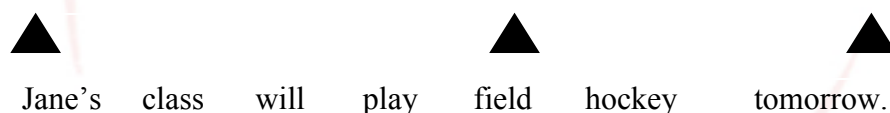


Figure 9. RMR Step One: Mark Main Accents

Step Two: Next, a rhythmic sequence is created based on the main accents as follows:

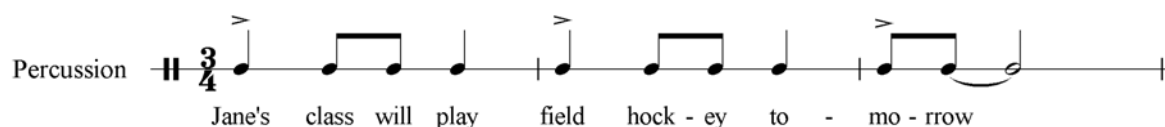


Figure 10. RMR Step Two: Create Percussion Sequence

Application of Steps One and Two

At this stage, before the melodic element is considered, the text (word, sentence or passage) can be presented and drilled purely rhythmically. Any combination of the techniques listed earlier in this paper, such as open and closed palm clapping, finger

snapping, foot-stomping etc, can be applied. Next, students are encouraged to imitate the basic pattern while the instructor joins in on stressed syllables for emphasis. Students then produce the target language while simultaneously producing the rhythmic pattern. Later in the lesson, as an extra activity, three alternative sentences are presented while students, in pairs, clap the rhythm to a particular word or sentence and their partner guesses which one was intended. Prior to this 2012 study when RMR was used experimentally, the importance of percussion games in accustoming Japanese students was emphasised by NS teacher Lynda Hurcomb, who claimed that these are memorable activities which she used “all the time” while teaching.⁴

Step Three: Having determined the underlying melodic pattern, the next step in RMR is to consider the general pitch fluctuations and intonation contours in the given text, and exaggerate the intervals to align them with a diatonic musical scale:

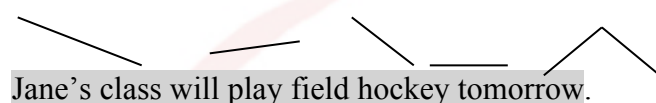


Figure 11. Sketch of general pitch contours

For example, the general dip between the words “Jane” and “class” in the sentence above is made into the musical interval known as a “minor third”, and a similar approach is used for the spoken pitch fluctuations in the rest of the text, as follows:



Figure 12 Pitch contours exaggerated to create a melody

Application of Step Three

Students are encouraged to hum and then sing the RMR melody, with and without the original words. Following this, students return to producing the phrase as spoken language. As the phrase reoccurs during the lesson, the teacher can briefly hum the melody to encourage students to self-correct. This is particularly useful for combating the habitual delivery of target language in a pitch-flat or neutral manner.

Although it can be suggested that RMR presupposes a high degree of musical ability to implement, it should be emphasised that only simple rhythms and the use of the white keys of a piano keyboard alone (within the maximum range of an octave) are required. Also, although the examples presented above have been scored on musical staves, the widespread availability of simple recording technology, which is even becoming ubiquitous on mobile telephones in the twenty-first century, make music literacy unnecessary as a prerequisite for the application of RMR.

⁴ L. Hurcomb, Pre-study questionnaire, 19 October 2010.

Conclusion

This article has helped to promote a better understanding of the factors that underlie the perception of musicians as capable teachers. At the same time, it determined that musical skills were not currently a significant element in the hiring process beyond providing musical teachers with extra confidence at the time of their application. The study focussed on a relevant, transferrable set of skills based on a broad conception of musical ability, and determined that musicians, in particular, are most confident applying them to language teaching. Surprisingly, however, “skilful in facilitating interaction” emerged as a strongly appraised skill area, highlighting the importance of maintaining a broad conception of musical ability. This incorporated the idea of musical ability as a social construct when conducting contemporary research into music and language.

It is also important that the focus on strengths should not eclipse the corresponding possibility of weakness in the cognitive profiles of musicians. For example, when musical skills relate to pronunciation and spoken language as occurs in the case of NS in an ALT (assistant language teacher) setting, reflecting a bias towards aural skills may be positive. On the other hand, there is no reason to expect that musicians will show correspondingly strong ability in teaching other aspects of language, such as literacy, style and non-musical English for specific purposes. Also, it should be recognized that the expressive ability that predisposes the music graduate to confidently model language, if not coupled with sensitivity to student position, might put students off and make them feel inadequate or discouraged. Such a situation might occur in the case of a teacher who is too strongly performance oriented.

The breadth of potential musical techniques that are applicable to teaching language have been clearly illustrated in this study. At the same time, the primacy of basic, melodic and rhythmic areas have also been confirmed. The adoption of the RMR method has been proposed by the authors in recognition of less confident NNS self-appraisals for melody and rhythm. The understandings gained from this study can also be applied to further streamline the training of teachers with musical backgrounds. They will be of great value when modulating curriculum design to maximize the effectiveness of musicians currently employed as teachers of language.

Further research and on-going monitoring of English teachers with musical backgrounds would contribute greatly to understanding the process of skill-transference itself. This understanding would make it possible to create training materials that are specific to teachers’ backgrounds. A fascinating question prompted by the current musical study is whether graduates from disciplines as varied as drama, engineering, computer science or health each have discipline-specific skills that are potentially valuable for transference to the language classroom. The need from more scholarly research into this area, especially empirical studies, has been clearly established.

At the present time, it still remains for the individual teacher to manage their transference and without undergoing training specific to the language classroom, or gaining language teaching experience, a music graduate can only be considered a potentially effective language instructor. Nevertheless, it is clear that such teachers

are adapting well and successfully applying their musical skill to teaching a “speech mode” of communication.

Works Cited

- Besson, M., & Schön, D. (2001). Comparison between language and music. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 930(1), 232-258.
- Boespflug, G. (1999). Popular music and the instrumental ensemble. *Music Educators Journal*, 85(6), 33-37.
- Bolduc, J. (2008). The effects of music instruction on emergent literacy capacities among preschool children: A literature review. *Early Childhood research and practice*, 10(1).
- Bolinger, D. (1985). *Intonation and its parts: Melody in spoken English*: Stanford University Press.
- Broughton, M., Stevens, C., & Malloch, S. (2009). Music, movement and marimba: an investigation of the role of movement and gesture in communicating musical expression to an audience. *Psychology of Music*, 37(2), 137.
- Clennell, C. (1997). Raising the pedagogic status of discourse intonation teaching. *ELT Journal*, 51(2), 117.
- Collins, J. (1999). The Ebonics controversy in context: Literacies, subjectivities, and language ideologies in the United States. *Language ideological debates*, 201-234.
- Cotton, H. (2011). *Music-Based Language Learning in Remote Australian Indigenous Schools*.
- Cross, I. (2012). Music and Biocultural Evolution. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert & R. Middleton (Eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music* (2 ed., pp. 17-27). New York and London: Routledge.
- Cullen, B., & Mulvey, S. (2012). *Fluency development through skill transference*. Paper presented at the Pan-SIG Conference.
- Dai, D., & Schader, R. (2001). Parents' reasons and motivations for supporting their child's music training. *Roeper Review*, 24(1), 23-26.
- Drake, C., Jones, M. R., & Baruch, C. (2000). The development of rhythmic attending in auditory sequences: attunement, referent period, focal attending. *Cognition*, 77(3), 251-288.
- Graham, C. (2002). *Children's Jazz Chants: Old and New*: Oxford University Press Oxford, UK.
- Green, L. (2012). Music Education, Cultural Capital, and Social Group Identity. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert & R. Middleton (Eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music* (2 ed., pp. 206-216). New York and London: Routledge.
- Hallam, S., & Shaw, J. (2002). Constructions of musical ability. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 102-108.
- Il iukien, G. (2005). Teaching English Rhythm Through Jazz Chanting. *Pedagogika*(78), 68.
- Li, X., & Brand, M. (2009). Effectiveness of music on vocabulary acquisition, language usage, and meaning for mainland Chinese ESL learners. *Contributions to music education*, 36(1), 73-84.
- Long, M., & Porter, P. (1985). Group work, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition. *Tesol Quarterly*, 19(2), 207-228.

- McMullen, E., & Saffran, J. R. (2004). Music and language: A developmental comparison. *Music Perception, 21*(3), 289-311.
- Nettl, B. (1958). Some linguistic approaches to musical analysis. *Journal of the International Folk Music Council, 10*, 37-41.
- Nettl, B. (2005). *The study of ethnomusicology: thirty-one issues and concepts*: Univ of Illinois Pr.
- O'Dea, J. (2000). *Virtue or virtuosity?: explorations in the ethics of musical performance* (Vol. 58): Praeger Pub Text.
- Schmidt, C. (1989). An investigation of undergraduate music education curriculum content. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, 42-56*.
- Seddon, F., & Biasutti, M. (2009). A comparison of modes of communication between members of a string quartet and a jazz sextet. *Psychology of Music, 37*(4), 395-415.
- Sloboda, J. A., Davidson, J. W., Howe, M. J. A., & Moore, D. G. (1996). The role of practice in the development of performing musicians. *British Journal of Psychology, 87*(2), 287-309.
- Spector, P. E. (1994). Using self-report questionnaires in OB research: A comment on the use of a controversial method. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 15*(5), 385-392.
- Steedman, M. J. (1984). A generative grammar for jazz chord sequences. *Music Perception, 52-77*.
- Stokes, M. (2012). Globalization and the Politics of World Music. In M. Clayton, T. Herbert & R. Middleton (Eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music* (2 ed., pp. 107-116). New York and London: Routledge.
- Suzuki, N., & Kawai, G. (2009). *Sing-alongs improve linking and reduce vowel epenthesis*. Paper presented at the TESOL.
- Tajima, K., Zawaydeh, A., & Kitahara, M. (1999). A comparative study of speech rhythm in Arabic, English, and Japanese.
- Vella, R. (2007). The 21st Century Conservatorium: Developing. *Inaugural Lecture Newcastle Conservatorium*.
- Vines, B., Wanderley, M., Krumhansl, C., Nuzzo, R., & Levitin, D. (2004). Performance gestures of musicians: What structural and emotional information do they convey? *Gesture-based communication in human-computer interaction, 3887-3887*.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1974). *Second-language learning and teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

Appendix One: Sample Questionnaire

Musicians in the Language Classroom: The Transference of Musical Skills to Teach “Speech Mode of Communication”

This questionnaire was created to evaluate the effectiveness of the transference of musical skills of musicians and non-musician teachers in the Language classroom. Please thoughtfully consider your response to the following questions, and answer as honestly as possible. All efforts will be taken to ensure your anonymity.

A. Self assessment about your general musical skills and qualities. Please check your answer.

	Excellent	above average	average	below average	poor
1. A well developed sense of rhythm					
2. Sensitive to pitch and intonation					
3. Demonstrative in speech and gesture					
4. Skill full in facilitating interaction					
5. Pre-disposed to comprehend grammatical analysis					
6. Self discipline and independent					

3. Self assessment of the effectiveness of your own application of transference of musical skills and techniques in teaching ESL/EFL. Please check your answer according to the degree of effectiveness.

	Excellent	above average	average	below average	poor
1. syllable stress marking					
2. feeling the beat by sounding the word out					
3. percussion sequence					
4. using an open and closed palm					
5. finger snapping					
6. foot tapping/ foot stomping					
7. body percussion					
8. tap on the desk					
9. clap the hands					
10. play simple instrument to emphasize loudness of a stressed syllables					
11. use rubber band as a visual image for the length variation in syllables					
12. use kazoos,etc (an instrument that you play by holding it to your lips making sound into it.					
13. humming					

14. hand gestures to indicate pitch change (conducting)					
15. directive gestures					
16. counting/reading aloud					
17. using the Metronome					
18. ensemble experience					
19. use of words and Mnemonics(something, such as poem to remember a rule)					

2. General Information

Please encircle your answer and answer if there is a follow up question such as why and how.

1. Did your employer know about your musical background when you were hired?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 If yes, do you think it is a big factor why you were hired?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partly
2. Do you view your musical background as strength, when you apply for English teaching position?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Do you think there is a perception of musicians' capability in teaching ESL/EFL in the countries where you have worked?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 If yes, what do you base this view on? Please write. _____

4. How many musicians teaching ESL/EFL have you met?
 - a. 2-3
 - b. 3-4
 - c. 5-6
 - d. 7-8
 - e. 9 and above
5. How do your musical ability and experience help you in the English language classroom?
 - a. Chant a lot
 - b. aware of the proper pronunciation
 - c. Aware of the stress and rhythm
 - c. improve my non- verbal communication
 - d. Others (please write)
6. What are some ways do use your musical skills indirectly in the classroom?
 - a. Use them to improve student's memory
 - b. Use them to lessen their stress when they are going to have an exam
 - c. Use them to relax
 - d. Others. Please write. _____
7. What are some ways do you use your musical skills directly in the classroom?
 - a. use them to wake them up before the class starts
 - b. Use them to motivate the students to study harder
 - c. To improve their listening and speaking by let them listen to the music
 - d. Others (please write)
8. Have you used melody as a tool to improve students spoken intonation contours? How?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

If yes, how? Please write. _____

9. Have you used rhythm drills to improve syllable stress? How?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how? Please write. _____

10. Which category do you belong?

- a. Musicians (music major or well trained in music)
- b. Non-musical major but with certified music training (Please indicate your field of study)
- c. Non-musical major with no certified music training (Please indicate your field of study)

ⁱ It should be pointed out, however, that the preparation of a doctoral thesis in any discipline makes rigorous demands on author in terms of language use.

ⁱⁱ Fieldwork observations: 2004-2006, Hokkaido and 2006-2008, Saitama, Yokohama and Okayama, Japan.

Sociolinguistic Predictors of Language Deficits in Pre-School Children with and without Immigrant Background

Eugen Zaretsky, Goethe-University, Germany,
Harald A. Euler, Ruhr-University, Germany
Katrin Neumann, Ruhr-University, Germany
Benjamin P. Lange, University of Göttingen, Germany

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0037

Abstract

Several potential predictors of language deficits caused by sociolinguistic factors were examined on the basis of a sample of German pre-school children with and without immigration background ($N = 741$, age range 60-99 months, median 70). A classification tree was calculated in SPSS 20 with a division of children in those needing or not needing special educational support in learning German. The model predicted correctly 71% of this dependent variable. Highest priority for the classification was attributed to the fathers' educational level, followed by the immigrant background and illnesses or impairments which influence negatively the language acquisition. Some other factors were not significant: age, sex, mothers' education, parents' language disorders etc. It is probable that the fathers' education is an indirect link to his IQ and/or the family's income which pre-determine other factors influencing language acquisition.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics

In the recent decades, Germany has been facing the challenge of integrating immigrants from many different countries, especially, from Turkey and Eastern Europe. In this short article, some sociolinguistic factors are discussed which might influence the language acquisition/learning progress in German and immigrant preschool children. The variable of interest was a classification of all children as those needing (EH) or not needing (NEH) additional educational help in learning/acquiring German. EH-children were defined as those whose language skills were below the 17th percentile of the reference group (1 standard deviation below the mean), with separate test norms for Germans and immigrants. For instance, if the child's grammar skills correspond to the 4th percentile in the reference population, it means that only 4% of tested children had the same or worse grammar skills. The classification as EH usually presupposes that the child might profit not from language therapy, but rather from educational help, that is, language courses or special language training. However, it does not preclude that the child might also have some medical issues.

As has already been shown for one of the databases used here, extra linguistic factors do influence the language acquisition progress in some immigrant groups (Zaretsky, Neumann, Euler, & Lange, 2013). For instance, Turks acquire German under very unfavorable conditions, which means that they have very little contact to German and Germans in the first years of life. Consequently, their progress in the acquisition of the German language is minimal in comparison with other immigrants. Russian speaking children, on the contrary, acquire German under better conditions and show significantly better language progress. In the present study, the language status of all immigrant children as one group is examined.

In order to assess the language status of the test subjects, at least two effective methods are available: a general language test and a plural test. Indeed, results of the plural tasks are so closely associated with the performance in other language domains that one can draw reliable conclusions on the language development of the child on the basis of the plural error patterns alone (Zaretsky et al., in press; Zaretsky, Lange, Euler, & Neumann, 2013). Unfortunately, the research on the German plural patterns often resulted in confusing and contradicting findings, probably due to limited sample sizes and inconsistent study designs. For instance, according to Schaner-Wolles (1989), only 20% of the four-year-old Germans were able to produce the correct plural form of the noun *Apfel* 'apple'. However, these 20% referred to only two children out of ten. In one of our databases (4,280 four-year-old monolingual Germans tested with a modified version of the speech and language screening Marburger Sprachscreening (Euler et al., 2010; Neumann et al., 2011)), more than two-thirds of the children produced this particular plural form correctly. In her small longitudinal study of German preschool children, Szagun (2001) found a tendency to substitute the plural marker *-s* with *-er* (e.g., *Autos* > *Auter* 'cars'). In our large-scale data, such overgeneralizations never occurred. Bittner and Köpcke (2001) analyzed only 67 wrong plural forms produced by eight German preschoolers and came to the conclusion that the omission of *-l* after a schwa (*Vöge* instead of *Vögel* 'birds') belongs to the most frequent error patterns in plural acquisition (15% of all errors). In our data, among more than 4,000 wrong plural forms, only seven such omissions occurred, all with the nonsense word *Tapset* (*Tapse*). Obviously, a very rare phenomenon which happened to occur several times in the small sample of Bittner and Köpcke (2001), probably due to idiolectal or dialectal peculiarities, was

erroneously described as one of the most widespread pluralization patterns. In spite of these contradicting findings, we demonstrated in Zaretsky et al. (in press) that certain plural error patterns are clearly associated with the advanced or limited command of German and that plural tasks correlate highly with the overall language status. In the present study, we utilized the grammar subtest from the widely used German language test SETK 3-5 (Grimm, 2001) for the assessment of the language status additionally to MSS. This grammar subtests contains only plural items.

Here, the sample is not subdivided into further groups, as such subdivisions are to be analyzed in other publications. Instead, factors predicting the classification as EH or NEH are analyzed for all children acquiring German. Nevertheless, the immigrant background is taken into account as one of the (dichotomous) variables which might influence the classification as EH or NEH.

Methods

Extra linguistic variables were assessed by questionnaires which belong to a new modified, validated version of the speech and language test Marburger Sprachscreening (MSS). The questionnaires were filled out by parents and daycare center teachers. First, extra linguistic variables from questionnaires were analyzed on the basis of a large sample ($N = 2,857$) of children acquiring German: 1,560 boys (55%) and 1,297 girls (45%), age range between 36 and 92 months, median 51 months. According to questionnaires and information from the daycare centers, 1,698 of these children were monolingual Germans and 1,159 children were either bilingual and/or had another mother tongue than German. Taking into account that the MSS questionnaires had already been validated, we expected that most of the factors would yield significant results.

All children were tested with MSS. A subgroup ($N = 1,521$) was also tested with the grammar subtest (plural tasks) of the language test SETK 3-5. Because the point biserial correlation between the SETK 3-5 plural score and the classification of all children as needing or not needing additional medical or educational support in learning German was almost as high as for the MSS total score ($r_{ps} = -.655$, $N = 1,298$, vs. $-.704$, $N = 1,401$, $ps < .001$), SETK 3-5 result can be considered an additional examination of the language status (and not only of grammar skills) of the test sample. The Spearman correlation coefficient between SETK 3-5 and the total score of correct answers in MSS was even higher: $\rho = .782$, $p < .001$, $N = 1,521$. On the basis of the language tests, audio records, and questionnaires for parents and daycare center teachers, all children were classified as EH or NEH by speech and language therapists and researchers with a PhD in linguistics.

Sociolinguistic variables from questionnaires for parents and daycare center teachers were assessed by means of correlations and cross-tables with the variable of interest, namely classification of all children as EH or NEH. For dichotomous data, Pearson's dichotomous correlations were utilized because they specify the direction of the link (positive or negative correlations) and its strength. For the metric variables, point biserial correlations were utilized. For ordinal variables, not Pearson's Chi-Square values, but linear-by-linear associations (L-b-L) were calculated because they deliver more precise results in such cases. For nominal variables with more than two categories, Chi-Square values were calculated.

All sociolinguistic variables which yielded significant or marginally significant ($p \leq .09$) results, entered the second part of the study. This part aimed at the identification of the most important sociolinguistic variables by means of the classification tree (growing method: Exhaustive Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detectors). Classification trees visualize hierarchical relations between factors, with the most important ones on top. Bonferroni adjustment of the p -value was applied automatically in SPSS. The dependent variable was the classification of children as EH or NEH.

The second sample consisted of 741 children: 393 boys and 348 girls, age range 60-99 months, median 70. Not all of the children could be unanimously classified as Germans or immigrants, but according to the information from questionnaires and testers, 288 children (39%) were Germans and 412 children (56%) were immigrants. Children were tested with several language tests appropriate for their age: ETS 4-8 (Angermeier, 2007), AWST-R (Kiese-Himmel, 2005), Mottier (Mottier, 1951), and S-ENS (Döpfner, Dietmair, Mersmann, Simon, & Trost-Brinkhues, 2005) including some additional validated tasks called S-ENS b below. The same linguistic domains were examined as in the first part of the study: speech comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, articulation, and phonological short-term memory. The tests were provided during the school enrolment examination. On the basis of the test results, the children were again classified as EH or NEH by the language experts.

Both samples of children were tested in daycare centers, but in case of the second one three public health centers were also involved. Parents were asked to sign an informed consent beforehand. All tests were conducted between the years 2008 and 2012, mostly in the German state of Hesse.

Immigrant background was one of the most important variables in the database used in this study. As was shown in Zaretsky et al. (2013) and Zaretsky et al. (in press), where the same database was used, the differences between children with and without immigrant background were highly significant for any language test and subtest. In the present study, we visualize these differences by means of boxplots with total scores of several language tests. The Results section begins with this visualization. After that, the sociolinguistic factors associated with the classification of children as EH and NEH are analyzed separately for the Germans, immigrants, and for both groups together. Finally, the most important factors are identified by means of the classification tree.

Results

The differences between test total scores of Germans and immigrants in both parts of the study are visualized in four boxplots, see Figure 1.

Figure 1. Boxplots with the total scores of the language tests MSS (speech comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, articulation, phonological short-term memory), ETS (grammar, speech comprehension), S-ENS b (speech comprehension, grammar, vocabulary), and AWST-R (vocabulary).

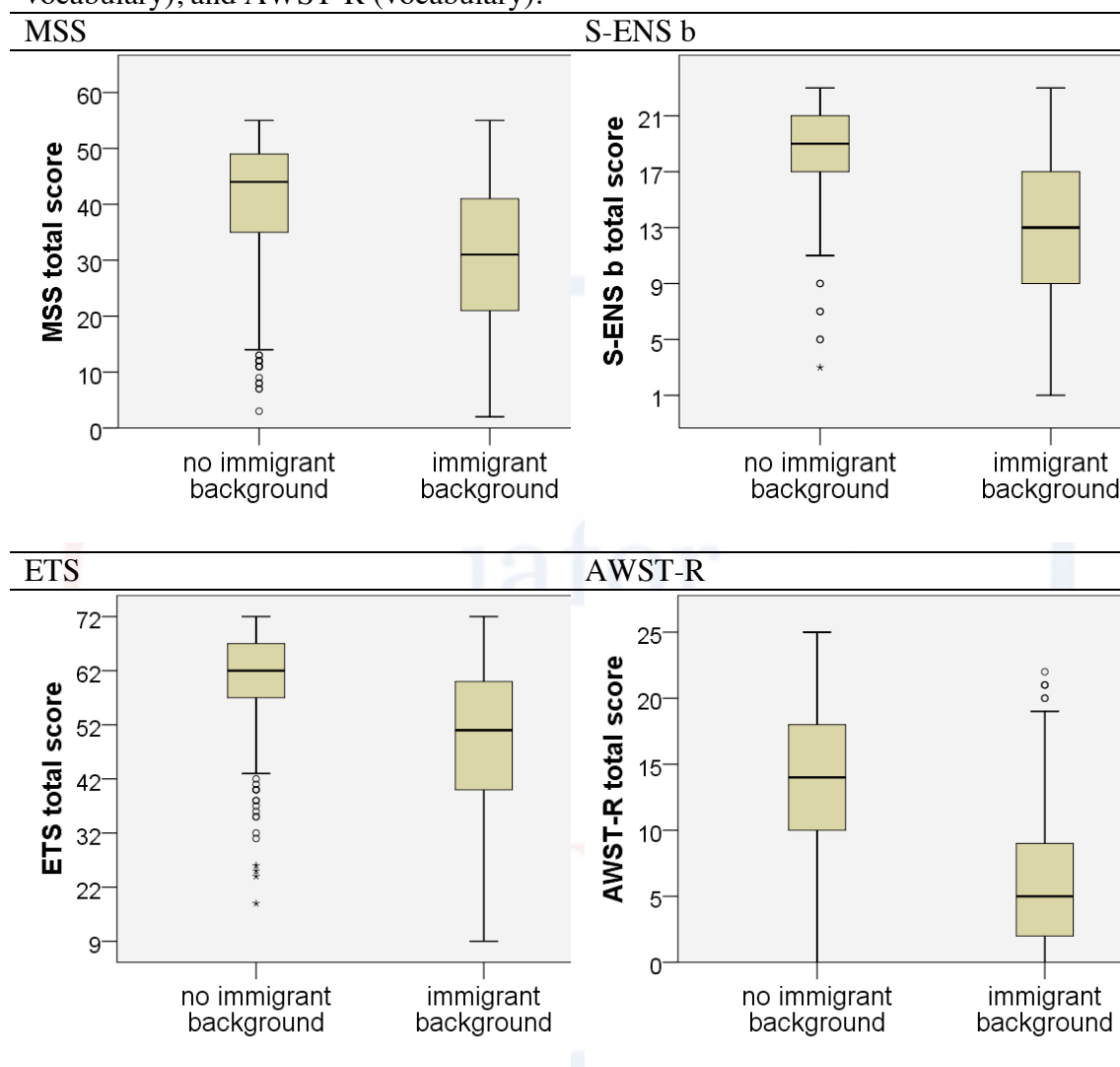


Figure 1 visualizes the necessity of presenting the study results for children with and without immigrant background separately. The boxes show the median, the first and third quartiles. 50% of all cases (here: tested children) are represented within the box. About 95% of all cases are located within the whiskers. Except for AWST-R where the length of the whiskers for both groups cannot be clearly identified, the results for immigrant children indicate more variance. For all four tests, lower median values for immigrant children are obvious.

Results of the first part of the study – identification of sociolinguistic variables associated with the classification of children as EH/NEH – are given in Table 1.

Some questions referred only to immigrant families (e.g., the age when parents began to learn German). Such questions are not mentioned in the columns “Germans” and “Both Germans and immigrants”. Exact significance values are given only for significant or marginally significant results (marked bold in Table 1).

Table 1. Relevance of variables from questionnaires for daycare center teachers and parents for the classification of German preschool children as those needing or not needing additional educational support in learning German.

Sociolinguistic factors from the questionnaires	Germans		Immigrants		Both Germans and immigrants	
Pearson's dichotomous correlations						
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Sex of the child	-.062	.018	-.070	.023	-.064	.001
Attendance of a nursery school in the first two years of life	.118	.006	.167	.002	.189	<.001
The child attends daycare center for half a day or a full day	-0.45	>.05	-.109	.075	-.035	>.05
The child attends daycare center regularly	.012	>.05	.093	>.05	.108	.008
The child has an illness or an impairment which influence negatively the language acquisition	-.265	<.001	.154	.016	-.175	<.001
There is at least one more child in the daycare center group who speaks the same foreign language	-	-	-.170	.011	-	-
The child is a member of some association or study group	.132	<.001	.204	<.001	.236	<.001
The child plays with German speaking children after the daycare center time	-	-	.187	<.001	-	-
The child speaks his/her mother tongue appropriate for his/her age	-	-	-.038	>.05	-	-
The child has often otitis media	.037	>.05	.270	<.001	.077	.051
Problems with reading and writing in the family	-.110	.003	.017	>.05	-.021	>.05
Language disorders in the family	-.090	.016	-.046	>.05	-.029	>.05
Stuttering in the family	.102	.070	.125	.016	.090	.018
The child has a permanent hearing disorder	.091	>.05	.011	>.05	.025	>.05
The child has a permanent visual disorder	-.072	>.05	-.060	>.05	-0.46	>.05
The child had a preterm or risk birth, or its birth weight was less than 1500 gr	.363	<.001	0.15	>.05	.146	.005
Cross-tables						
	χ^2 or L-b-L	<i>p</i>	χ^2 or L-b-L	<i>p</i>	χ^2 or L-b-L	<i>p</i>
The child likes to play with other	20.71	<.001	6.84	.009	30.93	<.001

children						
The child speaks out when playing with other children	37.60	<.001	29.10	<.001	88.68	<.001
The child plays with German children	-	-	21.66	<.001	-	-
Age when the child had enough language contact to learn German	-	-	105.00	<.001	-	-
How often the child speaks with other immigrants in his/her mother tongue	-	-	.44	>.05	-	-
The child does not hear well	35.80	<.001	17.15	<.001	41.75	<.001
Educational level of the mother	-*	-	12.49	.014	12.22	.016
Educational level of the father	-*	-	7.31	>.05	8.09	.088
Point biserial correlations						
Age when the mother began to learn German	-	-	.248	.003	-	-
Age when the father began to learn German	-	-	.135	>.05	-	-
Age of the child in months	-.018	>.05	-.121	<.001	-.055	.007
Length of daycare center attendance in months	-.051	>.05	-.207	<.001	-.143	<.001

*not enough cases

All significant and marginally significant factors were utilized for a classification tree with the second sample, that is, a sample of 741 German and immigrant children tested during the school enrolment examinations, see Table 2.

Node 0. Classification of children as EH or NEH		
Category	%	n
NEH	69.9	518
EH	30.1	223
Total	100.0	741

Fathers' educational level. $\chi^2_{(2)} = 60.66, p < .001$

Node 1. Low: secondary school certificates and "other"			Node 2. High: Matura or a high school			Node 3. Average: intermediate school-leaving certificates		
Category	%	n	Category	%	n	Category	%	n
NEH	49.6	57	NEH	84.6	258	NEH	63.2	203
EH	50.4	58	EH	15.4	47	EH	36.8	118
Total	100.0	115	Total	100.0	305	Total	100.0	321

Immigrant background. $\chi^2_{(1)} = 53.26, p < .001$

Immigrant background. $\chi^2_{(1)} = 39.17, p < .001$

Node 4. Germans			Node 5. Immigrants		Node 6. Germans			Node 7. Immigrants	
Category	%	n	n	Category	%	n	%	n	
NEH	36.1	273	41	NEH	82.3	116	48.3	87	
EH	63.9	483	24	EH	17.7	25	51.7	93	
Total	100.0	756	65	Total	100.0	141	24.3	180	

The child has an illness or impairment which influences negatively the language acquisition. $\chi^2_{(1)} = 9.65, p = .008$

Node 8. No

Node 9.

Category	%	Yes	
		%	n
NEH	58	73. 4	58
EH	4	26. 6	21
Total	62	10. 7	79

Table 2. Classification tree for the prediction of children as needing (EH) or not needing (NEH) additional educational help in learning German.

The logo for 'iafor' is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by two large, overlapping, semi-transparent circular arcs. One arc is light blue and the other is light red, creating a stylized circular frame around the text.

iafor

Discussion

In this study, some extra linguistic factors which might influence or might be associated with the classification of German and immigrant children as those needing (EH) or not needing (NEH) additional educational support in the language learning were scrutinized. First, questionnaires for parents and daycare center teachers were examined in respect to the correlations or associations with the classification of children as EH or NEH. Because the questionnaires had already been validated as a part of a new version of the speech and language test MSS, most of the factors yielded significant results for our study sample as well. Next, extra linguistic factors which had been shown to be relevant entered a classification tree with the classification of children as EH or NEH as dependent variable in order to identify the most important variables associated with the language development of the German preschool children. Another sample of children was tested linguistically and classified as EH or NEH by the same language experts. Fathers' educational level was shown to be of the utmost value, followed by the immigrant background and impairments or illnesses which influence negatively the language acquisition.

In the first part of the study, namely the validation of the extra linguistic factors, no contra-intuitive results were identified. Children who need additional language training are more often male than female (although the association was very weak), they do not attend the daycare center regularly, have various comorbidities (e.g., hearing disorders), are not members in any associations or study groups, have various language disorders or problems in the family, or had a preterm or risk birth. Also, they do not like to play with other children, do not speak out when playing, and the educational level of their parents is comparatively low. In our sample, such children were also a little younger and attended daycare center for a shorter period of time (in months) than NEH-children. For the linguistic development of immigrant children it is also of importance whether they attend daycare center for a full day or half a day (the longer the better for their language status), whether there are other children in their daycare center group who speak the same foreign language, and whether they play with German children. Very important is the age when immigrant children began to acquire German. Even the age when their mothers began to learn German was of significant importance.

In the second part of the study, relevant factors entered a classification tree with the classification of children as EH or NEH as the dependent variable. The variable with the highest ranking for this classification was the fathers' educational level. The higher the educational level of the fathers, the less likely children were classified as EH. For children whose fathers had an average or high educational level, the immigrant background also played an important role (immigrant children were more often classified as EH) and for children whose fathers had an average educational level, the presence or absence of medical issues was identified as a relevant factor (children with language-related impairments and illnesses were more often classified as EH). For the children whose fathers had a low educational level, no further important factors were found.

The educational level of fathers is probably closely associated with other factors which could not be documented due to ethical or organizational reasons, e.g., IQ of the child or income of the family. Unfortunately, the question on the educational

level was also answered very reluctantly by our participants. It is to be assumed that families where fathers have a high educational level and earn comparatively much can afford more expensive and more sophisticated toys (which might result in a better cognitive training), more private tutors, and better educational facilities. For instance, it has been shown that children learn German more quickly in better equipped preschool facilities (that is, facilities with more books, more space, more games, and learning materials) than in less equipped ones (Becker, 2010). Also, such families are probably more liable to be in contact with other individuals or families with a high educational level, which guarantees a qualitatively and quantitatively better language input for children in comparison with the children from less educated and poorer families.

Our results are in accordance with the results of the PISA study that confirmed that in almost no other country social and ethnic background as well as educational background of parents determine student achievement as much as in Germany (Entorf & Minoiu, 2005). For instance, the gap between the most disadvantaged immigrant group (that is, children of foreign parents who speak a foreign language at home) in reading skills and the group of natives (children who were born in Germany and speak German at home) amounts to 105.7 PISA score points for Germany, cf. 27.5 points for Australia and 25.5 for Canada (Entorf & Minoiu, 2005).

To sum up, according to our findings, advances in the acquisition / learning of the German language depend predominantly on the educational level of the fathers (that is, probably linked to family income and other factors such as IQ) and on the immigrant background. These results are in accordance with the findings of the PISA study that revealed that in Germany the reading scores of school children depend to a very large extent on the income, immigrant background, and educational status of the parents.

References

- Angermeier, M. J. W. (2007). *ETS 4-8. Entwicklungstest Sprache für Kinder von 4 bis 8 Jahren [ETS 4-8. Test on language development of children aged 4-8]*. Frankfurt / Main, Germany: Harcourt Test Services GmbH.
- Becker, B. (2010). Wer profitiert mehr vom Kindergarten? Die Wirkung der Kindergartenbesuchsdauer und Ausstattungsqualität auf die Entwicklung des deutschen Wortschatzes bei deutschen und türkischen Kindern [Who profits more from the daycare centers? The impact of the length of daycare center attendance and quality of its equipment on the development of the German vocabulary in German and Turkish children]. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 62(1), 139–163.
- Bittner, D. & Köpcke, K.-M. (2001). The acquisition of German plural markings: a case study in natural and cognitive morphology. In C. Schaner-Wolles, J. Rennison & F. Neubarth (eds.), *Naturally! Linguistic studies in honour of Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler presented on the occasion of his 60th birthday* (pp. 47–58). Turin, Italy: Rosenberg & Sellier.
- Döpfner, M., Dietmair, I., Mersmann, H., Simon, K., & Trost-Brinkhues, G. (2005). *S-ENS. Screening des Entwicklungsstandes bei Einschulungsuntersuchungen*

- [S-ENS . Screening of the developmental level during school enrolment tests]. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- Entorf, H., & Minoiu, N. (2005). What a difference immigration policy makes: A comparison of PISA scores in Europe and traditional countries of immigration. *German Economic Review* 6(3): 355–376.
- Euler, H. A., Holler-Zittlau, I., van Minnen, S., Sick, U., Dux, W., Zaretsky, Y., & Neumann, K. (2010). Psychometrische Gütekriterien eines Kurztests zur Erfassung des Sprachstandes vierjähriger Kinder [Psychometric quality criteria of a language screening for four-year-old children]. *HNO*, 58(11), 1116–1123.
- Grimm, H. (2001). *SETK 3-5. Sprachentwicklungstest für drei- bis fünfjährige Kinder* [SETK 3-5. Test of language development for three to five year old children]. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- Kiese-Himmel, C. (2005). *AWST-R. Aktiver Wortschatztest für 3- bis 5-jährige Kinder – Revision* [AWST-R. An active vocabulary test for three to five year old children – Revision]. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- Mottier, G. (1951). Mottier-Test. Über Untersuchungen zur Sprache lesegestörter Kinder [Mottier test. On examinations of the language of children with reading disorders]. *Folia Phoniatica*, 3, 170–177.
- Neumann, K., Holler-Zittlau, I., van Minnen, S., Sick, U., Zaretsky, Y., & Euler, H. A. (2011). Katzensgoldstandards in der Sprachstandserfassung: Sensitivität und Spezifität des Kindersprachscreenings (KiSS) [Fool's gold standards in language screening. Sensitivity and specificity of the Hessian child language screening test (Kindersprachscreening, KiSS)]. *HNO (eHNO)*, 59(1), 97–109.
- Schaner-Wolles, C. (1989). Plural- vs. Komparativerwerb im Deutschen – Von der Diskrepanz zwischen konzeptueller und morphologischer Entwicklung [Plural vs. comparative acquisition: on the discrepancy between conceptual and morphological development]. In H. Günther (ed.), *Experimentelle Studien zur deutschen Flexionsmorphologie* (pp. 155–186). Hamburg, Germany: Buske.
- Szagan, G. (2001). Learning different regularities: the acquisition of noun plurals by German-speaking children. *First Language* 21, 109–141.
- Zaretsky, E., Lange, B. P., Euler, H.A., & Neumann, K. In press. Acquisition of German pluralization rules in monolingual and multilingual children. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*.
- Zaretsky, E., Neumann, K., Euler, H. A., & Lange, B. P. (2013). Pluralerwerb im Deutschen bei russisch- und türkischsprachigen Kindern im Vergleich mit anderen Migranten und monolingualen Muttersprachlern [German plural acquisition in Russian and Turkish speaking children in comparison with other immigrants and monolingual native speakers]. *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 58(1), 43–71.

Promoting Problem Based Learning (PBL) in ESL Classrooms at UNIKL MITEC

Farah Idayu Mohd Salleh, Universiti Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology, Malaysia
Jamilah Tun Md. Ghazali, Universiti Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology, Malaysia
Syazwa Nabila Mohd Raidzuan, Universiti Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0040

Abstract

This research was carried out to examine how *Problem-Based Learning* (PBL) can be adopted and applied in *English as a Second Language* (ESL) learning contexts. For this purpose, students of University of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology will be learning their lessons using PBL and they will be given a questionnaire on the relevance of using PBL in ESL classroom. For data collection, one set of questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 Diploma of Industrial Logistic students. The overall findings of this research show that students have very positive perception of the learning English using PBL. Based on the results of this research, a learning style using PBL will be developed to improve teaching and learning style of English subject.

Introduction

Problem-based learning (PBL) acquires students to work together in small groups to solve real-world problems. PBL is an active and interactive process that engages students to identify their known and unknown knowledge of their respective field and the connection to the real-life situation. Their derived internal motivation to solve the problem will be used to find new knowledge and apply their learnt knowledge to resolve the given problem. PBL can be combined with lecture to form a hybrid model of teaching, and it can be implemented in virtually all courses and subjects.

In problem based learning, students can improve their problem-solving skills, research skills and social skills. It is good for their learning process and most importantly, make English subject more interesting to the students. Most of the students' English proficiencies at University Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology are at intermediate level. Hence, learning English using PBL in their English classroom will encourage the students to be more independent in their learning process.

Background of the Study

Problem-based learning purposefully combines cognitive and metacognitive teaching and learning. It is an approach that has been around since the late 1960s (Neufeld & Barrows, 1974) and engages language students in learning how to learn while they also learn language and content. Roschelle (1999) held that problem-based learning is rooted in John Dewey's project-based pedagogy of the early 20th century (e.g., Dewey, 1929, 1933, 1938). Within the area of second language learning and teaching, problem-based learning aligns with approaches in which students learn the target language by *using* it, rather than being presented with and then practicing predetermined language structures. Approaches based on similar principles include task-based learning (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996), content-based learning (Garner & Borg, 2005; Rodgers, 2006), and project-based learning (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Lee, 2002; Moss & Van Duzer, 1998). What makes problem-based learning unique is its core focus on learning through solving real, open-ended problems to which there are no fixed solutions (Ertmer, Lehman, Park, Cramer, & Grove, 2003). Students work alone or in groups first to understand a particular problem and then to find possible solutions to it. Therefore, problem-based learning is an interesting learning proponent to attract the students to learn English. As the students are encouraged to learn through the problem, lecturer role has shifted from the traditional authoritative role to facilitative role. The lecturers will take the role to facilitate students' learning process instead of feeding them direct answer or outcome.

This brief describes how problem-based learning aligns with research on second language acquisition, gives guidelines for teachers and administrators on implementing problem-based learning in classes or programs for adults learning English as a second language (ESL), and outlines the benefits and challenges of using problem-based learning approach with adult English language learners (ELLs).

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- i. To determine the attitude and perception of Diploma of Industrial Logistic students in learning English through problem-based learning
- ii. To find out the effectiveness of learning English through problem-based learning

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1. What are the Industrial Logistic students' perceptions learning English towards problem-based learning?
2. What benefits do Industrial Logistic students get when they learn English using problem-based learning?
3. Do students prefer to use problem-based learning as a learning tool compared to the traditional method?

Significance of the Study

This research is important to investigate students' perceptions of problem-based learning as a useful learning tool. Other important reasons are that the research findings would provide useful data for researchers and educators so that:

1. Researchers and educators would be able to understand the perceptions of students towards problem-based learning as a learning tool.
2. Lecturers can then develop better teaching and learning strategies which incorporate problem-based learning as a teaching and learning tool.
3. Researchers can also conduct further studies to investigate the benefits of problem-based learning usage for lecturers and students in the teaching and learning process.

This research will examine students' perceptions towards the use of problem-based learning as a learning tool in the university which will be later analyzed and used for future related research. Thus, educators would have to put in more efforts to improve the use of problem-based learning especially in teaching English subject.

Limitations of the Study

This study focuses only on current Diploma of Industrial Logistic students from University of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology, Johor Bahru. Therefore, the findings of this study may not represent the whole population of

Industrial Logistic students' perception from this university about the relevance and effectiveness of using problem-based learning in an ESL classroom.

Literature Review

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) is an instructional method that challenges students to “learn to learn,” working cooperatively in groups to seek solutions to real world problems. These problems are used to engage students’ curiosity and initiate learning the subject matter. PBL prepares students to think critically and analytically, and to find and use appropriate learning resources.” **Barbara Duch**

According to the statement above, it shows that current trend of learning is different now from traditional way. In traditional way, lecturer provides everything to the students. However, when the lecturers use problem-based learning, learning process becomes more interesting as students find the solutions to the problem. It develops creativity of students’ thinking process.

Problem-based learning also provides the students with opportunities to examine and try out what they know. It is also known as previous knowledge or schemata. Besides that, students also will have a chance to discover what they need to learn through the activities or problem given by the lecturer. In problem-based learning, students have ability to develop their interpersonal skills as they need to work in group. This is very important as communication skills is an important aspect to university students as they will use it after they have graduated.

The Problem-Based Learning Process

Teachers can facilitate motivation by helping learners identify short-term goals and reflect on their progress and achievements. For example, teachers can provide learners with self-assessment checklists to identify skill strengths and weaknesses, weekly checklists to track their progress on meeting a learning goal, and self-reflection tools (e.g., learning diaries) to help learners build autonomy and take charge of their learning (Marshall, 2002).

In problem-based learning classrooms, the roles and responsibilities of both lecturers and learners are different from those in more traditional way. Generally, in problem-based classrooms, the lecturer acts as a coach or facilitator of activities that students carry out themselves. The lecturer does not simply present information or directly control the progression of work. Instead, the lecturer provides students with appropriate problems to work on, assists them in identifying and accessing the materials and equipment necessary to solve the problems, gives necessary feedback and support during the problem-solving process, and evaluates students’ participation and end products, with the goal of helping them develop their problem-solving as well as their language and literacy skills.

Methodology

Sample of the Study

The study was carried out on 30 current Industrial Logistic students that have an experience in learning English using problem-based learning method. Only

respondents who had an experience learning English through problem-based learning in their learning process were asked to respond to the questionnaire. This is to ensure that they will not be facing any problem when answering the questionnaire. These respondents were represented by various races and gender, with an approximate age of 19 - 22 years old.

Research Design

As this research used the survey method, the instrument used was a structured questionnaire. The design for this questionnaire was based on research objectives and questions of research. It is divided into three sections.

The data obtained will be analyzed descriptively using simple percentage. The purpose of this questionnaire is to promote problem-based learning in ESL classroom in UniKL MITEC. The information obtained will be used for research purposes only and all responses will be kept confidential.

Research Instrument

In this research, the instrument that is used is the structured questionnaire (refer to Appendix 1). The design for this questionnaire is based on the research objectives and questions of research. The questionnaire is divided into three sections.

The questionnaire is done using the Likert Scale. There are three sections in the questionnaire:

- Part A : It contains four questions about personal data of respondents. This part is to get information about respondents.
- Part B : It contains five questions about students' perception of using problem-based learning in ESL classroom. This questionnaire also intends to elicit information regarding Industrial Logistic students' interest of using problem-based learning in the English Language classroom. There are five scales that contain score values and respondents must tick only one answer.
- Part C : This part contains five questions. In this part, the respondents have to tick only one answer according to the scale given. The aims of this part are to elicit information from the aspect on the use of problem-based learning in relation to the benefits of PBL and students' perceptions.

Data Collection Procedure

Before the start of the study, the lecturer will inform these Industrial Logistic students that they have to respond to the questionnaires. The lecturer will also tell them the purpose of distributing the questionnaires so that the students will be clear about the purpose of distributing the questionnaires. Then, the lecturer will arrange the

appropriate day and time to carry out the survey to ensure that all of the 30 Industrial Logistic students will be present on the day and time as agreed.

On the arranged date and time, the 30 Industrial Logistic students were provided with a questionnaire each and given a brief explanation of the aim of the study and instructions on how to respond to the questionnaires given to them. They were given up to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire so that they could answer the questionnaire freely, sincerely and accurately. The completed questionnaires were then collected.

Data Analysis

The data collected will be classified into different sub-headings. The sub-headings consist of the background of the respondents and the perceptions of Industrial Logistic students about promoting problem-based learning in ESL classroom.

To investigate the respondents' perceptions towards the benefits of using problem-based learning in ESL classroom, I would like to distinguish the respondents' attitude towards PBL. The data will be processed manually and presented in the form of frequency tabulation and percentage.

Findings

Overall Findings

From the responses of the respondents to the questionnaire, it was found that most of the respondents prefer to use problem-based learning in an ESL classroom. Analysis of data revealed two main categories:

- Students' perception of using problem-based learning in ESL classroom.
- The use of problem-based learning in ESL classroom.

Students' Perception of Using Problem-Based Learning in ESL Classroom

The perceptions of current Industrial Logistic students based on using problem-based learning in ESL classroom were reported based on the completed questionnaire. Following is the table about the responses to the items on students' perceptions:

Responses to items on students' perceptions

Questions	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
5. I feel it could be more interesting if the lecturer use problem-based learning in learning English.	3.3	0.0	13.3	33.3	50.0
6. I think a lecturer should use new methods (problem-based learning) in teaching English.	3.3	0.0	13.3	23.3	60.0
7. A lecturer needs to change the teaching process from traditional	0.0	0.0	10.0	33.3	56.7

method (whiteboard, textbook) to something new (problem-based learning) to attract more students to like English.					
8. I am willing to learn English using problem-based learning if it is implemented at the university.	0.0	3.3	13.3	53.3	30.0
9. It would be fun to learn English using problem-based learning.	10.0	10.0	13.3	30.0	36.7

The results above provide yet further evidence of the Industrial Logistic students' perception towards the benefits of using problem-based learning in ESL classroom. These results provide some strong indications that Industrial Logistic students prefer to use problem-based learning in ESL classroom for a change, as well as for better benefits, in the learning process.

This is evidence that English could be more interesting if the lecturer use problem-based learning in the learning process (50%). Most of the students also strongly agree that it would be more interesting if the lecturers use problem-based learning in teaching English (60.0%), though there are 13.3% who are unsure about it. There are 56.7% of respondents agreed that a lecturer needs to change the teaching process. This shows that problem-based learning will attract the students to learn English more than traditional method. 53.3% of the respondents also agree that they are willing to learn English using problem-based learning if it implemented at the university. The rest 13.3% are neutral about it.

36.7% of the respondents strongly agree that it would be fun to learn English using problem-based learning. This is because, when the lecturers use problem-based learning to teach English, it could be interesting for the students because they learn English through problem solving ways. Other than that, students will also practice their critical thinking skills as they have to solve the problem through problem-based learning.

The Use of Problem-Based Learning in ESL Classroom

Following is the table about responses to items on the use of modern technologies in ESL classroom:

Responses to items on the use of problem-based learning in ESL classroom

Questions	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
10. Problem-based learning help students in their learning process.	0.0	3.3	13.3	63.3	20.0
11. Problem-based learning style are more effective than lecture.	3.3	3.3	26.7	46.7	20.0
12. Problem-based learning can motivate	0.0	3.3	6.7	56.7	33.3

students in their learning process.					
13. Problem-based learning can be used to assist students in learning English language.	0.0	3.3	6.7	53.3	36.7
14. Lecturer and students should be exposed to the use of problem-based learning from now on, not only for English subject, but also for another subject as well.	3.3	0.0	0.0	46.7	50.0

Problem-based learning help students in their learning process (63.3%). 46.7% of the respondents agree that problem-based learning style is more effective than a lecture. This is because using problem-based learning students can be more creative rather than sit for the whole day listening to a lecture.

Problem-based learning can motivate students in their learning process (56.7%). It is because students can learn English through various ways and it can attract them to like English. But 3.3% of the respondents disagree with this statement. These respondents think that using traditional way can also motivate them to learn English.

53.3% of the respondents agree that problem-based learning can be used to assist students in learning English language. Using problem-based learning, learning English will be more interesting and fun. Other than that, lecturer and students should be exposed to problem-based learning usage from now on, not only for English subject, but also for another subject as well (50%). This is because, learning through problem-based learning encourages life-long learning because when the students learn the subjects through problem-based learning, it will creates their critical thinking skills, develop students' interpersonal skills and also it will encourage students' cooperation during the lesson. In PBL, it is the problem that drives the curriculum. It does not test a skill, it assists in the development of the skill itself. There is no one solution: the problem is solved in an interactive process where the perception of the problem can change as do the solutions found.

Conclusion

Problem-based learning has much to offer in ESL instruction. As a teaching approach, it has both linguistic benefits, as shown in the research on the role of natural, meaning-focused classroom interaction in language learning, and affective benefits in the form of raising student motivation and promoting learner autonomy and transfer of learning beyond the classroom. To achieve these benefits, lecturers and administrators must ensure that students understand the principles behind problem-based learning and recognize that they are participating in an effective learning process, even if it is unfamiliar to them. Students need to familiarize with the concept of problem-based learning to ensure the learning through PBL will be successful. Apart from that, lecturers need support from program coordinators and administrators from initial training on how to conduct problem-based learning to help with making resources available to students. Finally, administrators and the lecturers must consider the role that problem-based learning will play in their program. Will it constitute the primary philosophical and pedagogical thrust of the program, or will it serve as an

alternative activity for lecturers to use in their classrooms? Careful consideration of these issues will increase the likelihood that problem-based learning will be successfully incorporated into an ESL program with positive outcomes.

Recommendation

Although this has been a survey of one private institution in Johor Bahru, examining what really goes on in a classroom was a process that led to many new insights. It would be beneficial to repeat this study in other ESL classrooms to see if other researchers find that problem-based learning leads to a shift in pedagogy and classroom interactions. A larger sample size might allow generalization of the results of this study.

Another suggestion for replication would be to conduct a survey of other second language classrooms outside Johor Bahru. Students' and lecturers' expectations for language teaching and classroom communication might be different in a different context. What they experience in a classroom with problem-based learning might not be what they expected, which, in turn, might lead to a shift in classroom interactions. More importantly, if there were a shift in a different context, researchers should investigate how the students and lecturers respond to the newly introduced pedagogy.

A third suggestion is to examine whether the pedagogy that was promoted by problem-based learning does improve second language learning. It is essential to investigate what aspects of language learning would benefit from problem-based learning implementation. In order to find out how problem-based learning could contribute to second language learning, it is important to tie further research to theories of second language acquisition. In addition, a longitudinal study following a group of students through several years of language instruction might be useful for determining any long-term influence of the use of problem-based learning in second language learning.

Finally, there has been a strong tendency to emphasize quantitative method of research exemplified in the series of research studies on educational achievement that have been influential in shaping educational policy in many countries. However, using only quantitative method is not sufficient to capture the complex nature of learning and teaching in classrooms. The detailed description of classrooms' nature of teaching and learning may offer a more thorough understanding of the process and consequences of educational technology implementation in other colleges.

References

- Brumfit, C., & Johnson, K. (Eds). (1979). *The communicative approach to language teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- James, M. A. (2006). Teaching for transfer in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 60(2), 151–159.

Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 4(2), 119–134.

Kjell Erik, R. (2002). *Handbook of Online Learning: Innovations in Higher Education and Corporate Training*. London: Sage Publications.

Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. (2002). *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research and Applications* (2nd ed). Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Porter, Lynnette R. (1997). *Creating the Virtual Classroom: Distance Learning with the Internet*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Rhem, J. (1998). Problem-based learning: An introduction. *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, 8(1). Retrieved December 11, 2006, from www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9812/problem-based_learning_1.htm

Robins, K. & Webster, F. (2002). *The Virtual University? Knowledge, Markets and Management*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, C., Harris, K., & Reder, S. (2005). *Applying research findings to instruction for adult English language learners*. Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. Retrieved December 22, 2006, from www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/research.html

Integration of the Intercultural Approach in the Higher Education Context – Why and How?

Béatrice Cabau, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0045

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to illustrate how the intercultural approach benefits from the shift in higher education discourse, namely from a traditional knowledge-oriented educational philosophy to the importance for students to acquire skills and competences. The present case study of a European studies undergraduate programme in Hong Kong will be used to explore the different conceptual tools underpinning the integration of the intercultural dimension in a language oriented academic programme. After a short description of the programme in which this dimension is integrated, the article will focus on to the application of the conceptual framework within a seminar for final year students.

A large, faint watermark of the iafor logo is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue font, surrounded by a circular graphic element made of two overlapping curved lines, one light blue and one light red.

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

For several years now, we may observe a shift from a traditional knowledge-oriented educational philosophy to the importance for students to acquire skills and competences in the higher education arena. As a consequence, universities all over the world face the challenge to reposition and redefine academic programmes and courses along this new perspective (Cabau, 2012b). At the same time, a recurrent call for transdisciplinarity is used to enhance the coherence of academic programmes (Cabau, 2012a). This discursive context enhances the importance to incorporate an intercultural dimension in university curricula to better equip students who are very likely to enter a professional arena internationally oriented. The incorporation of such a dimension is even more relevant and obvious for students enrolled in foreign language studies or in programmes with a strong linguistic component. The rationale behind is that employers' expectations are not only in terms of linguistic competences, still viewed as essential, but also in terms of intercultural competence(s).

The main aim of this article is to illustrate how the intercultural approach benefits from the above-exposed educational perspectives. The present case study of a European studies undergraduate programme in Hong Kong will be used to explore the different conceptual tools underpinning the integration of the intercultural dimension in a social science oriented academic programme. After a short description of the programme in which this dimension is integrated, the article will focus on to the application of the conceptual framework within a seminar for final year students.

Conceptual Framework

First of all, even if the concept of intercultural competence or competences suffers from terminological opacity and diversity, we may refer to the following definition: "Intercultural competence is the ability to 'decentre', to understand the other's perspective – i.e. the assumptions that lie behind their communication – to see one's own assumptions from the other's perspective, to anticipate misunderstanding and to act to overcome that misunderstanding, above all the willingness to interact with others in a non-stereotypical and unprejudiced way" (Byram, 2004, p. 2). This definition stresses the ability and the will of the individual to decentre when meeting and communicating with the Other. This process of distancing from the self necessitates a reflection about one's identity and the other's. Examining one's identity is regarded as a constituent element of the intercultural approach (e.g. Abdallah-Preteille, 2003; Byram, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 2010; Zarate, 1993, 2003). As we will see, the European Studies Programme at Hong Kong Baptist University encompasses a social sciences dimension. This is the reason why special attention is given to the notion of 'social identity', 'that part of the individuals' self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1982, p. 2). The appropriate identification of the other's social identity is considered essential for successful interaction and communication, since it influences the foreign language learners' interactions with people of another language and culture (Byram, 2000, 2004).

Study abroad programmes offered in an increasing number of institutions worldwide to respond to the strong emphasis placed on the internationalisation of higher education seem more and more viewed as springboards for the acquisition of intercultural competences (Deardorff, 2006). Nevertheless, given the various challenges facing students in a foreign host institution, this acquisition should be facilitated by various activities before the stay abroad (Coleman, 1997; Cabau, forthcoming; Jackson, 2010). This is where the development of competences by foreign language learners takes its full importance. According to Byram (1997), foreign language learning/teaching should aim at developing not only knowledge (*savoirs*), but also skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) and attitudes of curiosity/openness (*savoir être*).

The acquisition of these competences stresses the importance of personal involvement in the students' learning process. This is where the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) can play an essential role: first of all, it describes "in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively". (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1) Furthermore, it is action-oriented and linked to the concept of task, where not only knowledge, but attitudes, dispositions, skills are expected from students. It means that action is justified through social practices considered as tasks, and not exercises. Hence, all tasks or classroom activities should be contextualized, pose a problem, have an objective, be complex and present a result. This approach defies the stereotype of Asian/Chinese students being passive learners, since linguistic/cultural knowledge and skills are presented as a tool for communication and action (Cabau, 2012b). For most Hong Kong students, this perspective greatly differs from what they have experienced in their English classes at secondary school, i.e. where their proficiency is generally measured 'in terms of formal language learning (e.g., grammatical accuracy)' (Jackson, 2010, p. 117).

This action orientation is also very likely to benefit from the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. CLIL is the umbrella term describing both learning other content or another subject through the medium of a foreign language, and learning a foreign language by studying the content-based subject, stressing the interrelation between content and language teaching. CLIL offers several advantages, among which are the building of intercultural knowledge and understanding, the development of intercultural communication skills, the improvement of language competence and oral communication skills, opportunities to study content through different perspectives, the possibility of having more contact with the target language, and increase in learners' motivation and confidence in both the language and the subject being taught (European Commission, 2008). CLIL has only recently been discussed at university level. In the Hong Kong context, this approach is innovative, even more so with the use of French in content classes (Cabau, 2012b).

The incorporation of an intercultural dimension in teaching/learning activities also addresses the recurrent issue of employability in higher education discourse related to fresh graduates' needs to find their first job (Cabau, 2012b). This entails to reconsider the gap between education and training, i.e. "the reconciliation of two fields often separated in terms of status where academics would often consider professionally-

oriented courses as being of secondary importance compared to the traditional academic courses” (Cabau, 2012b). This definitely represents a challenge, since the acquisition of competences is a new orientation for universities which live on a long tradition that preserves them from ‘trivial concerns about professional qualifications’ (Springer, 2010, p. 47). Even if higher education institutions do include short-term internships in their curricula, some academics are still adverse to any practical orientation in their courses, since this would be tantamount to a deviation from their traditional role, i.e. to provide knowledge, and not know-how.

Finally, three local educational dimensions are envisaged as supporting the intercultural dimension in Hong Kong higher education; first of all, the introduction of liberal studies in 2009 at secondary schools, which aim at helping students to enhance their sense of global and national identity, and their “understanding of themselves, their society, their nation, the human world and the physical environment” and their appreciation and respect for “diversity in cultures and views in a pluralistic society and handle conflicting values”. (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2007, p. 3) Secondly, Hong Kong Baptist University supports project-based learning in that “it allows students to construct their own knowledge and skills by working cooperatively on complex and challenging real-life projects” (Hong Kong Baptist University, 2010). As we will see in the last part of this article, the intercultural approach is incorporated in a final year project-based seminar of the European Studies Programme at Hong Kong Baptist University. Finally, the profile adopted for this seminar also echoes the then Hong Kong Secretary of Education’s idea to diversify strategies in order to enhance language outcomes for university graduates, as formulated as follows: “To motivate interest in language learning and to nurture critical thinking and creativity, we encourage teachers to adopt and flexibly apply an extensive range of approaches and strategies” (Suen, 2010).

The European Studies Programme at Hong Kong Baptist University

The European Studies Programme (ESP) at Hong Kong Baptist University combines two majors, social sciences and language, i.e. more precisely the study of European political, social and economic affairs with intensive foreign language acquisition (French or German). This four-year programme comprises two years of full-time study in Hong Kong; a third compulsory year for all students spent in a target-language country with academic study (for the French stream students, at an Institute of Political Studies or at a business school) and, whenever feasible, work experience in companies or institutions; followed by a fourth year in full-time study in Hong Kong. The content subjects are taught in English for the first two years, while French is the medium of instruction in most academic programmes in which students are enrolled during the third year in France. The ESP differs from other Hong Kong academic programmes where language education is usually associated with linguistic/cultural studies, with a shorter stay abroad in an English-speaking country to improve students’ English proficiency (cf. Jackson, 2010). The fourth year includes a three-hour seminar in French per semester as well as the draft of an academic essay written in French.

The annual student intake is set at 36 students, equally divided between the French and German streams. It is important to remember here that French (like German) is the students’ fourth language (after Cantonese, English, and *Putonghua*). The

admission quota for Mainland students is set at three per cohort. The presence of Mainland students is an important feature because of the interaction and confrontation of experiences in the classroom which necessitate for both groups some adjustment to each other's presence. Whereas language might cause some communication problems, social and cultural diversity generates 'different worldviews, values and life goals' (Lam, 2006, p. 93).

Although the European Studies Programme is a social sciences programme, the curriculum devotes considerable time to language study (twelve hours per week during the first two years). The first year language classes (absolute beginner level) focus on the context of living and studying in France. The second year language course aims to equip the students for academic study and internships in France during year III. All language courses of the European Studies Programme use the *Common European Framework of Reference* and have been re-titled 'Language in Context' in the new four-year course curriculum to illustrate that language learning is multi-purposed and context-oriented. Language activities are contextualized within four domains or 'broad sectors of social life in which social agents operate' (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10): the public domain (ordinary social interaction), the personal domain (individual social practices), the educational domain (academic context) and the professional domain. At all levels, devices offered by the development of communication technologies are used to increase the dynamic aspect of language learning into the classroom. All French language teachers are native speakers.

From Year II, French language classes include content-based teaching. For example, topics in French civilization (e.g., the French Revolution, the Algerian War, the May 1968 protest, the headscarf controversy) are presented in French by using lecture presentations, press articles, television programmes and films (Cabau, 2012a, 2012b). Upon graduation, students are expected to attain a certified proficiency level prescribed for full-time academic study and/or professional activities in French speaking countries (corresponding to the *Diplôme approfondi de langue française* or DALF level for French learners).

The fusion of social sciences and foreign language/culture studies in the ESP is envisaged as a resourceful springboard for students' acquisition of intercultural competences not only in the perspective of students' stay in France during their year, but also for professional purposes abroad or locally (Cabau, 2009; 2012a, 2012b).

Application of the Intercultural Dimension

Due to the academic infrastructure of the programme, no course is solely dedicated to intercultural studies. Nevertheless, the compulsory year abroad combined with students' expectations to work in a French-language environment in Hong Kong or elsewhere necessitates that the programme include sensitisation to intercultural encounters. The application of the intercultural dimension will be here illustrated with a final year seminar with French as medium of Instruction which focuses on the multi-faceted competences appropriate in a multicultural professional environment.

This three-hour seminar entitled "European Economic and Business Life: Working in an International Context" includes intercultural communication training, i.e. 'a skilful facilitation process in which trainees are given ample opportunities to acquire

culturally relevant knowledge, increase self-awareness and other-awareness' (Ting-Toomey, 2010, p. 21). Hence, after learning and being exposed to a foreign academic culture and a foreign culture of learning, the final year students are offered an insight into another culture that is totally unknown for most of them, a foreign work and company culture. But at the same time, students are required to be able to play the role of intermediaries by being knowledgeable about the Hong Kong professional and economic environment. Indeed, if an employer cannot expect that our graduates have a comprehensive knowledge of European affairs in the political, economic, social and cultural development, he/she needs a communicative bridge to carry out his/her business. This means among other things that our students should be able to outline the inherent traits of Hong Kong society and the People's Republic of China in several areas.

In this project-based seminar, the intercultural approach is linked to the action-oriented perspective (Cabau, 2012a). The project or scenario devised by the students sets the objective to be achieved (e.g. the opening of a French company in Hong Kong) and defines the different steps (micro-tasks) of the mission (macro-task) to be accomplished. The assessment takes place for each micro-task focused on reception, interaction and production of written and oral communication in French. This seminar format is inspired by the French national professional diploma *Diplôme de Compétence en Langue*, which not only assesses the language learner but also the learner-user of the language according to their competences in performing tasks in the language situation (Bourguignon, Delahaye, & Puren, 2007). The idea of the learner-user echoes the perspective of the language learner as a social agent embedded in the CEFR, and the language situation echoes the idea of 'language in context' of the European Studies Programme.

Five areas of expertise are evaluated: oral reception (listening comprehension), written reception (reading comprehension), interactive communication, oral and written productions in a context of real professional communication situations. Hence, the seminar contains the basic language activities presented in the CEFR, reception, production, interaction and mediation, with an emphasis on the latter for the above-mentioned reasons (Cabau, 2011). The evaluation focuses on students' ability to interact, adapt, integrate, interpret and negotiate or know-how as well as their attitudes or skills (Lazar, Huber-Kriegler, Lussier, Matei, & Peck, 2008). At the C1 level of the *Diplôme de Compétence en Langue Etrangère Professionnelle* (Diploma of Proficiency in Professional Foreign Language), students are expected to achieve and perform complete autonomy, relevant argumentation, effective negotiation, interpretation of nuances and registers, effective argumentation, clear and precise formulation of complex ideas, fluent and adapted speech, fully assumed role of interlocutor, balanced exchange contribution to debate, negotiation, and controversy (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2010).

The intercultural approach is supported by the use of two books addressing a public of French managers and professionals doing business in China or in contact with Chinese partners or colleagues (Ascencio & Rey, 2010; Monfret, 2010). The necessity of such training is acknowledged in the Chinese context: "While more European enterprises establish their businesses in China, they demand increasing numbers of competent local employees to both master the technologies or skills required by European companies in China and also to understand the cultures and values of both

China and the European countries". (Cai, 2005, p. 197) It is even more relevant in the context of a competitive job market and the increased trade relations between Europe and Hong Kong/China.

Conclusion

The success of a university programme is largely assessed through the concept of "employability", that is to say the rate of recruitment of fresh graduates, the types of jobs they are accessing, plus the compensation to which they are eligible. In the light of Hong Kong's official language policy, competence in English and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin or *Putonghua*) is becoming a basic requirement in the work setting, as is computer literacy. This means that the knowledge of an additional language/culture and experience in a non-English language environment is regarded as a big asset, even more so in light of increased competition in the job market. When graduating, Hong Kong students – and particularly foreign language/culture students – are expected to be expert communicators and mediators. In this field, European Studies Programme students have definitely some advantages in potential recruiters' eyes. But generally speaking, we can assert that all new graduates' lack of professional experience could be compensated by the acquisition of generic or transferable skills (team-working and communication) optimized by a sensitization to intercultural encounters. If proficiency in a foreign language and knowledge about a foreign culture are big assets, the profile of new graduates in any discipline is greatly strengthened by their flexibility/adaptability/negotiation skills during foreign encounters not limited to the English-speaking world. These considerations also play an important role in supporting Hong Kong to position itself as an education hub and as such, to complement future development of the Mainland.

References

- Abdallah-Preteuille, M. (2003). *Former et éduquer en contexte hétérogène*. Paris: Anthropos.
- Ascencio, C., & Rey, D. (2010). *Être Efficace en Chine - Le Management à l'Épreuve de la Culture Chinoise*. London: Pearson, Village Mondial.
- Bourguignon, C., Delahaye, Ph., & Puren, Ch. (2007). *Évaluer dans une Perspective Actionnelle: le Diplôme de Compétence en Langue*. Le Havre: Éditions Delbopur.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Byram, M. (2000). *Identité sociale et dimension européenne - La compétence interculturelle par l'apprentissage des langues vivantes/Social Identity and European Dimension - Intercultural Competence through Foreign Language Learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.archive.ecml.at/documents/identityE.pdf>.
- Byram, M. (2004, March). *Intercultural Competence and the Politics of Foreign Language Education*. Public lecture given at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. Retrieved from

http://sedll.org/es/admin/uploads/congresos/15/act/114/Byram,_Michael.pdf

Cabau, B. (2009). *European Studies in Hong Kong: Between Local and European Realities*. Proceedings from the Asian Conference on Education 2009 Local Problems, Global Solutions? IAFOR: Osaka (Japan), 696-703.

Cabau, B. (2012a). *Higher Education Ambitions and Societal Expectations*. ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, 1-14. Retrieved from <http://www.atiner.gr/papers/EDU2012-0005.pdf>.

Cabau, B. (2012b). *Language and Content Courses: A Plea for Synergy in Academic Programmes*. Paper presented at the Third International Symposium on European Languages in East Asia Challenges in Teaching European Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University, November 23-24, 2012.

Cabau, B. (2013). Intercultural Approach in a Hong Kong Setting. *The Language Learning Journal*, 41(3). doi 10.1080/09571736.2013.858548.

Cabau, B. forthcoming. Optimizing the benefits of overseas academic sojourns: pre-departure training for exchange students. In M. B. Paradowski (Ed.), *Teaching Languages off the Beaten Track*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: Peter Lang.

Cai, Y. (2005). The Future of European Higher Education from a Chinese Perspective: the Internationalisation Dimension. In J. Enders, J. File, J. Huisman, & D. Westerheijden, *The European Higher Education and Research Landscape 2020: Scenarios and Strategic Debates* (pp. 191-202). Enschede: University of Twente, CHEPS.

Coleman, J. A. (1997). Residence abroad within language study. *Language Teaching* 30. 1-20.

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Assessing intercultural competence in study abroad students. In M. Byram, & A. Feng (Eds.). *Living and Studying Abroad* (pp. 232-256). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Education and Manpower Bureau (2007). *Liberal Studies - Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 - 6)*. Retrieved from http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_5941/ls_e_070307.pdf

European Commission (2008). *Language Teaching: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm

Hong Kong Baptist University (2010). *Engaging Pedagogy*. Retrieved from <http://chtl.hkbu.edu.hk/resources/pedagogy>.

- Jackson, J. (2010). *Intercultural Journeys – From Study to Residence Abroad*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lam, C., M.-H. (2006). Reciprocal Adjustment by Host and Sojourning Groups: Mainland Chinese Students in Hong Kong. In M. Byram, & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and Studying Abroad* (pp. 91-108). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lazar, I., Huber-Kriegler, M., Lussier, D., Matei, G. S., & Peck, Ch. (2008). *Développer et Evaluer la Compétence en Communication Interculturelle - Un Guide à l'Usage des Enseignants de Langues et des Formateurs d'Enseignants*. Graz: Centre Européen pour les Langues Vivantes/Conseil de l'Europe.
- Ministère de l'Education Nationale (2010). *Diplôme de Compétence en Langue Etrangère Professionnelle (DCLEP)*. Bulletin Officiel n° 24. Retrieved from http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/24/19/3/competence_langue_etrangere_referentiel_certification_147193.pdf
- Monfret, A.-L. (2010). *Comment ne pas Faire Perdre la Face à un Chinois ? : Petit Guide à l'Usage de Ceux qui Travaillent avec la Chine*. Paris: Dunot.
- Springer, Cl. (2010). Evaluation des compétences langagière et interculturelle : une approche par compétences pour le supérieur. In F. Dervin, & E. Suomela-Salmi (Eds.), *New Approaches to Assessing Language and (Inter-) Cultural Competences in Higher Education/Nouvelles Approches de l'Evaluation des Compétences Langagières et (inter-) Culturelles dans l'Enseignement Supérieur* (pp. 39-55). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Suen, M. (2010). *Speech by the Secretary of Education at 334 Symposium on Language Outcomes for University Graduates*. Retrieved from http://net3.hkbu.edu.hk/~334lang/presentation/Keynote_Speech_by_Mr_Michael_Suen.pdf
- Tajfel, H. (1982). *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Re-issue Edition 2010.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2010). Intercultural Conflict Interaction Competence: From Theory to Practice. In M. Guilherme, E. Glaser, & M. del Carmen Méndez Garcia (Eds.), *The Intercultural Dynamics of Multicultural Working* (pp. 21-40). Languages for Intercultural Communication and Education 19. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Zarate, G. (1993). *Représentations de l'étranger et didactique des langues*. Paris: Didier-CRÉDIF.
- Zarate, G. (2003). Identities and plurilingualism: preconditions for the recognition of intercultural competences. In M. Byram (Ed.), *Intercultural Competence* (pp. 85-118). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

A Language Awareness Project for the Primary School EFL Classroom

Sabrina Bechler, Montessori-Schule Heiligensee, Germany

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0053

Abstract

In the young learners' classroom, English is taught for example through stories, games, singing, role-playing, crafts. The main focus is not on the foreign language itself. Taking a look at teaching material, it becomes clear that children are rarely cognitively challenged to a great extent. However, the integration of activities to raise language awareness can have some advantages. The children start to think about the foreign language. Therefore, they can experience their learning progress more clearly and take over more responsibility for their learning. In this article, some insights are given into a small research project, carried out in a German school. It shows that the children can deal directly with simple aspects of grammar, pronunciation and spelling and find it important to learn rules and apply them.

iafor

1. How English is Currently Taught to Young Learners

The first foreign language was included in all German primary school curricula as a compulsory subject around ten years ago. Most children start with English, either in the first or third grade. It is taught through stories, games, singing, role-playing, arts and crafts, and hands-on activities. To sum up, the approach is very playful, because children often learn indirectly, rather than directly (Harmer, 2005, p. 38) and they learn the language while “they are having fun and if they can work out messages from meaningful contexts. This means learning holistically [...]” (Pinter, 2006, p. 18). The concentration is usually not on the language itself, for example by speaking about grammatical features; the attention is rather on topics and activities. That often means that the children are not challenged cognitively to a great extent. A reason for this is that the child’s ability for abstract thinking is not developed greatly yet. “Children do not find it as easy to use language to talk about language; in other words, they do not have the same access as older learners to meta-language that teachers can use to explain about grammar and discourse” (Frost & Driscoll, 1999, p. 1). They also “internalise the structure of the target language more slowly than older learners because their cognitive development is not yet complete” (Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth, 2007, p. 164). In addition, English is only taught two or three lessons per week. Because it is learned like the mother tongue, by imitation and repetition, it can hardly be expected that the children form their own sentences. Analysis of lessons show that IRE (*Initiation – Response – Evaluation*) conversations are dominant in foreign language lessons in primary school. These dialogues usually consist of questions and answers and take place on the cognitive level of a two year old infant (cf. Schlemminger, 2010, pp. 107-108). Research has shown that the playful approach rarely leads to creative-productive use of English (cf. Roos, 2007, pp. 181-182). Another issue that occurs is that the current way of teaching might lead children to the thought that learning a foreign language doesn’t require effort (cf. BIG-Kreis, 2009, p. 12). When the children enter secondary school, they realise that now they have to put more effort into learning the foreign language. They play less, but have to write more, learn vocabulary by heart, do grammar exercises etc. That is why a balance needs to be found between playful, affective-emotional activities and cognitively challenging activities (cf. *ibid*, p. 21). In the following text, reasons for a change in teaching are given.

2. The Need to Integrate Awareness Raising Activities

An important aspect of foreign language learning is to develop language awareness. In other words, the learners develop explicit knowledge about language (cf. ALA, 2012). They pay attention to the language in use and gain insights into how languages work (Tomlinson, 2003a, p. 251). Teachers can “challenge pupils to ask questions about language” (Hawkins, 1984, p. 4) and stimulate interest and curiosity about language (cf. Brewster & Ellis, 2002, p. 7). Awareness means also that the children are led to the autonomous identification of rules and correlations, and that they develop hypotheses about structures and regularities themselves so that they are able to reproduce and transfer language to new situations (cf. Dudek, 2006, p. 75). When the children learn strategies to find regularities of the language themselves, they can gain independence and can be freed from the teacher as their role model (cf. Mindt, 2006, p. 73).

When the language is only repeated and imitated, the language production and creativity is very low and children are not able to transfer what they have learned to a new context (Kuhn, 2006, p. 154; Mindt & Schlüter, 2007, p. 29). After rules have been introduced and learned, children can take over more responsibility for their learning. They can take time to think before speaking, notice mistakes and correct themselves. They develop the ability to operate independently with the language. “[...] most learners learn best [...] when they willingly invest energy and attention to the learning process” (Tomlinson, 2003b, p. 252). When paying attention to the features of language, learners can “notice the gap between their own performance in the target language, and the performance of proficient users of the language” (ibid.). Creative language production can be increased.

To learn a foreign language in primary school like the mother tongue is learned as an infant, meaning without direct focus on the language, but by imitating and trying out, might not be realistic. The cognitive development of school children is broader than that of infants. They are already used to thinking about language in abstract ways (cf. Teubner, 2006, p. 66). In German lessons, it is normal to reflect and talk about language from the beginning of their time at school. The curriculum of Berlin for example contains a section called *Analysing language and language use*. For example, the children are supposed to develop an understanding of grammatical structures and develop their own rules (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Berlin et al., 2004, p. 30). If they have the cognitive ability to think and talk about the German language, they will certainly be able to do the same in English. Besides, children should be challenged in every subject. Of course they enjoy playful learning, but the challenging tasks allow them to experience success. Sarter (1997, p. 47) argues that the motivation of young learners can decrease when the learning outcomes and the progression are not visible to the children. A lot of children wish to experience more clearly that they have moved on in their learning. “Research provides some evidence that intrinsic motivation is not only created by fun and games but also by intellectual challenge and feelings of satisfaction with personal achievement“ (Edelenbos et al., 2006, p. 147).

Especially for weaker learners, activities which raise awareness can be a learning aid (cf. Kuhn, 2006, p. 153-154). Finding rules themselves is something that especially stronger learners can do. Weaker learners could be disadvantaged (Mindt & Schlüter, 2007, p. 31). In addition, it is not very likely that learners are successful in finding rules and testing hypothesis when being taught only a few lessons a week (Mindt, 2002, p. 6), so they will need some guidance. Some children even ask for rules (cf. Teubner, 2006, p. 63; Kuhn, 2006, p. 151-152). This is why some awareness-raising activities are indispensable and should be integrated in English lessons.

3. The Idea behind the Language Awareness Project

The aim of the project was to find ways to include awareness raising activities in the fourth grade of a German primary school EFL classroom. By that time, the children were about 9 years old and had been learning English for four years. The project was carried out within the last six weeks of the school year, with three lessons a week. I had been their English teacher since the beginning of the school year, and I carried out the project with them.

The name of the project was *Sprachdetektive (Language detectives)*. The learners' attention was directed towards the language. As detectives, they were cognitively challenged. At the same time, the lessons stuck to the basic principles of teaching English to children (as mentioned in chapter 1). That means that the learning took place lively and holistically. Young children's "[...] understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with" (Harmer, 2005, p. 38). A new language aspect was not only practiced by filling out worksheets, but also through age-appropriate (creative) hands-on activities and games, so that the balance which was described earlier could be kept. Especially when grammar is taught directly, teachers need to be careful not to demotivate their learners. "[...] we should remember that grammar teaching can often destroy motivation and puzzle children rather than enlighten them" (Cameron, 2001, p. 110).

The linguistic aspects we looked at were chosen by the following criteria: first they needed to be easy to understand and second they needed to be relevant, meaning for example aspects that the children had already encountered such as the plural or the indefinite article a/ an. The project was guided by two research questions, which were answered through observation and a questionnaire filled out by the children:

- I. Which awareness-raising materials and activities are appropriate for young learners?

Different materials and activities were tried out in the lessons, which allowed the children to engage in dealing with different aspects of the foreign language (grammar, pronunciation and spelling). Existing material from websites was tested as well as self-developed material.

- II. Do the children perceive value in the gained knowledge about the language?

The children were encouraged to think and talk about the foreign language to discover patterns and characteristics. It was particularly relevant if they took what they had discovered seriously and felt the need to make use of it.

According to Batstone (2003, 53), there are three approaches of dealing with grammar: teaching it as a product, a process and a skill. In this context, these three approaches were also used for spelling and pronunciation. The first approach "helps learners to notice and to structure by focusing on specified forms and meanings" (ibid). It comprises activities through which learners explore the foreign language and find grammatical structures. Often, self-developed worksheets were used which enabled a concrete comparison between the German and the English language to help the children to discover similarities and differences. The second approach allows the learners to "proceduralize their knowledge" (ibid). Worksheets, games and conversations were integrated in the lesson to give possibilities to practice what the learners had found out. The third approach "carefully guides the learners to utilize grammar in their own communication" (ibid). Creative hands-on activities gave freedom to the children to integrate what they had learned in different contexts and their products could proudly be shown to others.

4. Insights into the Classroom

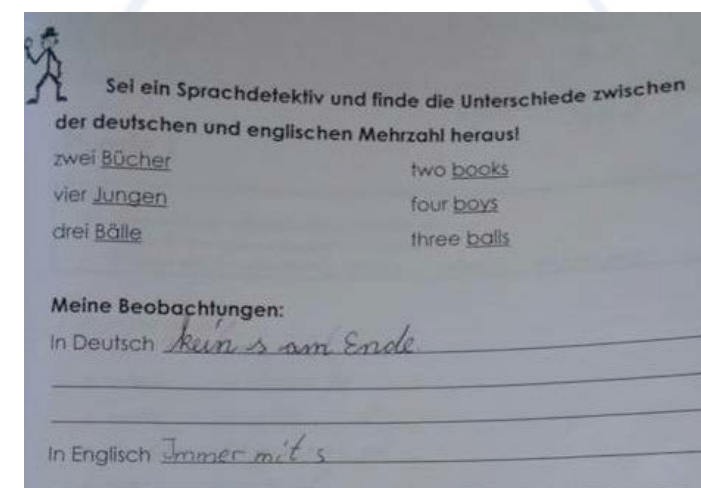
In the following, some examples are given on how these three approaches were used to learn about grammar, spelling and pronunciation.

4.1 Exploring the Language

- Plural Forms

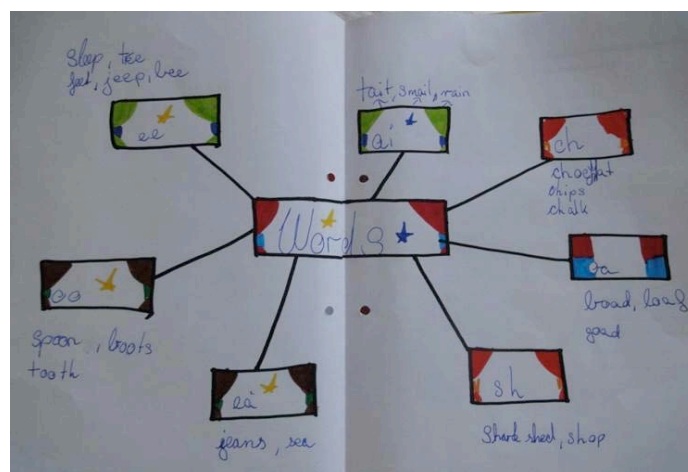
With the help of a worksheet, the children compared the plural forms in German and English and wrote down their observations. Afterwards, they made use of the discovered rule by translating some words into English. This task helped them to understand the rule better. In the example in picture, the child wrote that in German there is no s at the end of the word, but in English there is always an s. In German, there are several endings for plural forms (e.g. -er, -e, -n) and sometimes the vowel is changed into an Umlaut (ä or ü). With the help of the worksheet, the children could easily notice that there are different forms of plural in both languages.

The worksheet was used to discover the regular form of plural only. To find out about irregular plural forms, the children watched the film “The birthday party” from the Website of the *British Council for Kids*. We collected all plural forms on the blackboard and then filtered out characteristics of some irregular forms.



- Words with Pairs of Vowel Letters with Special Pronunciation (e.g. ai, ee)

To find out about the pronunciation and spelling of words with pairs of vowels, flashcards from the Website *Sparklebox* were displayed on the blackboard. The children had to find words which had something in common and therefore put all the words in order (e.g. snail, rain, train). We discussed what was special about the pronunciation and spelling of the words. In German, these vowels would be pronounced completely different, or when hearing the pronunciation, the children would write the words in another way. To give an example, it is very likely that German children would write the word *shark* like *schark*, because the *sh*-sound is spelled *sch* in German. The children then created a mind-map with examples for some words.



- Similar Words in English and German with Different Spelling

In some lessons we looked at words that are similar in English and German. The general aim here was to develop a feeling for language. The children learned to take a close look at words and find out that the roots of words are sometimes the same, but that there are different endings. There are certain kinds of endings that are typical for English, but cannot be found in German, such as the *le* (e.g. the German word *Bibel* is *bible* in English, *Liter* is *litre*) and *gy* (e.g. the German word *Energie* is *energy* in English, *Biologie* is *biology*). English word cards were placed on the blackboard with vocabulary that the children had not learned before, but could understand right away because of the similarities to German. They pointed out the differences and formulated a rule.

4.2 Practicing through Worksheets, Games and Conversations

- Plural Forms

A game allowed the practice of regular and irregular plural forms. The children played the game in pairs. Each playing field consisted of a singular form of a noun and a certain number of pictures displaying this noun (e.g. a picture of two strawberries and underneath the written word *strawberry*). They threw a dice and when they placed their figure on a field, they had to write down the plural and the number of things that they could see in the picture, for example two strawberries. After they had given the correct answer, they were allowed to move on in the next round. When the answer was incorrect, they tried again in the next round.

- Indefinite Articles

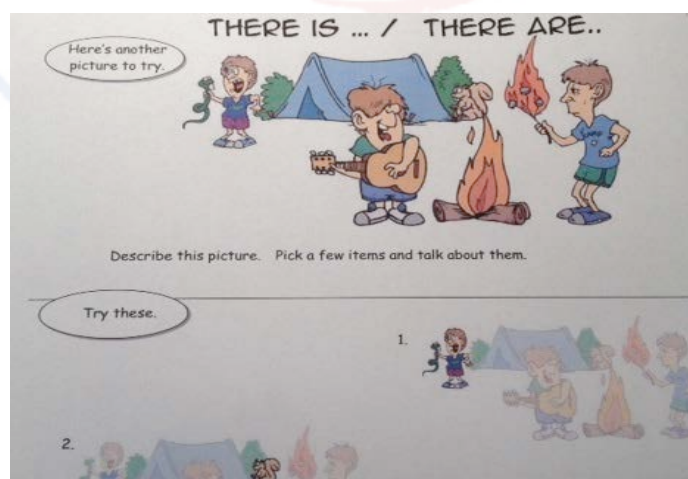
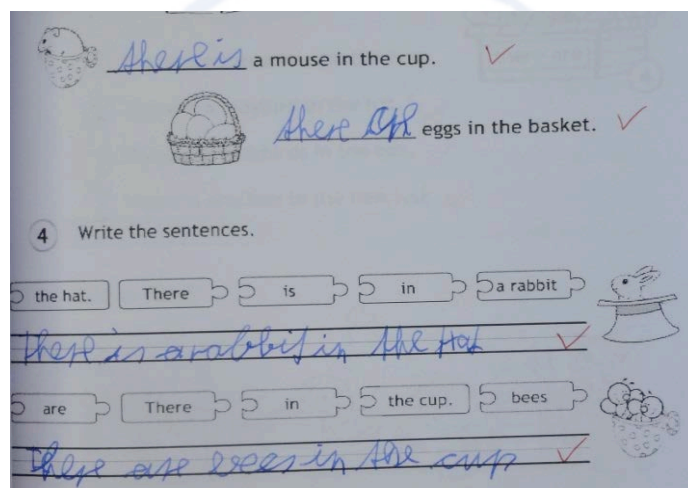
In German, there are two indefinite articles and their use depends on the noun, if it is masculine, feminine or neuter. In English, a complete different situation is given. A game allowed practicing the articles *a* and *an*. The children formed groups and had to find matching word and picture cards (e.g. the word *elephant* and a picture of an elephant) which were scattered in the schoolyard. At the end, they got points for every correct pair of cards, for every correct indefinite article they named matching their word and for every whole sentence they could say including the article and word (e.g. "An elephant is in the zoo").

- Present Continuous

A text by Dominic Streames with the title “The space telephone” from the Website *Efltheatreclub* demonstrates the use of the present continuous. Two aliens talk on the phone about what they are doing at the moment. At the end, the children are asked to talk to a partner “on the space telephone”. Without problems, the children told their partner about what they are doing as well as their family members and pets. It is important to take a closer look at the present continuous, because in German, there is no such tense; only the simple present is used.

- There is and there are

There is/ isn't and *there are/ aren't* was introduced to help children to be able to describe pictures. This could best be practiced with worksheets where the learners could for example fill in the correct form in a gap within a sentence, write a whole sentence which describes the picture that they could see or just talk about the pictures. The photo on the top shows a worksheet from *Anglomaniacy*, the photo below from *MES-English*. Both websites provide grammar worksheets that are easy to understand as well as fill in, and that are attractive for children because they contain nice and funny pictures. Phonics worksheets could be taken from *Bogglesworldesl*.



4.3 Transferring to own Contexts through Creative Hands-on Activities

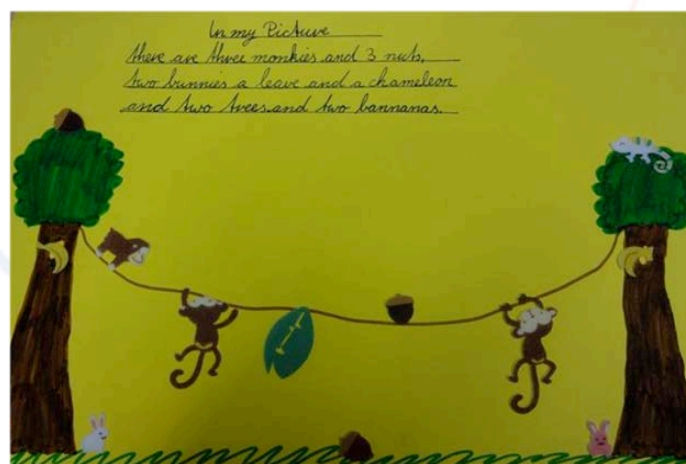
- Present Continuous

The children wrote down sentences in the present continuous and created a situation with animal figures matching their sentences. When the setting was finished, they took a photo which was later on printed out and given to them.



- There is and There are

A picture was created by the children with stickers and drawings. When the picture was finished, the children wrote a text about it, using *there is* and *there are* to describe what it showed. They put it into their English folder or took it home to show it to their parents and to hang it up.



- Words with Pairs of Vowel Letters with Special Pronunciation (e.g. ai, ee)

With the web tool *educreations*, pairs of children created a film where they recorded an explanation in German of how to pronounce for example *ai* in English. They gave some words as examples which they wrote down and drew, such as a snail. At the end, the video was shown to the other classmates.



5. Results of the Project

I. Which awareness-raising materials and activities are appropriate for young learners?

The questionnaire gives information on what the children liked about the project. More than half of the children liked finding out rules by themselves, watching films that explain grammar and filling out worksheets with a partner. All children enjoyed the games and especially the creative activities. More than half of the children thought that the content and material that was provided within the language detective project was better, more challenging and more fun than the normal school book, which doesn't contain awareness-raising activities.

The observation showed that the introduced aspects of language we looked at were appropriate. They were accessible and understandable for the children. The children found rules, talked and thought about the foreign language and compared it to German. Regarding the materials, both the self-developed as well as the material that was used from websites were suitable. The children had no problems reaching the aim. In addition, they did not give the impression that the challenge was too high or the topics and activities not interesting.

II. Do the children perceive value in the gained knowledge about the language?

All children found the learned rules important. A third of the class mentioned in the questionnaire that they wanted to make use of all rules in the future. Some children only pointed out concrete rules that they remembered. Some found the plural forms, the pronunciation of words (e.g. with ai) and the present continuous especially important.

During the lessons, it could be observed that the children were motivated to stick to the rules and use the right forms. They corrected themselves and each other. They were able to reflect about the English language and to compare it to German.

6. Conclusion

This small project shows that we can expect more from the children. Aspects of grammar, spelling and pronunciation that are easy to understand and that can be discovered by them challenge them more than when only playing. They can be practiced and transferred to another context through various fun activities. The study shows that the children were motivated to participate in the lessons. They didn't mind the direct focus on the foreign language and didn't find it boring or too demanding.

They took the rules that they had learned seriously and want to use what they have found out in the future, which shows that they haven't taken over responsibility. They realised that the rules can help them improve their English.

Some age-appropriate material can be found online. However, school books for young learners seldomly integrate awareness-raising activities, so that teachers who want to include these activities have to find or develop extra material. Especially worksheets that allow comparisons between two languages need to be created, because it helps the children to contrast both languages and to find characteristics quickly. More research will be necessary to get a broader insight into the use of awareness-raising activities in the young learners' classroom.

Bibliography

ALA/ Association for Language Awareness (2012). *Language Awareness Defined*.

Retrieved May 12, 2014, from http://www.lexically.net/ala/la_defined.htm

Batstone, R. (2003). *Grammar* (7th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BIG-Kreis/ Beratungs-, Informations- und Gesprächskreis (Ed.). (2009).

Fremdsprachenunterricht als Kontinuum. Der Übergang von der Grundschule in die weiterführenden Schulen. München: Domino.

Brewster, J. & Ellis, G. (2002). *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Harlow: Penguin.

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dudek, J. (2006). Von der Imitation zur bewussten Verwendung von Sprachmitteln: Unterrichtseinheit zum Modalverb can. In: N. Schlüter (Ed.), *Fortschritte im frühen Fremdsprachenlernen – Ausgewählte Tagungsbeiträge Weingarten 2004* (pp. 75-81). Berlin: Cornelsen.

Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R., Kubanek, A. (2006). The Main Pedagogical Principles Underlying the Teaching of Languages to Very Young Learners. Languages for the Children of Europe. Published Research, Good Practice & Main Principles. *Final Report of the EAC 89/04, Lot 1 study*. Retrieved May 12, 2014, from

http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/young_en.pdf

Frost, D. & Driscoll, P. (1999). *The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary School*. London: Routledge.

Harmer, J. (2005). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.

Hawkins, E. (1984). *Awareness of Language: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuhn, T. (2006). *Grammatik im Englischunterricht der Primarstufe. Theoretische Grundlagen und praktische Unterrichtsvorschläge*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Mindt, D. (2006). Von der Imitation zur bewussten Verwendung von Sprachmitteln: Ein neues Unterrichtsmodell. In: Schlüter, N. (Ed.), *Fortschritte im frühen Fremdsprachenlernen – Ausgewählte Tagungsbeiträge Weingarten 2004* (pp. 68-74). Berlin: Cornelsen.

Mindt, D. (2002). Die 'kommunikative Progression' und der Frühbeginn – 2. Teil. *Fremdsprachen Frühbeginn*, 6, 5-7.

Mindt, D. & Schlüter, N. (2007). *Ergebnisorientierter Englischunterricht für die Klassen 3 und 4*. Berlin: Cornelsen.

Müller-Hartmann, A & Schocker-von Ditfurth, M. (2007). *Introduction to English Language Teaching*. Stuttgart: Klett.

Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roos, J. (2007). *Spracherwerb und Sprachproduktion. Lernziele und Lernergebnisse im Englischunterricht der Grundschule*. Tübingen: Narr.

Sarter, H. (1997). *Fremdsprachenarbeit in der Grundschule. Neue Wege – Neue Ziele*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Schlemminger, G. (2010). Grundschüler im Fremdsprachenunterricht kognitiv fordern! *Französisch heute*, 41/3, 107-110.

Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Sport Berlin et al. (Eds.) (2004). *Rahmenlehrplan Grundschule Deutsch*. Berlin: Wissenschaft und Technik Verlag. Retrieved May 12, 2014, from http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/sen-bildung/schulorganisation/lehrplaene/gr_deu_1_6.pdf

Tomlinson, B. (2003a). How Would you Define language Awareness? In: Bolitho, R., Carter, R., Hughes, R., Ivanic, R., Masuhara, H. & Tomlinson, B., *Ten Questions about Language Awareness. ELT Journal* 57/3 (pp. 251-259), Retrieved May 12, 2014 from <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/57/3/251.full.pdf+html>

Tomlinson, B. (2003b). What are the Principles, Objectives, and Procedures of a Language Awareness Approach? In: Bolitho, R., Carter, R., Hughes, R., Ivanic, R., Masuhara, H. & Tomlinson, B., *Ten Questions about Language Awareness. ELT Journal* 57/3 (pp. 251-259), Retrieved May 12, 2014 from <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/content/57/3/251.full.pdf+html>

Teubner, K. (2006). Bewusstmachende Verfahren: Fortschritt oder Behinderung? In: N. Schlüter (Ed.), *Fortschritte im frühen Fremdsprachenlernen – Ausgewählte Tagungsbeiträge Weingarten 2004* (pp. 62-67). Berlin: Cornelsen.

Websites

(Retrieved May 2014)

www.anglomaniacy.pl

www.bogglesworldesl.com

www.educrations.com

www.efltheatreclub.co.uk
www.learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org
www.mes-english.com
www.sparklebox.co.uk



***Learners' Strategy for the Assessment of their Small Group Presentation
in the EFL class.***

Yoshihiko Yamamoto, Ritsumeikan University, Japan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0054

Abstract

Collaborative group work is often used in the classroom to enhance learner's target language skills. However, when group work is assessed as a part of requirements of the subject, it could be a problematic work rather than a collaborative work. The aims of this study are to examine whether assessed group work brings the effect of collaborative work to EFL learners, and to examine how EFL learners make their strategies to get higher scores for their group presentations. The author teaches a research-based English program which includes teaching group presentation skills. All classes of this program have learners who are at mixed levels of their English proficiency and therefore collaborative group work is necessary for them to pass the program. All members of each group get the same scores in the end of the mid term presentation. In order to collect the data, questionnaires are used and 60 responses are collected. The results show that 31 learners preferred a group assessment instead of an individual assessment for their group presentation. Moreover, while 31 learners equally divided each role in their groups, only 8 learners divided each role in their group based on aiming to get the highest scores for their presentations. This study discusses how EFL learners made their strategies for their assessed group presentations. The author believes that this study gives both EFL/ESL teachers some hints for group assessments in the classroom.

Introduction

Group work is popularly used in the EFL classes since it develops students' learning skills with other members of their group. Swardy (2012), for example, explains that employers often highly value group work and they often seek those who can perform their skills as a group. As for students, group work in their course can help students not only to develop their academic skills but also they develop interpersonal skills which are highly valued in the business environment. The author teaches a research based English for university students. In this programme, students need to decide their theme to research through the semester. The second year students in this programme need to conduct their research in a small group and their mid term presentation is assessed as a group evaluation. The aim of this study is to explore students' strategy of how they organise their group assessed mid term presentation.

In this paper, the literature review section reveals several past studies of group work and assessment of the group work. In the methodology section, it shows how this study is conducted. This study used questionnaires in order to investigate learner's strategy to get higher marks on their assessed mid term presentations. The result section is followed and it shows the answers of the questionnaires. In discussions, the author discusses mainly two points. The first discussion is why the participants liked and disliked the group assessment. The second discussion is why nearly half of the participants see the group assessment as the fairer assessment. In conclusion, it summarises this study and gives answers for the two research questions.

Literature review

Several studies point out the effectiveness of introducing group work activities in class. Long and Potter (1985) for example, point out that group work enhances learner's motivation to learn their target language and learn from each other. Swaray (2012: 285) explains that group work helps to promote work-related skills, to develop deeper understanding of complex tasks and to manage time-consuming tasks. Adam et al (1990) also explains that group work provides an opportunity for learners to learn skills such as analyzing, negotiating, and communicating their information as a team. Kuisma (2007) explains that working as a team, members need to externalize their ideas by communicating with other members of their team. Almond (2009: 142) also points out that group work provides learners such skills as practice in oral and written communication, group management, collective decision making. These skills are highly valued in a professional working environment. Group work also provides an opportunity for students to develop their learning skills such as becoming aware of multicultural and gender perspectives, experiencing diverse learning styles and individual differences by their peers, and learning collaborating skills by teaching each other in the group. Based on these past studies, group work is not only an effective learning method for students but also it is an important skill for student's future jobs. Thus introducing group work activities in class should be considered as a valuable skill for students to be learnt in class.

Assessment of the group work

Assessing group work is not an easy task for teachers. For example, Kuisma (2007) mentions although group work is an affective learning method, it has the difficulty in

assessing individual students' learning. As past studies in the previous section revealed advantages of using group work in class, students will get some benefits from their group work learning. However, when group work needs to be assessed, it is a problematic matter. Nordberg (2008) claims that weak students might copy stronger ones' work in their group without contributing their efforts to their group. Moreover, strong ones might lose their motivation to produce high quality performance because of weak students' performance.

Both Kuisma (2007) and Nordberg (2008) pointed out the difficulty of the assessment of the group efforts. There are, however, some studies which give some ideas of how group work is assessed in class. Maiden and Perry (2011) explain that individual contributions to group work are not easily identified and thus the most common assessment is to assess the product or the group work effort and apply this grade to all group members. Bound et al (1999) suggest although both process and products are important to be assessed, the process of peer learning should be highly valued. It is because students develop their confidence in the outcomes of peer learning. Webb (1999) points out the assessment of group work depend on an individual member of the group. When students are actively involved in a group work, the performance of the group will be correctly assessed. However, when students use group resources to get a solution or answer without understanding how to solve the problem, scores from the group will overestimate the individual performance. Orr (2010) finds students' perception towards the group assessment. Orr points out when individual effort was reflected on their grades, students felt more secure of their results.

Aim of this study

The aim of this study is to investigate learners' strategies to get higher marks on their mid term group presentations. Their mid term group presentations were evaluated as a group. Thus learners need to work together collaboratively in order to get higher marks for their assessed presentation. The questions of this study are

1. Do students like the group assessed presentation or not?
2. What strategies do they have in order to get higher marks for the assessed presentation?

Methodology

Assessments

The author teaches a research based English class and students need to deliver a 10 minute mid term group presentation in week 7. The author let students decide their roles for the mid term presentation on their own within their group. For example, a member of the group who is good at giving a presentation could give the presentation for 10 minutes alone. Then the other group members could make power point slides for the presentation, or could make manuscripts for the presentation and so forth. Whatever role each member of the group did for the presentation, all members of the same group would get the same grade after their mid term presentation. The author of this study believes both process and products of group work are important to be assessed and thus he gave a score for each group based on their process and products for their group presentation.

Participants of this study

Participants of this study are the second year students who are majoring sport and health science. The levels of English of participants in this study are between TOEIC 200 and 900.

Questionnaires were distributed to the author's students after they finished their mid term presentations in class. The total of 60 responses were collected from four classes. The author of this study made sure his students did not write their personal information such as their names or student ID numbers on the questionnaires. All questions on the questionnaires were made in Japanese for participants since participants who were low level English skills might find it difficult to answer questionnaires if it was made in English. After questionnaires were done in Japanese, all answers were translated into English by the author of this study. All questions which were used for the questionnaires are listed below.

Q1: TOEIC Score

1. 199以下
2. 200～299
3. 300～349
4. 350～399
5. 400～449
6. 450～499
7. 500～549
8. 550～599
9. 600～649
10. 650～699
11. 700～799
12. 800～899
13. 900 above
14. didn't take it or don't remember my score

Q2: How many hours did you spend for your mid term presentation?

1. Below 30 minutes
2. Over 30 minutes below 1 hour
3. Over 1 hour below 2 hours
4. Over 2 hours below 3 hours
5. Over 3 hours below 4 hours
6. Over 4 hours below 5 hours
7. Over 5 hours below 6 hours
8. Over 6 hours below 7 hours
9. Over 7 hours below 8 hours
10. Others ()

Q3: Which do you like group assessment or individual assessment?

Q4: Why do you think it so?

Q5: What was/were your role(s) for the mid term presentation?

1. Made PPT slides
2. Wrote manuscripts for the presentation
3. Gave a presentation
4. Others ()

Q6: How did you decide the role for Q5?

1. We made our decision in our group at randomly
2. To be fair we divided roles evenly in our group
3. Each member took a role that he/she is good at
4. We tried to get higher marks on the mid term presentation so we selected members who were good at giving a presentation
5. Others ()

Q7: To what extent did you contribute to your group this time?

1. A lot
2. To some extent
3. Average
4. Not really
5. Never

Q8: To what extent did you support your group members?

1. A lot
2. To some extent
3. Average
4. Not really
5. Never

Q9: To what extent were you supported by your group members?

1. A lot
2. To some extent
3. Average
4. Not really
5. Never

Q10: How long did you speak for the mid term presentation?

1. Below 1 minute
2. Over 1 minute below 2 minutes
3. Over 2 minutes below 3 minutes
4. Over 3 minutes below 4 minutes
5. Over 4 minutes below 5 minutes
6. Over 5 minutes below 6 minutes
7. Over 6 minutes below 7 minutes
8. Over 7 minutes below 8 minutes
9. Over 8 minutes below 9 minutes
10. Over 9 minutes below 10 minutes

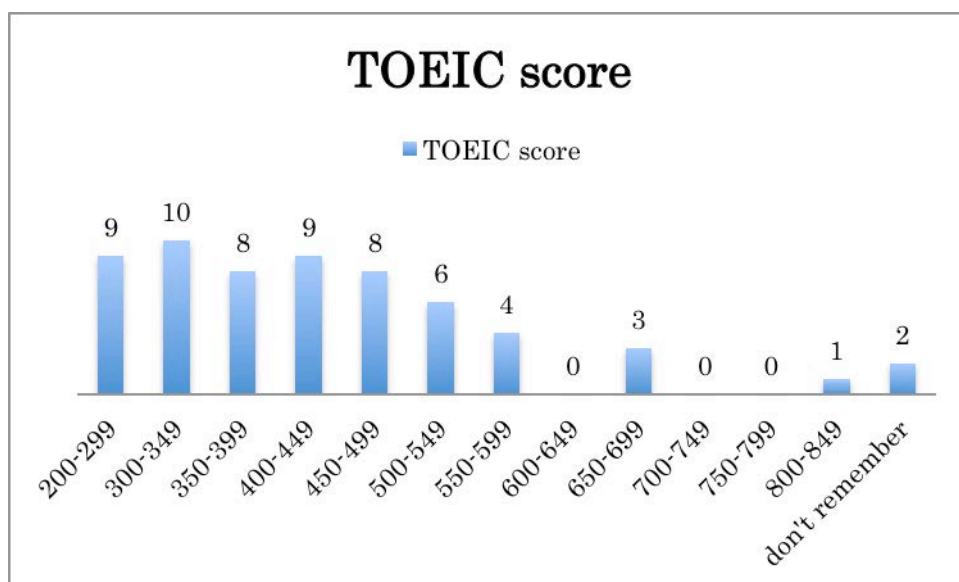
Q11: How did you decide Q10?

Q12: What was difficult for giving the mid term presentation?

Results

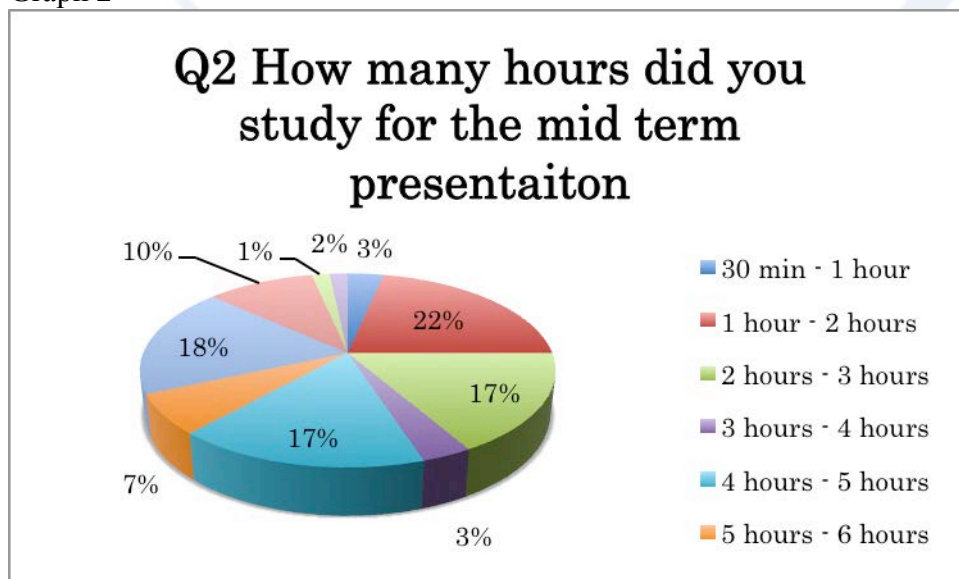
Results of questionnaires are shown below.

Graph 1



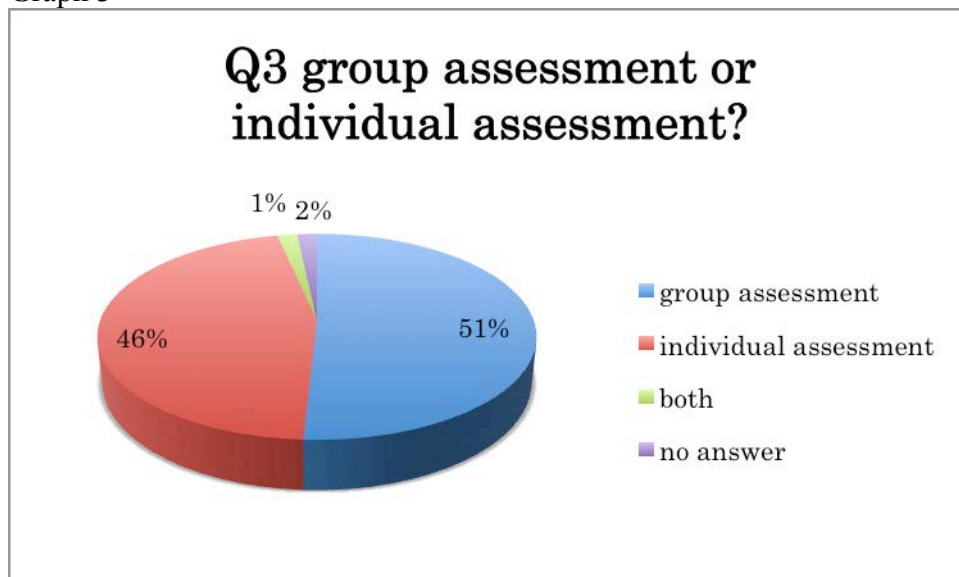
Graph 1 shows the result of Q1. As it shows, there are those who scored between 200 and 299 on TOEIC and there is one student who scored over 800 on TOEIC. Most groups in each class are formed with mixed TOEIC level learners. However, when students formed their groups, they tried to allocate at least one person who scored higher on TOEIC test. Thus each group should have at least one person who is good at English.

Graph 2



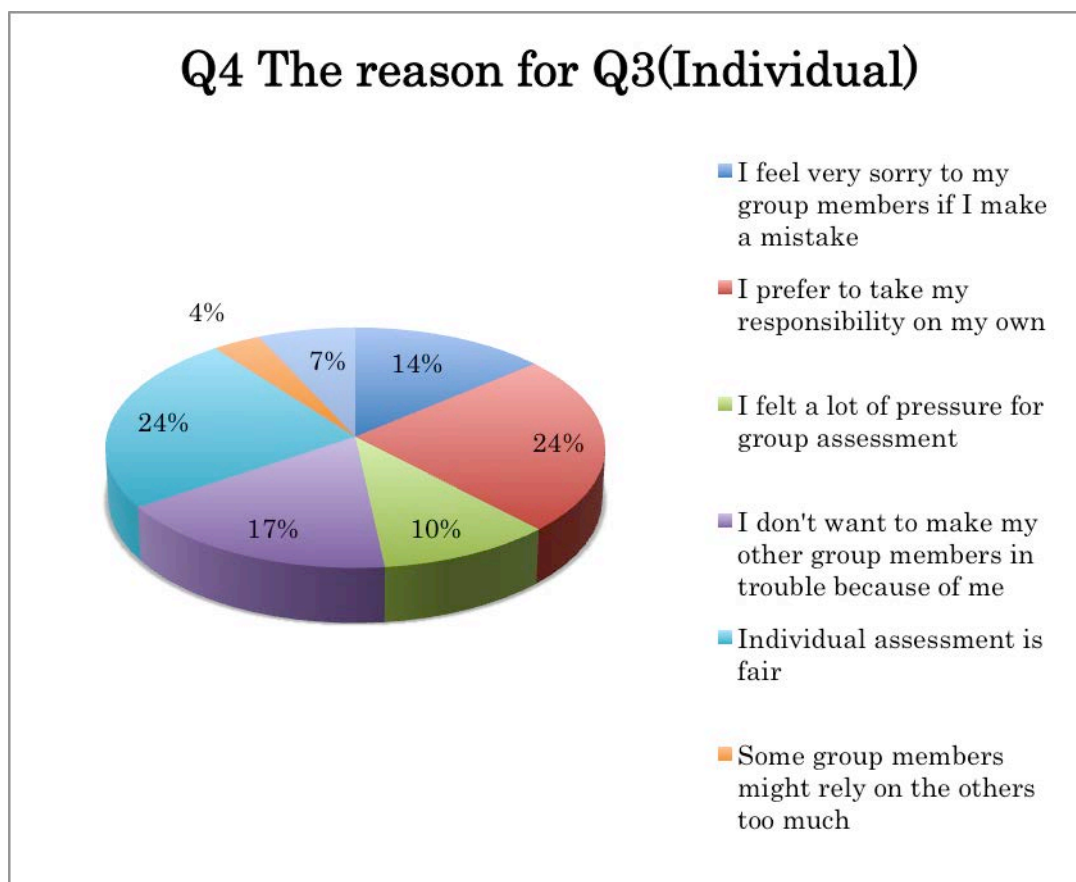
Graph 2 shows the result of Q2 (How many hours did you study for the mid term presentation?). As for the result of Q2, answers vary. The most popular answer was between 1 hour to 2 hours which is followed by the answer of between 6 to 7 hours. Overall, the result shows that students tended to prepare for their mid term presentation well.

Graph 3



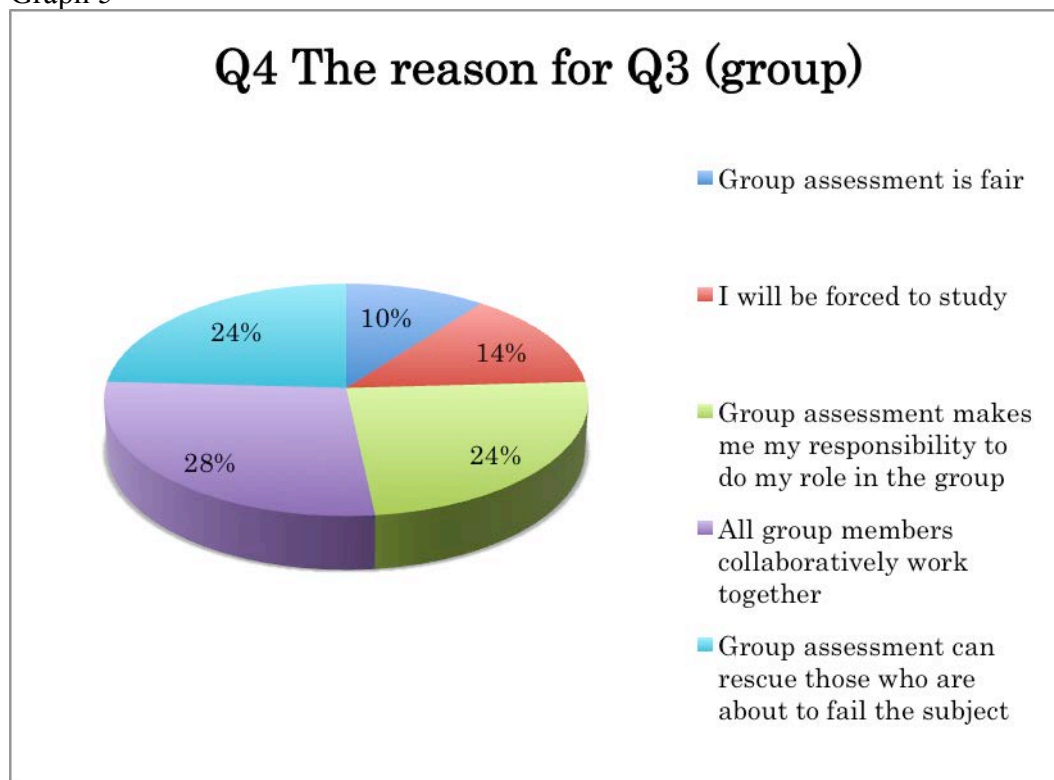
Graph 3 is the result of Q3 (Which do you like group assessment or individual assessment?). It shows that nearly the half of students (51%) liked the group assessment while nearly the other half of the students (46%) did not like the group assessment.

Graph 4



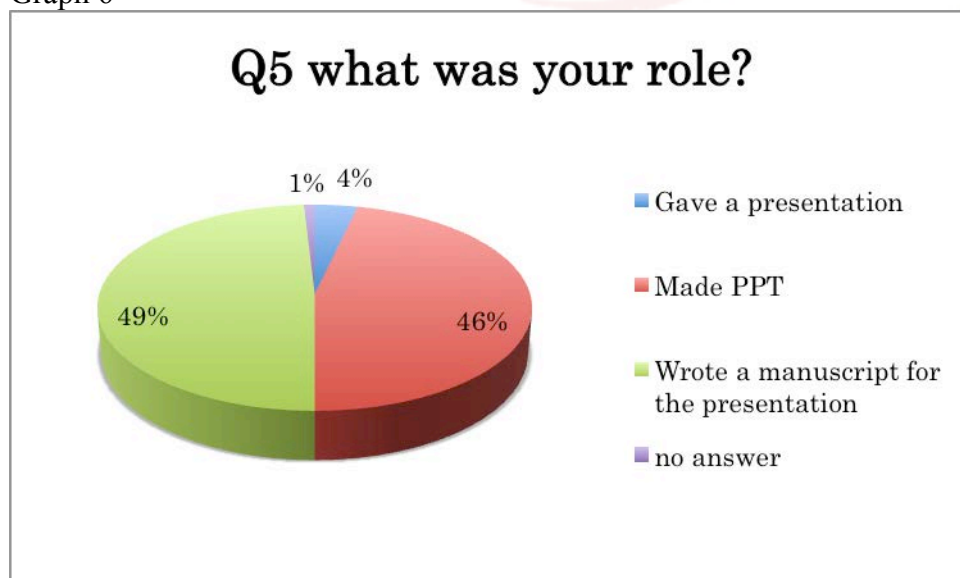
Graph 4 shows the result of Q3 (why do you think it so?). It shows results of only those who answered that they liked individual assessment for Q3. “I prefer to take my responsibility on my own” (24%) and “Individual assessment” (24%) are the most popular answers for the reasons of Q3. “I don’t want to my other group members in trouble because of me” (17%), “I feel very sorry to my group members if I make mistakes” (14%), and “I felt a lot of pressure for group assessment” (10%) show that students saw the group assessment negatively. These three answers show that students were worried a lot because of lack of their self-confidence towards the assessed group presentation.

Graph 5



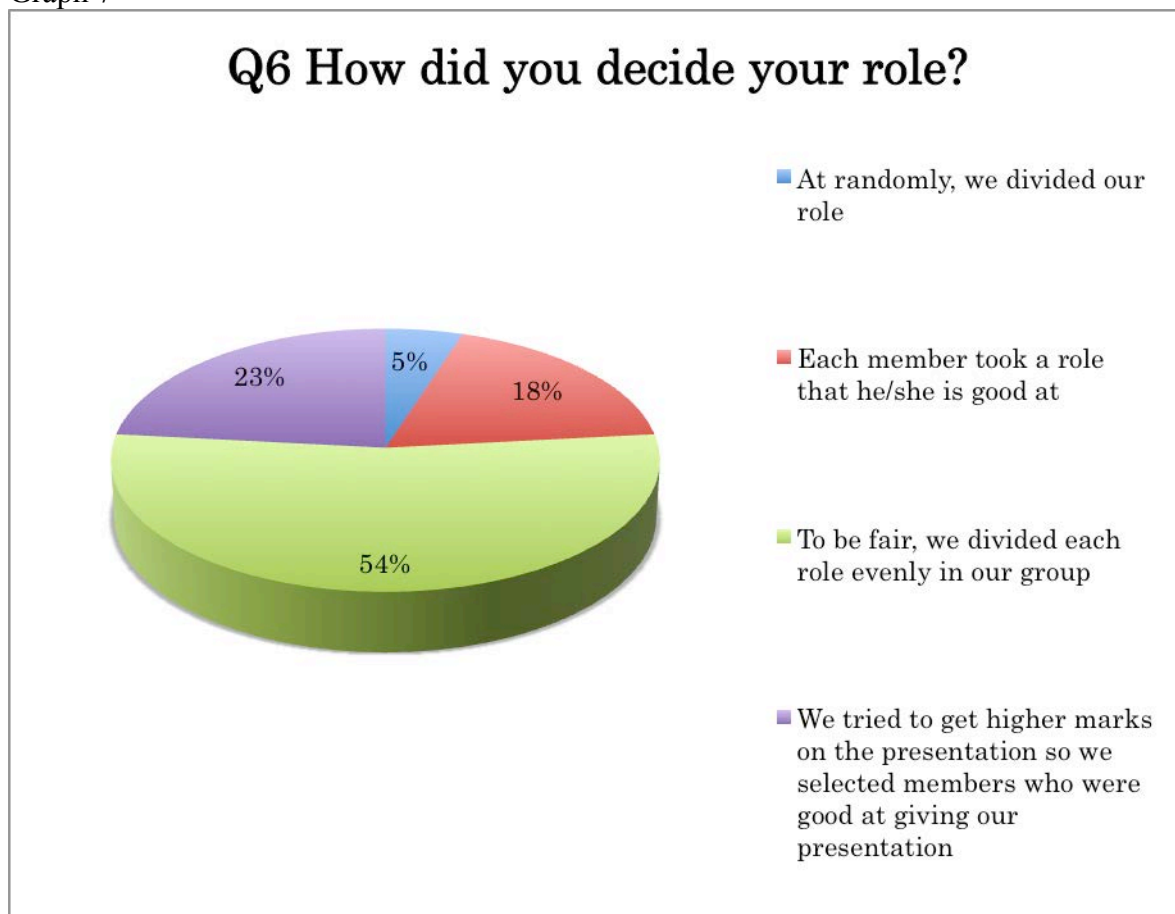
Graph 5 shows the results of reasons for Q3 and only shows positive reasons for the group assessment. The most popular reason is “All group members collaboratively work together” (28%). Both “Group assessment makes me my responsibility to do my role in the group” (24%) and “Group assessment can rescue those who are about to fail the subject” (24%) come to next.

Graph 6



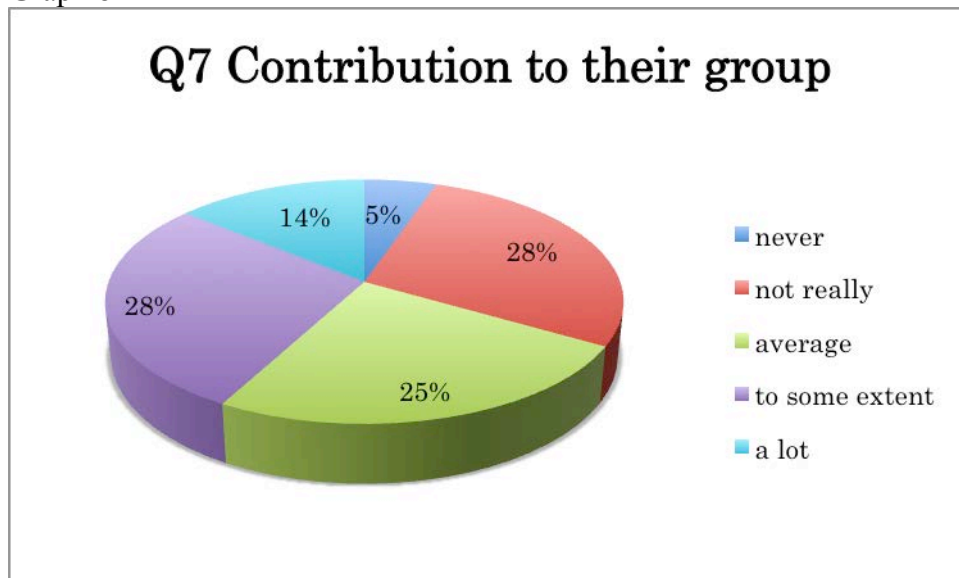
Graph 6 shows the result of Q5 (What was/were your role(s) for the mid term presentation?). It shows students' roles for the mid term presentation. 49% of answers show that students wrote their manuscripts for their presentations and 46% of students made slides for their presentations. Only 4 % of students actually gave presentations. It suggests that students in this study selected speakers in their group for their assessed presentations.

Graph 7



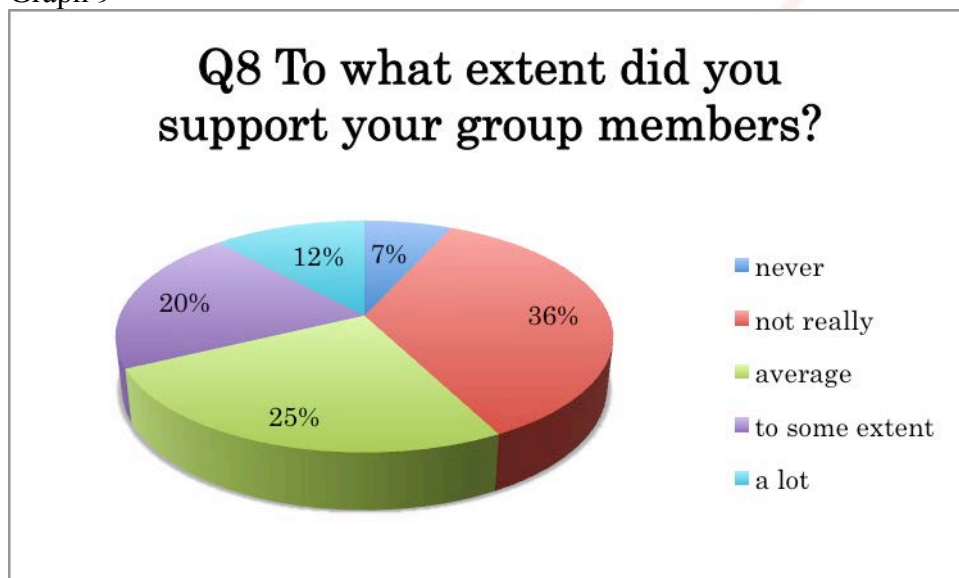
Graph 7 shows the result of Q6 (How did you decide the role for Q5?). It shows students' strategies to decide their roles for the mid term presentations. 54% answered that they divided their roles evenly to be fair. 23% answered that they selected members for getting higher scores and 18% answered they divided their roles depending on their skills. Thus the total of these two answers (23% + 18%) 41% suggests that they arranged group members' tasks to do in order to get higher scores for their presentations.

Graph 8



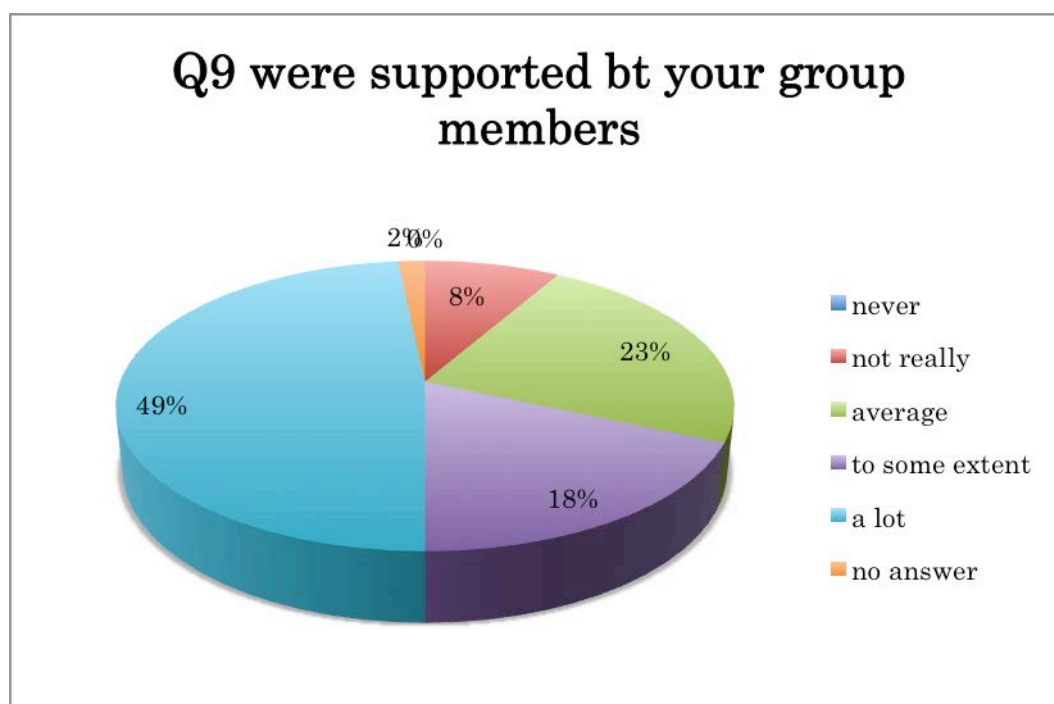
Graph 8 shows the result of Q7 (To what extent did you contribute to your group this time?). It shows their contributions to the mid term presentation. While 33% (never:5 % and not really:28 %) answered that they did not make their contribution to their group, 67% (average: 25%, to some extent:28%, a lot:14%) answered they made their contribution to their group.

Graph 9



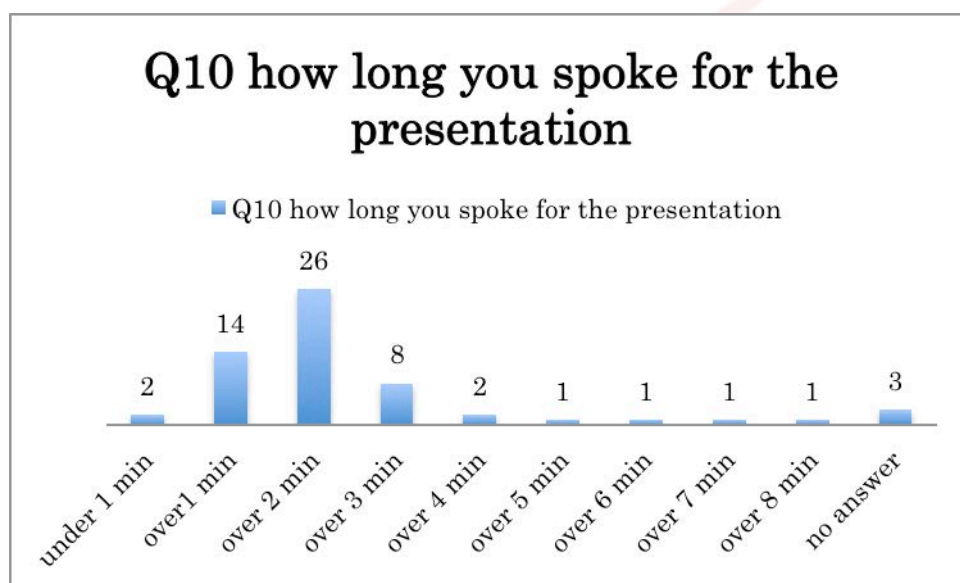
Graph 9 shows the result of Q8 (To what extent did you support your group members?). 43% (never: 7% and not really: 36%) answered that they did not support their group members while 57% (average: 25, to some extent: 25%, and 12% a lot) answered that they supported their group members.

Graph 10



Graph 10 shows the result of Q9 (To what extent were you supported by your group members?). Only 8% answered they did not feel that they were supported by their group members while 90 % (average: 23%, to some extent: 18%, and a lot: 49%) answered that they were supported by their group members. In addition, nearly the half of participants (49 %) answered that they felt they were supported a lot by their group members.

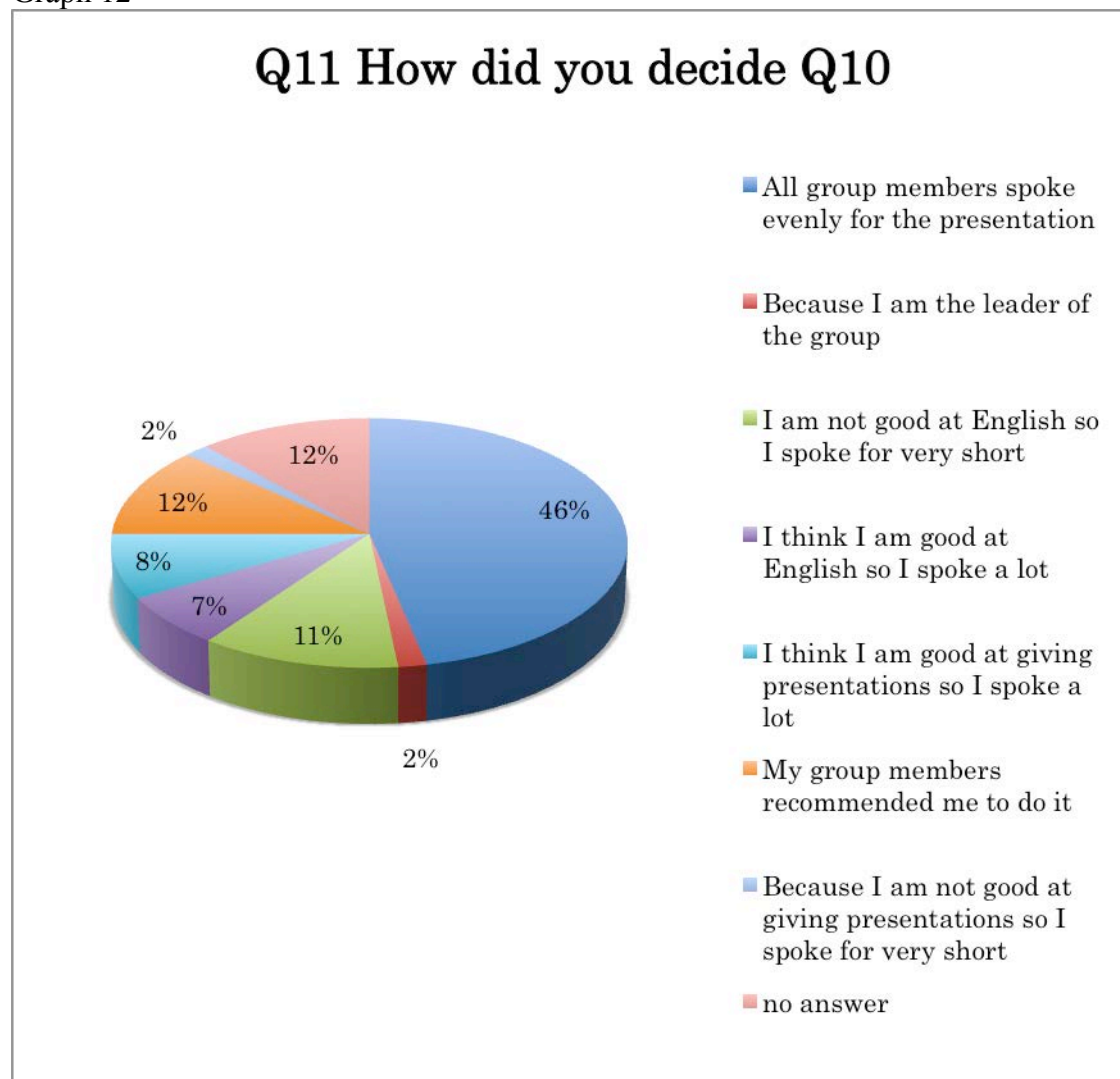
Graph 11



Graph 11 shows the result of Q10 (How long did you speak for the mid term presentation?). Q10 shows the length of speech in the mid term presentation. The

mid term presentation was a 10 minute presentation. The most popular answer was over two minutes and under three minutes. While one participant answered over 8 minutes and under 9 minutes, two people answered under 1 minute.

Graph 12



Graph 12 shows the result of Q 11 (How did you decide Q10?). Nearly the half of participants answered that they divided their speech time for the mid term presentation evenly. Other answers such as “I am not good at English so I spoke for a very short time”, “Because I am not good at giving presentations so I spoke for very short time”, “I think I am good at English so I spoke a lot”, and “I think I am good at giving presentations so I spoke a lot” indicate that these groups made their strategy to get higher marks for their presentations.

Q12: What was difficult for the mid term presentation?

- ✓ I was very nervous not to disappoint my team mates.
- ✓ I felt a 10 minute presentation was very short so I thought I must rush in finishing my part.
- ✓ We divided tasks between our group members which made my part a bit tricky to do.
- ✓ The leader's work depends on other's progress so it was bit difficult for me to

- organise the group work.
- ✓ It was difficult to organise the group.
- ✓ All members in a group get the same score and I feel sorry towards my team mates.
- ✓ It was difficult for me to organise a short time presentation.

Answers of Q12 vary. Some comments were interesting to see. For instance, “I was very nervous not to make my team mates disappointed” and “All members in a group get the same score and I feel very sorry to my team mates”. These comments indicate that they were under pressure not to fail in their presentation. Also “I felt a 10 minute presentation was very short so I thought I must rush in finishing my part” and “It was difficult for me to organise a short time presentation” show that they felt a 10 minute presentation was shorter than they expected when they actually gave their presentations.

Discussions

Firstly, the result of Q3 (Which do you like, group assessment or individual assessment?) shows that the nearly the half of students liked the group assessment. It was an interesting result to see since the author of this study predicted that the group assessment was not fair for them. As the result of Q4 shows that those who liked the group assessment thought it gave them an opportunity to work collaboratively in their group. Willis et al (2002) supports the idea of collaborative group assessment in their study that their students saw the group assessment is important because it encouraged and motivated them to get credit for the process of learning.

It is also interesting to see some students in this study answered in Q4 that the group assessment made them feel responsible to do their task well in their group and rescue those who tend to fail the subject. These answers show that group members collaboratively support each other for their group assessment. Chang (2010) points out that learners' group is the influential factor for collaborative group work. Her study shows that those who belong to a good learner group are motivated by their group members. There are good interactions among group members such as showing their homework each other.

Moreover, as most participants in this study either used to belong sport clubs or currently belong to sport clubs, they are familiar with working in the team. Many Japanese sport clubs which are run by schools often discipline students very well. Thus those who have experienced sport club activities tend to use team work skills which they learnt in their sport clubs for their group work in class.

On the other hand, 46% of students answered that they did not like the group assessment. Some answered that the group assessment made them feel under pressure not to make mistakes for their mid term presentation or under pressure not to let the other group members down. Liu (2012) explains that language anxiety is one of the factors of low motivation. Learners who are, for example, afraid of making a mistake in a language classroom, often worry that they are negatively evaluated by both their teachers and classmates. They are less likely to engage in autonomous learning activities either in or out of the classroom. Some students in this study have low

English skills which might have an influence on their low self confidence to involve themselves in group work.

Secondly, the results of Q6 show that nearly half of the students (54%) tried to put value on fairness for their group members instead of trying to get higher marks as a group. Although they were told that they could arrange their tasks in order to get the highest scores for their mid term presentation, nearly the half of students divided their tasks evenly. On the other hand, 41% of students tried to divide their tasks in order to get the highest scores for their group assessed presentations. The result of Q6 reflects on the result of Q10 (How long did you speak for the mid term presentation?). The most popular answer for Q10 was between two minutes and three minutes. Each group has three or four members and thus those who answered between two minutes and three minutes divided speech time for their mid term presentation evenly.

However, some students answered Q10 that they spoke longer than others such as speaking longer than six minutes out of 10 minutes for the mid term presentation. As the results of Q6 and Q10 showed, some students might find it difficult to make their strategy as a group to get higher scores. Sakai et al (2010) explain that Asian students often find it difficult to adjust themselves in a learner centered classroom. Thus when students are put in a learner centered classroom, they are not likely to realize autonomy to learn their target language on their own. Although participants of this study are the second year students who experienced learner centered type lessons at least for one year through what they took last year as their compulsory subject, some participants are not likely to show their autonomy in the learner centered class.

Conclusion

This study explored whether assessed group work will bring the effect of collaborative work to EFL learners and to explore how EFL learners make their strategies to get higher marks for their assessed mid term presentations. In this study, each group had to deliver their assessed mid term presentation for 10 minutes. Questionnaires were used in order to collect the data. The total of 60 responses were collected.

The result of questionnaires showed that nearly the half of students (51%) answered that they liked the group assessment. They thought the group assessment gave them an opportunity for collaborative group work. On the other hand, nearly the other half of students saw the group assessment as not fair. They also preferred to take individual responsibility for their assessment.

There were two research questions of this study which were

1. Do students like group the assessed presentation or not?
2. What strategies do they have in order to get higher marks for the assessed presentation?

For the first question, the answer is both yes and no. Almost the half of participants of this study liked the group assessment and the other half of them did not like the group assessment. Those who liked group assessment found it was fair and it made them collaboratively work together in their group. On the other hand, those who did

not like the group assessment found it was not fair. The group assessment put them under a lot of pressure from the other group members not to make mistakes. For the second question, there were some strategies in order to get higher marks among students. Some groups divided their roles within their groups based on what they were good at. Other groups selected good speakers for their actual presentations and they mostly spoke for their presentations. This study focused on examining those who were majoring in sport and health science. This study can expand to examining students who belong to the other departments as a future study in order to enhance its quality.

References

Adams, D. M., Carlson, H and Hamm, M. (1990). Collaborative learning – building a team spirit in the classroom. Cooperative learning & educational media – collaborating with technology and each other US: *Educational Technology Publications*, 3 – 34

Almond, R. J. (2009). Group assessment: comparing group and individual undergraduate module marks. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(2), April, 141- 148

Bound, D., Cohen R., and Sampson, J. (1999). Peer learning and assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 24(3), 413-426.

Chang, L. Y. (2010). Group process and EFL learners' motivation: A study of group dynamics in EFL classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(1), March, 129-154

Clement, R., Dornyei, Z., and Noels, K. A. (1994). Motivation, self-confidence, and group cohesion in the foreign language. *Language learning*, 44(3), 417-448.

Kuisma, R. (2007). Portfolio assessment of an undergraduate group project *Assessment and Education in Higher Education*, 32(5), October, 557-569.

Liu, H. (2012). Understanding EFL undergraduate anxiety in relation to motivation, autonomy, and language proficiency. *Electric Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 9(1), 123-139.

Long, M. H., and Porter, P. A. (1985). Group work, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19(2), 207-228.

Maiden, B. and Perry, B. (2011). Dealing with free-riders in assessed group-work: results from a study at a UK university. *Assessment & Education in Higher Education*, 36(4), July, 451-464.

Nordberg, D. (2008). Group projects: more learning? less fair? A conundrum in assessing postgraduate business education. *Assessment and Education in Higher Education*, 33(5), October, 481-492.

Orr, S. (2010). Collaborating or fighting for the marks? Students' experiences of group work assessment in the creative arts. *Assessment & Education in Higher Education*, 35(3), May, 301-313.

Sakai, S., Takagi, A., and Chu, Man-P. (2010). Promoting learner autonomy: students perceptions of responsibility in a language classroom in East Asia. *Journal of the college of education/university of Hawaii at Ma noa*, 12 -27.

Swaray, R. (2012). An evaluation of a group project designed to reduce free-riding and promote active learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 37(3), May, 285-292.

Webb, N. M. (1993). Collaborative group versus individual assessment in mathematics: processes and outcomes. *Educational Assessment*, 1(2), 131-152

Willis, S. C., Jones, A., Bundy, C., Burdett, K., Whitehouse, C. R., and O'neill, P.A. (2002). Small-group work and assessment in a PBL curricula: a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of student perception of the process of working in small groups and its assessment. *Medical Teacher*, 24(5), 495-501.

The logo for the International Association for Educational Assessment (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the word "iafor" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent arcs in shades of blue and red, creating a sense of motion or a globe.

*Analysis of Graduate Students' English Learning
Strategies at Eastern Asia University*

Amporn Srisermbhok, Eastern Asia University, Thailand

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0079

Abstract

This study aimed to (a) identify graduate students' learning strategies, (b) compare the similarities and differences among good and poor learners, and (c) explore impacting factors arising from age, gender, attitude, and motivation. The instruments used for data collection consisted of the students' diaries and a questionnaire developed in a classroom situation based on their input during the class. The samples in this study consisted of 13 non-English education major graduate students studying a 45- hour Academic English Course in a Doctoral Program in Education Administration at Eastern Asia University in the Summer of 2012 academic year. Qualitative research was employed to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaires, while descriptive statistics were used to assess their attitudes towards English as well as their satisfaction of the teaching materials. Findings revealed that all the students used both direct and indirect learning strategies relevant to Rebecca's (1990) learning strategies models, and the ones commonly used among good learners were cognitive ,memory, compensation , metacognitive, affective and social strategies, while poor learners preferred compensation, and social strategies. Age, and gender did not make significant differences in the learning outcome. However, attitudes, motivation and the teacher's personalities were influential factors. It was interesting to discover that journal writing had positive impacts on students' English proficiency. At the same time it reflected their feelings, attitudes and learning difficulties, which were useful for teachers to improve their teaching strategies.

Keywords: graduate students' learning strategies, attitudes, motivation

Introduction

English has been required as a non-credit subject in all graduate programs in Thai universities as it is considered an important tool for students to broaden their knowledge through reading texts, previous researches or articles written in English. In addition, the knowledge of English can enhance graduate students' communication skills either in speaking, listening, reading or writing. It is also believed that with English proficiency, students will be motivated to further acquire knowledge on their own outside the classroom, especially in this IT era, in which abundance of free information in English is available online, encouraging access of unlimited sources of useful materials for further study and personal development.

Griva & Chostelidou (2011) point out that the impact of English as an International Language and the growing demand for EFL courses have highlighted the need for a higher level of language sensitivity among EFL teachers and have established Language Awareness as an essential component in teacher education. That means teachers need to know how much knowledge they have to enable them to teach effectively. Moreover, they also need to know their learners' need concerning language learning strategies. As there is a shift from the teacher-centered to student-centered approach, in recent times, scholars have undertaken research on students' learning strategies to improve their teaching strategies as well as to get insight into how students learn English to better understand their problems in learning the language. Ellis (1994) has defined 'language learning strategies' as follows:

Language learning strategies are:

- 1) general approaches or particular techniques,
- 2) behavioral or mental, or both,
- 3) conscious and intentional or subconscious, and
- 4) direct or indirect on inter- language development.

The above definitions show that students' learning strategies involve their participation and engagement in language learning activities both consciously and unconsciously. In this way, it is hard to generalize their characteristics through sheer observation, so each individual learner's learning style or strategy must be carefully examined to make language teaching and learning become more successful.

Literature Review

Oxford (1990) has clearly classified language learning strategies into two classes and six groups as the following:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Direct Strategies: | I. Cognitive Strategies |
| | II. Memory Strategies |
| | III. Compensation Strategies |
| Indirect Strategies: | I. Metacognitive Strategies |
| | II. Affective Strategies |
| | III. Social Strategies |

Oxford's learning strategies clearly show the complexity of the learning processes that need to be understood. Obviously all direct learning strategies involve the cognitive, memory and compensation processes, which function differently. While the cognitive strategies, such as practicing and analyzing, making learners understand and able to use the target language, the memory strategies, such as grouping or using imagery for specific function, the compensation strategies, such as guessing and using synonyms, enable students to use the language even though they do not really have a full comprehension or knowledge about it. Indirect strategies are learning supportive. As metacognitive strategies allow learners to control their own learning process based on their study habits, affective strategies help learners maintain their emotions, motivations and attitudes. Social strategies engage students' interactions with others. In this light, understanding students' indirect learning strategies will make teachers aware of other learning situations related to students' application of the target language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In the research entitled "*The Relationship between Learning Styles and Language Learning Strategies of Pre-intermediate EAP Students*," Tabanlıoğlu (2003,1) interestingly describes the importance of language learning as in the following:

During the last couple of decades the world has been concerned with cultural, social, political and technological changes. In order to keep up with those changes, people have had to meet the needs created by all these changes. Language learning is one of the most important needs and it has become an essential component in people's lives. Because of numerous reasons such as studying at an English medium university, or living in a foreign country, people all over the world are trying to learn a second, even a third language.

The above statements reconfirm the need for Thai students to study English as a foreign language and use it as a tool to enhance their intellectual growth. Nunan (2003) in his article titled "*The Impact of English as a Global Language on Educational Policies and Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region*" maintains that the place of English as a global language is obvious by citing Graddol(1997) about the apparently 'unstoppable (p.2) trend toward global English usage. However, among non-English major adult Thai learners, studying English is bitter medicine in many aspects. From my teaching experience, these students lack confidence in using the language. They either feel themselves very weak at English or that they have forgotten or not used it at all after leaving school. The worst reason is that they feel they can not get through and may fail in the course and delay their graduation, making them lose self-esteem among their peers. All these negative attitudes have become barriers to their learning English. But since English is a required course, all non-English major graduate students, who do not have enough background in English, must strive to get through so as to finish the graduate program. In order to help our graduate students master their English course, it is necessary to investigate their learning strategies or techniques to find new ways to improve the teaching of English in Thailand.

Robin (1975) revealed that good students' learning strategies are useful to facilitate our understanding on the learning process of the target language. It is beneficial for the teacher to understand what learning strategies good students employ to adjust the

teaching approaches to suit their learning styles. Many other researchers have also claimed that students' learning strategies can broaden our notions of the learning process of a second and foreign language. Park (1997) in his research on "Language learning strategies and English proficiency among Korean university students" found that there was a linear correlation between language strategies used and language proficiency. Furthermore, all six categories of language learning strategies as well as the overall strategies use were significantly correlated with TOEFL Test scores used to measure their proficiency level.

Chen (2002) in a research on "Language learning strategies used by high and low English proficiency students in a technology college" discovered that there were significant correlations between strategy use and proficiency level. Cognitive and metacognitive strategies show very high correlations with the proficiency level of the participants and were used by high-proficiency learners. Compensation strategies, however, were shown to be favoured by both high and low-proficiency students, with low-proficiency students outperforming the high-proficiency ones in their use of such strategies.

Osamu Takeuchi (2003) in a research on "Searching for better language learning strategies: Study on good language learners in the Japanese *FL* context" found that there are some strategies especially favored in the Japanese *EFL/FL* context and that the use of some strategies seems to be closely connected to the stages of learning. This is also to confirm that metacognitive strategies are related to maximizing input and, above all, the opportunities to use a foreign language. Conscious learning also involves skill-specific strategies, and memory strategies are related to internalizing the linguistic system as well as the cognitive strategies for practicing, such as imitating, shadowing, and pattern practicing.

Mohammad Rahimi, Abdolmehdi Riazi and Shahrzad Saif (2003) in their research titled "An investigation into the factors affecting the use of language learning strategies by Persian *EFL* learners" revealed that the strategies use is a complex phenomenon that interacts with a number of variables as discussed earlier. These variables affect the overall strategy use as well as the use of the strategy categorized and individual strategies in different ways. So to obtain a clear idea of learners' patterns of strategy use, it is important to take all these aspects into consideration. It is also recommended that the context of language learning plays an important role in determining the nature and extent of this effect. That is, certain aspects of learners' strategic behavior, such as their perceived use of metacognitive and social strategies appear to have been influenced by the teaching approach adopted in the Iranian *EFL classrooms*. That means the kind of learners and the context of learning play a role in the choice of learners' strategies, and students' learning experience, including their awareness of the learning processes seem to have an impact on their choice of language learning strategies in this study. Consequently, my investigation of the learning strategies of non-English major students, studying for a doctoral degree in Education Administration at Eastern Asia University, will be significant in many ways. Firstly, it will provide a greater understanding of how our Thai students learn English. Secondly, the limitations of the traditional teaching pedagogies affecting the students' learning strategies will be underpinned and used as evidences and implications for teaching development as well as to help poor learners improve their performance, and finally the research findings will be presented at an international conference among scholars in the field.

Lately a lot of research in *ELT* has been devoted to students' learning strategies to examine their achievement and failure as reflections of the teacher's teaching strategies. Yet, in Thailand there is not much research on non-English major students' learning strategies. I, therefore, believe that my analysis of the graduate students' learning strategies in the non-credit intensive English course at Eastern Asia University will provide information valuable for those interested in teaching English to non-English major students to develop their teaching as well as to encourage Thai learners to have positive attitudes in learning English. Viewed in light of the ASEAN community, it is even more urgent for Thai educators to find ways to develop English language learning in Thailand to better prepare Thais to communicate effectively in English as global citizens.

RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In analyzing students' English learning strategies, the researcher will find out important factors, such as their learning behavior, attitude, motivation, teaching materials, including thought process, and personal skills students utilize to master the course, especially the ones used by good learners. This study will examine in detail the afore mentioned elements impacting students' achievement and failure in learning English based on their different learning strategies. Stern(1975,316) makes interesting remarks about the characteristics of good language learners as in the following:

....the good language learner is characterized by a personal learning style or positive learning strategies, an active approach to the learning task, a tolerant and outgoing approach the target language which is empathetic with its speakers, technical know-how about how to tackle a language, strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system with progressive revision ,constantly searching for meaning, willingness to practice, willingness to use the language in real communication, critically sensitive self-monitoring in language use and an ability to develop the target language more and more as a separate reference system while learning to think about it.

Stern's remarks made clear the nature of successful learners' learning strategies, and the impact of their positive learning attitudes. Unlike successful learners, poor learners' learning strategies also affect their learning as well as create stress and tension. Green and Oxford (1995) in their research on *A Closer Look at Learning Strategies, L2 Proficiency and Gender* discovered that even students shared some common learning strategies contributed to the significant learning process, it did not correlate to their English proficiency improvement. Poor or under achievement learners not only have to struggle to get through the course, but did not achieve significantly. All these observations are useful for the researcher to use as criteria for the investigation. As mentioned earlier that different learners have different learning styles, it is necessary to carefully examine each individual's learning strategy. Unlike a study on teaching strategies, in which the instructor has to prepare himself/herself ahead of time about what to teach, how to teach, and how to assess students' learning achievement, an investigation of students' learning strategies are based on the students' self evaluation and feedbacks on how they learned their English lesson. The

researcher is well aware that all students have different characteristics, which might affect their language learning strategies, such as age, gender, motivation, attitude, motivation, and personality among others.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to investigate the following:

1. To identify the students' learning strategies
2. To compare the differences and similarities of the learning strategies use among good and poor learners
3. To explore factors impacting each student's learning strategies: age, gender, attitude, motivation, teaching strategies, teaching materials, and assignments.

Definition of Terms:

1. Learners in this study refer to doctorate students majoring in Education Administration and Change Leader who studied an *Academic English for Graduate Students* subject at Eastern Asia University from March 31 – May 26, 2012.
2. Learning strategies in this research refer to thoughts and actions, including activities students use to accomplish their learning purposes.
3. Good language learners in this study refer to the students who are actively involved in language learning and are able to solve problems regarding their own learning, whereas poor language learners are those who are passive, and do not put enough effort to improve their weaknesses

Rubin and Thomson (1994) believe that good learners:

1. Find their own way, take responsibility for their own learning.
2. Organize information about language.
3. Are creative, and try to feel the language by experimenting its grammar and words.
4. Create opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom.
5. Learn to live with uncertainty by not getting confused and by continuing to talk or listen without understanding any word.
6. Use memory strategies to bring back what has been learned.
7. Make errors work for them and not against them.
8. Use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of the first language in learning a second language.
9. Use contextual cues to help them learn in comprehension.
10. Learn to make their intelligent guesses.
11. Learn chunks of language as wholes and formalized routines to help them perform "beyond their competence".
12. Learn to use certain tricks to keep conversation going.

13. Learn certain production strategies to fill in gaps in their own competence.
14. Learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language regarding the formality of the situation.

METHODS

The methodology includes the participants' diaries, a questionnaire for data collection, and data analysis. The research questions are:

1. What are the participants' learning strategies to achieve their goals?
2. Do good and poor learners have similar or different learning strategies?
3. What are impacting factors on the learners: age, gender, attitudes, and motivation?

Description of Population and Research Procedures

The population in this research consisted of 13 non-English education major graduate students, studying a 45-hour intensive non-credit **Academic English for Graduate Students** subject in the summer of 2012 academic year. The project started on March 23, 2013 and ended May 26, 2013. There were 7 females and 6 males. Their ages ranged between 27 and 64. The instruments used for data collection consisted of the students' diaries, their attitudes towards learning, and the questionnaire. The learners were assigned to write a diary five days a week for a period of four weeks, starting from the second week of the project. There were 8 statements used as guide lines with a 5-point Likert's scales to investigate their attitudes toward learning English. In their diaries, the students freely expressed their opinion, reflecting their responsibility, learning difficulties, the influence of the teacher's teaching style, learning atmosphere, and the social environment. They handed in their diaries to the researcher every week. The diaries were not evaluated, but used as research tools for analysis. Each of the learners who wrote diaries every week would be rewarded with 40 raw scores, which would be accumulated as part of the 50% class assignments. Scores from oral presentations, midterm and final, weighed 50% were also used for data analysis. The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the project. All the learners completed the questionnaires with 15 closed and 20 open-ended questions. The questionnaires were collected, then analyzed and discussed based on the researcher's judgments with reference to previous research or related theories on students' achievements.

Method of Data Collection:

Data from the participants' diaries were recorded every week, but not graded, and data from the questionnaires were collected and analyzed at the end of the project.

Questionnaires

To obtain data for analysis, the researcher designed the questionnaire consisting of 6 Parts: Part I: Personal data of the learners, Part II: Likert's 5 scale feedbacks on their attitudes towards learning, Part III: Their learning strategies to improve listening skills, Part IV: Their learning strategies to improve speaking skills, Part V: Their

learning strategies to improve reading skills, and Part VI: Their learning strategies to improve writing skills.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the collected data.

FINDINGS

Details of the findings, deriving from multiple sources as mentioned earlier are summarized and presented both in tables and analytical descriptions below:

Table 1
learners attitudes toward English learning in percentage

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I like learning English in and outside class.				N=3=23%	10=77%

Table 1
(Continues)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. When I don't understand, I try to seek help.				N=3=23%	10=77%
3. I put a great effort to improve my English. Table 1. Cont.			N=2=15%	N=9=70%	2=15%
4. It is important to evaluate my own progress.			N=1=7.6%	N=9=70%	N=3=23%
5. The teacher has an important role for me.					N=13=100%

6. I learn from my mistakes.			N=2=15%	N=5=39%	N=6=46%
7. It is important for me to plan my own study.			N=3=23%	N=4=31%	N=6=46%
8. It is important for the teacher to design all materials.					N=13=100%

The data from **Table1**.reveals that although all the learners have positive attitudes toward learning English both in and outside class with the highest percentage of 77%, and their effort to learn and understand the lesson was as equally high as 77%.,it is interesting to observe that 2 learners or 15% of the class did not confirm that they had put great effort to improve their English, and this is correlated to guided statements numbers 6,and 7 that they did not learn from their mistakes, nor planned their own study. However, all the learners strongly agreed that the teacher has an important role to inspire them to learn as their response was rated 100%.That means the teacher has a very influential role in class.

Table2

Learners' opinions about the teaching materials in a 5-point Likert's scales in percentage.

Contents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.Standard for Foreign Language Learning				N=6=46.15%	N=7=53.84%
2. Word Power: Why Bother?				N=5=38.46%	N=8=61.53%
3.Denotation/Connotation			N=1=7.69%	N=5=38.46%	N=7=53.84%
4.Selected Poems			N=2=15.38%	N=4=30.76%	N=7=53.84%
5.Fiction/Non-fiction			N=3=23.07%	N=3=23.07%	N=7=53.84%
6.Writing Haikus				N=5=38.46%	N=8=61.53%
7.Parts of Speech & Parts of Sentences			N=1=7.69%	N=3=23.07%	N=9=69.23%

8.Sentence Combining				N=5=38.4 6%	N=8=61.53%
9.Composition Writing				N=4=30.7 6%	N=9=69.23%
10.Research Format & Summary Writing				N=3=23.0 7%	N=10=76.92 %

Data from **Table2** above shows that most of the learners were satisfied with the teaching materials and what they enjoyed learning most was summary writing. These data also show that teaching materials are influential factors that motivate learners to learn and be engaged in assignments and class activities. However, slow learners in this class rated from 7.69% to 23.07% did not enjoy studying fiction, poetry, nor figurative language as they were more demanding.

Learners' learning strategies to improve different English skills will be discussed in separated parts below:

Part I: Learner' learning strategies to improve their listening skills

Discussion:

The data from 13 students showed that their learning strategies varied according to their background, attitudes and motivation to learning. However, they had similar learning strategies to improve their listening skills, which were relevant to Rebecca's classification of learning strategies as cited earlier. But the most common learning strategies to improve their listening skills were cognitive learning strategies. Their listening skills were reinforced by listening to the teacher speaking English in class, apart from watching VDOs, and their friends' presentations. Outside class good learners were motivated to listen to news, songs and watch soundtrack movies. Xiang Yang (2008, 13-22) maintains that a good teacher can help L2 to be positive learners: the importance of creating a pleasant environment where everyone enjoys learning the language as well as inspiring them that nothing is impossible to a willing heart. Attitude is important, and it is important to encourage them that every mistake will be the path to one's success.

Part II : Learners' learning strategies to improve their speaking skills

Discussion

The students' responses showed that most of them had positive attitudes and felt motivated to learn to improve their speaking skills. They used both direct and indirect learning strategies. Good learners shared similar direct learning strategies that included cognitive strategies, memory strategies, and compensation strategies, whereas the most common indirect learning strategies were metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. The teacher's teaching strategies and class activities also enhanced their speaking skills. Moreover they tried to improve themselves according to their ability, except poor learners. In fact, the data provided confirmed that the learners who were highly motivated and productive took every opportunity to develop their language skills. In addition, a positive relationship between the learners and the

teacher was an underlying factor that promoted a good learning environment and made learning activities meaningful. Good learners or those who made improvement had common learning strategies. They were able to adjust their own learning styles to suit themselves, and their learning environment. However, poor learners did not achieve much as they had low self-esteem and rather remained passive in class..

Part II: Learners' learning strategies to improve their reading skills.

Discussion

Responses from all the learners revealed that their learning strategies varied, and were often applied to the same behavior. From the feedbacks some learning strategies directly contributed to learning such as clarification, monitoring, memorization, guessing or inductive inference, and practice. Some indirect learning strategies also included creating opportunities for practice, and production tricks, such as tape-recording a monologue, found among good learners who tried to put into practice what they have learned. That is there is a mixture of learning strategies and communication strategies. However, according to Brown(1980,87)there is a clear distinction between learning strategies and communication strategies on the grounds that communication is the output modality and learning is the input modality. He suggests that, while a learner generally applies the same fundamental strategies, such as rule transference used in learning a language to communicating in that language, there are other communication strategies such as avoidance or message abandonment which do not result in learning. The students also confirmed the impact of extensive reading on the development of their analytical and comprehension skills, even among poor readers or those with low motivation. These findings also corresponded with Srisermbhok's conclusion (2010,143) that extensive reading both in and outside class can help students develop their reading speed and reading comprehension. It was found that 80% of her students were definitely confident that extensive reading was helpful to improve their English.

Part IV: Learners' learning strategies to develop their writing skills

Discussion

Responses from all the learners revealed that almost all of them used similar learning strategies to improve their writing. Viewed in light of Rebecca's learning theories, the students used both direct and indirect learning strategies. For direct learning strategies, most of them used cognitive strategies, guessing strategies and compensation strategies. 10 students or 76.9% of the class had good characteristics of good learners as they always paid attention to their study by practicing a lot and doing all the assignments to become proficiency in English. They also evaluated their own limitations, and put effort to improve themselves. Unfortunately, two students who had negative attitudes about their ability to learn, had withdrawn from the course at the end of the project for fear of failing. The responses also revealed important information about the impact of the teacher's teaching strategies, personality, and good rapport with the class. The teacher's positive feedbacks really influenced the learners' attitude and motivation to learn to improve themselves. As discussed earlier, the teacher's teaching strategies can directly effect the learners' learning strategies and learning achievement.

Conclusions

This study confirms that age and gender did not have real impacts on the learning achievements of these adult learners of English, as data from the total scores showed that those who got the top scores of 80% were both male and female. While the male was aged 64, and the female 57. It was also discovered what matters most is their attitudes toward their own ability to learn, and if they are motivated to learn and do their best, they will achieve their goal, even among those who had little background in English. Two participants withdrew from the project because they did not write their diaries regularly, and hardly participated in class as they believed that they could not learn. The findings also correspond to Dornyei's, and Baker's statements concerning motivation and attitudes in language learning. Dornyei (1998) claims that motivation is a key factor that influences the rate and success of second/foreign language (L2) learning, whereas Baker (1993) explains that students with positive attitudes will spend more effort to learn the language. Attitudes affect the rate of development and the final proficiency achieved in the target language.

Amporn Srisermbhok, a former Fulbright scholar, is an associate professor of English at Eastern Asia University in Thailand. She holds a PhD in English/American Literature from Bowling Green State University, Ohio, USA. Her research areas include gender/equity issues, literary criticism, education, and critical pedagogy.

References:

- Baker, C. 1993. *Foundation of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon : Multilingual Matters.
- Brown, H. Douglas (1998). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood. Cliffs NJ : Prentice Hall.
- Chen, I.J. 2002. *Language learning strategies used by high and low English proficiency students in a technology college*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Changhua Normal University, Changhua, Taiwan
- Dornyei, Z. 1998. "Motivation in Second Language Learning" in *Language Teaching*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Volume 31/Issue 03/July 1998. pp. 117-135
- Dornyei, Zoltan & Istvan Otto 1998. *Motivation in action : A process model of L2 motivation in Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, Thames Valley University, London, Vol. 4, pp. 43-69.
- Ellis, R. 1994. *The Study of Language Acquisition*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Graddol, David. 1997. *The Future of English*. London: British Council.
- Green, John M. & Rebecca Oxford (1975). "A Closer Look at learning Strategies: L2 Proficiency and Gender", *TESOL Quarterly*, 29/2, 261-297.
- Griva, Eleni, and Dora Chostelidou. 2011. "Language awareness issues and teachers' beliefs about language learning in a Greek EFL context" Selected papers from the 19th ISTAL

Nunan , David.2003. *The Impact of English as a Global Language on Educational Policies and Practices in the Asia-Pacific Region* in TESOL Quarterly , Vol.37, No. 4, Winter 2003.

Oxford, L.R. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Newbury House.

Oxford,L.R.2002. *Language Learning Strategies in a Nutshell: Update and ESL Suggestions*. In Eds by Richards, C.J.,and Renandya, A.W. *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*

Park, G.1997. Language learning strategies and English proficiency in Korean University Students Foreign Language Annals, 30,pp.211-221.

Rahimi, Mohammad, Abdolmehdi Riazi and Shahrzad Saif 2003. An investigation into the factors affecting the use of language learning strategies by Persian EFL learners. Unpublished Research. Universite Laval. Quebec. Canada.

Rubin, J.1975. What the 'good language learner' can teach u? *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol.9. No1. 41-51.

Rubin, J.& Thompsons I.1994. How to be a more successful language learner (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Stern, H.H 1975. "What can we learn from the good learner?" in *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 34,304-318.

Srisermbhok,A.2010. "*Exploitation of IT to Enhance Students' Extensive Reading Skills:*

A Case Study of 4th. Year Business English Major Students." *KOTESOL Proceedings*.

Tabanlıoğlu, Selime .2003. *The Relationship Between Learning Styles and Language Learning Strategies of Pre-Intermediate Students*. Unpublished Master's Research in English Language Teaching Program. University of Bahceseh. Turkey.

Takeuchi, Osamu.2003. Searching for better language learning strategies: Studies on good language learners in the Japanese FL context. Tokyo: Shohakusha. PP1-20.

Yang,Xiang(2008). "Attitude and Motivation in L2 UM Master Students", *International Journal of Management and Sustainability*.(1):13-22. Asian Economic and Social Society

Reading can be Fun: Through Readers' Theatre

Yu-hsuan Huang, Tamkang University, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014

Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0080

Abstract

English education in Taiwan begins in primary school, but a large number of college students are still reluctant or unable to read English texts. In addition, most university teachers tend to take a teacher-centered position while teaching, which may lead to a less interactive teaching/learning environment. Without being engaged and inspired, most students will not cultivate their habit and ability of independent learning, which is an integral part of higher education. Furthermore, English reading ability is essential to daily survival and vocational competition in society. However, it has been a difficult task for language teachers to motivate their students to read an English article/textbook efficiently.

This study applied an EFL teaching strategy, "Readers' Theatre," to the text reading activity of college students and evaluated its effect on students' comprehension and motivation to self-reading. Participants in this study included a total of thirty six sophomore students of non-English majors. A self-reflected questionnaire was employed as the research instrument to examine students' motivations and attitude before and after the intervention of Readers' Theatre along with teacher' log. An in-depth focused group interview was held to further analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire.

This study echoed previous researches and found similar evidence for Readers' Theatre as a useful tool in improving students' fluency and motivation in reading. The finding suggests that Readers' Theatre can be employed as a useful alternative or as a supplement to other empirically supported reading strategies in university classrooms to engage reluctant readers and thus enhance their independent learning.

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Introduction

Background of the Study

English education in Taiwan begins in primary school, but a large number of college students are still reluctant or unable to read English texts. In addition, most university teachers tend to take a teacher-centered position while teaching, which may lead to a less interactive teaching/learning environment. Without being engaged and inspired, most students will not cultivate their habit and ability of independent learning, which is an integral part of higher education. Despite the fact that English reading ability is essential to daily survival and vocational competition in society, it has been a difficult task for language teachers to motivate their students to read an English article/textbook efficiently, especially for those with lower proficiency no matter how long they have been studying English.

As many researchers know, Readers' Theatre is an interpretive reading activity in which readers use their voices to bring characters to life. Unlike conventional theater, Readers' Theatre requires no sets, costumes, props, or memorized lines. Rather the performer's goal is to read a script aloud effectively, enabling the audience to visualize the action. Besides the character, the narrator has a special role in Readers' Theatre. Narrators provide the cementing details and explanations that may be found in the original text's narration descriptions, or even illustrations.

Although Readers' Theatre has been used to encourage language learners' appreciation of literature and eagerness to read has been widely realized, the application for utilizing Readers' Theatre in university level hasn't been discussed. Hence, the researcher intends to investigate Readers' Theatre's influence on university level students' English reading fluency and motivation.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does Reader's Theater influence reading comprehension in university students?
2. To what extent does Reader's Theater improve motivation to read in university students?
3. What would be some of the benefits of using Readers' Theatre in university level English reading class?

Literature Review

Motivation and Reading

Reading motivation is the inspirational force to reading. Implementing the conditions under which students are motivated to read is important in the process of teaching and fostering learning. Most of the scientifically based research studies have provided well documented research on the importance of the cognitive aspects of reading such as word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and even background knowledge (Allington, 2005; Chard et al., 2002; Kuhn, 2005; Therrien & Kubina, 2006). However, a critical aspect of reading proficiency that is too often overlooked is the key role motivation plays in reading success. In order for students to develop into effective readers, they must not only possess reading skills, they must also have the will to read. That is to say, the more people read the better readers they will become. Readers who are highly motivated are self-determining and generate their own reading opportunities. They want to read and choose to read for a wide range of personal reasons such as curiosity, involvement, social interchange, and emotional satisfaction (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996).

Wigfield et al. (2004) described self-efficacy for reading as the perception of one's ability to reach a goal. A student's self-efficacy beliefs are intertwined in how well they have done on similar tasks and the feedback they receive from others. When students have a high perception that they will attain a given goal, they are more apt to participate in challenging activities and have the perseverance to keep on trying even though a given task may be difficult (Wigfield et al.). Intrinsic motivation allows children to complete activities, such as reading, for their own interest. Their motivation comes from inside themselves. For example, giving children opportunities to experience hands-on learning coinciding with allowing them to generate their own research questions promotes intrinsic motivation. This in turn leads to students who want to find out the answers to their questions through the use of relevant literature (Wigfield et al.). Extrinsic motivation can also engage a child in reading activities. Extrinsically motivated students read to receive some benefit such as a reward. Their motivation comes from what they will materially attain such as a grade or a prize (Wigfield et al.).

Means of building motivation

Inspiring students to want read is a basic struggle in many classrooms. Motivation is a key factor in obtaining reading success. Children need to be motivated to read and use literature to develop into fluent readers. Motivating struggling readers is not an easy task, but it is necessary to build the desire and drive to read. Good reading instruction influences students' achievement of positive motivational dispositions and specific

competencies in code based reading skills (Wigfiel et al.).

In a research study conducted by Gambrell et al. (1996) at the National Reading Research Center, motivation to read was investigated with a variety of elementary age children. In several different studies, they looked at reading motivation with first, third, and fifth grade students. These studies identified several key components involved in fostering motivation. According to Gambrell et al., classroom cultures that foster reading motivation are characterized by a teacher who is a reading model, a book-rich classroom environment, and familiarity with books, social interactions with books, opportunities for choice, and literacy-related incentives that reflect the value of reading. To foster motivation in children, literature should not be limited solely to basal readers or trade books, but include comics, newspapers, magazines and humorous literature. Researchers described a variety of other strategies educators can use in the classroom to ensure that all readers are motivated. These include using interactive strategies such as Readers Workshop, Think-Aloud, Story Telling, and Reader's Theater. (Gambrell, 1996; Gambrell et al., 1996; Wigfield et al., 2004).

What is Readers' Theatre

Readers' Theater (RT) is a scripted, formalized story-telling experience that began in the late 1940s by a professional group in New York who called themselves Readers' Theatre, Inc., produced Oedipus Rex as an option to offer greater accessibility to live theater for people (Coger, L. I. & White, M. R., 1973). In the 1960s, Readers' Theatre became popular in college theater departments and, eventually, spread to secondary English education (Coger, L. I. & White, M. R., 1973). Even its format is similar to a play, Readers' Theatre is distinct from acting. According to Beck (1984), Readers' Theatre's emphasis is placed on the literature, whereas acting places its focus on the actors' interpretation of the literature. In other words, Readers' Theatre provides the opportunity for viewers to look into, and thoughtfully contemplate a story. As Post (1974) noted the goal of it is to stimulate thinking about the stories so that the cast and audience can engage in meaningful discussion.

Readers' Theatre in Teaching

The benefits of Readers' Theatre for students are many. It has been found to be an activity that builds confidence in the participants (Rinehart, 1999), reinforces oral language (Stoodt, 1988; Tiedt 1983), and animates the content areas (Worthy & Prater, 2002). Readers' Theatre allows students with differing reading abilities to participate (Tyler and Chard, 2000). Also, performing stories based on another culture is a great way for students to become interested in and familiar with that culture; not to mention

Readers' Theatre typically fosters a love of reading among students and provides a fun way to teach facts, history, social issues, ethics and/or health (Post, 1974). The most important part is that most students view Readers' Theatre as non-threatening.

One of the factors that motivate even struggling readers to participate in a Readers' Theatre event is the fact that it is a group reading activity (Chan & Chan, 2009). In some instances, children who had shunned other reading tasks eagerly participated in Readers' Theatre, relishing the sense of togetherness as they listened to others and read themselves (Rinehart, 1999). Tyler and Chard (2000) found that collaborating with peers was one of the most appealing features of Readers' Theatre; learners did not feel alone as they read, they did not have to read the whole text, and they experienced breaks between their reading. With Readers' Theatre students are motivated by the fact that they are working towards shared goals (Chan & Chan, 2009) and show willingness to help each other during rehearsals (Uthman, 2002). They develop their interpersonal, social and collaborative skills. Along the same line, it also provides an opportunity for reflection and group discussion (Beck, 1984), which is important for students who are not likely to volunteer to participate in other classroom activities, such as role playing.

Conclusion

Being able to comprehend and to draw meaning from what one reads is the fundamental purpose of reading. Readers' Theatre shows promise for helping students improve reading skills in a wide range of ages and abilities. The research literature was overwhelmingly in support that repeated oral reading instruction, that includes guidance from teachers, adults, peers, or parents, has a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, comprehension and overall reading achievement across grade levels, and that fluent readers are better able to comprehend what they read (Chard et al., 2002; Kuhn, 2005; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; 2001; Rasinski, 2004; Therrien & Kubina, 2006). The literature also supported the use of Readers' Theatre as an effective way to motivate students to become proficient readers.

The use of Readers' Theatre appears to be both manageable for teachers and motivating for students (Martinez et al., 1999; Millin & Rinehart, 1999; Rasinski, 2004). Educators have encountered students who are fluent, yet continually struggle with comprehension. In contrast, educators have encountered students who stumbled and stammered their way through decoding a passage, yet clearly comprehended meaning from the text. However, the majority of current Readers' Theatre research involved primary grade students (Martinez et al., 1999; Rasinski, 2004) and/or

students who had been identified as having significant reading deficits in the United States (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Millin & Rinehart, 1999). More research needs to be undertaken as to the effectiveness of Readers' Theatre on fluency and comprehension for older students and adult learners.

When implemented effectively in the classroom, Readers' Theatre can capture the attention of many of the most reluctant readers and instill the love of reading. Through dramatization and repeated readings, Readers' Theatre can offer students a greater opportunity to acquire an understanding of the text.

Methodology

Research Design

The present study could be considered as lying within the field of Action Research. Typically, action research is undertaken in academic / school settings (Burns, 1999) and one of its prime focuses can be on learning in a social context. Action research is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the "research." Rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows teachers and students (co-participants) to address those concerns that demand attention in a specific learning situation as, for example, the development of strategies to improve reading comprehension in English. As such, this type of research does not start from a view of educational problems as pathologies; rather, it is motivated by a quest to understand how learning occurs in a particular classroom setting and how to improve it to effect positive changes concerning a specific learning goal to be attained. Action Research can involve a variety of instruments for data collection, for example questionnaires, diaries, interviews, observational data, field notes, and video recordings. In short, action research is concerned with changing situations, especially in classroom settings and not with simply interpreting obtained results based on collected data. Both teachers (researchers) and students (co-researchers) engage in a systematically-evolving process of change that can lead to better understand of how learning occurs, which will reflect on better ways to learn by means of collaboration among participants.

Participants

A total of 36 sophomores, non-English major students participated in this study. Students in this university had to take an English placement test before enrolling in sophomore English, which was required by the school. The students, then, would be placed into different levels of classes from 1 to 15 under each college based on their

test results. The 36 participants came from two sophomore English classes under College of Engineering, and they were categorized as low achievers. The textbook, assigned by the Applied English Department, used by these two classes were the same; in other words, the thirty participants' English proficiency levels were evaluated as the same. There were 13 males and 8 females in class one, and were divided into a group of four except one was five. Class two had 12 males and 3 females and they were divided into a group of four except one was three. The lecturer of the English reading courses was the researcher herself, so that the participants' responses or learning obstacles would be tracked and noticed immediately.

Instrument

The text. The participants were asked to read two adapted English novels independently or collaboratively during the class time within six weeks. The two novels were chosen for they were the adaption from movies so that the participants could assign their roles and lines at the first class. Novel one was *Jumanji* written by Todd Strasser and the other was *Kung Fu Panda* adapted by Fiona Beddall. The two novels were both fantasy and adventure story for advanced- beginners and the story wordcount was approximately 1000 each.

Questionnaire. A Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 12 statements regarding to students' English reading habits, previous experiences of learning English, and attitude toward self-reading was given at the third week. Examples of the statements were:

- I normally like to read aloud in English.
- Readers' Theatre was a good way of practicing oral English.
- Readers' Theatre has made me more confident in using English.
- Readers' Theatre has helped me to concentrate better.
- It was difficult/stressful to participate in Readers' Theatre.
- It was fun to participate in Readers' Theatre.
- It was educational to participate in Readers' Theatre.
- I would like to take part in more Readers' Theatre projects.

The researcher's log. After each class hour, the researcher evaluated the process with the students in plenary, eliciting their reactions to the experience and writing these in a log. In addition, the research kept a log of her own reflections on the experience; both during the process of working with Readers' Theatre with the different groups and after the whole class discussion.

Procedure

The English reading course was a two credit hours school required reading class held once a week and two hours a time. Class one was from 8:10 am to 10 am and class two was from 10:10 am to 12 am. The researcher used an hour for the Readers' Theatre study and the other for normal reading class. To reduce uncontrolled variables, this research was employed at first seven weeks of the semester so that students might not yet have too much pressure or disturbing from other subject matters or school lives. Each group was asked to read particular chapter(s) for equally share. Each group members was assigned to a character or as the narrator; in some cases, one character's line could be assigned to two students. No props, costumes, or memorization of the script were required.

During the first two weeks, each student read the responsible parts by themselves and had group discussion to figure out the plot, main idea, symbols or themes in the original text, if they were lost. The instructor was around monitoring students' responses and made sure each group was on schedule.

At the third week, students had finished reading the whole novel and were ready to give a 15 minutes Readers' Theatre presentation in front of the whole class. After performing and listening to their classmates' Readers' Theatre presentations, students were asked to answer three questions orally from novel one: 1) What's the plot of the story? 2) What's the main message the author tries to deliver? 3) Which part of the story do you like/dislike the most? The three-week cycle procedure then is repeated again for novel two from week four to week six. And the questions for novel two are: 1) What's the plot of the story? 2) Use your imagination, what would the five main characters metaphorically are, if each of them were an analogy of a country? Why? 3) Which Kung fu do you want to learn? On completion of two Readers' Theatre projects they had worked with, each participant was employed with a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 12 statements, to which they responded by crossing out one of five options denoting varying degrees of agreement or disagreement.

At the seventh week, a focused-group interview leading by the researcher was held to further investigate students' questionnaire responses. Meanwhile, students were encouraged to share their ideas and feedbacks during this session.

Data collection

A Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and 6 (no answer) questionnaire focusing on students' motivations, interests, and

comprehension of the novels was employed after the intervention of Readers' Theatre to see if students' learning behaviors, motivation, and comprehension of the text were influenced. After collecting the questionnaires, software called EXCEL was applied to analyze the data. The two focused group interviews were held and recorded by the researcher.

Findings

This section first presents the results of the students' responses to the questionnaire and then some of the most salient data elicited from the researcher's logs and interviews. Table 1 provides an overview of the students' questionnaire responses concerning their attitudes to Readers' Theatre.

Table 1: students' attitudes to Readers' Theatre (actual numbers with percentages in brackets)

Statement (N = 36)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
I normally like reading aloud in English	5 (14%)	5 (14%)	17 (47%)	8 (22%)	0	1 (3%)
The combination of reading aloud and dramatization in Readers' Theatre was exciting.	0	4 (11%)	15 (41%)	14 (39%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)
It was difficult/stressful to take part in Readers' Theatre.	9 (25%)	12 (33%)	9 (25%)	5 (14%)	0	1 (3%)
It was fun to take part in Readers' Theatre.	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	9 (25%)	14 (39%)	7 (19%)	2 (6%)
It was educational to take part in Readers' Theatre.	0	2 (6%)	13 (36%)	13 (36%)	7 (19%)	1 (3%)
I would like to take part in another Readers' Theatre project.	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	11 (30%)	13 (36%)	5 (14%)	1 (3%)

As Table 1 shows, almost three out of ten of the students were not normally favorably inclined to reading aloud in English, while roughly one out of two were in part favorably inclined. Almost one out of two of the students agreed or strongly agreed that the combination of reading aloud and dramatization was exciting, with roughly four out of ten partially agreeing. 55% of the students did not consider it to be stressful or difficult to participate in Readers' Theatre, while one out of four partially

considered it to be difficult or stressful. Roughly six out of ten agreed or strongly agreed that it had been fun to work with Readers' Theatre, with one out of four partially agreeing. Roughly the same number considered that it had been educational to work with Readers' Theatre, while one out of three partially agreed. Finally, every second pupil was in favor of the idea of working on another Readers' Theatre project, while three out of ten were partly in favor.

Table 2 provides an overview of the students' perceived benefits from using Readers' Theatre. As Table 2 shows, a clear majority, roughly seven out of ten of the students, agreed or strongly agreed that Readers' Theatre was a good way of practicing oral English. Only one pupil disagreed. Roughly one out of three agreed or strongly agreed that they had become more confident about using English, while 44% partially agreed. Finally, roughly two out of ten agreed or strongly agreed that Readers' Theatre had helped their ability to concentrate, while roughly six out of ten partially agreed.

Table 2: Pupils' perceived benefits of Readers' Theatre (actual numbers with percentages in brackets)

Statement (N = 36)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
Readers' Theatre is a good way of practicing oral English.	0	1 (3%)	8 (22%)	18 (50%)	8 (22%)	1 (3%)
Readers' Theatre has given me more confidence in my ability to use English.	0	5 (14%)	16 (44%)	12 (33%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)
Readers' Theatre has improved my ability to concentrate.	0	5 (14%)	22 (61%)	8 (22%)	0	1 (3%)

According to the researcher's log, the students seemed to take Readers' Theatre right from the start. In fact, she found it to be an excellent ice breaker, and put the participants all on an equal footing and gave them a common goal. Several of the students appeared to be pretty shy initially, and reluctant to participate orally in English. However, the process of working with Readers' Theatre had helped them to lose much of their shyness. There was one student in particular who basically struggled with speaking in English but thrived when working with Readers' Theatre, in spite of seeming rather nervous at the beginning. This student especially liked the idea of emphasizing certain words in a sentence in order to add meaning to the text.

It also showed that one of the main attractions of working with Readers' Theatre was the dynamics of the group experience, as confirmed by Rinehart (1999), Tyler & Chard (2000), Uthman (2002) and Chan and Chan (2009). The class observations revealed how the students seemed to enjoy the process of molding a text from written word on paper to something living and entertaining performed by the group. It was the actual reading of the text that was the main value of the exercise. Students got the chance to experience how everything came together as a whole as they practiced. The "ownership" of the performance as a group seemed to make them want to perfect their part of the text both for themselves and for the group as a whole. It was also fascinating to observe how fast the students improved. According to the class observation, the researcher noted how the students managed to sound proficient after having worked through the text a few times. They seemed to enjoy working with the text and, experiencing the progress in their fluency. They kept working with it and practiced until they achieved a good level of fluency in the reading of the text as a group.

Following are some reaction transcribed from the two focused group interview recordings when we discussed about their experiences of working with Readers' Theatre.

Student A: I thought it was good fun. All we had to do was read, stand and sit. There is a great difference between standing up there alone and reading as part of a group.

Student B: I liked it better than just reading from a book. Everyone was doing something at the same time, and it made it a lot easier to read English out loud.

Student C: When we performed, I liked that we stood up one after the other to read and that we had to deliberately look at the other readers as they did their reading.

Student D: It is scary to perform alone, so working in a group was very good. We sat down in a circle and read again and again.

Student E: What I liked about the process was the story. I had never heard it before, so it was fun to read and listen.

The interview results showed that students experienced significantly benefitted by this teaching method.

Nevertheless, the most amazing part is that Readers' Theatre created a bond between the students and the teacher which was comparable to that of a choir and choir master. It surprised me that there was a greater willingness on the part of individual students

to come to me for assistance, for example over the pronunciation of a word or how a sentence should sound in order for it to convey the meaning it was supposed to convey. I experienced a slight change in my own role in the classroom as the students started employing me as an *asset* towards their goal of producing the best performance possible for the group, which again signified the students' sense of ownership of the Readers' theatre text.

Discussion

This study has shown that how Readers' Theatre can have cognitive and affective benefits with older learners, and in a foreign language. The researcher experienced, for example, how her students' pronunciation gradually improved as she pointed out the correct pronunciation of words during practice sessions. Also, as students reread texts and became more and more familiar with the content, their reading fluency was improved. In addition, the study has also confirmed the potential of Readers' Theatre to increase struggling readers' confidence and motivation to read, as was the case in studies such as Millin and Rinehart (1999), Rinehart (1999) and Uthman (2002). Motivation, self-confidence and low anxiety, which are considered as essential to successful language acquisition (Krashen, 1982), are often directly affected by how the learner experiences classroom learning of a foreign language; therefore, a learning context in which learners feel that they can use the target language in meaningful communication is likely to increase their motivation and confidence, especially if it takes place at a low anxiety situation. Low achieving language learners especially need to see the practical benefits of learning a foreign language, namely that a foreign language is learned for communicative purposes and not as a pure academic exercise. Positive experiences in one aspect of language learning can be a catalyst for positive experiences in other aspects of language learning.

References

- Allington, R. L. (2005). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing researchbased programs* (2nd ed). Boston, Ma: Allyn and Bacon.
- Beck, R. A. (1984). *Group reading: Readers theatre*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.
- Beddall, F. (2011). *Scholastic (2): Kung Fu Panda with CD*. UK: Scholastic.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. New

- York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chan, A., & Chan S. (2009). Promoting assessment for learning through Readers' Theatre. *IATEFL Young Learner and Teenage Special Interest Group*, 2(09), 40-50.
- Chard, D., Vaughn, S., & Tyler, B. (2002). A synthesis of research on effective interventions for building fluency with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 35(5), 386-406.
- Coger, L. I. & White, M. R. (1973). *Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature*. Revised Edition. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co.
- Gambrell, L.B., Palmer, B.M., Codling, R.M., Mazzoni, S.A. (1996). Assessing motivation to read. *The Reading Teacher*, 49(7), 518-533.
- Groff, P. (1978). Readers Theatre by Children. *The Elementary School Journal*, 79(1), 15-22
- Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Exeter: Pergamon.
- Kuhn, M. (2005). Helping students become accurate, expressive readers: Fluency instruction for small groups. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(4), 338-344.
- Millin, S.K., & Rinehart S.D. (1999). Some of the benefits of readers theatre participation for second grade Title 1 students. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 39, 71-88.
- Post, R. M. (1974). Readers Theatre as a Method of Teaching Literature. *The English Journal*, 63(6), 69-72
- Rasinski, T. V. (2003). *The fluent reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Rinehart, S. (1999). Don't Think for a Minute That I'm Getting Up There: Opportunities for Readers' Theater in a Tutorial for Children with Reading Problems. *Reading Psychology*, 20(1), 71-89.
- Rinehart, S. (2001). Establishing Guidelines for Using Readers Theater with Less-Skilled Readers. *Reading Horizons*, 42(2), 65-75.
- Stoodt, B.D. (1988). *Teaching language arts*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Strasser, T. (2002). *Penguin 2 (Ele): Jumanji*. Pearson Taiwan.
- Therrien, W., & Kubina, R.(2006). Developing fluency with repeated reading. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 41, 156-160.
- Tiedt, I.M. (1983). *The language arts handbook*. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tyler, B., & Chard, D. (2000). Using Readers Theatre To Foster Fluency in

- Struggling Readers: A Twist on the Repeated Reading Strategy. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 16(2), 163-68.
- Uthman, L.E. (2002). Readers' theatre: An approach to reading with more than a touch of drama. *Teaching PreK-8*, 32(6), 56-57.
- Wigfield, A., Guthrie, J., Tonks, S., & Perencevich, K. (2004). Children's motivation for reading: Domain specificity and instructional influences. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 97(6), 299-309.
- Worthy, J., & Prater, K. (2002). I Thought About It All Night: Readers Theatre for Reading Fluency and Motivation. *Reading Teacher*, 56(3), 294-97.
- Young, T. A. (1991) "Readers Theatre: Bringing Life to the Reading Program!" *Reading Horizons*, 32 (1).

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

Teenagers Activity through Computer Based Language Learning

Mohammad Hannan Mia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0104

Abstract

Now a day's many educational institutions have based their teaching on blended language learning among marginalized society (consider here drug addicts). This means firstly, that teachers need to explore new ways to ensure that the competences *Pelatih* (trainee) are expected to have at the end of the term are acquired. And secondly, to make sure that learners receive the necessary guidance to succeed in their learning. It trends in recent years has been the exploration and integration of Information Communication by computer based learning. It is considered to be complementary to face-to-face learning. While face-to-face teaching refers to the general learning process which takes place in the classroom, online learning refers here to autonomous learning through Virtual Learning documentation, tracking and reporting of training programs and contents. the *Pelatih'* point of view in this regard is highly accepted. Before we continue analyzing the benefits of computer based language learning at PPU (Pusat Pengajian Umum) in UKM (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), it is worth explaining briefly about it. Additionally, *Pelatih* are allowed to create new objects. What particularly makes them attractive for many users is its similarity to the new method of learning language. Youth's personal and social identities are critically important in the learning process. They affect not only how our young people see themselves, but also how they are perceived by both educators and school peers, how they engage with schooling, and how they themselves produce knowledge about everyday experiences. This begs the questions: What role do we play as educators and education researchers in these identification processes? How does the way that we see – or don't see – the personal identities and lived social realities of our *Pelatih* affect them, particularly in their learning and educational outcomes? What might be our own complicities in processes of social inclusion or exclusion of our *Pelatih*, particularly of our culturally diverse and racialized youth? How does this impact them? How might we best understand *Pelatih'* responses accordingly? Most importantly, what can *we* do to break existing patterns of social dislocation and marginalization to ensure the educational success in language learning in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and associated life outcomes of all of *Pelatih* (trainee). Given below financial plan for *pelatih* for spending USD for teaching English language since they are part of marginalized society in Malaysia

FINANCIAL PLAN

SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT NEEDED

The Centers Equipment

12 Computers	USD 900 each	12000
10 Chairs	at USD 50 each	500
10 Desks	at USD 80 each	800
Miscellaneous		<u>1000</u>
TOTAL	USD	14300

Miscellaneous are hidden costs including cabling and connection costs. These shall depend on the suppliers but are not expected to exceed USD 2000.

Of the 12 computers, Disadvantaged Human Development Society has indicated to partner with us in this project and thus shall donate 2 computers to the center. These are the training computers and they have applauded this project, giving their computers for the benefit of the community. This has reduced the project total to USD 1800.

Interpretation of Statement

These forecasts are for a year's (12 months) projections.

Revenues shall be derived from the users of the center. It is estimated that each computer shall operate for 8 hours per day with some hours idle. Out of the time in use, half the time shall be for internet browsing (charged at USD .75 per hour) and the other half shall be for typing and training (charged at USD .75 per hour).

Depreciation is charged at 10% of the assets.

Insurance is charged at 5% of the assets.

CASH FLOWS

Net inflows shall be from operations only for the first year of operations. Outflows shall be expenses. Thus the forecasts of the income statement can be reflected as the cash flows excluding depreciation.

Statement of problem

Among teenagers some of them are addicted consider marginalised society for learning English language programme. So it is studying very heartily although effects the study. In identifying youth problems, it is essential to give equal priority to moral education and discipline, existing poor practical education, incompleteness of formal education (dropout), negative attitude towards supply of labor, different types of unemployment, involvement of youths in antisocial and immoral activities including AIDS and drug addiction, unawareness in health care, scarcity of credit and less scope for undertaking self-employment project, backwardness in technology, inefficiency in IT, absence of favorable environment in the fields of sports and games and sound recreations, lack of sense of responsibility to family and society, moral degradation etc. It is necessary to identify youth related problems towards undertaking any step of development for the youth. It is urgent to emphasize opinion of the youth.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- 1 **To provide the community of youth for drug addiction treatment in UKM** with standard: Information Communications Technology Centres.

- 2 **To develop ICT knowledge among young people of youth for drug addiction treatment in UKM.:** Being exposed to the centres shall benefit the youth in gaining knowledge on ICT.
- 3 **To provide hands-on education and training on ICT for the users:** There shall be computer classes for the users of the centres. In these they will learn the basics of computers with courses that reflect acceptable standards.
- 4 **To exploit opportunities available in the ICT industry to better meet youth employment:** The ICT industry is by far the rapidly growing industry, It has vast opportunities of employment, ranging from typing to programming. Some of the computer courses are provided free online. This project shall seize those opportunities to help the youth with them.
- 5 **To train young people of youth for drug addiction treatment in ICT systems development and support:** As part of the classes to be provided, the youth shall be trained to know how to upgrade systems and how to maintain programmes.
- 6 **To have a HIV/AIDS resource centre:** As the HIV/AIDS pandemic is continually threatening the community. This project is believed as an opportunity to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS. As youth have a special interest in ICT this opportunity shall be seized to provide awareness and pieces of advice to young people. There shall be pop-up screens and sites for HIV/AIDS information.

Methodology of the Study

Pilot study: The on-site coordinator of this research conducted a pilot study and formative evaluation of the intervention instruments, using one reading passage and one computer the idea of improving the materials before conducting a broader intervention.

Participants: The study was conducted at a large comprehensive university in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). 120 undergraduates from English classes participated in the study at a computer lab among the age level 13 to 19. University English is a required fundamental course for four months as well for non-English major undergraduates in Malaysia. This course is composed of classroom-based instruction and computer-lab-based instruction with 80% of the time spent in classroom and 20% in the computer lab. The objective of the course is to develop Pelatih' ability to use the English language in a number of ways, including reading, using vocabulary in context, listening, speaking, writing, and intercultural communication. All the participants in the current study were in the second level reached within 2 months.

Instrumentation:

This study used a within-subjects design. Fifty-seven participants received both the experimental condition and the control condition with the sequence counterbalanced. Each participant studied four text passages in the control condition and four in the experimental condition. The 120 participants were divided into three groups. 40 participants in each groups.

Data collection

Data has been collected from 120 undergraduate *Pelatih (marginalised society member)* at PPU (*Pusat Pengajian Umum*) in UKM (*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*).

Data Analysis

SPSS was used for analyzing the data as well. To examine the effectiveness of the two learning conditions were analyzed. Each test was independently checked by two graduate Pelatih (or two investigators). Test items with discrepancies were later resolved by the full group (all graduate Pelatih and investigators)

Findings

Twenty-seven articles addressing for language learning programs were identified and reviewed. Two specifically addressed adolescent use while eight focused more broadly on the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use, primarily marijuana. In addition, two articles that addressed school-based substance abuse prevention curricula and two articles that surveyed available research on an array of community-based programs were included. Findings relating youth development for language learning by adolescents are presented. Factors are social cultural and individual and environmental factors that contribute to language learning. These factors apply to differences in outcomes for individuals exposed to similar tasks for language learning. It is finalized at last that listening, reading, writing and speaking are depending fully individual attempts basically excepts others are also available by exploring these factors themselves as well.

- Society environment – or the social, cultural, and economic conditions affecting a group or individual
- Family
- Community – conditions in the specific area where an individual lives
- School
- Peers
- Individual – including biological, behavioral and psychological factors

Limitations

Due to the lack of standardized units of analysis, variables studied, methodology, and population, current literature does not support generalizations or comparisons across existing studies, or prioritization or ranking of identified risk factors (Hawkins et al 1992, Noell et al 2001, Tang et al 1996, Flom et al 2001, Roy et al 2003, Kane et al 1999). The literature does not provide evidence any consistent or causal way. Whereas all factors have been associated with adolescent English language learning programme. No single factor or combination of factors has been shown to be a necessary condition or predictor of the use of language learning. Small samples sizes, selection bias and study attrition, concerns regarding self-reported and recalled data, and cross-sectional data limit the ability to address the causal relationship between these actors and use outcomes for learning English language among marginalized society (drug addicts).

Future recommend for this research

- A common cause can bring diverse groups together for language learning among marginalized society especially drug addicts for learning language.

- Community residents and institutional leaders should be participants of equal stature among marginalized society especially drug addicts for learning language.
- Local government can be instrumental in facilitating constructive community efforts among marginalized society especially drug addicts for language learning.
- Strategy, community accountability and leadership are crucial among marginalized society for language learning.

Conclusion:

The outcomes presented here are part of a larger implementation of computer based learning which sets out to explore the positive impact applications on education in general for language learning among the teenagers (drug addicts, consider them as member of marginalised society) in Malaysia by focusing on marginalized society. The study analyses the possible complementary environment for language teaching and learning and sets out an experiment that may shed some light on appropriateness for that purposes. They are four months based learning. For speaking 20 minutes every day until four months, 10 minutes listening BBC or VOA or likely every day four months and writing 1 page every day until four months It is acknowledged that the proposed study still presents a number of limitations. Among those are the omissions of voice chat, a need for more collaborative and meaningful tasks as well as the design of activities based on the adaptive learning principles.

References

- Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.
- Bialystok, E. (1990). *Communication Strategies: A Psychological Analysis of Second Language Use*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Bongaerts, T., & Poulisse, N. (1989). Communication strategies in L1 and L2: Same or different? *Applied Linguistics*, 10(3), 253- 268.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.
- Chamot, A., & O'Malley, M. (1994). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Chamot, A., & O'Malley, M. (1996). Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA). In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language Learning Strategies Around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives* (pp. 167-173). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Centre.
- Cohen, A. (1990). *Language Learning: Insights for Learners, Teachers, and Researchers*. New York: Newbury House.
- Dansereau, D. (1985). Learning strategy research. In J.W. Segal, S.F. Chipman, & R. Glaser (Eds.), *Thinking and Learning Skills: Relating Learning to Basic Research* (pp. 209-240). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Davis, R. (1997). Modeling the strategies we advocate. *TESOL Journal*, 6(4), 5-6.
- Dornyei, A., & Thurrell, S. (1991). Strategic competence and how to teach it. *ELT Journal*, 45(1), 16-23.
- Earle-Carlin, S., & Proctor, S. (1996). *Word of Mouth*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989). *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ely, C., & Pease-Alvarez, L. (Eds.). (1996). Learning styles and strategies [Special Issue]. *TESOL Journal*, 6(1) [Autumn].
- Freeman, D., & Richards, J. (Eds.). (1996). *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L., Mathes, P., & Simmons, D. (1997). Peer- assisted learning strategies: Making classrooms more responsive to diversity. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 174-206.
- Gardner, D., & Miller, L. (Eds.). (1996). *Tasks for Independent Language Learning*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Graham, S. (1997). *Effective Language Learning*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gu, P. (1996). Robin Hood in SLA: What has the learning strategy researcher taught us? *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6, 1-29.
- Kasper, G., & Kellerman, E. (Eds.). (in press). *Communication Strategies: Psycholinguistic and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. London: Longman.
- Kidd, R., & Marquardson, B. (1996). The foresee approach for ESL strategy instruction in an academic-proficiency context. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language Learning Strategies Around the World: Cross-cultural Perspectives* (pp. 189-204). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Centre.
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (1994). Challenging student approaches to ESL vocabulary development. *TESL Canada Journal*, 12(1), 69-80.
- Lessard-Clouston, M. (1996). ESL vocabulary learning in a TOEFL preparation class: A case study. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 53(1), 97-119.
- Mayer, R. (1988). Learning strategies: An overview. In Weinstein, C., E. Goetz, & P. Alexander (Eds.), *Learning and Study Strategies: Issues in Assessment, Instruction, and Evaluation* (pp. 11-22). New York: Academic Press.
- Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., Stern, H., & Todesco, A. (1978). *The Good Language Learner*. Research in Education Series 7. Toronto: OISE Press.

*An Analysis of Third-Year English for International Communication
Students' Summary Writing*

Phanlapa Khathayut, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Thailand

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0108

Abstract

The purposes of this study were threefold: 1) to find out whether the subjects can catch all the main ideas of the original text in their summary writing, 2) to investigate whether the subjects have committed any plagiarism in their summaries, and 3) to examine the subjects' summaries whether there is any information distorted from the original. The subjects of this study were 25 third-year students who were studying in English minor, English for International Communication Program in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla province, Thailand in the academic year 2012. The instrument used in this study was a text length about 400 words. It consisted of 4 paragraphs. Two paragraphs had topic sentences, and the other two, the topic sentences were not included in the paragraphs. The findings revealed that most of the students in this study could catch the main idea of each paragraph though some paragraphs, there were no topic sentences. However, they (92% of the students) committed plagiarism, and 6 out of 25 students committed distortions of meaning.

Introduction

Summary writing is one of the crucial academic skills for students in developing reading and writing skills. It is a part of writing activity which can make students improve their understanding of the text. It can be said that if students can summarize well, exactly, they improve their reading and paraphrasing ability (Budi, 2009; Palmer, 2003; Sangcharoon, 2010; Sotiriou, 2002; Teweles, 2001).

Many researchers found that summarization process connected with reading and writing. Corbeil (2000) pointed out that “the summarization process in second language becomes a valuable assessment tool to conduct students’ progress towards the acquisition of second language reading comprehension skills”.

Many students feel that writing a summary is difficult especially in Thai language community because when they were asked to read and summarize a text, they usually struggle to write by themselves without the knowledge in summarizing technique (Laosooksri, 2006). Moreover, many researchers have studied summary writing of students. They found that there were many problems in students’ summaries such as distortion of the contents of the texts, copying the same words as the original text, identifying the key points of a text, lack of coherence, and lack of ability to paraphrase (Laosooksri, 2006; LIU, 2008; Newfeilds, 2001; Palmer, 2003).

For students’ reading comprehension, many researchers found that most students had many problems with failing to comprehend English texts, identifying the main idea, interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and summarizing (Hiransathit, 2005). For a decade, Sriratapai (1999) studied Thai students’ summary writing. The results maintained that there were three important problems in the students’ summary writing. First, the students did not restate all the main ideas and their significant supporting details in their summaries. Second, they committed plagiarism because they were not able to paraphrase the main ideas in the reading text. Finally, they distorted the information in the reading text because of their weakness in writing or reading skills.

Furthermore, many studies found failing to capture the main idea and changing the original ideas into their own words in Thai students’ summaries. Most students struggle to write without certainly understanding the text, and some usually underlined some important ideas and then joined those underlined sentences together (Laosooksri, 2006; Yimwilai, 2008). According to these problems, it is better if students have more chance to study writing a summary in the class. In brief, summary is a writing strategy involving reading and writing skills. It is a way to show the readers’ understanding of the reading text and it also displays the students’ ability to relay the message by reading it in their own words.

This research, therefore, was designed to investigate summarizing ability in particular to third-year English for International Communication students of Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla, Thailand. This program was created to support students to get more proficiency in English. In the future, they may be a part of an international organization, so the research results would be fruitful to teachers and students to find ways of enhancing reading comprehension and summarizing abilities.

Methodology

The subjects of this study were 25 third-year students who were studying Business English minor, English for International Communication Program in the Faculty of Liberal Arts, in the academic year 2012. These students had been trained to read and write in English through the time they have studied in the university.

The instrument used in this study was a text which was adapted by Khathayut (2011). This text consisted of four paragraphs. Two paragraphs had topic sentences (the 2nd and the 4th paragraph), and the other two (the 1st and the 3rd), topic sentences were not included in the paragraphs. The whole text was about 400 words.

Data were collected in the 2nd semester in the academic year 2012. The text used as the research instrument was distributed to the students without any suggestions about using summarizing techniques. Then they had to complete their summary in one hour, and they were not allowed to use any dictionaries or discuss the text with others. During the time they summarized, they could make notes or write anything down on the text, but they had to turn in the text and their papers after their summary was completed.

The students' summaries were analyzed to find if they could catch all four main ideas of the paragraphs; how much they committed plagiarism; and how much they distorted the content of the original respectively.

In order to analyze plagiarism, the students' summaries were broken down into T-units. Then every T-unit in each summary was analyzed whether it was copied from the original or paraphrased. If there were four consecutive copied words found in one T-unit, it was assumed plagiarized. It was counted under the following conditions:

- a) A sentence is analyzed as two (or more) T-units when two (or more) independent clauses (with subjects and finite verbs) are conjoined.

"People will change (1 T-unit) and the environment will change (1 T-unit)." = 2

T-units

- b) A sentence is analyzed as two (or more) T-units when two (or more) independent clauses (with subjects and finite verbs) are

conjoined.

"People will change (1 T-unit) and the environment will change (1 T-unit)." = 2 T-units

- c) Comma splices are counted as two T-units (or more).

"There are many developments (1 T-unit), it makes people have the good lives (1 T-unit)." = 2 T-unit

- d) A coordinate clause without a grammatical subject is counted as one T-unit.

“The people will live and (-) work in the third world countries (1 T-unit).”

e) If there is no verb in the sentence, count that sentence as one T-unit.

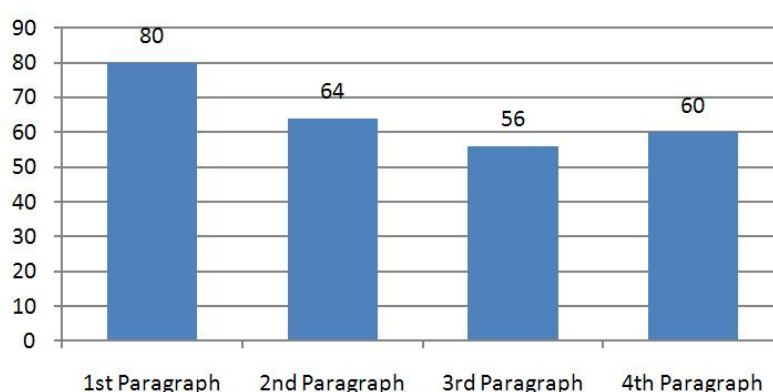
“When you (-) cutting down the rain forests, pollution will be destroyed (1 T-unit).”

To analyze if there were any committing distortions in the students' summary, each student's summary was parsed in T-units. It could show that whether the students understood the original text and could represent it properly or not. The students' summary was assumed as committing distortion if the students added their own opinions, ignored important details, or misinterpreted the original text.

Results and analysis

In order to find out whether the students could catch the main idea of each paragraph, the researcher marked the summary writing of the students to see their abilities in finding the main idea of each paragraph then the scores were analyzed. It was found that the students could find the main idea of the 1st, the 2nd, the 4th and the 3rd paragraph respectively as shown in graph 1.

Graph 1 Finding Main Idea of Each Paragraph



With respect to the data presented in graph1, it is visible that the main idea of the first paragraph was found the most (80%). The students caught 64 per cent of the main idea of the second paragraph. The fourth paragraph was found 60 percent, and the third paragraph was found the least (56%).

It is noticeable that most students had abilities to find the main idea in the paragraph that had no topic sentences. The main idea that has been found the most was the main idea of the 1st paragraph. It was because of the length of the paragraph. There were 53 words in the 1st paragraph. However, the number of the students' finding the main idea of the 3rd paragraph was just 56 per cent. There were 116 words in the 3rd paragraph. It can be concluded that the students could find the main idea of the paragraph that there was not a topic sentence included if that paragraph is short.

When comparing the number of finding the main idea of the 1st and the 3rd paragraph with the number of the findings of the main ideas in the 2nd and the 4th paragraph, it was found that there are just a few differences appeared in the results

The findings to meet the second objective, to examine whether the students had committed plagiarism in their summaries, are presented in the following table.

Table 1 The number of plagiarized T-units found in the students' summaries

No.	Overall T-units	Plagiarized	Percentage	No. of students committing plagiarism
1	7	2	28.57	1
2	4	4	100	1
3	8	8	100	1
4	9	7	77.78	1
5	17	17	100	1
6	15	0	0	0
7	11	9	81.82	1
8	10	9	90	1
9	9	0	0	0
10	7	7	100	1
11	7	7	100	1
12	8	8	100	1
13	12	12	100	1
14	13	10	76.92	1
15	19	19	100	1
16	12	3	25	1
17	14	11	78.57	1
18	8	8	100	1
19	8	5	62.5	1
20	9	1	11.11	1
21	8	8	100	1
22	13	13	100	1
23	8	7	87.5	1
24	9	7	77.77	1
25	8	8	100	1
Total	253	190	75.90	23 (92%)

Table 1 showed that most of students committed plagiarism in their summaries. So, the number of plagiarized T-units found was high.

Horizontally, table 1 showed the number of overall T-units and plagiarized T-units found in each student's summary. Of all the 25 summaries, there were 253 T-units analyzed and 190 out of 253 T-units were plagiarized. The percentage of the plagiarized T-units was 75.90%. The result indicated that most of the students failed to restate the original in their own words.

Vertically, the table reveals that, all in all, 23 out of 25 students committed plagiarism in their summaries. The percentage of the students who committed plagiarism was

92%. This result demonstrated that two students wrote their summaries by using their own words; whereas, the others committed plagiarism. The cause of high percentage was probably all the students were not aware of the importance of using their own words instead of copying the original. Although, they were in English program, they were not trained on how to use summarizing techniques seriously. In fact, they should paraphrase the original before writing a summary. Also, the result indicated that all T-units of 12 students committed plagiarism. These 12 students might think that copying words from the original might not harm the summary writing. Alike Hill (1991) and LIU (2008) found in their studies that when the students summarized the text, they struggled. They tried to copy instead of writing the sentence themselves. However, Looksooksri (2006) found that although the students were trained to write a summary explicitly, they still committed plagiarism because they tried to paraphrase, so they distorted the original text.

In conclusion, according to the results, of all the 25 students, 23 (92%) students committed plagiarism. A high percentage (75.90%) or 190 out of 253 T-units was plagiarism.

To investigate if the students distorted the content of the original in their summary writing, the findings are shown as follows:

Table 2 The number of distorted T-units found in the students' summaries

No.	Overall T-units	Distorted	Percentage	No. of students distorting the content
1	7	1	14.29	1
2	4	0	0	0
3	8	0	0	0
4	9	1	11.11	1
5	17	0	0	0
6	15	0	0	0
7	11	0	0	0
8	10	0	0	0
9	9	6	66.67	1
10	7	0	0	0
11	7	0	0	0
12	8	0	0	0
13	12	0	0	0
14	13	0	0	0
15	19	0	0	0
16	12	1	8.33	1
17	14	1	7.14	1
18	8	0	0	0
19	8	2	25	1
20	9	0	0	0
21	8	0	0	0
22	13	0	0	0
23	8	0	0	0
24	9	0	0	0
25	8	0	0	0
Total	253	12	4.74	6 (24%)

Table 2 revealed that of all the 25 students, 6 students distorted the content of the original. In their summaries, there were 12 out of 253 T-units distorted.

As you see in the table 2, it showed that of all the 25 students, 6 students distorted the content of the original. In their summaries, there were 12 out of 253 T-units distorted. The percentage of the students was 24%. The cause of low percentage was that most of the students copied the words from the original, so they did not distort the content of the passage

According to the findings, the researcher found that the students who tried to paraphrase the sentences distorted the original content more than those who plagiarized. For example, in the first student's summary, there are seven T-units. Two T-units were plagiarism, and one T-unit distorted the content.

Conclusion

The research studied summarizing ability of third-year English for International Communication students. The results show that the students could catch the main idea of each paragraph; even if some were not topic sentences included. However, the findings revealed the students could not write the main ideas in their own words. Most of all students copied from the original text. The researcher also found that if students tried hard to avoid plagiarism, they would distort the original meaning of the text. According to the results, the students should have been provided with a suitable course in improving their reading abilities such as explicit teaching summary writing course not only inserted in the reading subjects.

References

- Budi, A. S. (2009). *Using summarizing techniques to improve the reading comprehension of the students of the English study program of state Polytechnics of Jember*. Unpublished master's thesis, Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.
- Corbeil, G. (2000). Exploring the effects of first-and second-language proficiency on summarizing in French as a second language. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(1-2), 35-62.
- Hill, M. (April, 1991). Writing summaries promotes thinking and learning across the curriculum—but why are they so difficult to write? *JSTOR: Journal of Reading*, 34(7). 536-539.
- Hiransathit, A. (2005). *A comparison of mattayomsuksa IV students' English reading ability and attitudes including expected learning behaviors through instruction based on concentrated language encounters model II and traditional approach*. Master's Thesis. Srinakharinwirot University. BKK, Thailand.
- Khathayut, P. (2011). *Effects of applying summarizing techniques on reading comprehension, plagiarism and distortion of meaning*. Master's Thesis. Prince of Songkla University. Songkhla, Thailand.
- Laosooksri, T. (2006). Effects of teaching summary writing to English majors. *วารสารวิชาการศึกษาศาสตร์*, 7(1-2-3), 66-76.
- LIU Xiao-juan. (2008). Exploring summarizing: A case study. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 5(8), 29-34.

- Newfeilds, T. (2001). Teaching summarizing skills: Some practical hints. *ELJ journal*, 2(2), 1-7.
- Palmer, J. C. (2003). Summarizing techniques in the English language classroom: An international perspective. *PASAA*, 34, 54-63.
- Sangcharoon, T. (2010). *Reading and writing skills development: The use of SQ5R technique*. Master's Thesis. Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand.
- Sotiriou, E. P. (2002). *Reading to write: Composition in context*. USA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Sriratampai, A. (1999). *An analysis of Srinakharinwirote University third-year English majors' summary writing ability*. Master's Thesis. Srinakharinwirot University. BKK, Thailand.
- Teweles, B. (2001, November). Paraphrasing>summarizing: A good means to a better end. *Proceedings of PAC3 at JALT 2001, JP*, 180-184.
- Yimwilai, S. (2008, July-December). English reading abilities and problems of English-major students in Srinakharinwirot University. *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 4(2), 130-148.

The logo for the International Association for Language Acquisition Research (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the word "iafor" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a light blue one in the foreground and a light red one behind it, creating a sense of depth and movement.

***Genre, Multimodality, and Pedagogical Implications of the Evolution of Blogs for
Second Language Education***

Jianxin Liu, Charles Sturt University, Australia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0111



iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Genre-based pedagogy is influential in second language education. Although debates on whether genre should be overtly instructed as procedures (Martin, 1992), implicitly introduced through processes (Medway & Freedman, 1994), or tacitly exposed for raising awareness (Swales, 1990) are yet to settle, researchers are unanimous in the view that commanding a repertoire of metalanguage is necessary. Writing activities that involve identifying the generic structure of a text or composing a new text with similar generic moves, for instance, are common in EAL (English as an additional language) classrooms. To help classroom teachers apply this pedagogy, researchers even coined a knowingly misleading term, text type, to alleviate the theoretical thickness of genre. As Paltridge (1996, 2002) has pointed out, although genre entails typification with attention to prototypes, as abstraction it does not rely on types, kinds, or categories but rather emphasizes flexibility in relation to process, tenacity, and tendency. By contrast, text types, with a visible focus on such extant text categories as recount, description, and procedure, require recognition of generic characteristics and boundaries that are sustained by a particularized text order and power structure. Some researchers have further warned that the genre-based pedagogy may mostly benefit elite social groups rather than marginalized social groups (Hyon, 1996). Cultural and educational capital as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1984) may provide stronger support for the elite groups to recognize and master their genres, and to constantly manipulate existing genres for maximizing their own interests. Pedagogical suggestions and practices resulting from these perspectives can be restraining. Furthermore, it is evident that multimodality's prevalence through digitization and social media has been persistently remaking rules of thumb when it comes to genre (Bateman, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2005) and subsequently presenting greater challenges for the extant genre pedagogy. Rethinking genre pedagogy in relation to multimodality in times of digitization and social media is therefore imminent.

In this article I will take the evolution of the blog into genre as an instance to explore the relevance of genre-based pedagogy in second language education. In what follows, I will discuss in the first two sections the application of genre theory in second language education in light of the emergence of multimodality in social media space. In the section that follows, I will then use the evolution of blogs into a mainstream social media space and genre as a case to explore the dynamics between multimodality, genre, and second language education. In the last section, I will explore the possibility of integrating the theory of performativity to enrich, if not to advance, the genre-based pedagogy in digital times. It is hoped that the article will encourage both second language genre researchers and practitioners to reconsider genre theorization and its pedagogical translations in constructing multimodality-rich second language learning spaces.

Problematizing genre pedagogy

Genres are purposeful human representations with layers of reference to typified and often recurring constructs, functions, forms, emotions, and relationship. Genre theory was systematically introduced to second language education in Swales' (1990) writing and has been continued by researchers such as Miller (1994), Bazerman (1994), Bhatia (2002), Devitt (2004), and Martin (2003). Views on genre vary among researchers and sometimes are even contradictory in terms of conceptualization and pedagogy.

Overall, three schools of thinking have been prominent (Hyon, 1996). The English for Specific Purposes view, given its focus on language use in specific disciplinary areas such as academic, business, and chemistry, recognizes genre as purposeful communicative events with identifiable moves (Swales, 1990, 2004). Pedagogically, it advocates for exposing second language learners to disciplinary expert texts and analyses as well as for reproducing similar texts (Paltridge, 2001). Genre network analysis of a scholarship application, for instance, may help learners understand the interconnectedness of the genre to many other genres that occur prior to or after an application, by post or online, as well as the complexity of such situated genre ecology.

The Systemic Functional Linguistics view sees genre as staged, goal-oriented social activities (Martin & Rose, 2003). It contends that decoding expert texts uncovers the hidden, often oppressive intention from the ruling class and consequently empowers marginalized social groups and learners. Recognizing the constraints of generic structure which tend to impose a rather linear progress of textual development, Halliday (1978) offers genre potential as a complementary term to expand on the inclusion of social activities. In pedagogical practices, the SFL school often favors explicit instruction of generic moves by simplifying genre into text types (Norton & Christie, 1999).

The New Rhetoric perspective, with an origin in English writing practices, sees genre as typified social actions even though it has rarely discussed the agency of social action (Devitt, 2004; Medway & Freedman, 1994). Together with process-based pedagogy, it allows second language learners to go back and forth to experiment with the rhetorical functions of a genre with little or no modelling on a given template or metalanguage.

The three perspectives, though differing from one another, are interrelated with commonalities towards integration, as Swales (2009) has recently synthesized. Pedagogically, these perspectives have shared drawbacks irrespective of their specific constructs. For one thing, preserving textual conventions (in particular, academic and professional standards in the name of accountability) is accentuated with an argument that text types and categories inscribe stability and hierarchy (Swales, 2004). Even with fluidity and dynamicity of genre in conceptualization, genre hierarchies are often unwittingly reinforced rather than being resisted. Language learners are increasingly instructed to rely on language experts in order to master a particular genre due to their lack of exposure to metalanguage and practices. Genre bending in Bhatia's (2002) view is mostly achievable when the genre agent is superior either in knowledge, power, or social status. The communities of practices theory (Wenger, 1998) in which legitimate learning of the peripheral, marginalized community members can only be sanctioned by the expert members, is instrumental to this view. Learners are expected only to learn but not to apply or change expert genres.

For another thing, admittedly, explicit instruction is taken as the dominant pedagogical paradigm in alignment with critical pedagogy originating from Freire (1970) to empower the oppressed as well as to press for accountability and scaffolding. However, this paradigm would unintentionally stifle second language learners' contribution to textual development or obstruct their effective participation in social interactions. Even a non-invasive approach such as awareness-raising has

also suffered due to excessive exposure to genre traits. The hegemonic order between the native and non-native speakers thus persists in dismissing non-native speakers merely as recipients of a language and its genres, rather than as contributors to a language.

Several researchers (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Canagarajah, 2004) have warned that some research areas of EAL, for instance, academic writing, may have become involuntarily entrenched in a deficit approach in which the texts produced by non-native speakers of English are deemed problematic even in the face of diversity. Wrong questions have been repeated in the course of, for instance, discovering the differences between writing in English and Japanese, while the right questions such as exploring the ways that other languages add value to the English language and its genres have been overlooked. Although genre dynamicity and fluidity have been underscored and genre-based pedagogical approaches merit a pedagogical turn from teacher-centric to learner-centric model, or a shift from sole instruction to learner-led inquiry, nearly all of them presume an existence of expert genres and stability of genre. This simplified interpretation of critical pedagogy may risk stripping learners' autonomy, productivity, and resilience. Language teachers often assume a super savior gaze to teach over and over again until learners have been either tamed by their instruction or become rebellious.

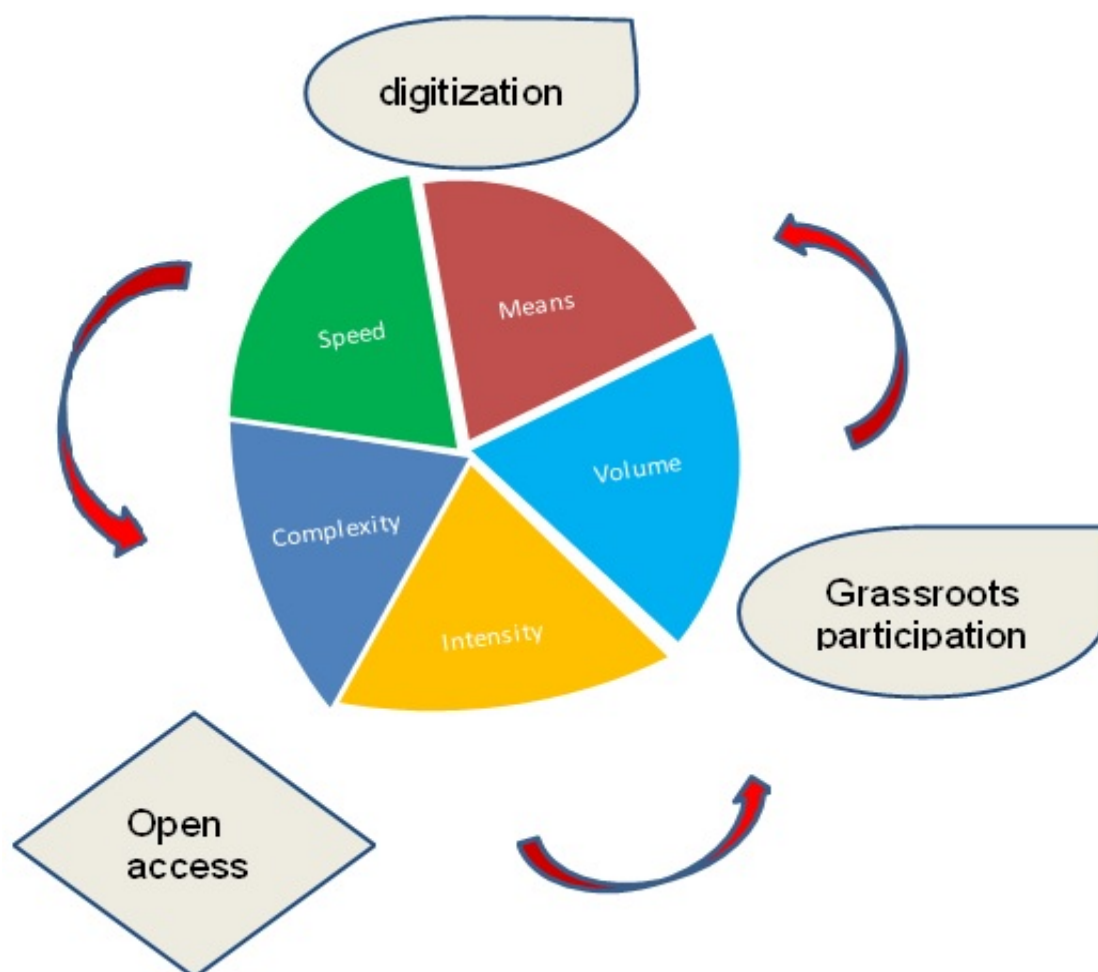
The pedagogical application of genre theory in language education itself is a simplified version of genre theory in literature and media in which research and teaching practices concentrate on non-literary, standardized (mostly written) texts. Even Swales (2009) admits that his genre approach is unable to attend to the complexity of literary text, which invites unconformity and uniqueness rather than commonality. This explains why Frow's (2006) genre work that elaborates on systematic connections of genre components to social structuration and interaction can be intimidating for second language teachers. Rooted deeply in English literature, Frow deals with the original work and masterpieces in literature whereas second language teachers mostly face non-native speakers, young learners, and pre-service professionals. Simplified texts and theorization is a rational compromise but the question looms large: has such textual censorship been de-servicing learners rather than scaffolding their learning and production?

Multimodality challenges

Multimodality is about using multiple resources for enacting social or semiotic text. In addition to linguistic resources, pictures, drawings, paintings, music, illustrations, actions, speeches, fonts, body, and interactions are all multimodal texts in which various semiotic resources are employed to create or negotiate meanings (van Leeuwen, 2005). Multimodality is not a new feature of genre on the spectrum of text either in a narrow sense as semiotic or in a broad sense as social, but rather an innate attribute of text (Kress, 2013). As Fig.1 reveals, the affluence of multimodal textuality is driven by three main forces of change. Digitization generates the technological affordances needed by multimodality, grassroots participation enlarges the population of multimodal text consumers and producers, and open access deregulates the monopoly of textuality. By and large, enhanced technological affordance and affordability has significantly democratized the inclusion of multimodal resources and participants in text production and dissemination. A multimodal text is no longer

exclusively produced by an artist, nor does it require expensive equipment or a place for storage, preservation, and distribution. All of this is available at one's finger tips via cloud storage, while open or low-cost access and participation have fuelled text participants' motivation. Such democratization has encouraged people from all walks of life to engage in multimodal textual production, consumption, and distribution (Lemke & Coughlin, 2009) on spaces such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, Kik, Snapchat, and in education, learning management systems.

Figure 1 Dimensions of multimodal textuality in the digital times



Under these forces, multimodality deviates from its previous manifestations in five dimensions: means, volume, complexity, intensity, and speed, as have emerged from the scholarship over the past ten years (e.g., Bateman, 2008; e.g., Kress, 2013; Pullen & Cole, 2010; Sheppard, 2009). First, semiotic resources are increasingly diverse as a result of innovation and remixing. New types of semiotic resources and means are added every second. Second, many of the textual products are unprecedentedly modality rich. Third, multimodal resources employed in textual construction are intricately complex in terms of type, function, and connection given that viewing pathways are different and that unfavorable actions can be easily undone. Fourth, the intensity of multimodal resource application has been magnified. Innovations in Television alone, for example, have engineered technologies such as High definition, digital, LED, 3D, panoramic and experiential viewing. Lastly and noticeably, multimodal resources have been generated at a remarkably rapid pace.

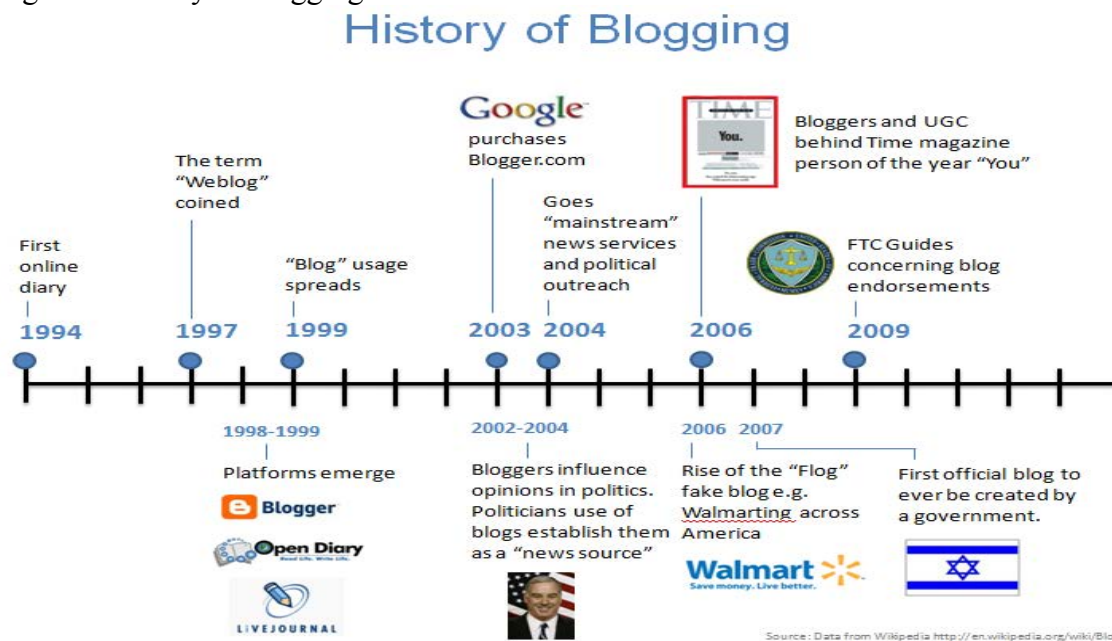
Unquestionably, each of these changing dimensions has challenged text participants' genre practice, especially in light of standard, accountability, authority, and legitimacy (e.g., Siegel, 2012). Socio-systematically, multimodality disrupts the kind of social orders that have been built on the dominance of writing and reading as a result of technological and economical paucity. As permeation of such social orders simultaneously upholds the stability of genres (Frow, 2006), text participants proficient in the written genres and resources may cling to their textual practice to maximize utilities such as control and a sense of security. They tend to dismiss or moderate the newly emergent multimodal textual practices, as well as their users and creators, many of them being young people, teenagers, and non-native language speakers. It is often lamentable that even genre transference (e.g., from mail to email) that seemed to work with reasonable adaptations can become problematic (e.g., including the inside address and using formal closing such as Yours sincerely).

Pedagogically, the democratizing and diversifying forces that are afforded by the mechanisms of multimodality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) fundamentally challenge two domains of genre pedagogy: instruction and assessment. Genre instruction that relies on the exclusive possession of an instructional medium and resources are questionable. Language learners no longer need teachers for language learning resources and even input, which are readily accessible via digitized media, media spaces, and connections such as Skype and Google Hangouts. The analysis of a genre, for instance, can be found on OWL-like (Online Writing Lab <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>) websites, consulting other users in second language discussion groups on LinkedIn or Google, or by face-to-face video meetings with (self-claimed) language experts. The majority of language teachers will need to shift their role as instructor to one that can be likened to that of a sports coach—facilitating, coordinating, and motivating. At their best, they may become proficient in particular techniques, say, active YouTube language program makers, but they have to be conscious that this only caters to the preference of a small proportion of his/her learners. On the plane of assessment, it is increasingly difficult for second language educators and teachers to assess their students' genre performances through text. The multiple dimensions of multimodality that have been discussed above may make it impossible for a teacher to have expertise in all of them in order to provide credible professional judgment (Siegel, 2012). As such, not only would teachers' accountability be at risk, but also the quality of a second language program would become questionable within the closed, traditional paradigm of genre.

Blogs as genres in the making

Using the blog as an example, in this section I will further examine the relationship between genre and multimodality to lead to the discussion of second language pedagogy in the last section. To begin with, a blog is generally known as an archive of online journals in reverse chronological order. The first blog was started in 1994 by Justin Hall with a frivolous self-exposing diary style of 'writing' (www.links.net), though the official name of the blog was not coined until 1999 that joins the word *Web* with the word *log*. In less than a decade after the coinage, numerous blog hosting services have flourished and the blogosphere has grown into a mainstream social media space on the Internet and continues to grow in volume and form as Fig. 2 illustrates.

Figure 2 History of blogging

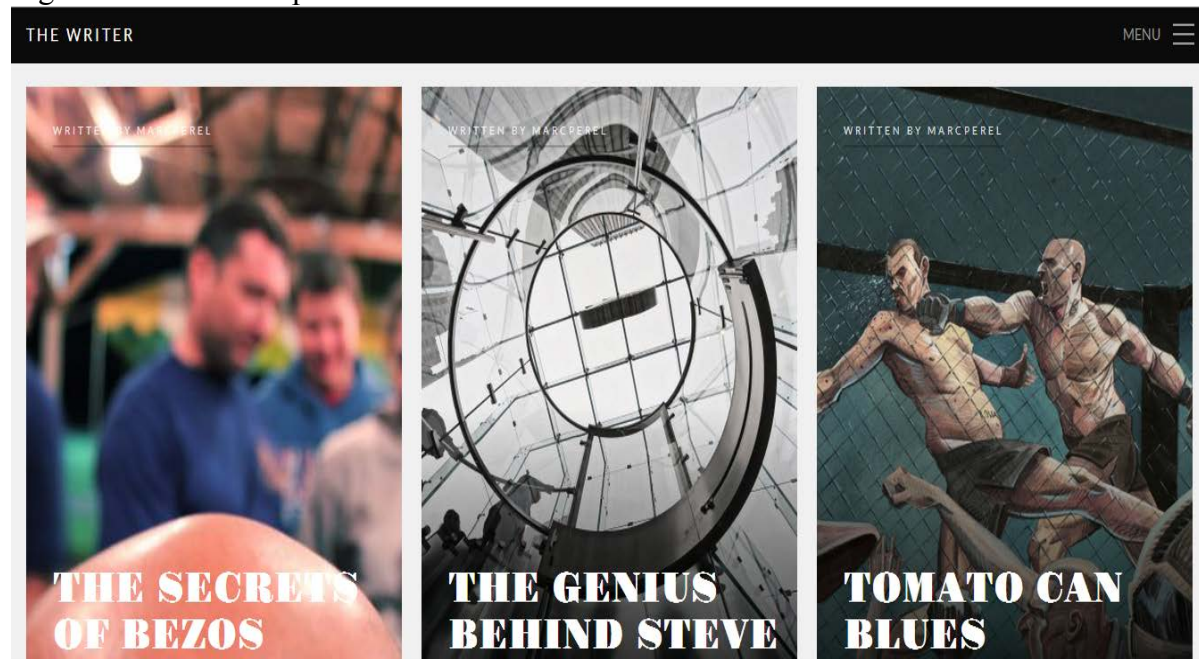


(Retrieved at <http://brandswithfansblog.fandommarketing.com/files/2010/05/history-blogging3.png>)

The early form of the blog, also known as Weblog, was a mix of such genres including the 'What's new' section of a website, journal keeping, and navigation logs, with hyperlinks embedded in the text to other external texts (Walker, 2005). At this early stage, in its purist version, or somehow distraction-free, written-word only model, pictures and videos were not preferred. Shortly after this stage, other features such as permalink and tags were engineered to either archive blogs or to increase the visibility of blogs, for various purposes including advertising and marketing. Early researchers (Blood, 2002; Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2005; Miller & Shepherd, 2004; Walker, 2005), seeing blogs an emergent genre, would typically define the blog as a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so that the most recent post appeared first.

Despite some early pioneers' resistance (Lyons, 2005), numerous technical functions and multimodalities have been created, which are able to transform a simple blog entry into a webpage and eventually a visually appealing website with enhanced interactivity and connectivity for sharing, participation, publishing, and working. In addition to content, design takes a centre stage in blogging. Templates, themes, and widgets are designed to expand on a blog's technical capabilities. Consequently, bloggers have been endowed enormous technical capacity to freely edit or re/design their own blog sites for achieving desired effects. Some of the established blog hosting services such as the WordPress (www.wordpress.org) have become full-fledged webspace developing engines in order to cater to such needs. Fig. 3 is a snapshot of a theme template prompted by WordPress. With merely three large size visuals in the center to navigate the content, the website's title humbly sitting on the top left corner and the Menu with a dropdown list on the top right corner, this blog site is a symbol of simplicity and beauty. At the same time, it has little resemblance to a blog site.

Figure 3 A theme template of the WordPress



(Retrieved at <http://thewriterdemo.wordpress.com/>)

Technically, there is no constraint as to what and how many features and functions can be added to a blog, which include but are not limited to:

- Permalink
- Tag
- Widget
- video
- audio
- images
- animations
- Links
- Tweets
- Facebook

...


Without doubt, this list could continue at length but an example from the blog hosting service, WordPress, would be more illuminating. At the time of this article being composed, it was stated on the WordPress site regarding the status quo of the plugins development as the following:

30,553 PLUGINS, 640,597,596 DOWNLOADS, AND COUNTING
 (Retrieved at <https://wordpress.org/plugins/>)

The implication of this statement is that it is virtually impossible even for the WordPress to categorize all the plugins it has encouraged bloggers to develop. It is even more difficult to consider categorization when the overall productivity of all other blog hosting services such as Blogger and Live Journal is taken into account. Consequently, genre researchers interested in investigating the blog as well as its pedagogical applications are trapped in an awkward situation in which identification of generic and rhetorical moves, stages or features is physically unsustainable and technologically infeasible.

Further, there are no limits to what a blog is capable of doing. In the early days of the blogosphere, the majority of blogs were personal blogs interested in presenting selves, identities, and desires, even though the borderline between the personal and the public was blurring (van Dijck, 2004). However, following the emergence of collective and community building blogs, the blogosphere has expanded into countless areas and disciplines, ranging from knowledge-building, leisure, entertainment, business, organizations, and even government. What a blog can do to a greater extent depends on the authors and their technical (and other) capacities and specifications. Fig. 4 provides a snapshot of a genealogy on Blog Finder (www.genealogyblog.com), which archives blogs in English. About 12 general categories are on the list, each of which has a number of sub-categories that can be further categorized. The implication of this is that similar to the challenge presented in analyzing the features of blogs it is virtually unrealistic to exhaust all the categories of blogs. What bloggers can use their blogging to do is essentially unpredictable.

Figure 4 Genealogy of blogs

Genealogy Blog Finder  Now tracking **1,785** genealogy blogs

Search Blog Directory Search Blog Posts

Recently Updated »
Genealogy blogs with fresh content
 What's New »
The latest blogs added to the directory
 Who's Blogging Where »
A map of recent blogging activity

Genealogy News »
The latest developments in the genealogical world
 Personal Research »
Family historians share their personal stories
 Locality Specific »
Regional and local news and resources
 Tips, Resources & Reviews »
Tips for building skills and finding resources
 Technology »
Using technology to aid research
 Single Surname »
Blogs focusing on one surname
 Documentary »
Digitized and transcribed documents

GenWeb »
Blogs associated with GenWeb projects
 Famous Folks »
Exploring the origins of famous people
 Preservation »
Tips on preserving your family's history

Photography »
Genetic Genealogy »
Queries »

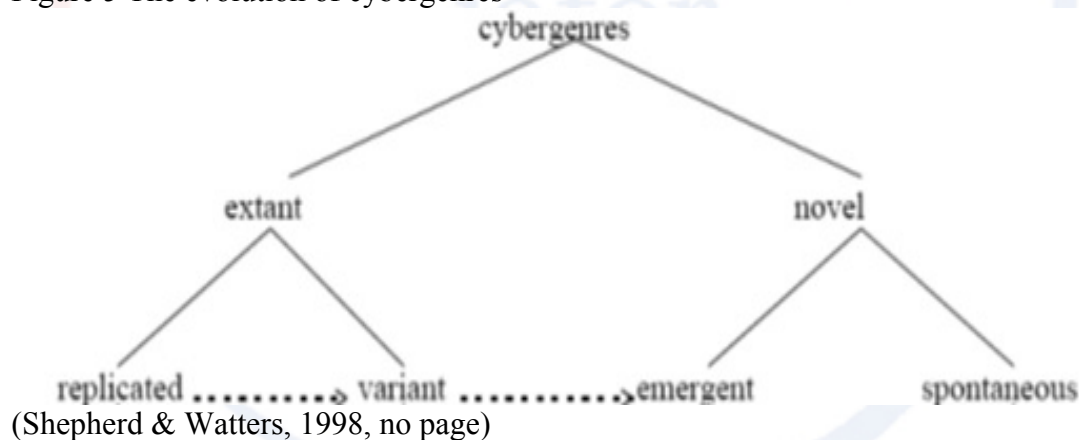
(Retrieved at <http://geneabloggers.com/genealogy-blog-primer/types-genealogy-blogs/>)

Therefore, such a fast and diverse adoption of technologies has compelled genre researchers to revise their views. Miller and Shepherd (2004) who claimed the blog as genre based on rhetorical functions, for instance, have revised their view five years

later to define the blog as a technology rather than a genre (Miller & Shepherd, 2009). Their revision, to some extent, is based on convincing observations. It is evident that what has become of the blog has little similarity to its antecedents. Technically, over the years, the blog has been remixing numerous genres to enact dynamic content composition, dissemination, and consumption by resorting to the power of hypertext, code embedding, semantic clouds, and smart computing. Experientially, the blogs' evolution is expeditious with heterogeneous content, functions, features, purposes, authorship, and viewership.

Miller and Shepherd however are incorrect to define the blog as technology. The blog, along with many other social media genres, are all supported by similar computing technologies—the programming languages and technical infrastructure that enables templates, widget and apps that have evolved considerably over the past two decades. These technological innovations as such have shaped the characteristics of the blog, especially in comparison with other non-digital genres. But they should not establish the blog as a technology. What they have engendered is in effect the blog's transition from discursive to multimodal, from mono-dimensional to multiple dimensional, and from general blogging to micro-blogging, from content presenting to content congregating and repurposing. The blog's social purpose, regardless of these technical and functional evolutions, is largely consistent, with only minor modifications needed that follow the two main routes as suggested in Shepherd and Watters' (1998) model of cyber genre evolution (Fig. 5).

Figure 5 The evolution of cybergenres



One is the emulation of the existing genres with some changes, and the other continues the variation to create new genres that respond to localized contexts. Shepherd and Watters did not elaborate on the localized context which in Spinuzzi's (2004) conception of genre ecology is critical. Genre can never stand alone and only realize its social purpose within a socio-ecological niche. Genre ecology stresses interdependence that people and activities make among genres, decentralization that enables the distribution of usability, design, and intention across the ecology of genres, and stability that helps users make the interconnections between the genres they use conventional and official. Since genres are dependent on one another, the emergence of any given genre depends on its interconnections with other genres and how those genres jointly mediate a given activity. The concept of genre ecology in this regard is helpful in refuting the claim of the blog being simply a technology. Evidently, instead

of standing alone as one singular genre, over the past 15 years, the blog has evolved as a genre ecology.

The above analysis of the blog as genre as well as the inclusion of genre ecology perspective on the blog corresponds to the discussion of genre and multimodality in light of the following blogging specific questions:

1. Is the blog a genre, genres, a way of composing content, or simply a technology?
2. (How) can the blog be taught?
3. Who has the right to make judgment on the quality of a blog?
- 4.

To some extent, the first question has been answered in the previous section through refuting Miller and Shepherd's technology view, as well as scrutinizing the implications of Spinuzzi's genre ecology. Genre ecology, with its emphasis on genre composition, networks, and socio-ecological niche in which genres are engendered and operate, however, elucidates the reality that the blog is effectively not a singular genre, but is a genre collective. Their forms, contents, functions, and relationships (and even social purposes) can vary significantly in response to specific (socio-cultural, political, institutional, or technological) genre ecologies. In other words, there are numerous secondary genres of the blog to be learnt or taught, many of which are heterogeneous to each other and have little resemblance to the primary or prototype genre of the blog, and the number keeps increasing at close intervals. The quantity of blogging genres creates a massive challenge for language teachers and learners. For second language learners, the dynamicity which leaves little space for linguistic and other semiotic features to crystallize, poses another challenge.

All of them are naturally translated into the second question: how can the blog be taught as a genre. Two sides of the question should be looked at. On one side is the effectiveness of the extant genre pedagogy. Is traditional explicit instruction still relevant? Or is awareness-raising alone adequate? Is a process-based approach still useful? Instintively, an affirmative response may be prompted—after all, the conventional approaches used to be effective at some point. But these approaches are dubious in that consensus on the form, content, function of blogs can hardly be realized given the multimodal features and traits enabled by technological and practical innovation. On the other side lies the pedagogical innovations that have the capacity to teach genre. Design-based learning, for instance, is one of them. Yet, none of them is able to address the pace and quantity of genre ramifications in blogging. The dilemma that faces the traditional genre pedagogy (including the design-based branch) is: in order to enact so-called learning and mastery, teachers have to rely on the relative stability of a genre over a period of time, which unfortunately, has been violated with the growth of blogs.

The third question touches upon the reality of the blog as genre. The blog's quick establishment in the mainstream creates a similar challenge for teachers and learners in terms of practice. It is safe to say that most teachers are not experienced bloggers and have less familiarity with blog-related online genres than their students. It is likely that teachers are able to transfer their genre skills to these new online genres but it is often the case that the immersive practices that students hold onto in social media spaces are more relevant and valuable. From a learner's perspective, it may be challenging to acknowledge that if a teacher does not blog, does not how to blog, and

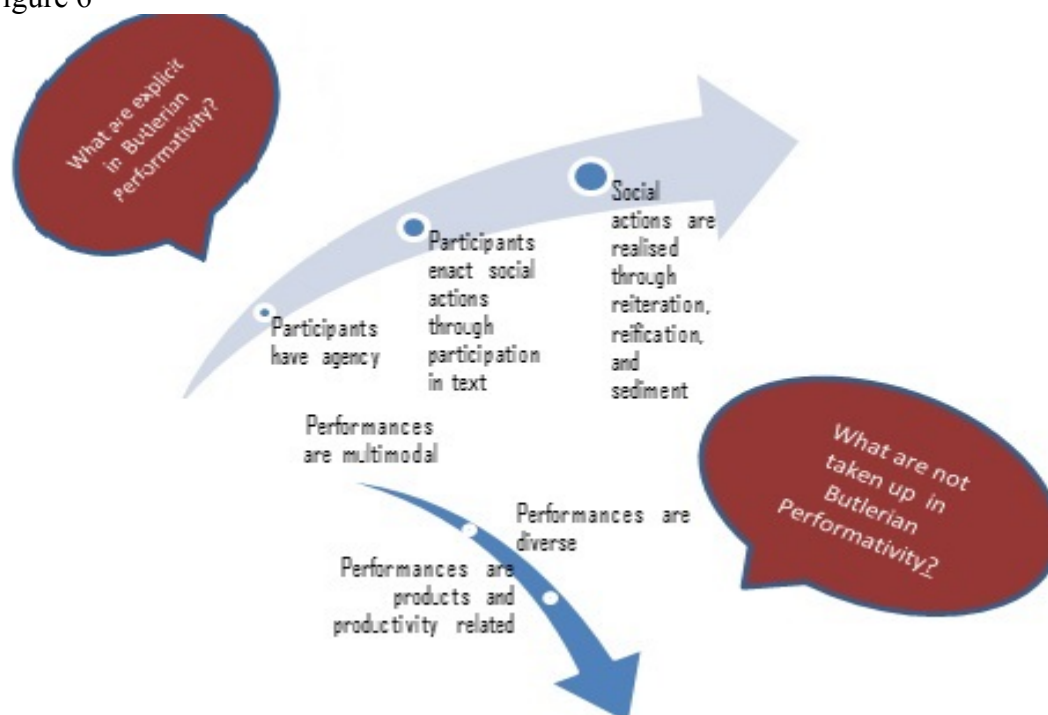
does not know how to blog well, he or she can still teach students by being a facilitator, coordinator, and motivator, but should not be seen as the (sole) assessor of student's genre practices in blogging.

Enacting genre through performative practice

The challenges presented by the blog-like new genre collectives are new issues for genre pedagogy. A simple nod to genre ecology, its interconnectedness, and its rapid evolution is useful but is far from adequate. A serious concern is who has the capacity to form, enliven, and indeed enact these rapidly emergent genres that may disappear in less than a couple of years. To remedy this inadequacy, this article suggests that second language learning focus on the performance space in alignment with the socio-ecology of genre. This performative view is only nascent in genre theory alongside the socio-systematic view proposed by Frow (2006) and Swales (2009) and has been discussed by Tseng (2011) and Liu (2010). As a point of departure, the performance view of genre is indebted to Butler's (1988, 2010) conception of performativity, which seeks to explain how the subversion of power emerges within a dialectical relation between constraint and agency. In essence, Butlerian performativity, with its original interest in the discursive iteration (in particular, speech acts) of gender relations, underscores that entities such as gender and identity are not fixed or imposed but rather taken up by the agent or the performer (Lloyd, 2007).

As Fig. 6 illustrates, applying this view to genre pedagogy would first help reinstate the learning participants' agency which has been neglected in teaching centered pedagogy or downplayed in the social constructivist paradigm. Further, a performative view helps reaffirm learning as and through practices rather than as being instructed (as understanding or reflections). That is, a performative view will focus on what learning participants can do and (re)present rather than on what they have or possess. In other words, it places emphasis on the dynamic process of development rather than fixed entity (test results for instance). Finally, a performative view would encourage learning participants to engender a desire for enacting social actions through participatory textual practices related to time and space. Learning participants should no longer be indoctrinated as submissive recipients of genre constructs, knowledge, and (re) presentations; nor should they be sidelined as incompetent text consumers.

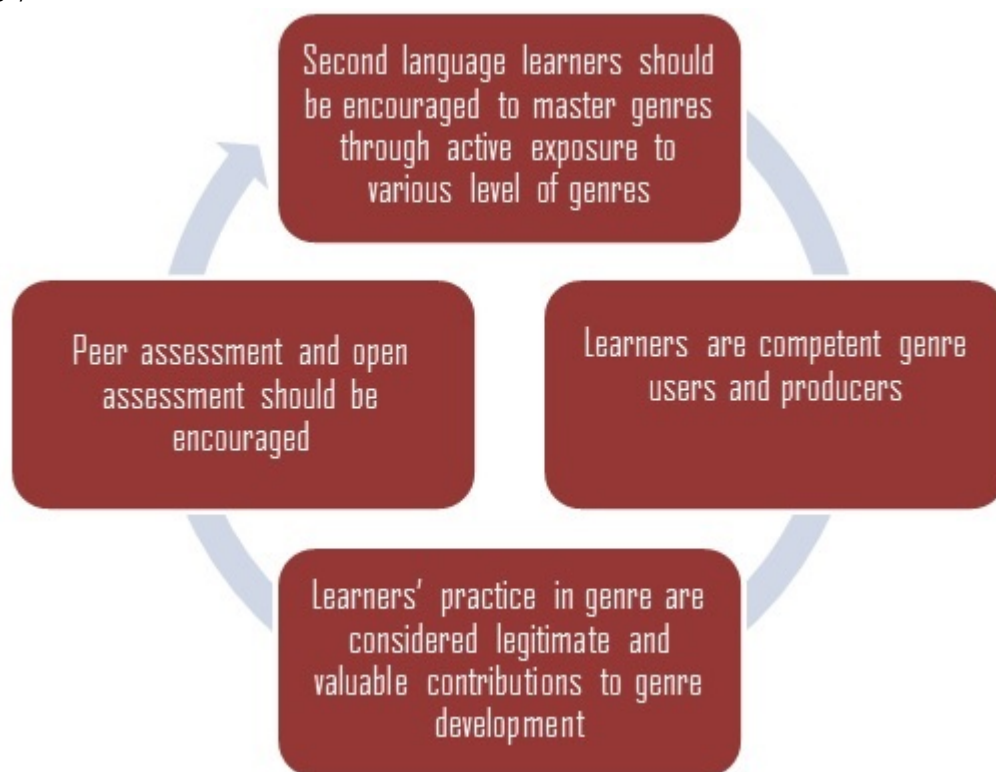
Figure 6



Although Butler's original conceptualization was neither directed at education and genre-like textual practices nor intended for engineering solutions as computing technologies and social media spaces, the confluence of multimodality indicates that three layers be can be added to enrich genre theory's relevance to language education. Certainly, the first one, that performance is multimodal, is self-evident. Rather than a repetition, it goes beyond performativity's early reliance on speech acts to include both social and semiotic textual resources for enacting performances. Secondly, it emphasizes the agglomeration of numerous performances that are inherently heterogeneous. Lastly, as a further extension of practice, it reinforces that performance is able to meld a process of creating with the outcomes of creating. Involving learning participants in genre-based performances is a leeway to genre reproduction as well as recreation.

Performative genre pedagogy inclusive of the above-discussed components thus reshapes pedagogical perspective and practices. As is highlighted in Fig 7, learning participants are respected as competent genre users and producers. They are able to actively engage in activities or tasks that sustain or alter genre ecologies and their evolution. Undoubtedly, their practice is as legitimate as other expert users' and can add indispensable contributions to genre formation. Genre change or bending in this sense can be initiated by both the elite and grassroots textual user. As a response to the new cycle of rapid genre production and demise, open assessment practices, such as peer assessment and blog-like portfolios, could help to dethrone the uniformity cherished in conventional assessment. Every learning participant, regardless of their background and proficiency, can provide valuable feedback. Ultimately, second language learners should not be seen as problematic but as competent not only to master online genres but also to recreate genres.

Figure 7



Genre-pedagogy that embraces multimodality inevitably encourages students to be creative, immersive in the new textual practice and to take ownership of their language learning, participation, and production. Upon a performative approach to genre pedagogy, second language learners are no longer dismissed as amateurs dependent on genre experts for confirmation but are given the confidence, opportunity and access to be able to revise or even recreate genres through immersive textual participation and performance.

References

- Bateman, J. (2008). *Multimodality and genre: A foundation for the systematic analysis of multimodal documents*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bazerman, C. (1994). Systems of genre and the enactment of social intentions. In P. Medway & A. Freedman (Eds.), *Genre and the new rhetoric* (pp. 77-99). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2002). Applied genre analysis: a multi-perspective model. *IBÉRICA 4*, 3-19.
- Blood, R. (2002). Introduction. In J. Rodzvilla (Ed.), *We've got blog: How weblogs are changing our culture* (pp. ix-xiii). Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519-531.
- Butler, J. (2010). Performative agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 147-161.
- Canagarajah, S. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*: Oxford University Press.

- Canagarajah, S. (2004). Subversive identities, pedagogical safe houses, and critical learning. *Critical pedagogies and language learning*, 116-137.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2009). "Multiliteracies": New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(3), 164-195.
- Devitt, A. (2004). *Writing genres*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Frow, J. (2006). *Genre*. London: Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. London: Arnold.
- Herring, S., Scheidt, L. A., Bonus, S., & Wright, E. (2005). Weblogs as a bridging genre. *Information, Technology & People*, 18(2), 142-171.
- Hyon, S. (1996). Genre in three traditions: Implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(4), 693-722.
- Kress, G. (2013). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*: Routledge.
- Lemke, C., & Coughlin, E. (2009). Change Agent 1: Democratization of Knowledge. *Change*, 67(1), 54-59.
- Liu, J. (2010). The blog as genre and performance: an analysis of Chinese A-list personal blogs. PhD thesis, The University of Sydney, Sydney.
- Lloyd, M. (2007). *Judith Butler: From norms to politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lyons, D. (2005). Attack of the blogs. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2005/1114/128.html>
- Martin, J. R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2003). *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*. London: Continuum.
- Medway, P., & Freedman, A. (1994). *Genre and the new rhetoric*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Miller, C. (1994). Genre as social action. In P. Medway & A. Freedman (Eds.), *Genre and the new rhetoric* (pp. 23-42). London: Taylor & Francis.
- Miller, C., & Shepherd, D. (2004). Blogging as social action: A genre analysis of the weblog. In L. Gurak, S. Athnivevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff & J. Reyman (Series Eds.), *Into the blogosphere: Rhetoric, community, and culture of weblogs*, Retrieved from http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/blogging_as_social_action.html
- Miller, C., & Shepherd, D. (2009). Questions for genre theory from the blogosphere. In J. Giltrow & D. Stein (Eds.), *Genre in the Internet: Issues in the theory of genre* (pp. 263.-290). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Norton, B., & Christie, F. (1999). Genre theory and ESL teaching: A systemic functional perspective. *Tesol Quarterly*, 33(4), 759-763.
- Paltridge, B. (1996). Genre, text type and the language learning classroom. *ELT Journal*, 59(3), 237-243.
- Paltridge, B. (2001). *Genre and the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Paltridge, B. (2002). Genre, text type and the EAP classroom. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple Perspectives* (pp. 73-90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.
- Pullen, D. L., & Cole, D. R. (2010). *Multiliteracies and technology enhanced education: Social practice and the global classroom*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

- Shepherd, M., & Watters, C. (1998). *The evolution of cybergenres*. Paper presented at the 31 Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Hawaii.
- Sheppard, J. (2009). The Rhetorical Work of Multimedia Production Practices: It's More than Just Technical Skill. *Computers and Composition*, 26(2), 122-131. doi: 10.1016/j.compcom.2009.02.004
- Siegel, M. (2012). New times for multimodality? Confronting the accountability culture. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(8), 671-681.
- Spinuzzi, C. (2004). *Four ways to investigate assemblages of texts: Genre sets, systems, repertoires, and ecologies*. Paper presented at the 22nd annual international conference on Design of communication: The engineering of quality documentation, New York.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. M. (2009). Worlds of genre: Metaphors of genre. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a Changing World* (pp. 3-16). West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.
- Tseng, M.-Y. (2011). The genre of research grant proposals: Towards a cognitive-pragmatic analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(8), 2254-2268.
- van Dijck, J. (2004). Composing the self: Of diaries and lifelogs. *Fibreculture Journal (online)*, 2004(3).
- van Leeuwen, T. (2005). *Introducing social semiotics*. London: Routledge.
- Walker, J. (2005). Encyclopedia entries on 'Blog (Weblog)'. In D. Herman, M. John & M.-L. Ryan (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory* (pp. 45). London: Routledge.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

***Effects of Chinese Reading and Writing Instruction:
Case Study of a Technology University***

Pai-Lu Wu, Cheng-Shiu University, Taiwan
Hsiu-Chen Lin, Cheng-Shiu University, Taiwan
Yu-Ren Yen, Far-East University, Taiwan
Ching-Hwa Tsai, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0123

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to explore the effects of an instructional experiment in Chinese reading and writing. The experimental condition included thematic instruction, increasing the amount of reading, and increasing the use of vernacular instructional materials. The subjects completed pretests and post-tests involving writing abstracts, which were scored according to the following four criteria: grasping the main point, composition and rhetoric, sentence construction and punctuation, and correct use of terminology. The sample consisted of 44 first-year university students, and *t*-tests were used to analyze the results.

The results reflected significant changes in the overall reading and writing performance of the total sample after instruction. Further analysis revealed significant changes due to instruction among both male and female students and among students in both the Department of Child Care and Education and the Department of Corporate Management.

Keywords: Chinese reading, Chinese writing, reading and writing

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

I. Introduction

In a public speech, Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggested that literacy is the common currency of the knowledge society of the 21st century (He & Chian, 2009). In other words, “literacy” is as important as money in the context of globalization.

Moore (2001) asserted that the ability to read well is an important basis for the ability to write. In the Grades 1–9 Curriculum Guidelines, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan (2003) clearly supported “the cultivation of basic reading skills in students,” stating that “students should possess the ability to listen, speak, read, and write.” Indeed, recent reforms in language education in Taiwan have emphasized reading and writing.

However, surveys show that “poor language ability” seems to be common among university students. In particular, students at technical universities generally come from vocational schools, where education focuses on technical and occupational learning oriented toward employment. Thus, these students receive less training in basic academic subjects (such as Chinese, English, and mathematics) and have fewer learning-related skills. The researcher participated in the 2011 Writing and Reading Innovation Plan of the Ministry of Education of Taiwan, which divided the core curriculum into two dimensions: the first involved motivation, and the second involved improving the writing ability of students. The purpose of this plan was to help students control the emotional components of learning and literacy and thereby improve their ability to read and write Chinese.

The study assessed the performance of first-year university students before and after an experimental instructional course to evaluate changes resulting from the Chinese reading and writing instructional experiment, to identify the difficulties and problems experienced by students learning Chinese, and to provide information that can contribute to improved instruction. A pretest was administered at the beginning of the semester-long (4.5 months) instructional experimental treatment, and a post-test was administered at the end of the semester. It was hoped that this instructional experiment, especially the comparison between pretest and post-test scores, would provide data on the benefits and shortcomings of this program and serve as an important reference for future modifications of instructional materials, methods, and curricular content.

II. Literature review

The words written in texts have many functions; they convey meaning, form a structure, and serve rhetorical purposes. Structurally, they are also embedded in sentences and are subject to rules of correct usage. According to Gagne, a scholar of the theory of education, the process of reading is divided into four stages: 1) decoding: the process by which the reader identifies the meaning of words; 2) literal comprehension: the process by which the reader searches for the meaning of words from her/his long-term memory to analyze and understand the meaning of sentences; 3) inferential comprehension: the process by which the reader is able to integrate, summarize, and contemplate; and (4) comprehension monitoring: the process by which the reader examines and monitors his/her own learning conditions, sets goals, and adjusts his/her learning approach accordingly (cited in Chang, 2008).

Gagne's understanding of reading begins with the stage at which the meaning of words is identified and progresses to the stages at which the reader engages in an exchange and interaction with the text and digests the knowledge signs conveyed by continuous passages. This reading process includes basic reading comprehension as well as the high-level semantic understandings involved in in-depth reading. Thus, this theory addresses both the high- and low-level processes involved in writing, the use of the correct terminology to enable readers to grasp the main point, and the role of structure in expressing reflections and thoughts. Pressley believed that reading involves high and low levels; the low level focuses on understanding vocabulary, and the high level focuses on understanding textual meaning (cited in Tzeng, 2010). The former emphasizes correctly using terminology, punctuation, and sentences as well as correctly constructing sentences. The latter emphasizes the ability to summarize the meaning of passages, connecting such meaning to old knowledge, thinking, analyzing, and evaluating. This approach is consistent with Goodman's dynamic interpretation of the reading process (Hung, 1998), which traces the connection between reading and writing from reading words through using words and comprehending textual meaning to creating a literary work. This process entails four stages: the visual stage, the sensory stage, the grammar stage, and the semantic stage. According to this model, reading tasks subserve goals related to writing.

What is writing? Chang (2004) believed that it is expressing personal ideas using reasonable logic and correct grammar and punctuation in the form of sentences that constitute paragraphs, which, in turn, constitute a work of prose. Chen (1994) pointed out that writing includes assessing a topic, establishing one's intentions, using the

material given, forming a composition, and choosing words. The present study used pretests and post-tests involving writing article abstracts to evaluate changes in the ability of first-year university students to read and write Chinese after an instructional intervention. An abstract differs from purely restrictive writing or free writing; it is a brief and definitive organization of the important content of an article. In terms of journal articles, Wu (2008) believed that an adequate thesis abstract must meet requirements related to word usage, term usage, and sentence creation.

The writing requirements of the present experiment, which were based on cognitive theory and evaluation methods used by scholars in the domains of reading and writing, employed evaluative dimensions that are suited to the experimental course studied here and addressed four key areas: 1) grasping the main point, 2) composition and rhetoric, 3) sentence construction and punctuation, and 4) correct use of terminology.

Reading is the process of constructing meaning (Graesser, Singer, & Tratasso, 1994), and the most important aspect of reading is precisely grasping the information the author wanted to express so as to understand and organize the content of the article. The most important aspect of writing is interpreting textual meaning to establish the “main point of the article” as well as the in-depth meaning of the article. Otherwise, one would be unable to read the article or grasp what the author really wanted to say; one would thus be unable to read effectively. Zheng (2007) proposed that the process of abstract writing includes four dimensions: understanding the original text, distinguishing between primary and secondary elements, rewriting central content, and using appropriate forms of writing.

Assessments of “composition and rhetoric” should consider the structure and terminology used in the article, the presentation of and emphasis on the main point, and the extent to which the article engages in an objective discourse characterized by appropriate transitions and solid logic. The latter two categories involve linguistic expression and word choice.

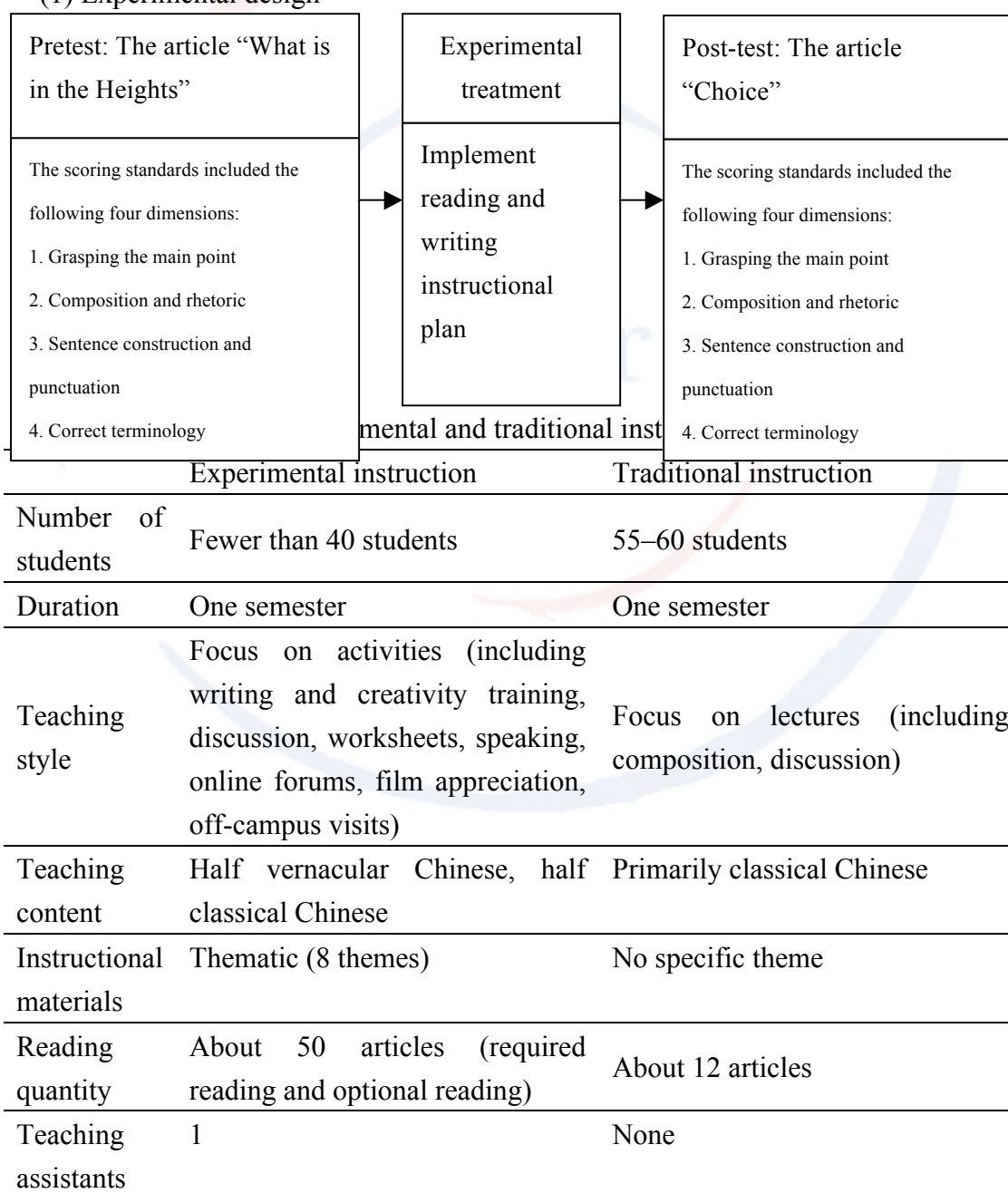
“Sentence construction and punctuation” include the use of vocabulary and the employment of punctuation to appropriately divide sentences to express the intended meaning. Wu (2008) noted that the language used in abstracts should be simple and objective and should not include subjective evaluations. In terms of tone, declarative and imperative sentences should be used, and interrogative and exclamatory sentences should be avoided. Therefore, the third part of the evaluation addressed whether students constructed appropriate and correctly punctuated sentences that properly

expressed the intended meaning.

The final category, “correct terminology,” was measured by the number of incorrect characters. The Chinese writing abilities of students in Taiwan have declined, and the most important indicator of this phenomenon is the number of incorrect words and terms and of incorrectly written characters (Li, 2005). As punctuation and word choice are part of basic writing skills, these can be used as an index of the basic language skills of students.

III. Research design and implementation

(1) Experimental design



The differences between experimental and traditional instruction involve the diversity of articles, the breadth and depth of the readings, the in-class instructional model, the time for discussion and independent writing, and the availability of opportunities to have work reviewed and corrected.

2. Scoring mechanisms for pretest and post-test:

The reading and writing pretest was given during the first class of the first semester, and the test was returned to the students 2 weeks later. PowerPoint presentations were used in lectures and analyses to underscore the strengths and weaknesses of the written products. In the first week of the second semester, another reading and writing post-test was given. After one semester of lessons in reading and writing and a comparison between the pretest and post-test performances by students, I evaluated whether the Chinese writing ability of students improved.

Students were given 50 minutes in two class sessions to complete the pretest and post-test, both of which involved reading and writing.

The pretest and post-test were scored in terms of 1) grasping the main point (40%); 2) composition and rhetoric (20%); 3) sentence construction and punctuation (20%); and 4) the use of correct terminology (20%). The scores were then summed and divided into four grades: A (more than 90 points), B (80–89 points), C (79–70 points), and D (69–60 points).

“A” papers met the following standards: 1) correct use and comprehensive treatment of materials given the purpose of the paper; 2) rich content, profound thinking, or a unique perspective presented in a persuasive or compelling way; and 3) correct word choice, smooth flow, no incorrect characters, correct punctuation, and ability to use multiple types of punctuation.

“B” papers met the following standards: 1) understanding of the topic, appropriate paragraph separation; 2) appropriate purpose, engagement with content, reactions, and logic, but insufficiently profound; and (3) correct use of terms and sentences, only a few incorrect characters, and suitable use of punctuation marks.

A grade of “C” indicated the following: 1) insufficient content, insufficiently clear discourse on the theme; 2) loose article structure, poor flow of sentences; 3) several incorrect characters and errors in punctuation that affected the meaning of the text; and (4) incorrect punctuation or use of only one type of punctuation.

Finally, a “D” grade indicated the following: 1) addressed the theme, included personal thoughts or opinions, but the content was lacking or deviated from the theme; 2) few changes in the sentences, like a running tally; and 3) complete inability to follow the format, with many incorrect punctuation marks and words.

(3) Research materials

The research materials used in this study included two articles written in vernacular Chinese. The pretest and post-test articles were “What is in the Heights” (by Zhang Xiaofeng) and “Choice” (by Mao Min), respectively. The former is a descriptive essay, whereas the latter is an expository essay; both contain fewer than 1000 words. Students were also given an answer sheet with prompts. They were instructed to capture the content of the abstract and describe their own thoughts in at least 200 words.

(4) Research subjects

The sample for this study consisted of 44 first-year university students (18 males and 26 females) in the first-year Chinese Reading and Writing Plan at a technical university in southern Taiwan. Twenty-one participants were from the Department of Child Care and Education, and 23 were from the Department of Corporate Management.

(5) Data analysis

The quantitative data collected in this study were used to compare the pretest and post-test scores of all students. Additional comparisons were also performed according to sex and department, and *t*-tests were used for all comparisons.

IV. Results and discussion

(1) Results

1. Changes after instruction in the total sample

The changes due to instruction in the total sample are presented in Table 1. In terms of grasping the main point, the mean pretest score was 73.45, and the mean post-test score was 81.61, which reflects a statistically significant difference ($t = -5.78$, p

< .001. The mean composition and rhetoric pre-test score was 73.91, and the mean post-test score was 81.77, also indicating a statistically significant difference ($t = -6.35, p < .001$). The mean pretest score for sentence construction and punctuation was 74.59, and the mean post-test score was 81.39, a statistically significant change ($t = -6.01, p < .001$). Similarly, the mean pretest score for correct terminology was 74.27, and the mean post-test score was 82.09, also a statistically significant change ($t = -6.38, p < .001$). The mean total score on the pretest was 73.90, and the mean total score on the post-test was 81.55, also showing a statistically significant change ($t = -6.46, p < .001$).

Table 1: Changes due to instruction in the total sample

Chinese	Pretest ($n = 44$)		Post-test ($n = 44$)		t -value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Grasping the main point	73.45	8.48	81.61	6.38	-5.78** *
Composition and rhetoric	73.91	8.08	81.77	5.59	-6.35** *
Sentence construction and punctuation	74.59	6.89	81.39	5.71	-6.01** *
Correct terminology	74.27	7.02	82.09	6.33	-6.38** *
Total score	73.90	7.31	81.55	5.73	-6.46** *

*** $p < .001$

2. Changes after instruction in males and females

Changes among male students following instruction are shown in Table 2. With regard to grasping the main point, the mean score before instruction was 75.22, and that after instruction was 81.22 ($t = -2.22, p < .05$). In terms of composition and rhetoric, the mean score before instruction was 76.11, and it was 81.33 after instruction, also indicating a significant change ($t = -2.39, p < .05$). The mean score for sentence construction and punctuation was 75.78 before instruction, and it was 80.28 after instruction, showing a statistically significant improvement ($t = -2.90, p < .05$), and that for correct terminology was 74.89 before and 81.50 after instruction ($t = -2.86, p < .05$), also indicating significant improvement. The mean total score

before instruction was 75.37, and it was 80.78 after instruction, also showing a significant difference ($t = -2.47, p < .05$).

Table 2: Changes due to instruction: Male students ($N = 18$)

Chinese	Pretest ($n = 18$)		Post-test ($n = 18$)		<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Grasping the main point	75.22	9.52	81.22	6.39	-2.22*
Composition and rhetoric	76.11	8.07	81.33	5.79	-2.39*
Sentence construction and punctuation	75.78	6.64	80.28	5.77	-2.90*
Correct terminology	74.89	7.88	81.50	6.86	-2.86*
Total score	75.37	7.75	80.78	5.90	-2.47*

* $p < .05$

The changes among female students following instruction are shown in Table 3. In terms of grasping the main point, the mean pretest score was 72.23, and the mean post-test score was 81.88, reflecting a statistically significant change ($t = -6.62, p < .001$). Similarly, the mean composition and rhetoric pretest score was 72.38, and the mean post-test score was 82.08, also indicating a significant change ($t = -7.04, p < .001$). The mean sentence construction and punctuation score before instruction was 73.77, and that after instruction was 82.15 ($t = -6.50, p < .001$), a significant change. Furthermore, the mean score for correct terminology before instruction was 73.85, and that afterward was 82.50, also a statistically significant difference ($t = -6.48, p < .001$). With regard to total scores, the mean pretest score, 72.88 was significantly different from the mean post-test score, 82.08 ($t = -7.30, p < .001$).

Table 3: Changes due to instruction: Female students ($N = 26$)

Chinese	Pretest ($n = 26$)		Post-test ($n = 26$)		<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Grasping the main point	72.23	7.64	81.88	6.49	-6.62** *
Composition and rhetoric	72.38	7.87	82.08	5.54	-7.04** *
Sentence	73.77	7.07	82.15	5.66	-6.50**

construction and punctuation					*
Correct terminology	73.85	6.48	82.50	6.04	-6.48** *
Total score	72.88	6.96	82.08	5.66	-7.30** *

*** $p < .001$

3. Changes after instruction according to department

Pretest and the post-test scores for students in the Department of Child Care and Education are shown in Table 4. The mean score for grasping the main point was 71.86 before instruction and 82.00 after instruction, revealing a statistically significant change ($t = -6.31, p < .001$). Similarly, mean scores for composition and rhetoric improved significantly from 72.29 before to 82.24 after instruction ($t = -6.38, p < .001$). The mean score for sentence construction and punctuation also showed a significant improvement, with mean scores of 74.05 before and 82.29 after instruction ($t = -6.06, p < .001$), as did the mean score for correct terminology, which was 73.90 before and 83.10 after instruction ($t = -6.39, p < .001$). The mean total score was 72.79 before instruction and 82.33 after instruction, revealing significant improvement overall ($t = -6.77, p < .001$).

Table 4: Changes due to instruction: Students in the Department of Child Care and Education ($N = 21$)

Chinese	Pretest ($n=21$)		Post-test ($n=21$)		t -value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Grasping the main point	71.86	8.05	82.00	6.78	-6.31** *
Composition and rhetoric	72.29	7.93	82.24	5.59	-6.38** *
Sentence construction and punctuation	74.05	6.92	82.29	5.88	-6.06** *
Correct terminology	73.90	5.99	83.10	5.21	-6.39** *
Total score	72.79	7.13	82.33	5.67	-6.77** *

*** $p < .001$

Changes in scores for students in the Department of Corporate Management are presented in Table 5. The mean score for grasping the main point was 74.91 before instruction and 81.26 after instruction, reflecting a statistically significant change ($t = -2.84, p < .01$). Scores for composition and rhetoric also showed significant changes, from a mean score of 75.39 before instruction to a mean of 81.35 after instruction ($t = -3.24, p < .01$). Sentence construction and punctuation also improved, from a mean score of 75.09 before instruction to a mean of 80.57 after instruction ($t = -3.12, p < .01$). The mean score for correct terminology showed a similar pattern, improving significantly from a mean score of 74.61 before instruction to a mean of 81.17 after instruction ($t = -3.39, p < .01$). The mean total score was 74.91 before instruction and 80.83 after instruction, a statistically significant improvement ($t = -3.25, p < .01$).

Table 5: Changes due to instruction: Students in the Department of Corporate Management ($N = 23$)

Chinese	Pretest ($n = 23$)		Post-test ($n = 23$)		t -value
	M	SD	M	SD	
Grasping the main point	74.91	8.78	81.26	6.13	-2.84**
Composition and rhetoric	75.39	8.09	81.35	5.69	-3.24**
Sentence construction and punctuation	75.09	6.99	80.57	5.55	-3.12**
Correct terminology	74.61	7.96	81.17	7.20	-3.39**
Total score	74.91	7.48	80.83	5.81	-3.25**

** $p < .01$

(3) Discussion

This study evaluated a one-semester Chinese reading and writing instructional experiment and found statistically significant improvements in the reading and writing performance of the total sample following instruction. The pretest data suggest that most students were not able to write an adequate abstract. They tended to treat the passage prompt as a yes/no question and were unable to grasp the main point. Furthermore, they wrote only one paragraph, used punctuation marks inappropriately, did not follow an appropriate writing format, and wrote only 200 words.

After one semester of the instructional experiment, the post-test revealed that students

who participated in the instructional experiment were able to accurately understand the main point of the article, to reorganize the structure of their writing, and to identify key words and sentences. Furthermore, they wrote at least three appropriately separated paragraphs using correct punctuation, used at least three kinds of punctuation, indented at the beginning of the abstract and established new paragraphs on new lines in accord with the basic writing format, and wrote abstracts of more than 200 words.

Based on the above, this instructional experiment met its goals. However, we suggest that future Chinese reading and writing instructional experiments designed to teach students about writing abstracts take several steps, as follows: prevent students from directly copying the content of the selected article, require more comprehensive abstracts (e.g., keywords, an introduction, discussion, a transition, and conclusions), teach students how to evaluate the topic and engage in discourse, and guide students in correct punctuation. Additionally, such programs should address students' cognitive weaknesses and limitations.

References

- Chang, Xin-Ren (2004). *Taiwan Review and Prospect of Research Writing*. Psychological Publishing Co., Ltd., Taipei, Taiwan.
- Cheng, Bing-Lin (2008). *Encyclopedia of education: Glossary*. National Academy for Educational Research (NAER), Taipei, Taiwan.
- Chen, Man-Ming (1994). *Teaching writing guide*. 117-318, Wan Juan Lou Publishing Co., Ltd., Taipei, Taiwan.
- Graesser, A. C., Singer, M., and Trabasso, T. (1994). Constructing inferences during narrative text comprehension. *Psychological Review*, 101(3), 371-395.
- He, Chi-Yu., Chian, Chin-Jau (2009). To reading and writing skills determine national competitiveness. *Education, Parenting Family Lifestyle*, 5, 12-17, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Hung, Yue-Niu (1998). *On reading*. Translation. Psychological Publishing Co., Ltd., Taipei, Taiwan.
- Li, Gu-Tong (2005). *Chinese Taiwanese students nowadays low level*. United Daily News, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Moore, D. F. (2001). *Educating the deaf psychology: Principals, and practices*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tzeng, Shr-Jie (2010). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced*

- teaching*. Translation. Psychological Publishing Co., Ltd., Taipei, Taiwan.
- Wu, Xiao-Hong (2008). On the Standard of Appropriate Use of Words and Sentences in Writing Academic Paper Abstract. *Journal of West Anhui University*, 24(6), 107-109.
- Zheng, Wen (2007). Abstract writing and cultivation of discourse scheme awareness. *Journal of Wuhan University of Science and Technology (Social Science Edition)*, 9(3), 315-318.



Is Bilingualism the Answer to Linguistic Sustainability in Multilingual Societies?

Oscar Gallego, UWCSEA, Singapore

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0137

Abstract

The last several decades have seen the strength of some languages leading the extinction of minor languages in Asia. The sociolinguistic impact of political and economic development has raised the issue of linguistic sustainability in plurilingual sociocognitive ecosystems.

The sociolinguistic impact should be studied as much as the environmental impact of economic, political and technological development. Why should ethnic groups stop speaking their native languages in favour of those that are considered superior or more important?

A large, faint watermark of the iafor logo is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue font, surrounded by a circular graphic made of several overlapping, curved lines in shades of red and blue.

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

The linguistic sustainability aims to put an end to dominating languages and the ideology of linguistic superiority or inferiority, the objective would be to avoid ethnic groups abandon their own culture and language when becoming bilingual or polyglot. It should be a process of gradual transformation. The bilingualism should not lead to a language shift and abandon their first language in just two generations.

The ecology of languages should be a sociocognitive holistic approach (Bastardas, 2007) based on the relations of cultural ecosystems. A “language” is not just its grammar or its lexis but also the living human cognition, interaction, and identification of the individual and the society. The sociocognitive ecosystemic approach is therefore, essential to understand the importance of bilingualism in plurilingual societies such as Singapore and Myanmar.

What is sustainable development?

The Brundtland report describes sustainable development as the process that is “able to harmonise economic and social progress without endangering the planet natural balance”. It has been identified several types of sustainability, not just environmental, but also economic, human and social.

If we apply the economic and social progress to the linguodiversity reality, what do we see? The expansion of dominant languages in order to advance in the economic and cultural development. We can see examples of dominant languages in every corner of the planet; in Oaxaca, where Zapotec was once the sign of pride and identity against the conqueror, it is nowadays spoken by parents and grandparents but hardly used by youngsters, parents prioritize Spanish as the language to be taught to their children. Similarly, in the town of Kamawak in the Mon state in Myanmar, Mon language has become an oral language only used by the elderly, as the younger generation prefer to speak Burmese, the dominant language in Myanmar.

Why should linguistic and cultural diversity be preserved?

A language is not just its grammar or its lexis but also involves the human living cognition, interaction and identification. The language is a part of the human evolution and Edgar Morin sees the language involved in 3 different spheres: the psychosphere, where the language makes an individual distinctive; the noosphere, where the language plays a vital part in the knowledge system; and the sociosphere, where the language makes the individual interact with the society.

The language atlas in 50 years will be significantly less colourful than one from today. There are many causes for the decline of the diversity of languages and the hierarchy values implied by the belief in linguistic superiority/inferiority, some are recurring factors imposed directly by governmental bodies in the form of educational policies and political pressure; others, are indirectly repressed by the society, avoiding social marginalization and aiming at a greater social mobility.

Case study – Intergenerational language transmission

Myanmar is a multilingual country where over 100 languages are currently spoken. The study was conducted in Taunggyi, the 5th largest city in Myanmar and the capital of Shan State, it has a population of 350,000 inhabitants (est 2013). Taunggyi was chosen because is the capital of Shan state and Shan language is the largest group of languages spoken after Burmese, an estimated 3.5 million Shan speakers are spread over the Eastern states of Myanmar and some northern parts of Thailand.

In the case study 257 students between 11 and 14 years old from 3 schools in Taunggyi were questioned. It was stressed that in order to be a successful candidate, both of the student's parents had to be from the Shan ethnic group.

The usage of Shan language as well as most of the ethnic languages in Myanmar has been decreasing in the last few decades, this is particularly noticeable in the cities. In graph 1 we can observe that Shan language is rarely or never used by over half of the children under 14, we can also deduct from the graph that barely over 10% of the parents of the students interviewed, encourage the use of Shan language by speaking it at home in a regular basis.

Figure 1. Use of the Shan language

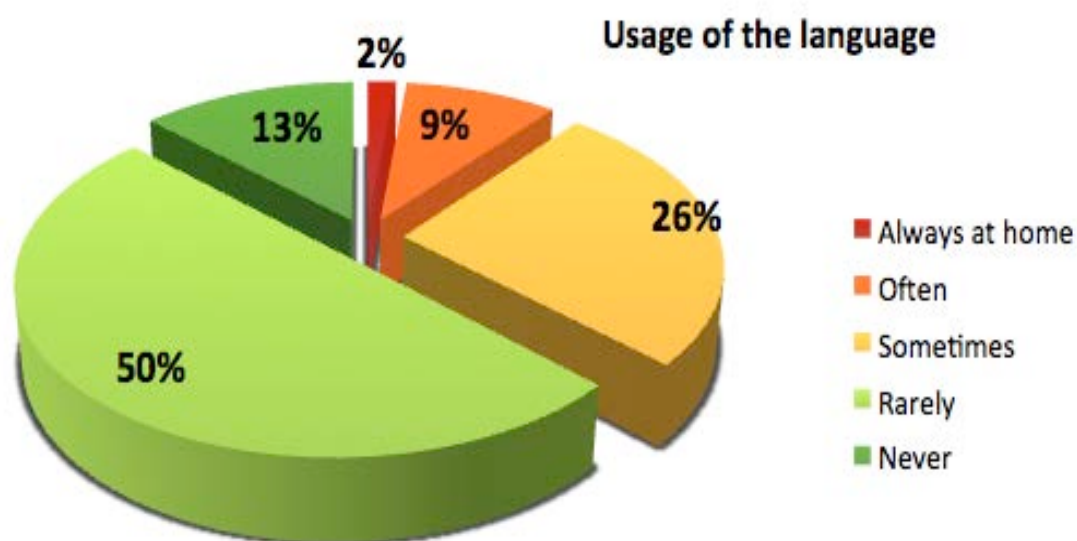
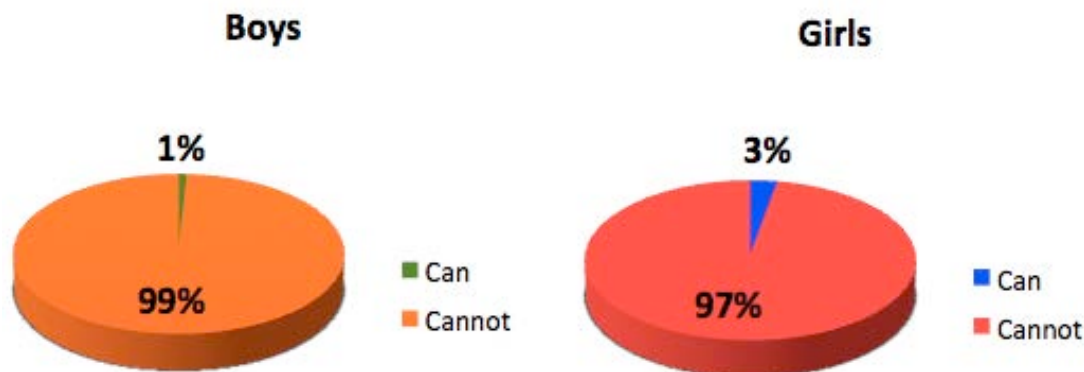


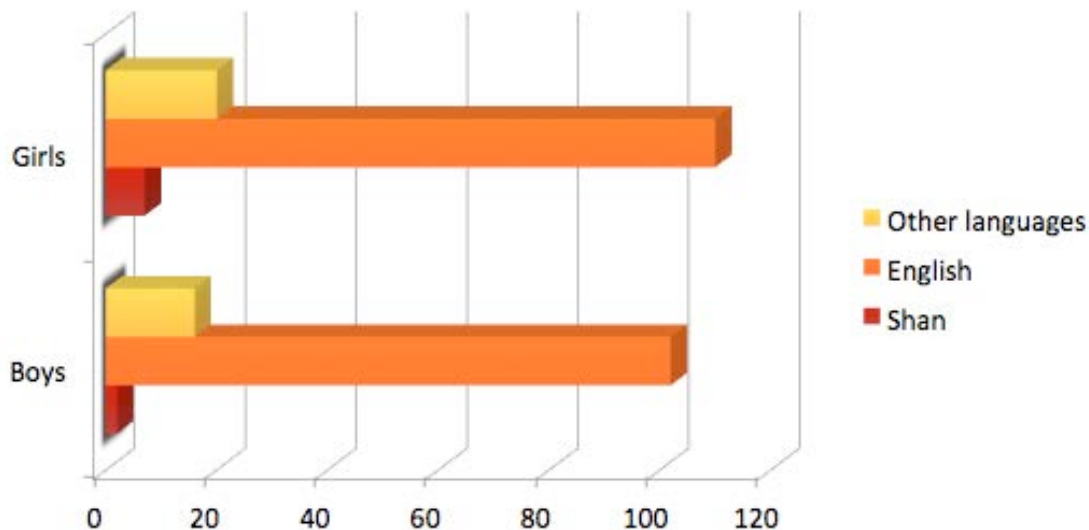
Figure 1 might show that 50% of the students questioned between 11 and 14 years old, use Shan language at some extent, nonetheless, the level of their skills when using the language seems to be reduced to the oral form. Figure 2 demonstrates that the vast majority of them are not competent to use the language in the written form, this is stressed with the boys.

Figure 2. Ability to read and write in Shan language



The research shows that the youngsters use Burmese as the dominant language but they are inclined to learn and/or improve other languages, unfortunately in most cases these languages would not be their community language. Over 80% of the students would prefer to learn English, becoming the most popular language to learn, not surprisingly as it is considered “the language of progress and business” not just in Myanmar but in most parts of South East Asia. However, it was surprising to discover that the students would give priority to learn Chinese, Japanese, French or even Korean rather than improving their mother tongue.

Figure 3. Languages students would like to improve or learn



The results in the case study were staggering as it shows a deep inclination towards the use of the dominant language, Burmese, and other foreign languages like English. The use of Burmese and English in Taunggyi by the younger population also indicates a decline of the use of their mother tongue. Shan language is still very common amongst the older generations and it is frequently heard, however, the danger comes when the language is rarely used among youth. The first indication of the decay of any language is the context where the language is used, when the population prefer to use the dominant language and the ethnic language becomes just an oral language.

The ethnic language will suffer the first signs of endangerment, as a proportion of the younger generation will opt out to continue to use the language in a daily basis.

Nonetheless, the case study only reflects one side of the reality, and some factors must be taken into account before making conclusions.

Taunggyi is the capital of a state and therefore, it is a very culturally diverse city. A common language, Burmese, would be preferable as the language of communication amongst its people.

Taunggyi is also a popular tourist destination in Myanmar, every year it attracts lots of foreign and national tourists. Burmese and English would be the most practical language to use as a medium of communication.

Minority languages are not allowed to be taught in primary and secondary schools, the ban has been present for several decades. The use of ethnic languages carries the significant stigma of being from an ethnic minority. Burmese ethnic has been considered as more powerful than the other ethnics in the country, hence that the other languages are not nominated as official languages.

Until September 2011, there was a massive oppression by the government in all forms of telecommunications. The Internet and the use of mobile phones were considered a luxury and the use of minority languages were very localised.

Is bilingualism the solution to linguistic sustainability in multilingual societies?

There are several variables to take into consideration. We start from the idea that in every society there will always be a dominant language, therefore, we consider it as a constant variable. We will have two factors, the ethnic or local language that we will call X, and the external language, will be Y.

We must compare the degree of valuation and functions of the language that is not originally of the group Y, and that of the language that is originally of the group X.

It will arise two possible scenarios. If Y is lower than X, the bilingualism is sustainable. However, if Y is greater, the bilingualism is not sustainable and the language original of the group will degrade and disappear in a few decades.

What to do next?

The linguist sustainability will require different actions according to some particular factors: The degree of techno-industrial development, the political organisation and the composition of the population in each group or community.

There are certain groups with a high risk of languages to be extinguished within a couple of decades. These priority groups are countries with a strong international presence and those groups economically underdeveloped.

Some of the recommendations are to reach a clear assessment of the models, phases, situations, priorities, and interventions in order to construct the most adequate action

and evaluation strategies. The governments must provide resources to avoid languages falling into discredit with their own speakers and intervene in the intergenerational transmission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bastardas, Albert. Linguistic Sustainability and language ecology. CUSC, Barcelona. March 2005

Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. United Nations.

Morin, Edgar. From the concept of system to the paradigm of complexity (translation of Sean Kelly, 2013)

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

The Impact of a Five-day English Summer Camp on the Conceptions of English Learning of EFL Elementary Students in Taiwan

Lim Ha Chan, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0140

Abstract

This study explored the impact of participation in a short-term English summer camp on 32 English as a Foreign Language elementary students' conceptions of English language learning. The summer camp, which lasted for 5 days, took place in a suburban elementary school in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The students were given pre- and post-participation surveys about their conceptions of English language learning. The results revealed conceptions of English language learning at the quantitative level and indicated some changes in conceptions that were mainly in the category of "ways of learning." Furthermore, students in the higher grade conceived that learning was more monotonous than students in the lower grade.

Key words: second language learning, elementary education, conceptions of learning

Introduction

To develop an understanding of what learning is to individuals, numerous studies of conceptions of learning have been carried out. Conceptions of learning refer to one's understanding of what learning is and to the interpretation of what the learning objectives, learning processes, and learning activities are to oneself (e.g., Benson & Lor, 1999; Marton, 1981; Vermunt & Vermetten, 2004). A conception is formed from the accumulation of experiences of a particular phenomenon in a particular environmental context (Pratt, 1992). This means that the conceptions of learning are constructed on one's own from personal experiences or specifically through personal learning experiences (e.g., at a school setting). Learning is unique to individuals, and it is also context-dependent. Once the conception is formed, it will form the basis of action. This means that it may influence how individuals go about learning (Phan, 2008) and eventually affect their learning outcomes (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Furthermore, understanding one's conception of learning provides information about one's experiences in a particular context or culture (Gao & Watkins, 2010; Marton & Booth, 1997).

Previous research has found six conceptions of learning held by learners across different cultures, including Western countries (Marton, Dall'Alba, & Beaty, 1993; Säljö, 1979), Hong Kong (Watkins & Biggs, 1996), and Nepal (Watkins & Regmi, 1992). Learning is perceived as:

- A. increasing knowledge
- B. memorizing
- C. applying knowledge
- D. understanding meaning
- E. interpreting something in a different way
- F. changing as a person (Marton et al., 1993, p.283).

These six conceptions of learning can be grouped according to two opposing approaches: the quantitative and the qualitative. Conceptions A to C are considered to be quantitative in nature, which involves a superficial understanding of what learning is. In contrast, Conceptions D to F are qualitative conceptions that represent a deeper understanding of what learning is. However, Entwistle and Peterson (2004) considered that conceptions E and F are the integration of conceptions A to D and they viewed E and F as representing a higher level of conception of learning as they require a deeper understanding of meaning.

Since conceptions of learning are context-dependent, different conceptions of learning could be expected among learners in different cultures. Some research has found that Asian learners might have both quantitative and qualitative conceptions (i.e., both memorizing and understanding) at the same time (e.g., Marton, Watkins, & Tang, 1997).

In Durate's (2007) study on Portuguese students, a new conception, "learning as understanding and applying," and new ideas from the existing categories emerged such as, "learning occurs through: exploratory practice; learning to learn; motivation" (p.781).

A large number of studies on conceptions of learning have been carried out involving college or university students, some of which have been related to learning in general (e.g., Durate, 2007; Marton et al., 1993; Watkins & Regmi, 1992) and others to specific subject domains such as science (e.g., Tsai, 2004; Virtanen & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2010) or specific learning activities (e.g., Cheng & Tsai, 2012; Lee, Johanson, & Tsai, 2008; Yang & Tsai, 2010). However, only a few studies have explored the conceptions of learning in the domain of English as a foreign language (EFL) or of elementary students. Yang and Tsai (2010) explored Taiwan college students' conceptions and approaches to English learning in an online peer assessment activity. Chan and Chen (2011) looked at the change in student teachers' conceptions of English teaching and learning before and after an English summer camp. Prior to the camp their conceptions were more concerned with learning environments. After the camp, the most salient conceptions referred to learning English as having fun and fostering interest, which was not observed prior the camp. A recent study by Wang and Tsai (2012) explored Taiwan elementary school students' conception of learning through students' drawing. The study found that the students mainly represented "traditional" conceptions of learning. They often depicted a learning scenario where they sat in a classroom and listened to the teacher. Nevertheless, this study did not explore students' conceptions of learning in any specific domains, but the results revealed that Chinese and mathematics were perceived as the main contents of learning.

Exposure to a particular English language learning experience may bring about changes to conceptions of English language learning (Chan & Chen, 2011), and how a people think about learning may influence how they go about learning (Phan, 2008). Therefore, further investigations of elementary students' conceptions of English language learning may reveal new knowledge about the realm of conceptions of learning and provide insights to help educators to develop their English language curricular.

1. Purpose of this study

Instead of looking at the impact of formal regular English language classes provided by school teachers on EFL elementary students' conceptions of English language learning, this study explored the impact of a 5-day English summer camp activity provided by college EFL student teachers on students' conceptions of English language learning. This study aimed to investigate the following questions:

What are elementary students' conceptions of English language learning before and after the English summer camp?

Are there any changes in students' conceptions of English language learning after the English summer camp? If so, what are they?

2. The context of the study

The six student teachers involved in this study were third year college students pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Foreign Language Instruction in a college in southern Taiwan. This degree program aims to prepare students to be EFL teachers in Taiwan. They did this 5-day English summer camp in July as their graduation project. They started preparing four months before the English camp took place under the guidance of their advisor. They needed to analyze the needs of the target elementary school and

its students, organize all the camp activities, design English lessons, and produce learning materials and teaching aids for the camp. They recruited ten freshmen and sophomores as helpers in the camp.

The target elementary school was located in a remote area in Kaohsiung where no public transportation was available. The school had only six classes (one at each level, each with around 20 students), which was relatively small compared to schools in urban areas that can have more than fifteen classes at each level. Formal English classes were provided starting from grade three onwards.

Before the English summer camp took place, the target elementary school recruited 54 of their students (aged between 6 and 12) to join this summer camp. They were divided into three levels (1–3), each of which reflected increasing English difficulty. The student teachers designed six 40-minute English lessons consisting of three units at each level using the communicative language teaching approach and the PPP approach to language teaching. Teaching techniques like Total Physical Response (Asher, 1996) and audio lingual methods were also involved. The topics were related to the students' daily life and school environment (see Appendix 1). At the end of the camp, the students had to participate in an English performance event. The aims of the lessons were to enhance students' motivation to learn English and to cultivate students' confidence in speaking English.

3. Research Method

In this study, only 32 elementary students in Level 2 (7 males and 10 females aged 9–10) and Level 3 (7 males and 8 females aged 10–12) were involved. Students at Level 1 were excluded due to their young age and their more limited ability to express their thoughts clearly; 35% of the students at Level 2 and 33% of the students at Level 3 were participating in this kind of activity the first time. The others had previously participated in similar activities on between one and four occasions. Students joined this English summer camp for different reasons. The most common reason was that they thought this English summer camp would be fun. Table 1 shows the students' responses to the question about why they joined this camp.

Table 1
The Reasons the Students Participated in this English Summer Camp

Reasons	Number of responses (percent)*
I think this English summer camp will be fun	19 (18.81%)
I like learning English	15 (14.85%)
I want to learn more English	15 (14.85%)
My parents want me to join	15 (14.85%)
I have nothing to do in the summer	14 (13.86%)
I want to be with my classmates	8 (7.92%)
I am curious to know what this English summer camp is about	7 (6.93%)
My teacher wants me to join	5 (4.95%)
My classmate wants me to join	2 (1.98%)
Others (my classmate and I made an agreement to join together).	1 (0.99%)

*N = 32 (Students could give more than one response, and that the percentage is the percentage of total responses received.)

In general, the students thought that learning English was interesting. Prior to and following the English summer camp, the students were asked to rate whether they thought learning English was interesting on a five-point scale (ranging from 1, *very interesting*, to 5, *not interesting at all*). Prior to the camp, the ratings were 2.12 and 2.13 for Level 2 and Level 3 students respectively. There were no significant changes after the camp: 2.13 at Level 2 and 1.93 at Level 3 (see Table 2).

Table 2

The Students' Rating of Interestingness of Learning English prior to and after the English Summer Camp

Levels	Mean (Pre-survey)	Mean (Post-survey)
Level 2 (n = 17)	2.118	1.706
Level 3 (n = 15)	2.133	1.933

The concept of phenomenography was adopted in this study as it is often used to explore people's thinking and learning (Marton, 1986) and in the study of the conception of teaching and learning (Gao & Watkins, 2010). Phenomenography is a non-intrusive way to study the idea of learning. The descriptions of the experience of learning are collected and are put into qualitatively different categories to identify different conceptions of learning (Marton & Booth, 1997). Before the camp started, a pre-survey questionnaire was given to the participants asking about their conception of English learning. At the end of the camp, a post-survey questionnaire was given to them to find out whether they had changed their conception of English learning. Since elementary students might not be able to express their conceptions clearly, prompts were given for the students to choose besides letting them write freely about their

thoughts. The prompts were selected from the more common responses from Chan's (2012) study of the conceptions of English language teaching and learning of student teachers in Taiwan. The prompts included responses from the categories of "ways of learning," "acquisition of knowledge," and "application" (see Appendix 2). "Ways of learning" was a new conception of English language learning that emerged from Chan's study. It was considered to be a unique conception of learning which is quantitative in nature. It concerns the methods or ways that are used to learn the English language rather than the conceptualization or understanding of the language.

The data from the pre- and post-participation surveys were analyzed separately, and each response was counted and organized into categories. The ideas provided freely by the students were compared to the prompts listed in the survey and they were added into the categories they belonged to. The repeated ideas of a particular student were only counted once. If there were ideas that did not fit into the existing categories, new categories were created. The numbers of responses in each category was then expressed as a percentage of the students.

4. Results

5.1 Main conceptions of English learning prior to and after the English summer camp

The most prominent conception of English learning among students across the levels both prior to and after the English summer camp was "English is to be learned through diverse activities," which is under the category of "ways of learning." At Level 2, the two other more popular conceptions of English learning prior to and after the camp were "Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life" in the category of "application" and "Learning English is to accumulate experience" in the category of "acquisition of knowledge" (see Appendix 3).

5.2 The change in conceptions of English learning after the English summer camp

After the English summer camp, there were some changes in the students' conceptions of English learning. The most obvious change was the increase in responses in the category of "ways of learning." At Level 2, there was an increase of more than 20% in the following items of conceptions of English learning from the category "ways of learning," arranged in descending order:

- English is to be learned through diverse teaching methods
- English is to be learned through English courses
- English is to be learned through speaking English
- English is to be learned through repetitive practice.

At Level 3, the items that increased by more than 20% are listed below in descending order:

- English is to be learned through repetitive practice
- English is to be learned through English courses
- English is to be learned through listening to English.

At Level 3, beside "English is to be learned through diverse activities," one of the more popular conceptions of English learning prior the English summer camp was

“Learning English is to enhance one’s interest,” but the score for this item dropped by more than 20% after the camp.

Tables 3 and 4 below show the most common conceptions of English learning which were held by more than half the students prior to and after the English summer camp.

Table 3

Common Conceptions of English Learning Prior to and After the Summer Camp at Level 2*

Prior	After
<p>Ways of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is to be learned through diverse activities (76.47%) <p>Acquisition of knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning English is to accumulate experience (52.94%) <p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life (58.82%) 	<p>Ways of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is to be learned through diverse activities (76.47%) ▪ English is to be learned through diverse teaching methods (76.47%) ▪ English is to be learned through English courses (64.71%) ▪ English is to be learned through speaking English (58.82%) ▪ English is to be learned through repetitive practice (58.82%) ▪ English is to be learned in a joyful atmosphere (58.82%) ▪ English is to be learned through listening to English (52.94%) ▪ English is to be learned in a fun way (52.94%) <p>Acquisition of knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning English is to accumulate experience (58.82%) ▪ Learning English is to enhance one’s English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (58.82%) <p>Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life (52.94%)

*n = 17

Table 4

Common Conceptions of English Learning Prior to and After the Summer Camp at Level 3*

Prior	After
<p>Ways of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is to be learned through diverse activities (93.33%) ▪ Learning English is to enhance one’s interest (53.33%) 	<p>Ways of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is to be learned through diverse activities (80.00%) ▪ English is to be learned through repetitive practice (53.33%) ▪ English is to be learned in a fun way

(53.33%)

*n = 15



5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the conceptions of English language learning of primary students in Taiwan and the changes in their conceptions after the 5-day English summer camp. The findings provide preliminary insights into the effects of a short-term non-regular English activity on elementary students' conceptions of English language learning. They also verify that conceptions of learning are context-dependent.

In this study, most of the elementary students perceived English language learning in terms of "ways of learning." In particular, "English is to be learned through diverse activities" was the most prevalent conception, both prior to and after the English summer camp. This means that when it came to English language learning, different from Wang and Tsai's (2012) findings, the students did not expect a "traditional" way of learning where they just sat in a classroom and listened to the teacher. It suggests that students' learning experiences in a particular subject domain are unique and therefore may lead to different kinds of conceptions.

When the conceptions of English language learning between Level 2 and Level 3 are compared, the Level 2 students seemed to possess more diverse conceptions than those in Level 3. At Level 2, more than half of the students perceived English language learning both before and after the English summer camp in terms of "Learning English is to accumulate experience" in the category of "knowledge acquisition," "Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life" in the category of "application," and "English is to be learned through diverse activities" in the category of "ways of learning". However, the conceptions of students at Level 3 mainly fell into the category of "ways of learning" both before and after the camp. This is consistent with the findings in Wang and Tsai's (2012) study where students' conceptions were that learning became more monotonous as their learning experiences increased.

After the English camp, the Level 2 students were concerned more about ways of learning. It seemed that new knowledge of English language learning was constructed after this 5-day English learning experience. They appeared to realize that there could be different ways to learn English in the classroom (e.g., "English is to be learned through diverse teaching methods," "English is to be learned through speaking English," "English is to be learned through repetitive practice methods," and "English is to be learned in a fun way"). Furthermore, the students were more aware that learning English enhances their English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

However, the change of conceptions was not obvious at Level 3. Beside "English is to be learned through diverse activities," more than half of the students perceived that "English is to be learned through repetitive practice" after this learning experience. The percentage of responses for "Learning English is to enhance one's interest" dropped from 53.3% before to 26.7% after the camp. However, a similar conception that "English is to be learned in a fun way" in the category of "ways of learning" increased from 40.0% to 53.3%.

It might be that the Level 3 students' conceptions of English language learning have become more consolidated as their English learning experiences have increased, and

they might be less susceptible to change. This short exposure to a particular English learning activity might not be sufficient to have a big impact on their existing conceptions of English language learning.

After this learning experience, more than half of the students at both Level 2 and Level 3 perceived that “English is to be learned through repetitive practice”; the increase was more than 20% for both levels. This suggests that the students might have experienced a lot of repetitive practice involving this learning experience. This is a reasonable assumption as the audio-lingual method was used in the English lessons in the camp. This experience might have given them a strong impression about English language learning.

The results of this study show that the students’ conceptions of learning were mainly limited to the classroom context and at the quantitative level. Qualitative conceptions of learning were not observed among these elementary students. It could be that the development of qualitative conceptions is related to age. Also, the prompts provided by the surveys might have influenced the expression of their conceptions of English language learning. Moreover, the students’ at the higher level conceived that English language learning was more monotonous. Pratt (1992) stated that a conception is formed from the accumulation of experiences of a particular phenomenon in a particular environmental context. Therefore, if students were exposed to a greater variety of English language learning contexts besides the classroom over a longer period of time, and if teachers could provide more English language learning experiences that involved a deeper level of learning, students might generate different conceptions of learning, and qualitative conceptions could be formed.

With regard to the design of English summer camp or any English learning activities at the elementary level, learning activities should be more diverse inside and outside school and not limited to drills; these should be aimed at encouraging students to realize the reasons for learning English, which are not limited to academic success, and what changes it could bring them. Furthermore, the element of fun could be integrated into the process of learning.

As elementary students may have a limited ability to express their thoughts, and prompts given in a survey may influence the expression of their thoughts, understanding their conceptions of English language learning can be difficult. Therefore, a combination of different methods such as drawing (Wang & Tsai, 2012) and interviews could be used in future studies of this realm. In terms of surveys, a broader coverage of both the quantitative and qualitative conceptions of learning is necessary.

In order to have a more thorough understanding of elementary students’ conceptions of English language learning in Taiwan, further studies with a large number of students in various English language learning contexts are required. Furthermore, comparisons between the conceptions of English language learning and teaching of elementary educators and students could be explored.

References

- Asher, J. (1996). *Learning another language through actions: The complete teacher's guidebook* (5th ed.). Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.
- Benson, P., & Lor, W. (1999). Conceptions of language and language learning. *System*, 27(4), 459–472.
- Chan, L. H. (2012). *The Impact of one-year teaching practicum on the conception of English teaching and learning of EFL student teachers in Taiwan*. Unpublished manuscript, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages.
- Chan, L. H., & Chen, C.-Y. (2011). *The impact of short-term teaching experience on the conception of English teaching and learning of EFL student teachers in Taiwan*. Unpublished manuscript, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages.
- Cheng, K.-H., & Tsai, C.-C. (2012). Students' interpersonal perspectives on, conceptions of and approaches to learning in online peer assessment. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 28(4), 599-618.
- Duarte, A. M. (2007). Conceptions of learning and approaches to learning in Portuguese students. *Higher Education*, 54, 781–794.
- Entwistle, N. J., & Peterson, E. R. (2004). Conceptions of learning and knowledge in higher education: Relationships with study behaviour and influences of learning environments. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 41, 407–428
- Gao, L., & Watkins, D. (2010). Conceptions of teaching and learning. In L. Zhang, J. Biggs, & D. Watkins (Eds.), *Learning and Development of Asian Student: What the 21st century teacher needs to think about* (pp.13–35). Singapore: Pearson Education South Asia.
- Lee, M. H., Johanson, R. E., & Tsai, C. C. (2008). Exploring Taiwanese high school students' conceptions of and approaches to learning science through a structural equation modeling analysis. *Science Education*, 92(2), 191–220.
- Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10, 177–200.
- Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography: A research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *Journal of Thought*, 21, 28–49.
- Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and Awareness*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Marton, F., Dall'Alba, G., & Beaty, E. (1993). Conceptions of learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 19, 277–300.
- Marton, F., Watkins, D., & Tang, C. (1997). Discontinuities and continuities in the experience of learning: An interview study of high school students in Hong Kong. *Learning and Instruction*, 7, 21–48.
- Phan, H. P. (2008). Predicting change in epistemological beliefs, reflective thinking and learning styles: A longitudinal study. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 78, 75–93.
- Pratt, D. D. (1992). Conceptions of teaching. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42, 203–220.
- Säljö, R. (1979). Learning in the learner's perspective. I. Some common-sense conceptions. *Reports from the Department of Education*, University of Göteborg, No. 76.
- Tsai, C. -C. (2004). Conceptions of learning science among high school students in Taiwan: A phenomenographic analysis. *International Journal of Science Education*, 26(14), 1733–1750.
- Vermunt, J. D., & Vermetten, Y. J. (2004). Patterns in student learning: Relationships

- between learning strategies, conceptions of learning, and learning orientations. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(4), 359–384.
- Virtanen, V. & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2010). University students' and teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in the biosciences. *Instructional Science*, 38, 355–370.
- Wang, H. -Y. & Tsai, C. -C. (2012). An exploration of elementary school students' conceptions of learning: A drawing analysis. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 21(3), 610–617.
- Watkins, D., & Biggs, J. B. (Eds.) (1996). *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological, and contextual influences*. Hong Kong/Melbourne: Comparative Education Research Centre/Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Watkins, D., & Biggs, J. B. (Eds.) (2001). *Teaching the Chinese Learner: Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Hong Kong/Melbourne: Comparative Education Research Centre/Australian Council for Education Research.
- Watkins, D., & Regmi, M. (1992). How universal are student conceptions of learning? A Nepalese investigation. *Psychologia*, 35, 101–110.
- Yang, Y. F., & Tsai, C. C. (2010). Conceptions of and approaches to learning through online peer assessment. *Learning and Instruction*, 20(1), 72–83.

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

Appendix 1

Topics for Students' English Lessons in the English Summer Camp

Units/Topics	No. of lessons	Vocabulary	Sentence structures
Level 1			
1: Clothes	2	dress, pants, jacket, skirt, T-shirt, shoes, hat, tie, ring, watch, necklace	Put on your <u>dress</u> . Take off your <u>shoes</u> .
2: Food	2	tomato, tuna, ham, corn, egg, cheese	I want some <u>tomato</u> . Add some <u>corn</u> .
3: Classroom	2	desk, chair, blackboard, bulletin, board, bookshelf	A: What is this? B: It is a <u>chair</u> .
Level 2			
1: Transportation	1	train, bus, MRT, bike, car, foot	A: How do you go to (a location near the school)? B: I go to (a location near the school) by <u>bus</u> .
2: My school	3	toilet, staircase, office, bulletin board, washbasin, music room, English room, library, next to, between	A: Where is the <u>toilet</u> ? B: It's <u>next to</u> the <u>office</u> . A: Where is the <u>toilet</u> ? B: It's <u>between</u> the <u>office</u> and <u>library</u> .
3: Festivals	2	Chinese New Year, set off firecrackers, Lantern Festival, carry lanterns, Dragon Boat Festival, eat rice dumplings, Moon Festival, have barbecue	A: What do you do in <u>Chinese New Year</u> ? B: I <u>set off firecrackers</u> at <u>Chinese New Year</u> .
Level 3			
1: Shopping	2	cushion, curtain, carpet, dresser, stove, oven, teapot	Customer: Excuse me. I want to buy a <u>cushion</u> . Shop assistant: This way please. Shop assistant: Which one do you want? Customer: I want the <u>blue</u> one. Customer: How much is it? Shop assistant: It is <u>one hundred</u> dollars.
2: Sports	2	baseball, basketball, dodge ball, badminton	A: What sports do you play? B: I play <u>basketball</u> .

		golf, football, soccer, bowling	
3: Campus	2	gate, pond, parking lot, swing, slide, playground	Welcome to (name of the school). Let me introduce our campus for you. First, this is the <u>gate</u> . In front of the <u>gate</u> you will see a <u>pond</u> . There is the <u>parking lot</u> . The <u>playground</u> is near by the <u>parking lot</u> . We also have a <u>slide</u> and a <u>swing</u> on our campus. Hope you have a great time.



Appendix 2

Categories of Conceptions of English Learning Used in the Pre- and Post-participation surveys

Ways of Learning

Ways of learning concerning methods

- English is to be learned through diverse activities
- English is to be learned through reading English materials
- English is to be learned through listening to English
- English is to be learned through writing English
- English is to be learned through speaking English
- English is to be learned through repetitive practice
- English is to be learned through diverse teaching methods
- English is to be learned through English courses
- English is to be taught by native English teachers
- English is to be taught by local English teachers

Ways of learning concerning the learning environment

- English is to be learned in an English context

Ways of learning concerning emotions

- English is to be learned in a fun way
- English is to be learned in a joyful atmosphere
- Learning English is to enhance one's interest.

Acquisition of Knowledge

Acquisition of English language skills or elements

- Learning English enhances one's English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Learning English enhances one's English vocabulary, sentence patterns, grammar, pronunciation, etc.

Acquisition of knowledge in order to enhance ability or to fulfill a purpose

- Learning English is to accumulate experience.

Application

- Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life
 - Learning English is to be able to use English to communicate with foreigners.
-

Categories	Level 2		Level 3	
	Pre-survey no. of responses (%)	Post-survey no. of responses (%)	Pre-survey no. of responses (%)	Post-survey no. of responses (%)
Ways of Learning				
<i>Ways of learning concerning methods</i>				
English is to be learned through diverse activities	13 (76.471)	13 (76.471)	14 (93.333)	2(80.000)
English is to be learned through reading English materials	6 (35.294)	7 (41.176)	5 (33.333)	(6.667)
English is to be learned through listening to English	7 (41.176)	9 (52.941)	4 (26.667)	(46.667)
English is to be learned through writing English	4 (23.529)	7 (41.176)	2 (13.333)	(20.000)
English is to be learned through speaking English	4 (23.529)	10 (58.824)	5 (33.333)	(26.667)
English is to be learned through repetitive practice	6 (35.294)	10 (58.824)	4 (26.667)	(53.333)
English is to be learned through diverse teaching methods	7 (41.176)	13 (76.471)	5 (33.333)	(40.000)
English is to be learned through English courses	5 (29.412)	11 (64.706)	3 (20.000)	(46.667)
English is to be taught by native English teachers	2 (11.765)	4 (23.529)	1 (6.667)	(6.667)
English is to be taught by local English teachers	2 (11.765)	5 (29.412)	2 (13.333)	(6.667)
English is to be learned through interactions among students^	1 (5.882)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
English is to be learned through doing tests^	1 (5.882)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
<i>Ways of learning concerning the learning environment</i>				
English is to be learned in an English context.	5 (29.412)	6 (35.294)	2 (13.333)	1 (6.667)
<i>Ways of learning concerning emotions</i>				
English is to be	8 (47.059)	²⁰¹ 9 (52.941)	6 (40.000)	8



Learning English is to enhance one's interest.	8 (47.059)	8 (47.059)	8 (53.333)	4 (26.667)
--	------------	------------	------------	------------

Acquisition of Knowledge

Acquisition of English language skills or elements

Learning English enhance one's English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills	6 (35.294)	10 (58.824)	4 (26.667)	5 (33.333)
---	------------	-------------	------------	------------

Learning English enhances one's English vocabulary, sentence patterns, grammar, pronunciation, etc.	7 (41.176)	8 (47.059)	7 (46.667)	6 (40.000)
---	------------	------------	------------	------------

Acquisition of knowledge in order to enhance ability or to fulfill a purpose

Learning English is to accumulate experience	9 (52.941)	10 (58.824)	4 (26.667)	4 (26.667)
--	------------	-------------	------------	------------

Learning English is to enhance ability^	0 (0.000)	1 (5.882)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
---	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

Acquisition of knowledge in general^

Learning English can give one a lot of knowledge.^	1 (5.882)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
--	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

Application

Learning English is to apply/use English in daily life	10 (58.824)	9 (52.941)	4 (26.667)	6 (40.000)
--	-------------	------------	------------	------------

Learning English is to be able to use English to	7 (41.176)	7 (41.176)	5 (33.333)	2 (13.333)
--	------------	------------	------------	------------

**Attitude
towards English
learning[^]**

English learning is interesting [^]	1 (5.882)	2 (11.765)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
Learning English is happy [^]	2 (11.765)	2 (11.765)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
Learning English is enjoyable [^]	1 (5.882)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)
Learning English is difficult. [^]	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	0 (0.000)	1 (6.667)

*n = 17, **n = 15, [^]newly generated items


 The logo for the International Association for Language Acquisition (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the word "iafor" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of several overlapping, curved lines in shades of blue and red, creating a sense of motion or a stylized globe.

iafor

Impact of Online News Stories on English Vocabulary Learning

Araya Vithsupalert, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0158

Abstract

This research has three objectives: 1) to investigate students' opinions about English vocabulary learning through online news stories 2) to enhance students' attitude towards English learning through integration of web-based reading and 3) to encourage students to be autonomous language learners. The sample group comprised 44 graduate students of Khon Kaen University who are taking the course Reading in English for Graduate Students in the second semester of the academic year 2013. The research tools consisted of a questionnaire on students' background, an online reading assignment sheet, online news stories from the Bangkok Post website and a questionnaire to get students' feedback of the practice. Data were collected from these instruments followed by random interviews with 10 students. The quantitative data were analyzed by computing the percentage, means and standard deviation and the qualitative data by analyzing the content and concluding as a descriptive report. The main findings are: 1) the majority of students thought that online news stories reading was a very interesting form of learning 2) most students thought that the vocabulary they had learned was attractive 3) the majority of students felt that they had benefited a great deal from online vocabulary learning and 4) most students stated that online vocabulary learning had raised their confidence in autonomous learning.

Keywords: Vocabulary learning, Web-based reading, Online learning, Innovative ELT

Introduction

Both Chomsky (1959) and Krashen (1989) emphasized the need for second language (L2) learners to be extensively exposed to the target language in authentic situations. To achieve adequate exposure to English where it is not used as the first language, the Internet resources seem to be a plausible solution. Hence, many institutions have promoted web-based language learning. Similarly, several studies advocated this style of learning and pointed out its strengths, particularly authenticity and flexibility (Ayoun 2000; Koh 2005; Yang 2005; Pino 2008; Wu&Wu 2008; Islam 2011). In addition, Luck (2008) emphasized the advantage of unlimited authentic materials online while Daneshdoust et al (2012) pointed out that the Internet-based language learning helped enhance learners' autonomy as well as stimulating their interest in language learning.

In the context of Thailand, English is studied as a foreign language. As a consequence, students generally have limited and insufficient opportunities to be exposed to the use of English in authentic situations in society. This is a gap that the Internet resources can fill, given the modern and advanced technology that is readily available to the public. Web-based learning, therefore, seems to be an efficient approach for learning English since it can engage students in authentic contexts as well as real-life English. Thus, an online reading assignment was designed by the researcher to help students develop their English vocabulary through reading online news stories. This study was carried out with three main purposes: 1) to investigate students' opinions about English vocabulary learning through online news stories 2) to enhance students' attitude towards English learning through integration of web-based reading and 3) to encourage students to be autonomous language learners.

Methodology

1. Sample The sample group comprised 44 graduate students who are taking the course 411 711 Reading in English for Graduate Students in the second semester of the 2013 academic year at Khon Kaen University. Among this group, there are 26 students from the Faculty of Engineering and 18 from the Faculty of Public Health. Twenty-five of them are male and nine-teen are female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 39.

2. Instruments The research instruments consist of:

- 2.1 A questionnaire on students' background
- 2.2 An online reading assignment sheet
- 2.3 Online news stories from the Bangkok Post website
- 2.4 A questionnaire to get students' feedback of the practice
- 2.5 Random interview with 10 students

3. Procedure

Step 1: The questionnaire on students' background, the online reading assignment sheet and the questionnaire to get students' feedback of the practice were prepared by the researcher.

Step 2: The sample group filled in the questionnaire on students' background.

- Step 3:** The online reading assignment sheet was distributed to each of the sample group and a period of 10 weeks was allotted to complete the assignment.
- Step 4:** At the end of the period, the students filled in the questionnaires to give their feedback of the practice.
- Step 5:** The researcher randomly interviewed 10 students to get additional feedback and comments on the practice.
- Step 6:** The data collected from all the research instruments were analyzed.
- Step 7:** The research results, discussion and conclusion were written.

Research Results

The main findings are as follows:

1. The majority of the students thought that this style of learning was a very interesting form of learning (59.09% at the high level). Besides, half of the students thought that the vocabulary they learned was very interesting while 40.91% thought it was interesting. Similarly, the biggest group (47.73%) stated that they benefited from the online news stories reading at the high level while 43.18% thought they benefited at the highest level. When asked whether the web-based reading helped improve their attitude towards English learning, a similar response was found (47.73% at the high level and 45.45% at the highest level). In addition, the biggest proportion of students (47.73%) thought that learning from the online newspaper increased their confidence in independent learning. (Table 1)

Table 1: Students' Opinions about English Vocabulary Learning through Online News Stories

Opinion	Level Frequency(Percentage)					N	Mean	S.D.
	Highest (5)	High (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Lowest (1)			
1. The style of learning is appealing.	16 (36.36%)	26 (59.09%)	2 (4.55%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	44	4.32	0.56
2. The vocabulary I have learned is interesting.	22 (50.00%)	18 (40.91%)	4 (9.09%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	44	4.41	0.66
3. I have benefited from learning through online news stories.	19 (43.18%)	21 (47.73%)	3 (6.82%)	1 (2.27%)	0 (0.00%)	44	4.32	0.71
4. Learning from the online newspaper has improved my attitude towards English learning.	20 (45.45%)	21 (47.73%)	3 (6.82%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	44	4.39	0.62
5. Learning from the online newspaper has increased my confidence in independent learning.	17 (38.64%)	21 (47.73%)	5 (11.36%)	1 (2.27%)	0 (0.00%)	44	4.23	0.74

2. When asked about their pros and cons regarding learning English vocabulary through online news, a large number of students (81.81%) mentioned that they particularly liked the freedom in choosing the texts for reading as well as the flexibility in time and place for practice. Moreover, the same number of students (81.81%) thought that the contents of the news were interesting and up-to-date. Also, the majority (75.00%) stated that the contents of the news on the whole were not too difficult. Similarly, many of the students (72.73%) relished the large variety of the news contents. Furthermore, many (63.64%) considered that the contents of the news helped broaden their horizons and increase their awareness of current events. On the other hand, nearly half of the students (47.73%) thought that the period of time for practice should be extended while seventeen students (38.64%) stated that the contents for vocabulary practice were sometimes too difficult for them. (**Table 2**)

Table 2: Students' Likes/Dislikes about English Vocabulary Learning through Online News Stories

Students' Likes about English Vocabulary Learning through Online News Stories	N(Percentage)
1. The contents of the news have a large variety.	32(72.73)
2. The contents of the news are interesting and up-to-date.	36(81.81)
3. On the whole, the contents of the new are not too difficult.	33(75.00)
4. The contents of the news helped broaden my horizon and increase my awareness of current events.	28(63.64)
5. I had freedom in choosing the contents as well as flexibility in time and place for practice.	36(81.81)
Students' Dislikes/Obstacles about English Vocabulary Learning through Online News Stories	N(Percentage)
1. The contents for vocabulary practice are sometimes too difficult.	17(38.64)
2. The period of time for practice should be extended.	21(47.73)

3. Finally, results from the random interviews with 10 students revealed that students appreciated this style of learning English vocabulary through online news. However, they thought the period for practice should be extended from 10 weeks to 12 or more.

Discussion

The research results indicate that the students' feedback was mostly positive. The majority of the students seemed to be satisfied with many aspects of this learning style such as the variety and appealing nature of the news contents, freedom in choosing the contents to read as well as flexibility in time and place for reading practice. Moreover, they thought that the vocabulary they had learned was attractive and felt that they had benefited a great deal from online vocabulary learning. Interestingly, the majority of the students stated that this way of learning had improved their attitude

towards English learning as well as increasing their confidence in autonomous learning.

Despite some complaints about the limitation of time for practice and certain cases of encountering the reading contents that were too difficult, most students expressed favorable opinions about learning English vocabulary through online news stories.

Conclusion

Various approaches in language teaching have continuously been innovated, experimented and promoted, all for a similar ultimate goal_ to optimize the learning outcome. This study aims to help students develop their mastery of English vocabulary. At the same time, it intends to enhance learners' attitude towards English as well as their capability in autonomous learning. To conclude, a teacher's role should not be merely to teach, but also to motivate and inspire students to see the benefits of learning and be able to continue learning by themselves throughout their lives.

References

- Ayoun, D. (2000). *Web-based Elicitation Tasks in SLA Research*. Language Learning & Technology 3(2), pp. 77-98.
- Chomsky, N. (1959). *Review of B. F. Skinner's "Verbal Behavior."* Language, 35, 26-58.
- Daneshdoust, B. et al. (2012). *The advantages and disadvantages of Internet-based language learning in Iran*. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 31, 607-611.
- Islam, M. (2011). *Independent English Learning through the Internet*. Journal of Language Teaching & Research, 2(5), 1080-1085.
- Krashen, S. (1989). *We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis*. The Modern Language Journal, 73, 440-464.
- Koh, S.L. *Surfing the Waves of Change in ELT*. Thai TESOL Focus 2005 May; 18 (1): 35-36.
- Lück, K. (2008). *Web-based Foreign Language Reading: Affective and Productive Outcomes*. CALICO Journal, 25(2), 305-325.
- Nunan, D. (2000). *Autonomy in language learning*. Paper presented at the ASOCOPI 2000 Conference, Cartagena, Colombia.
- Pino, D. (2008). *Web-Based English as a Second Language Instruction and Learning*. Distance Learning, 5(2), 65-71.
- Wu, W.V. & Wu, P.N. *Creating an Authentic EFL Learning Environment to Enhance Student Motivation to Study English*. Asian EFL Journal 2008 December; 10(4) : 1-10.

Yang, L. (2005). *Eight CAI Modes in Language Learning and Teaching*. Sino-US English Teaching. ISSN 1539-8072, USA 2(2), pp.62-65.



*Teachers' and Students' Views on the MOI Fine-tuning Arrangement
in Hong Kong*

Edward Y.W. Chu, The Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014

Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0162

Abstract

To raise students' proficiency in their second language, English, Hong Kong government replaced its mother tongue education policy in 2010 and gave secondary schools 'greater flexibility in devising their MOI arrangements at junior secondary level' (Education Bureau, 2009:7). The policy, called 'MOI Fine-tuning Arrangement', was content-based instruction in essence. This study reports on teachers' and students' views towards it. The results were obtained from a questionnaire administered in July 2013, involving three former mother-tongue schools which started to teach two different content subjects in Grades 7-9 equivalent because of the arrangement. Altogether 150 students and 50-strong teachers were involved. The schools are all typical government-aided schools, whose levels are 'high, 'medium' and 'low' based on Yip, Tsang and Cheung's (2003) categorization. The study revealed mixed feelings among teachers. They deplored the significant workload resulted from the policy. They were rather wary about the progress students made in content subjects and English, and the support given by the Education Bureau. Students, however, were generally more positive. They indicated strongly that the arrangement improved their vocabulary. On the other hand, despite worries about the linguistic demand of learning content subjects in English, students believed that they were capable of completing the content subject assignments in English, and that their interest of learning was not compromised because of English medium of instruction. Regardless of levels, students from the three schools also preferred more subjects to be taught in English. The implication of these rather contrasting results will be discussed.

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Background of Study

The Fine-tuning arrangement was introduced in Hong Kong since 2010 to replace its predecessor, Mother-tongue (MT) education which lasted for more than a decade. MT education was about allowing the more elite schools (about 25%) to continue to offer the English medium instruction (EMI) in content subjects while the rest (about 75%) would have to switch to Chinese medium instruction (CMI) in their junior secondary level (Grades 7-9 equivalent). A bifurcation model, MT education policy was generally considered a failure, given the negative labeling effect (Yip & Tsang, 2007), parents' and business' criticism (Poon, 2010) and the low university entrance rate among the majority students educated in CMI (Tsang, 2008). To rectify the planning error, the Fine-tuning arrangement was introduced to provide 'students with more opportunities to be exposed to and use English at junior secondary levels' (EDB, 2010a:7). Under the arrangement, those former CMI schools can either teach up to two content subjects (e.g. Science and Mathematics) in English, or adopt EMI in selective content in various subjects in/out of the classroom through 'extended learning activities' (ELA). Either way, the total lesson time for EMI in the curriculum is capped at 25% (excluding the lesson time for the English Language). To sum up, the Fine-tuning arrangement is about raising second language proficiency through content-based instruction for students who are off the top tier.

Because of its recency, there is generally a lack of report of how well the arrangement was carried out as perceived by the key stakeholders, the students and teachers. Chan (2013) and Poon, Lau, & Chu (2013) are two valuable studies in this end. Chan's investigation took place in one middle ranking former CMI school in the second year when the arrangement was implemented. It comprised of research tools ranging from log book to interview to lesson observation. It therefore provided a treasurable opportunity to see how the policy was implemented by the teachers as intended by the policy maker and how students responded to it. The study revealed that the arrangement was duly carried out in Secondary 1 and 2 (Grades 7 and 8 equivalent) despite initial difficulty felt by the teachers and students. However, the research focuses were on policy implementation at school level, and an objective description of language use in different subjects (both EMI and CMI taught) at different grades (both junior and senior levels), which extend beyond the scope of the policy. Views regarding the effectiveness of the policy itself as perceived by the stakeholders were not much reported.

On the other hand, the study by Poon, Lau, & Chu (2013) aims to solicit students' view of the arrangement through survey. The study involved 400 strong Secondary 1 students (Grade 7 equivalent) in three schools in the first year when the arrangement was implemented. In addition to the perceived effects on language enhancement and academic achievement, the study also solicited views of wider scope such as factors affecting students' MOI choice and students' attitude towards EMI and partial-EMI instruction. Students were reported to favour the use of EMI but had encountered much difficulty in their content subjects. A valuable finding at the initial stage of the arrangement, there were limitations, though. First, as the informants were Secondary 1 students who were young and whose experiences in everything at school (the medium of instruction included) were new, there were concerns of maturity of the views expressed. Also, because of the time constraint, responses from the informants, who had studied under the new policy for one year only, might lack the stabilizing effect. Higher relevance may be present if the views of the first batch of students completing the entire junior form under the arrangement can be solicited.

To this end, a similar study with modification is proposed. It was conducted in July 2013, the time when the arrangement finished its' third year, allowing participation of all junior forms. The study was primarily concerned with the perceived effects on language enhancement and academic achievement, but views from both the students and teachers would be solicited. Since most teachers have had experience teaching in MT education era, their views on it would be solicited as well for comparison purpose. It is hoped that a more updated picture about the impact of the Fine-tuning arrangement would emerge as a result.

Research questions

The study attempts to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the students' view on the impact of content-based instruction on their L2 proficiency brought by the Fine-tuning arrangement?
2. What is the teachers' view of the Fine-tuning Arrangement and Mother-tongue education as an appropriate language-in-education policy?
3. Are there different views between the teachers and students on the impact of the Fine-tuning arrangement on students' L2 learning?

Student and Teacher Questionnaire

Participants' understanding of the objective and the questions of the survey is on the

top priority, especially when junior form students are involved. Several features are present to achieve the goal. First, the objective of the questionnaire is stated clearly at the beginning. Prior to question answering, there is a section describing the background of the Fine-tuning arrangement. Finally, bilingual presentation is adopted throughout the questionnaire to ease comprehension and allow cross-referencing.

On the other hand, the following constructs were used to guide the setting of the questions:

Table 1. Constructs of Student and Teacher Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible benefits and difficulties of learning (in) English - Overall view of the Fine-tuning arrangement |
|--|

Teacher Questionnaire:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student achievement in English under the Fine-tuning arrangement - Student achievement in content subjects taught in English under the Fine-tuning arrangement - Workload under the Fine-tuning arrangement - Overall acceptance of the Fine-tuning arrangement and Mother-tongue education as the appropriate language-in-education policies |
|--|

Questions in both the Student and Teacher Questionnaire involved simple statements like ‘I can understand the teaching of content subjects in English.’ Responses were captured in a continuum of agreement, namely ‘Strongly disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘No opinion’, ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’. There were some other questions which aimed to solicit more open answers, such as other possible benefits or shortcomings of learning content subjects in English. However, because of the sparse response, they were not analyzed in this study.

Methodology and Participants

The study took the form of a survey involving three former CMI, off the top tier schools which have utilized the flexibility the arrangement gave and adopted English as the MOI in either two different content subjects (Schools 1 & 2) or extended learning activities (ELA) (School 3) in junior forms. The three schools are typical government-aided schools, whose rankings can be called ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ based on Yip, Tsang and Cheung’s (2003) categorization. According to Hong Kong 3-band school classification system with the smaller number being higher in banding,

the three schools are about high Band 2 (School 1), middle Band 2 (School 2), and high Band 3 (School 3). As for the subjects taught in EMI, School 1 opted Science and Integrated Humanities while School 2, Science and Geography. As for School 3, it opted ELA in the subjects of Science, Computer Studies, Geography and Mathematics in different junior forms, but the total lesson time of EMI still falls within the official limit of 25% of its curriculum.

Altogether 144 students from Secondary 1 to 3 (Grades 7-9) were involved in the Student Questionnaire. Six randomised class numbers were generated and ordered, with the last two being the make-up numbers should any one or two from the first four could not complete the questionnaire. The randomly chosen students were asked to complete the questionnaire by either their class or English teacher.

As for the teachers, while all teaching staff members of the participating schools were invited to complete the questionnaire, eventually 114 teachers (School 1: 43, School 2: 32; School 3: 39) responded. The Teacher Questionnaire had been pilot-tested with 6 in-service teachers from another school beforehand.

To ascertain the students' and teachers' overall view towards the two MOI policies, overall means and individual school means were calculated on the continuum of agreement from one (Strongly Disagree) to five (Strongly Agree).

Results and Discussions:

Research Question 1:

What is the students' view on the impact of content-based instruction on their L2 proficiency brought by the Fine-tuning arrangement?

Students' view on the impact of the arrangement can be obtained through the responses of its possible benefits and difficulties. Here are the questions whose results are found to be illustrative:

Table 2. Questions whose results are illustrative

Aspects of view	Question No.	Questions	
Possible benefits	S1	When I learned content subjects through the medium of English:	My English reading improved.
	S2		My English writing improved.
	S3		My English oral improved.
	S4		My English listening improved.
	S5		My interest in studying improved.
	S6		My English vocabulary improved.
Possible difficulties	S7	I can understand the teaching of English in English lessons.	
	S8	I can do the homework set by the English teacher.	
	S10	I can understand the teaching of content subjects in English.	
	S11	I can do the homework of content subjects in English.	
	S13	Compared to subjects taught in Chinese, subjects taught in English are more difficult.	
	S14	Compared to subjects taught in English, it is easier to get higher marks for subjects taught in Chinese.	
Overall view	S20	Number of content subjects preferred to be taught in English	

Students' view of the possible benefits

As the primary objective of the arrangement is to raise L2 proficiency (EDB, 2010a), students' view of the possible benefits is solicited in the enhancement of the four skills, namely reading, writing, oral and listening. Views of vocabulary improvement are collected, too. Finally, the non-linguistic item, the interest of studying, is incorporated in the questionnaire to obtain a wider picture of the possible benefits of the content-based instruction brought by the arrangement.

Table 3. Possible benefits of studying content subjects in English

Question No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
S1	My English reading improved.	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.2
S2	My English writing improved.	3.7	3.9	3.7	3.0
S3	My English oral improved.	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.2
S4	My English listening improved.	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.1
S5	My interest in studying improved.	3.3	3.1	3.5	3.3
S6	My English vocabulary improved.	3.8	4.0	3.9	3.5

On a scale of 1 to 5, the highest mean fell on the item of vocabulary improvement (S6), which stood at 3.8. It was followed by improvement in reading (S1) and writing (S2), both at 3.7. The remaining two linguistic items (S3-S4) ranged from 3.5-3.6, which were generally on par with those more favoured linguistic items (S1-2; S6). On the other hand, the mean of the non-linguistic item, the improvement of interest in studying, was 3.3, which fell short from its linguistic counterparts.

There is another observation when means of the possible benefits from the individual schools are looked at. Except a minor deviation in question S5, means of School 1 were higher than that of School 2, and means of School 2 were higher than that of School 3. Also, despite the positive overall means, School 3, the lower ranking school in this study, displayed mostly neutral view (3.0-3.2) towards the effectiveness of the policy in raising the four skills (S1-S4). In other words, the higher the ranking of the students, the greater the improvement in English they think learning content subjects in English resulted in them.

Having presented students' view of the possible benefits of the arrangement, their view of the possible difficulties will be looked at.

Students' view of the possible difficulties

Investigation in this part involves responses of carrying out routines and the perceived difficulties of studying content subjects in English compared to Chinese:

Table 4. Possible difficulties of studying content subjects in English

Question No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
S10	I can understand the teaching of content subjects in English.	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.4
S11	I can do the homework of content subjects in English.	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.2

The mean scores were 3.7 and 3.8 respectively, which shows students did not think English instruction had posed a serious obstacle for their progress in content subjects. On the other hand, prior to the present investigation it was worried that students, particularly those from the lower banding schools, were likely to have greater difficulty catching up with the progress in content subjects conducted in English. The results did show that the lower the ranking of the students, the more likely they indicated having some difficulty catching up with the progress. But even for School 3, the lowest banding school in this study, the mean scores were 3.4 in understanding the teaching in English (S10) and 3.2 in doing the homework (S11), both of which were above 3.0, the yardstick for positive indication. The negative effect of using an L2 for learning content subjects as perceived by the students surveyed was not obvious.

To ascertain the challenge posed by studying subjects in L2 further, another comparison was performed between subjects taught in L2 English and those taught in L1 Chinese.

Table 5. Comparison of the perceived difficulties of studying content subjects in English and Chinese

No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
S13	Compared to subjects taught in Chinese, subjects taught in English are more difficult.	3.7	3.5	4.0	3.6
S14	Compared to subjects taught in English, it is easier to get higher marks for subjects taught in Chinese.	3.6	3.3	3.9	3.8

The students once again confirmed the greater challenge posed by studying subjects in

L2, and they generally agreed obtaining better grades was easier for subjects taught in L1. An unexpected result was observed in question S13, where School 3's mean (3.6) was closer with School 1's (3.5) instead of School 2's (4.0). A possible explanation is that School 3 might have lowered the linguistic demand by opting ELA (i.e. teaching selective content in different subjects) instead of teaching two content subjects exclusively in English as what School 1 and 2 did. As a result, School 3 students did not feel the difficulty of content-based instruction as great as their School 2 counterparts did despite their lower ranking.

In question S14, the means of School 2 and 3 (3.9 & 3.8 respectively) were much higher than that of School 1 (3.3). In other words, the lower the banding of the students, the greater they felt Chinese, their L1, could help with their studying. This is reminiscent of the correlation between students' banding and perceived improvement reported earlier, which will be further discussed later.

The final question to report before turning to the discussion section is the number of content subjects preferred to be taught in English (S20). By asking students to indicate the number of subjects they preferred to be taught in EMI, their overall view towards the Fine-tuning arrangement can be solicited. There are eight options for this question, from '0' (No content subject should be taught in English) to '7' (all major content subjects, together with peripheral subjects like Design & Technology, should be taught in English). The 'default' is 2.0, which is the official maximum number of contents subjects that can be taught exclusively in English under the arrangement. Students' overall view towards the arrangement can therefore be gauged with reference to it:

Table 6. Number of content subjects preferred to be taught in English

Question No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
S20	Number of content subjects preferred to be taught in English	2.9	3.4	2.4	3.1

The overall mean was 2.9. This means on average, students would like to have about three content subjects taught exclusively in English if they were free to choose, which is higher than the number officially allowed. There is a note of caution to this result, though. The overall mean (2.9) may have been skewed up by School 3, which opted ELA in four content subjects in different junior forms as discussed before instead of

two full content subjects taught exclusively in English. School 3 aside, the means of School 1 (3.4) and 2 (2.4) are still clearly above 2.0. This signifies students' overall preference to accept even more content subjects to be taught in English if allowed.

Discussion on Research Question 1

While students are generally affirmative of the benefits the arrangement brought, vocabulary improvement, being the biggest perceived benefit across schools of different rankings (School 1: 4.0; School 2: 3.9; School 3: 3.5), warrants further discussion. Many abstract concepts used in daily life, such as 'greenhouse effect' and 'democracy', are more likely covered in content subjects such as Science and Liberal Studies instead of in English lessons. In fact, an empirical study by Lin & Morrison (2010) reported that because of MT education, the size of L2 vocabulary among Hong Kong students has shrunk significantly. This points to the important role of content subjects in vocabulary enhancement. In addition, as expository texts present in content subject textbooks usually elaborate key vocabulary items in context, acquisition of vocabulary through content subjects is therefore more effective (Gibbons, 2009). All this explains the particularly positive view of vocabulary improvement, among other skills, through content-based instruction adopted by the Fine-tuning arrangement.

The benefit of the non-linguistic item, namely the improvement of the interest of studying (S5), was 3.3, which fell short from its linguistic counterparts. While it sounds like common sense that learning content subjects in an L2 would not improve studying interest, it is important to point out that the students surveyed did not feel de-motivated because of English instruction as worried by some (See Education Commission, 2005).

The trend observed in questions S1-6, where the higher the ranking of the students, the greater the approval of the arrangement, and in questions S13-14, where the lower the banding of the students, the greater they felt Chinese, their L1, could help with their studying, is reminiscent of Cummins' (1979) Threshold Hypothesis. Threshold Hypothesis is an influential L2 language acquisition theory developed through longitudinal observation of academic performance among bilingual students in Canada in 1970s. It postulates that there is a positive correlation between bilingual proficiency and academic performance. If students are to study academic subjects in L2 well, a rather high level of both L1 and L2 appropriate to age and needs is necessary. This level is called the 'higher threshold'. Studying academic subjects

without such level in both L1 and L2 is likely to result in academic retardation, the characteristic of the ‘lower threshold’. Despite criticism that the two thresholds have never been precisely specified (See Takakuwa, 2005), Threshold Hypothesis provides logical explanation to the responses made by the different ranking students in this study.

A few conclusions can be drawn for the students’ views on the Fine-tuning arrangement. First, middle and higher ranking students were affirmative about the effectiveness of the arrangement in raising their four skills. Lower ranking students, inconvenienced by their L1 and particularly L2, held a comparatively neutral view towards this. The views expressed by these different ranking students are congruent to what Threshold Hypothesis postulates, where certain level of both L1 and L2 must be present so that academic achievement in content subjects conducted in L2 is possible. On the other hand, regardless of rankings, students found content-based instruction particularly useful in improving their vocabulary, which is in line with the research findings in the area. Despite the challenge of studying content subjects in L2, students unanimously believed they could maintain their progress and would like to be challenged even further if allowed.

Research Question 2

What is the teachers’ view of the Fine-tuning Arrangement and Mother-tongue education as an appropriate language-in-education policy?

As most teachers participating in the survey have experience working in both the era of MT education and the arrangement, one way to solicit their view of the Fine-tuning Arrangement is through comparison:

Table 7. Teachers’ view on MT education and the Fine-tuning arrangement

Question No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
T10	The policy where EMI/CMI distinction was present is an appropriate language policy.	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.6
T11	The policy which allows the previous CMI schools to teach up to 2 content subjects in English in S1-3 is an appropriate language policy.	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8

The mean was low for MT education (2.5). The mean for the arrangement was also slightly negative (2.9), which was out of expectation given the generally positive response by the students reported earlier. Searching for a possible explanation, further analysis by the background of the teachers was performed. All teachers were divided into four types based on the subjects taught and the medium of instruction used. Here is the list:

Table 8. Four types of teachers

Type	Teachers who
1	teach neither English language nor any content subject in English
2	teach English language
3	teach content subject in English
4	teach both English language and content subject in English

Except for type 1, all types have some involvement of teaching (in) English, with type 4 being involved the most. Analysis by such division allows greater understanding of what different types of teachers thought regarding the two language policies. The results are as follows:

Table 9. Teachers' views on MT education and the Fine-tuning arrangement by types

Types of teachers	Overall mean of T10 (MT education)	Overall mean of T11 (The arrangement)	Number of responding teachers (n)
Type 1: Teachers who teach neither English language nor any content subject in English	2.9	2.8	44
Type 2: Teachers who teach English language	2.1	2.9	34
Type 3: Teachers who teach content subject in English	2.2	3.2	28
Type 4: Teachers who teach both English language and the content subject in English	1.8	3.8	6

Across different types of teachers, a negative view towards MT education was

displayed. However, the extent of negativity among different types of teachers was notably different. For question T10, whether MT education was an appropriate language policy, those without any background of teaching (in) English (Type 1) displayed only slightly negative attitude with the mean of 2.9. The level of negativity soared to 2.2 for content subject teachers in English (Type 3) and 2.1 for English teachers (Type 2). Those with dual roles in English teaching displayed an extremely negative attitude towards MT education with the mean of 1.8.

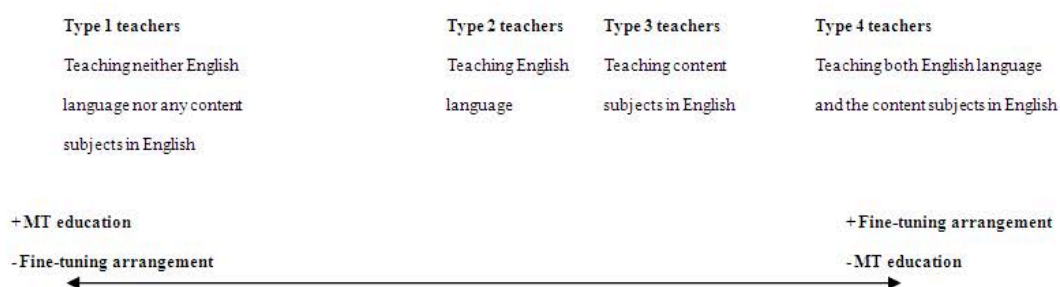
As for question T11, whether the Fine-tuning arrangement was an appropriate language policy, the attitude was more mixed. Types 1 and 2 teachers were generally ambivalent (2.8 & 2.9) while type 3 looked at the arrangement a bit more positively (3.2). It was type 4, those being the most heavily involved in teaching (in) English, were the most positive (3.8). This type of teacher therefore possessed the most negative view towards MT education (1.8) on one hand and the most positive view towards the Fine-tuning arrangement (3.8) on another, although it consisted of only six headcounts.

Discussion of Research Question 2

The issue to be discussed in this section is not really the teachers’ views on the whole. Rather, it is the differing views on the two language-in-education policies among different types of teachers that deserve discussion in details.

There was actually a trend evolving from the differing views among different types of teachers: the more involved the teachers were in English-related teaching, the greater the dissatisfaction they displayed towards MT education, and the greater the satisfaction towards the Fine-tuning arrangement. The following figure captures the idea:

Figure 1 The views of MT education and the Fine-tuning arrangement among different types of teachers



Notice the slightly unequal distribution of the different types of teachers on the continuum. It is an effort portraying their different views more accurately. On the other hand, the number of teachers in each type, as reported, is not equal. Pertinent to our discussion here is the small sample size ($n=6$) of Type 4 teachers. Type 4 comprises of 6 teachers (2 from School 1, 3 from School 2 & 1 from School 3) who taught English language and content subjects in English concurrently. The sample size of this type of teachers is small for two reasons. First, it is common that English major teachers do not have teaching duties in other subjects out of the campaign of Specialized Teaching (See EDB, 2006). Second, among the three former CMI schools (and possibly the majority of the rest), the first subject selected to be taught in English under the arrangement is Science, which is beyond most English language teachers' expertise. This explains the small sample size.

Despite the size, those type 4 teachers, unknown to each other, were unilateral and exceptionally strong in their views towards MT education (1.8) and the Fine-tuning arrangement (3.8). Being the smallest in number, their opinion was diluted by the other types of teachers who are not as heavily involved or not even involved in teaching (in) English. However, their strong opinion – that the Fine-tuning arrangement was far more appropriate as a language-in-education policy than MT education - may arguably be of greater value of reference than teachers of other types given their heaviest involvement.

Apart from the dilution of opinion of the more involved teachers, another reason which may explain the overall neutrality of teachers' view towards the Fine-tuning arrangement (2.9) may lie in the workload:

Table 10. Workload of English teachers and teachers teaching content subjects in English under the Fine-tuning arrangement

Question No.	Questions	Overall Mean	Sch 1	Sch 2	Sch 3
T6	After the Fine-tuning arrangement, English teachers' workload has become heavier.	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.6
T7	After the Fine-tuning arrangement, the workload of teachers teaching content subjects in English has become heavier.	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.8

Irrespective of the ranking of schools, teachers indicated that the workload of English teachers and in particular teachers teaching content subjects in English under the arrangement had become much heavier. This can be another reason for the comparatively reserved view towards the Fine-tuning arrangement as an appropriate language-in-education policy among teachers in general.

Research Question 3

Are there different views between the teachers and students on the impact of the Fine-tuning arrangement on students' L2 learning?

The last research question of the present study is to compare the views of students and teachers regarding the impact of the arrangement. Except minor differences in wordings, the meaning of the questions to be compared is the same. Here is an example:

Table 11. Minor differences in wordings

Teacher Questionnaire	Student Questionnaire
T5: Junior students can maintain their interest in content subjects taught in English.	S12: I can maintain my interest in learning content subjects in English.

Worth noting here also is that for the possible benefits, there are five separate questions on improvement in the four skills plus vocabulary (S1-4 and S6) in Student

Questionnaire whereas there is only one corresponding question, namely ‘Junior students’ achievement in English becomes higher after the Fine-tuning arrangement’ (T1), in Teacher Questionnaire. The clearer delineation of the concept ‘achievement in English’ in the Student Questionnaire is thought to be helpful for students who are still young at age.

Recalling that different types of teachers can have different views, such intricacy shall be reflected when results are presented for more objective comparison. Teachers’ view in the following is therefore presented in two separate columns. The first is the mean of the first type of teachers, whereas the second is the mean of types 2 to 4 teachers, the ones who are involved in teaching (in) English to different extent. Such binary distinction singles out the factor of involvement in the arrangement which is thought to be appropriate when views regarding its impact are solicited.

Table 12. Teachers’ and Students’ views regarding the impact of the Fine-tuning arrangement

Aspects of view	Question No.(T/Ss)	Question Content	Mean of Type 1 Teachers	Mean of Types 2 to 4 Teachers	Mean of Students from 3 schools
Possible benefits	T1/S1-4;6	Achievement in English becomes higher.	2.9	3.1	3.6
Possible difficulties	T3/S10	Understanding of the content subjects in English not compromised.	3.1	3.2	3.7
	T4/S11	Can do the homework of content subjects in English.	3.0	3.2	3.8
	T5/S12	Can maintain the interest in learning content subjects in English.	3.0	3.0	3.4

From the table, the difference between type 1 teachers and types 2 to 4 teachers is actually not as big as thought. The much bigger differences, however, are observed between the teachers and the students. Students generally believed the arrangement had improved their English (3.6). They also thought that despite the difficulty of content-based instruction, they could understand their lessons in L2 (3.7) and manage their homework (3.8), as well as maintain their interest of studying (3.4). On the other

hand, regardless of types, teachers' views to students' ability to manage under content-based instruction are reported as neutral in T3 to T5 (3.0-3.2). They were not as positive as their students about the impact on English proficiency the arrangement brought as well (Type 1: 2.9; Types 2 to 4: 3.1).

Discussion of Research Question 3

There are different views regarding the impact of the arrangement between the two groups. On the whole, students are positive while teachers can only be described as neutral. In the previous sections, teachers' overall neutral view has already been speculatively attributed to work load and those more involved teachers' view being crowded out by the less involved ones. Some more evidence and speculation will be given in the following in bid to further account for such a difference.

Prior to the introduction of the arrangement in 2010, Education Bureau (EDB) had been aware of the greater linguistic demand in studies brought by the arrangement on students who were not the top ranking ones. Therefore, in its official document of the implementation of the arrangement (Education Bureau, 2010a), it encouraged schools to carry out extra English activities in co-operation with content subjects. This was called Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) later on and was promoted with substantial subsidy¹. Many English and content subject teachers therefore were engaged with additional LAC activities ranging from game booths of content subject vocabulary attack during lunch time to Science Fair in English over a week².

Much work has also been done inside the classroom in bid to make content-based instruction successful. Lin (2012, 2013) reported strenuous efforts some teachers made to help bridge the gap between the content knowledge possessed by students in their L1, and the proper way of expressing that knowledge for academic purpose in students' L2. Examples of such efforts include using bilingual parallel texts, teaching students strategies to unpack dense academic texts, using visuals and graphic organizers to enhance 'multimodal' teaching, and so on. Students may have been

¹ Under Refined English Enhancement Scheme (REES), schools would be granted HK\$1 million (US\$138000 equivalent) for employing additional staff and/or buying services from the market if their plans of remedying students' English were approved. The scheme placed special emphasis on strengthening cross-curricular collaborations in the hope of improving students' learning of English and their knowledge in content subjects (See EDB, 2010b).

² See more examples in the following official link: http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/languagesupport/activity/english/103_20101002/index.html

greatly assisted along their way in content-based instruction when the arrangement was implemented. Without being fully conscious of the efforts behind, their evaluation of themselves being capable in EMI may be an over-statement to some extent. On the other hand, when commenting on their students' ability in managing and reaping the benefits of content-based instruction, the back staged teachers, who facilitated the students all along, may have seen the more complete picture of why students could 'get by'. This may be a reason why their views were more reserved.

It is important to reiterate, though, that the teachers' overall neutral response (2.9) for the Fine-tuning arrangement as an appropriate language policy is still ahead of that of MT education, whose mean is 2.5.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the views of students and teachers on the recent Fine-tuning arrangement as well as the previous mother tongue education. The conclusions are as follows. First, junior students believe the Fine-tuning arrangement has some favourable impacts on their L2 proficiency, particularly in vocabulary. Correlations are found between student rankings and the level of perceived benefit. There is no evidence showing students feel being severely handicapped in their content subject learning. These positive views expressed by the students are generally in line with the research in second language learning.

On the other hand, teachers generally show a more neutral response to those favourable effects on L2 perceived by the students. A number of reasons are speculated based on some evidence found in the questionnaire and an official website, which include heavy workload, more favourable opinions being diluted by those teachers who are less involved, and a view that students might not 'get by' in EMI if not for the teachers' strenuous effort behind. Teachers' overall view for the Fine-tuning arrangement as an appropriate language-in-education policy is also neutral. But it was found that teachers who are the most heavily involved in the arrangement, whose views are arguably of higher value of reference, possess a very positive view about the appropriacy of the arrangement as a language policy and a very negative view on MT education in this regard. This provides some support to the value of the arrangement in rectifying a previous planning error from the teachers' view.

Having concluded the findings, the limitations of this study must be pointed out. This

is a small scale study attempting to gain an insight of the effects of a language-in-education policy on students' L2 learning at a national level. Obviously, the validity will be much improved if the scale of the study can be enlarged to call for participation of more schools representative of different backgrounds. The validity will be further improved with the presence of a greater variety of tools such as interviews and standardized tests. Speculations will be more reliably made as a result. Also, the study is constrained by the recency of the arrangement. One could imagine a more objective comparison in student achievement in L2 and content subjects taught in L2 be done between those educated in the MT era and the Fine-tuning arrangement. Such comparison will have to involve using the data from the public examinations, which will not be available until 2016 the earliest, when the first batch of students educated under the arrangement sit for their public exams. All this point to the need for more follow-up research in the area, which is not only important for Hong Kong but for many others who have high hopes on content-based instruction in raising L2 proficiency without the cost of content knowledge.

Notes

1. This study is supported by the School Research Fund at the Open University of Hong Kong. I would also like to thank the teachers and students of the three local secondary schools for participating in the survey.
2. A copy of the Student and Teacher questionnaire used in this survey can be obtained from the author.

References

Chan, J. Y.H. (2013). A week in the life of a 'finely tuned' secondary school in Hong Kong. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 34:5, 411-430, DOI: [10.1080/01434632.2013.770518](https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.770518)

Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research* 49(2): 222-251.

Education Bureau (2010a). *Enriching Our Language Environment, Realising Our Vision*. Hong Kong: Education Bureau, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Education Bureau. (2010b). *Education Bureau Circular No. 139/2010 Refined*

English Enhancement Scheme. Retrieved 9 January 2013, from website:
http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/EN/Content_7372/edbcm139_2010_e%20_revised.pdf

Education Commission (2005). *Report on Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation*. December 2005. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

EDB (2006) Administrative Arrangements for Specialised Teaching. Accessed on 25 March 2014 at:
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-teaching/admin-arrangement-specialised-teaching/index.html>

Gibbons, P. (2009). *English learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking: Learning in the challenge zone*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, USA.

Lin, A. (2012). Multilingual and Multimodal Resources in Genre-based Pedagogical Approaches to L2 English Content Classrooms. In Leung C. & Street B.V. (eds) *English a Changing Medium for Education. New Perspectives on Language and Education: 26*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Lin, A. (2013). Toward Paradigmatic Change in TESOL Methodologies: Building Plurilingual Pedagogies From the Ground Up. *TESOL QUARTERLY Vol. 47, No. 3, September 2013. doi: 10.1002/tesq.113*

Lin L.H.F. & Morrison, B. (2010). The impact of the medium of instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools on tertiary students' vocabulary. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 9*: 255-266.

Poon, A.Y.K. (2010). Language use, and language policy and planning in Hong Kong. In *Current Issues in Language Planning, 11:1*, 1-66.

Poon, A.Y.K., Lau, C.M.Y. & Chu, D.H.W. (2013). Impact of the fine-tuning medium-of-instruction policy on learning: Some preliminary findings. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ), 4(1)*, 946-954. (U.K.) (Online publication)

Takakuwa, M (2005). Lessons from a Paradoxical Hypothesis: A Methodological

Critique of the Threshold Hypothesis. *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*, ed. Cohen, J. , McAlister, K.T., Rolstad, K. and MacSwan, J., 2222-2232. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Tsang, W.K. (2008). *The effect of medium-of-instruction policy on education advancement*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Yip, D.Y. & Tsang, W.K. (2007). Evaluation of the effects of the medium of instruction on science learning of Hong Kong secondary students: Students' self-concept in science. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 5(3), 393-413

The logo for the International Association for Language Acquisition Research (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the word "iafor" in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a larger, light blue outer arc and a smaller, light red inner arc, both of which are slightly offset from each other to create a sense of depth and movement.

Scaffolding Strategies as Part of Writing Process: To Improve Academic Writing Skill in Higher Education

Hui Lin The, Sunway University, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0164

Abstract

Students are expected to express ideas using accurate structures in their writing. However, it can be very challenging for the ESL learners who have different educational and cultural background to write effectively for academic purpose. This paper provides a preliminary case study of how changes may possibly occur in the student's writing through scaffolding strategies taught in classroom. The study hypothesises that specific scaffolding strategies that are implemented in the writing lessons for the hospitality and tourism students for duration of 14 weeks will improve their writing skill in terms of organisation and structure. Data was collected through pre-writing and post-writing exercises and collectively compared with the student's writing in the final examination. The initial findings indicate mixed results where a few students have improved their structure and tone in writing while some are unable to switch to a more formal mode of writing. In conclusion, to some extent, the scaffolding strategies may enhance students' writing skills, but other factors such as differences in ways of learning and student's attitude need to be scrutinised further.

Introduction

Language learning has never been more challenging than now especially for second language (L2) learners who not only have to learn the forms and structure of English language, but also have to be able to express their ideas clearly using the L2 forms and structure. Given the advanced technology for learning and easy access to materials and learning resources, language learners should be able to use English language easily in all aspects such as speaking and writing. However, this is not the case for some students in Malaysia as they have to contend with many challenges such as inconsistency in pedagogy, limited access to relevant materials, lack of contact hours with instructors or tutors, limited writing practice, students' attitude in learning English language and low motivation level that may hinder language learning (Chao and Huang, 2007, Vigneswaran Kannan, 2011). It has also become more crucial to the Malaysian learners to be proficient in English language as it is acknowledged as the language of knowledge and communication across the borders (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2014).

Rationale of study

The author is currently teaching writing courses for specific academic purposes and communication skills course at the English for Specific Academic Purposes Unit at Sunway University. The unit provides the compulsory language papers to different schools or faculties. From the author's observation after almost five years of teaching writing courses, students did not perform very well in academic writing. Many fell in the modest or limited category during evaluation of these assignments. This is similarly reported by Mah (2013). There are four assignments to be completed: sentence skills test, summary and reader response, argumentative essay, and research report. The assignments constitute 60 per cent while 40 per cent is derived from the final examination. The final examination paper consists of three sections which are comprehension questions, directed writing and argumentative essay, where the essay constitute 50 per cent of the whole paper. The design of assessment was approved and monitored by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MQA). This clearly signifies the importance of academic writing skill at tertiary level, where the students are expected to provide relevant points to support their arguments, and to present their ideas in an organised, clear manner.

Realising the need to develop a different pedagogy in teaching academic writing for specific academic courses (ESAP) in higher education and believing that the writing course should entail specific scaffolding strategies to develop students' writing, the author, who was also the teacher-researcher, attempted to use five scaffolding strategies in the writing course to find answers to the research objectives which are:

1. to determine to what extent students apply the five scaffolding strategies taught in the writing class: nominalising, removing the personals, using linkers, using the passive, and avoiding repetition and redundancy
2. to evaluate students' progress in writing an argumentative essay by analysing and comparing their prewriting, post-writing and final exam essay

The research objectives stemmed from the teacher's beliefs that the language teachers should guide students in developing and improving their academic writing skill, given their current ability, curriculum instruction, and classroom setting through scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; Walqui, 2006; Zaretskii, 2009). In fact, the scaffold approach has become common in the writing courses for L1 as opposed to teaching writing skills to L2 learners (Englert et al., 2007). Although it was reported that scaffold was not really provided to guide students to write and later, to be able to write independently in Malaysia due to academic constraints and lack of time (Mah 2013), the author believes that scaffold is necessary for development and improvement in student's writing skills.

Conceptual framework and research design

This qualitative research is situated as action research-based which is primarily driven by the teacher's desire to find different ways to teach academic writing. Guided instructions are provided to teach students the structure of argumentative essay. The author believes that language teachers and writing instructors need to show the students individually, how to write in a formal way, by providing step-by-step strategies to monitor and improve their own writing. The author believes scaffolding strategies are fundamental in changing the way students write; at the end of the course, they should be able to produce academic essays using formal structures and language. In other words, the students are able to switch from informal writing which they are so used to, like posting comments in Facebook or write short response in their blogs, to formal writing such as academic writing or professional writing. They should made aware of the differences between formal and informal writing, and learn how to switch from one to another according to needs and requirements.

With these assumptions, scaffolding strategies were utilised in the attempt to develop and improve student's writing. These strategies were adapted from a writing workbook designed to teach academic writing to business students at Sunway University, Malaysia (Tan and Mazlin Mohamed, 2013). The five scaffolding strategies are:

- nominalising – to create more formal structure, using nouns or noun phrases,
- removing the personals – to be impartial in the argument,
- using linkers or connectors – to connect ideas in a paragraph, or between paragraphs,
- using the passive – to focus on the actions or results, rather than the doer, and
- avoiding repetition and redundancy – to rewrite the sentences so that arguments or explanations are concise.

There were a total of 25 first year degree students in Bachelors in Hospitality Management and Bachelors in Culinary Management, who took ENG1024 English for Tourism and Service Industry, a compulsory university paper that the author taught. The course lasted for one semester. There were ten Malaysians and the remaining 15 were of mixed nationalities such as China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Japan, Uganda and Uzbekistan.

Since the students are of different nationalities, their experience in learning language might be different from others, thus creating a diverse environment in language

teaching and learning. The types of assessment that they took before in the previous institution could differ from what are required in their current degree programme. The curriculum design and implementation for language learning could also be considered as others factors that could change the way these students learn language, particularly in writing. These factors are thought to be influential to the students' current ability in academic writing as they form part of the student's experience in learning language and writing, particularly. That is why the author believes strongly that to account for these differences, guidance should be provided to each student individually to monitor their development in writing, although this may be quite challenging to implement if the teacher has many writing classes and large classes for each course.

The author also incorporated new processes in existing pedagogy, hoping to establish a new benchmark in the development of student's academic writing skill (Norton, 2009; Noffke and Somekh, 2011). This means that besides incorporating the five scaffolding strategies, the author has included prewriting and post-writing exercise as classroom activities. This enabled the students to monitor their own progress in writing and it also served as a point of reference to the level of writing for each student individually. To the knowledge of the author at the time of writing, these were not apparently practiced before in teaching the course. It is strongly believed that prewriting can help students to organise and plan the essay (Pritchard and Honeycutt, 2005). Prewriting allows students to plan and develop their ideas before the actual submission of the essay. The teacher or instructor can also comment on the content, structure and language of the student's writing, so that the student can modify the essay. However, in this research, prewriting is used as a comparative tool to evaluate how students utilise the five scaffolding strategies and then, compare to their post-writing essay and the final examination's essay. The teacher and the students can then evaluate the level of writing and whether the student has fulfilled the criteria for the assignment.

In this research, argumentative essay was used as an instrument to scrutinise student's writing as it is thought to cover most of the characteristics of academic writing (Nussbaum & Kardash, 2005), which includes a clear organisation of main ideas and supporting details, and logical reasoning to support opinions or arguments. The students were taught the essay structure and asked to write the first draft based on an essay question in the workbook (Tan and Mazlin Mohamed, 2012, p.25) during the prewriting session. Then, all five scaffolding strategies were explained to the students. During this period of time, the students were asked to try out the exercises in pairs and sometimes individually for different exercises. The students compared answers with their teacher's sample answers. The teacher provided feedback to the students by evaluating their answer and pointed out how the error can be rectified or how the statements in the paragraphs can be modified. Although not all students were able to ask questions, they can still learn how to identify errors in writing and rewrite the statements. Next, they were asked to rewrite the essay based on the same essay question (post-writing). This time, they were required to apply all the five scaffolding strategies that they have learnt. The pedagogical process is summarized in the table below:

Duration	Classroom activities
1 lesson	Structure and paragraphs

1 lesson	Prewriting
6 lessons	Scaffolding strategies (exercises and classroom discussion)
1 lesson	Post-writing
1 lesson	Comparison between prewriting and post-writing

(Table 1: Lesson plan to teach argumentative essay; 1 lesson is equivalent to 2 tutorial hours)

Once the collection of data was completed, which included the essays from prewriting, post-writing and final examination, qualitative data analysis was conducted to scrutinise the essays. The five scaffolding strategies were coded and identified in the essays (Creswell, 2006; Remler, 2011). From the coding, a comparison in the frequency of each strategy in all three essays was conducted. For easy reference, the Malaysian students were coded with the letter 'M' in numerical order while the foreign students coded with 'F' in numerical orders as well. So, the local students will be identified as 'M1' to 'M10', while the international students as 'F1' to 'F15'.

Findings and discussion

Generally, most students have difficulties in linking ideas and providing concrete or relevant supporting details. Many essays were found to consist of circular arguments and repetitive words. Hence, it can be quite difficult to comprehend student's essay or the argument. In this section, samples of student's prewriting, post-writing and essay from the final examination will be discussed to determine to what extent they apply the five scaffolding strategies and the progress that they made through the prewriting and/or post-writing.

Preliminary findings indicate that out of the five strategies, removing personal pronouns is the most frequently used strategy. In fact, students' essay in the final examination reveals that they do not use any personal pronoun at all, although some students still used personal pronouns in their prewriting and/or post-writing. This shows that it is easy to remove personal pronouns from the essay as it only involves avoiding usage of discreet items in the essay as exemplified below:

Removing the personals

"I personally believe that globalisation has more of a positive impact compared to the negative aspects, if planned for correctly." (F13, prewriting)

"In this ever changing 'global village' that we live in, globalisation can have a positive impact on an indigenous culture as long as its implement correctly." (F13, post-writing)

"Social media has seen a large growth in the number of travel agencies, hoteliers and airlines that are using it to promote their products. Social media provides a platform that allows individual that share common interests, goals and opinions to voice globally, through pictures, videos and blogs. Social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and Tripadvisor are among some apps used in the travel and tourism

industry to promote products. Social media is very much beneficial to an organisation's promotion of services if correctly utilised." (F13, final exam)

Using linkers / connectors

The next most frequently applied strategies are using appropriate connectors or linkers to connect ideas in student's writing. It is quite apparent that students tried very hard to use varieties of linkers to establish a coherent and cohesive piece of writing, illustrated in the extract below. However, most linkers were not appropriate; students did not manage to link the ideas clearly as illustrated in the following sample:

"Globalisation has also brought destruction to the nature. Due to development of roads and building, many trees have been cut. Deforestation cannot be avoided for a country to be globalised. People nowadays do not care for the nature as compared to the past. To develop or to improve living standard, the people will do whatever it takes. Hence, many wildlife are destroyed, animals lost their home. People who were part of the forest also lost their home." (F1, prewriting)

"In addition, for improvements to be made in a particular place, there must be improvements in buildings and offices. To build a building, trees have to be cut down which is known as deforestation. Indigenous culture are those who harmonise with nature. Cutting down of trees are not done because of their own greed. If deforestation are done, here will be loss of habitats of animals and destruction of harmony between locals and nature will occur..." (F1, post-writing)

"Increase in usage of social media has made people to freely give opinion about their or other's experience. They can give honest comments on their travel experience and these comments are valuable information to companies. By being able to know what customer, really felt about the tour, the company may improve on their weakness or strengthen what they are good at. For example, when a tourist complains about the limited choice of foods in main restaurant of a hotel, the hotel manager can think of solutions to increasing variety of food choice. On the other hand, if a customer appraise the quality of the room service of a hotel, the hotel manager can use that strength to attract more customers." (F1, final exam)

Using the passive

Very few students tried to use the passive form in their writing, either in prewriting and the final examination.

"One of the advantages of social media is a higher online revenue can be gained by tourism organisations. There is a web-based application provided by social media, where statuses, photos and videos can be uploaded at anytime and anywhere. Additionally, no special technical skills are required to share the posts..." (M1, final exam)

"Social media is one of the fastest growing communication technologies in tourism industry. It is considered as a platform for people sharing the same interests, goals and characteristics to construct their own personal profiles and share their life stories and experiences. It is found that social media beneficial to the travel and

tourism industry because it is a more effective marketing tool than traditional methods such advertising through television, radio and newspaper, as well as an platform to communicate with their customers and find out their needs.” (F7, final exam)

Nominalisation

After changing the sentence into passive structure, the students were taught to change the verb into noun form. Although some students attempted to do so, this strategy was not often employed in student’s essay as illustrated in a student’s prewriting, post-writing as well as the essay in the final examination below,

“All in all, globalisation could cause extinction of indigenous culture because it is less known among the people now. Therefore, indigenous culture should be promoted often in order to let people know more about it.” (M7, prewriting)

“All in all, globalisation is the bridge for all kinds of people to link to each other. Through globalisation, communication and interaction between people are increasing. However, indigenous culture is slowly forgotten by the people as globalisation expands. As a result, indigenous culture is slowly going down to the pathway of extinction.” (M7, post-writing)

“As a conclusion, social media which plays a major role in one’s everyday life is a medium that benefits the travel and tourism industry. The organisations should make use of social media wisely due to its growing significance in today’s world. The organisation should promote their news and events using social media because it can generate revenue and increases brand image.” (M7, final exam)

Avoiding repetition & redundancy

There were still many repetitive ideas and redundant sentences found in students’ essay. From the sample below, it is clear that the student repeatedly expressed two ideas which are, first, social media has benefitted the travel and tourism industry, and next, users can express opinions using social media.

“Social media has increasingly brought benefits to the travel and tourism industry. Social media such as Tripadvisor, Facebook and Youtube has brought benefits to both travellers and travel and tourism industry. User-generated content (UGC) such as reviews, comments, experiences and videos could be freely post on any of the social media. Users can retrieve or express them on the social media and it creates an opportunity for companies to communicate with their customers by UGC about their company and give response. Social media has allowed users to express opinion or retrieve other’s opinion and also allowed two way communication between companies and customers.” (M4, final exam)

Based on the discussion earlier, the table below summarises the initial findings and the frequency of the use of each strategy, at the scale of 1 – rare, 2 – seldom, 3 – occasional, 4 – often, and 5 – always.

Scaffolding	Overall findings from data analysis	Frequency of usage
-------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------

strategies		
Nominalisation	Some students attempted to nominalise the verbs, although this created other errors in structures	3
Removing personal pronouns	Majority did not use personal pronouns during post-writing. All students did not use personal pronouns during the final exam.	5
Using linkers or connectors	Although there were attempts to use different linkers in the essay, most linkers were not appropriate; they did not manage to link the ideas clearly.	4
Using passive structures	Very few students tried to use the passive in their writing.	3
Avoiding repetitive and redundancy	There were still many repetitive ideas and redundant sentences found in students' essay.	2

(Table 2: Summary of findings and frequency of use for each strategy)

In sum, although the students demonstrated some efforts to utilise all the five strategies that they have learn during the writing class, many still struggled in producing a formal, well-written essay. To some extent, the scaffolding strategies only seemed to benefit students with a higher proficiency as noted in their prewriting. This means that their prewriting essay did not contain many grammatical errors and was generally easy to comprehend. The scaffolding strategies seemed to make their prewriting to be more formal and academic. Generally, it is observed that the students were able to use more formal structures and language forms in the final examination's essay, although there could be many grammatical errors.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Although the qualitative analysis can provide in-depth analysis of the students' development in writing, the size of sample is relatively small which may not be adequate to reach to a generalised statement about the use of scaffolding strategies in teaching academic writing. More samples may be required to affirm whether the scaffolding strategies may work for different groups of students. Also, the final exam essay was moderated by a peer moderator while the essay for prewriting and post-writing were not. This was due to time constraint and the fact that the author has to cover other teaching loads and administrative duties. It is suggested that for future research of similar design and scope, a moderator should be assigned to evaluate students' prewriting and post-writing to validate the results derived from the data analysis.

Besides, the duration to monitor the progress is too short due to academic constraint. The writing course is only provided for one course and there is no follow up course if the students need to improve their writing. Other factors affecting student's development in writing like motivation level, attitudes towards writing and language proficiency prior to joining the degree programme were not extrapolated for fear of too many variables. Further analysis on how these factors affect the use of scaffolding

strategies or other kinds of method in teaching academic writing can be carried out to determine the correlation between them in developmental writing for ESAP courses.

Conclusion and implication to teaching practice

In general, although some students have improved their structures, most of them are not able to link their ideas clearly. This indicates that many L2 students have difficulty in providing cohesion and coherence in their writing (Mah, 2013). Therefore, writing instructors or language teachers need to provide specific scaffolding strategies to ensure that students can improve their writing incrementally. As writing is a process, and requires planning and rewriting, feedback and continuous monitoring on student's progress in writing is crucial to achieve a positive outcome. This requires initiatives from both teacher and student, who may need to spend more time and effort to develop the student's academic writing skill. The initial findings support the contention that scaffold should be provided in the writing courses for specific academic courses to develop academic writing skills (MacArthur and Philippakos, 2013), and prewriting can be utilised to benefit the students in development of writing.

Future direction

As this research is a preliminary study and still in progress, the author will work on overcoming the limitations and covering more samples to gain substantial results that may make the writing process smoother. It is hoped that this small-scale research will interest and persuade other teachers and fellow academicians to probe further in different scopes of the teaching and learning in academic writing. An interesting scope to look at will be the relationship between assessment in writing, teaching method and student's performance in writing at higher education.

Acknowledgement

Hui Lin Teh would like to express profound gratitude to Prof. Dr. Stephen Hall for his support of this research and Sunway University for the conference funding. She would also like to express her utmost gratitude to her esteemed colleague and roommate, Tan Siew Imm, for her constructive comments and constant encouragement throughout the course of this research. She would also like to say thank you to many others who have shown encouragement and provided valuable input, especially the other colleagues in her unit, and fellow presenters and participants at the conference.

References

- Mah, B. Y., Irfan Naufal Umar, Thomas, C. V. F. (2013). *L2 Writing Challenges for the Undergraduates: A Performance Analysis and a Literature Review on SIL Domains*. Official conference proceedings, the Third Asian Conference on Language Learning 2013, 'Globalization, Culture and Society: What role does language play?' April 25 – 28, Osaka, Japan.
- Chao, Y. C. J. and Huang, C. K. (2007). The effectiveness of computer-mediated communication on enhancing writing process and writing outcomes: The

- implementation of blog and wiki in the EFL writing class in Taiwan. In Montgomerie, C. and Seale, J., eds. *World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications 2007*, Vancouver, Canada. AACE, 3463-3468.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. International Student Edition*. 4th Ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Englert, C. S., Zhao, Y., Dunsmore, K., Collins, N., and Wolbers, K. (2007). Scaffolding the writing of students with disabilities through procedural facilitation: Using an internet-based technology to improve performance. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30, 9–29.
- MacArthur, C., A. and Philippakos, Z., A. (2013). Self-Regulated Strategy Instruction in Developmental Writing: A Design Research Project. *Community College Review*, 41(2), pp.176-195.
- Ministry of Education, Malaysia. (2013). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025*. Retrieved April 15, from http://www.moe.gov.my/cms/upload_files/articlefile/2013/articlefile_file_003108.pdf
- Noffke, S. E. and Somekh, B. (2011). Action Research. In B. Somekh and C. Lewin. *Theory and methods of social research*. London: Sage.
- Norton, L.S. (2009). *Action Research in Teaching and Learning. A Practical Guide to Conducting Pedagogical Research in Universities*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Nussbaum, E. M., and Kardash, C. M. (2005). The effect of goal instructions and text on the generation of counterarguments during writing. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97, 157-169.
- Pritchard, R. J. and Honeycutt, R. L. (2005). The Process Approach to Writing Instruction: Examining Its Effectiveness. In Charles A. MacArthur, Steven Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald. *Handbook of Writing Research*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Remler, Dahlia K. (2011). *Research methods in practice: strategies for description and causation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tan, S. I. and Mazlin Mohamed. (2013). *Write Now!* 2nd Ed. Malaysia: Ace-McGraw Hill.
- Vigneswaran Kannan. (2011, December 15). Lecturers lack skills in teaching methodology. *The Sun Daily*.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Mind and Society*, pp.79-91. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Walqui, A., (2006). Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: A conceptual framework. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 9(2).

Zaretskii, V. K., (2009). The Zone of Proximal Development, What Vygotsky Did Not Have Time to Write. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*. 47(6), pp. 70–93.



Influence of Drastic Shifts in Russian Society and Global Social Changes as Well on the Development of Modern Russian Language for Special Purposes (LSP) in the Field of Construction

Ivan Lykov, Ural Federal University, Russia
Zhanna Khramushina, Ural Federal University, Russia
Stepan Lykov, Ural Federal University, Russia
Larisa Lykova, Ural Federal University, Russia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0174

Abstract

The paper discusses major trends in development of Russian language for special purposes (LSP) in the field of construction brought about by profound changes in the life of Russian society which have begun since the late 1980s or early 1990s and are going on at present; also it discloses influence of social changes of an international scale on the active processes occurring in modern Russian LSP in the field of construction.

Key words: LSP in the field of construction, special construction sublanguage, professional jargon, lexical borrowings, foreign embedding, popular language, evaluativeness, expressivity, antinomy.

Language is similar to a living organism that readily responds to all social and technological changes in people's life.

At the end of 20th century there have been drastic shifts in Russia; they affected all spheres of society's life and were of course reflected by language [7].

As a result, active processes have been taking place in the Russian language during the last 25 years. The processes impact on all levels, functional and stylistic variants of the Russian language, many speech genres and speech behavior stereotypes. The influence of these processes could not but affect professional sublanguages as well.

A subject of our consideration is one of branch types of the industrial and technical language style, namely language for special purposes (LSP) in the field of construction (LSPC), comprising interconnected subsystems of literary special construction sublanguage, which includes terms, and spoken sublanguage, which includes professionalisms consisting of professional construction popular words, professional construction jargon words and professional dialectisms.

In modern nondomestic linguistics a sublanguage is considered as "a limited set of lexical and grammatical structures for performing communication in a limited range of topics" [38].

We will consider the sublanguage as a part of LSP describing a definite subject domain (ontology) having no lexicogrammatical constraints (except for those specified by a topically homogeneous field of language functioning and constraints imposed by a communicative situation) [15: 99].

Although analyzing the literature on the said issues showed that there is not sameness of views on the internal structure and content of LSP [15: 96], relationship of its subsystems is similar to that of the codified Russian literary language for general purposes (LGP) and its spoken forms, including uncoded ones.

From the linguistic viewpoint, LSP is a functional form of language aimed at providing relevant and effective communication of professionals in a specific subject domain [15: 98].

In the official professional communication the construction sublanguage is used, and its codification level same as such a level of any special sublanguage is higher than that of literary LGP, for its usage is subject to corresponding state standards; in informal casual communication the professional construction jargon and popular language are more often used. The aim of our investigation is language innovations both in official professional construction communication and professional informal speech of modern builders. The investigation is based on modern professional dictionaries, scientific researches on linguistics and constructional and architectural terminology, and authors' records of builders' speech in the city of Ekaterinburg in recent years.

Our observations show that at the turn of the century the changes in LSPC affect vocabulary and phonetics more often than morphology and syntax of the Russian language.

Innovations in the field of professional builders' speech (PBS) vocabulary are the most significant ones.

Vocabulary is known to be the most changeable part of any language for it is the part most evidently affected by extralinguistic factors, i.e., the evolutions taking place in life of native speakers, because the sphere of words is closely connected to the sphere of ideas. [1]. The main function of words is a nominative one and a new denotatum requires getting a new name or attributing a new meaning to an old name.

In particular, there are fast changes in modern construction terminological vocabulary as a result of considerable evolutionary change of manufacturing engineering processes in this field as well as multilinguality, linguistic polyphony of modern construction community. [16; 18; 24].

Thus, since early 90s of the 20th century one of the most active and socially significant linguistic processes has been that of borrowing foreign words. At the turn of the century good opportunities for international contacts were created: the Russian society became more open and ready for such contacts. In that new social and political environment the reasons caused inevitability of borrowing came to life. Russian life style changed drastically when audio and video equipment, computers, the Internet became widely available. Foreign words entered into our vocabulary as its integral part even at the mundane level, let alone the special, manufacturing engineering one. The technical and information burst at the end of the 20th century made international information exchange inevitable, which would be difficult without a uniform language code, what the international terminology is. Thus, need for verbal denominating new concepts and facts of the reality and absence of relevant names in the Russian language unavoidably led to borrowing international words that are mostly direct borrowings from the English language. [42].

Examples of this type of borrowings are the substantives *топпинг* ['tɒpɪŋ] (eng. *topping*) – a mixture hardening the top layer of concrete surfacing [5]; *пентхауз* [pent'hauz] and *пентхаус* [pent'haus] (eng. *penthouse*) – a multiroom apartment on the top floor of a house open to a flat roof [29: 148]; also the phraseological unit *каменная вата* ['kʌmɛnnʌjə 'vʌtə], which is a calque of the anglicized thermal insulation trademark «*ROCKWOOL*» and an appellative for any thermal insulation containing basalt, or else the terminized word combination *жидкие гвозди* ['zɪdkije 'gʌvɔzdi] (*Liquid Nails*) — constructional glue. [44].

Anglicized innovations are caused by terminology internationalization, globalization of modern communication revealing itself in a growing number of international exchanges and international conferences using the English language as a working one, in expanding transnational research projects, establishing international consortiums of enterprises and establishments, global scientific, industrial, educational and other e-mailing in English, increasing a number of journals issued in English in non-English speaking countries, etc. [33].

However, it's necessary to note that history of every foreign word in a recipient language is unique. For there are different reasons of word penetration into an alien

language, as different are rate and degree of adapting such words to another language system, the language status of lexical items differs too. [7].

A priority in describing the process of borrowing foreign words by the Russian language belongs to L.P. Krysin. He has offered to divide foreign words into three groups, and that was accepted in the domestic linguistics:

- 1) borrowed word;
- 2) exoticism;
- 3) foreign embedding.

In turn, borrowed words are represented by the following groups of words:

- a) words coinciding structurally with foreign prototypes, i.e., words changed graphically and expressed by corresponding phonemic means of a borrowing language without any structural “additives”;
- b) words morphologically structured by means of a borrowing language;
- c) words undergone partial morphological substitution. [19].

Thus, the borrowed words represent a complex and structurally nonhomogeneous group; however, the lexical items combined into this group have some common characteristics distinguishing them from other lexical layers of the Russian language. [9: 103].

Further, exoticisms are the borrowed words that characterize specific national details of various peoples' life and are used in the description of non-Russian reality. So, such words as *аул* [Λ'u:l] (village), *сакля* [sΛkljə] (house), *арба* [a:r'ba:] (bullock cart) are used in the representation of Caucasus peoples' life [40]; exoticisms *зэр* [gær] (nomad's tent), *хана* [hΛ'na:] (tent lattice wall), *тооно* [tɔ:'nɔ] (light-and-smoke opening), *уняа* [u'nja:] (dome pole), *дааган* [da:'gΛn] (small girder) are applied to describe Buriat dwellings [3]; a French hue is inherent to the country house denomination *шато* [ʃΛ'tɔ] and a Swiss one is to *шалле* [ʃΛ'le]. A distinctive feature of the exoticisms is their not having Russian synonyms, so their use in describing other peoples' life is motivated by necessity. Against the backdrop of other foreign lexical elements the exoticisms are distinguished as the words not completely acquired lexically [40].

In present the most numerous group is made up of words of the latter, third group. They have not yet become language facts, and many of them will never have. They are foreign embeddings. [7].

L.P. Krysin has defined the concept of “foreign embedding” as one of the foreign word types along with borrowings and exotic words, all of those having “structural and functional distinctions”. The foreign embeddings themselves are divided into two groups:

1. Words and word combinations “having an international nature and being able to be used in texts of any cultivated language”. These words represent the “interlingual verbal and phraseological fund” and are capable of being used both in different styles of literary language and in spoken language.

2. Foreign elements not being able to be called sustained or international. They are used very often for artistic and stylistic purposes, as well as for reflecting individual language use. [19: 47-49].

Examples of foreign embeddings into the Russian LSPC of recent years are the following lexical and phraseological items: "...hardened concrete floors – *топпинговые* [‘tɒppɪŋɔvɨjə] floors.” [36]; "...bituminous *праймер* [‘praɪmɐr] should be spread on the sub-floor immediately...” [34]; “*Прайс лист* [praɪs list] of our company ... for finishing works...” [31]; and a variety of polylingual names of construction industry enterprises: “...the construction company *Renaissance Construction*...” [27]; Ural *Девелопмент* [de‘velɔpmɛnt], the company; *Фореест* [‘fɔrɛst], the woodworking plant; *Фрееш* [frɛj] climate, Ltd., the multibusiness company; *Mio-Bambino*, the child interior studio; *Soffitto*, the trading and mounting company. [37].

The bulk of the represented foreign embeddings belongs to either the groups of foreign words and word combinations that preserved their semantics, source language features or those included in Russian text in a form adapted to the system of Russian language soundclasses and presented through Russian language symbols or source language graphics. The foreign embeddings mostly preserve source language semantics allowing rendering specificity of the country or situation in question. Frequent use of the foreign embeddings (especially in the mass media) can transform them into borrowings structured completely in accordance with the rules of a recipient language. [8: 40].

This group is as well adjoined with attributive composites having a borrowed substantival stem as the first component and attributive relations between components. Originally lexemes of the kind were borrowed from the English language where the formation of complex lexical items based on two independent nouns is a common phenomenon [7] (*сплит-система* [split sis‘tɛmə] (wall split air conditioner), *сэндвич-панель* [‘sendvɨʃ pə‘nɛl’] (sandwich panel), *слайдинг-профиль* [‘slaidɪŋ ‘prɔfɨl’] (sliding profile) and many others).

Another variety of such hybrid, polycode innovations combining elements of different codes and different language systems comprise the following two types of linguistic units:

- 1) neolexemes created on the basis of Russian and foreign graphics with deviations from the traditional spelling [25: 43]:

ТрейдКлинБилдинг [ˈtrɛɪdˌkɫɪnˈbɪldɪŋ], Ltd.; *INDIGO-Потолки* [ɪnˈdɪgɔ pətəlˈki], the studio; *Dom-postroim* [dɔm pɔˈstroːɪm], the design and construction company; *ArtБригада* [ˈɑːrtbrɪˈgɫɔdə], the design factory; [hruˈʃʃɔvkə], the real estate agency [37].

- 2) neolexemes and neophrasemes created on the basis of acronyms. At the turn of the century abbreviation as a manner of derivation is characterized by high productivity [48: 256] and multifunctionality, for modern acronyms perform not only nominative and compressive functions, i.e., are used for forming nominations shorter than

corresponding word combinations [47: 8-12], but are the means of speech expressivation as well [46: 120-124].

Examples are *HDF плита* [pli'ta:] (HDF board) [23]; *UV-излучение* [izlu'ʃeniə] (radiation) [13]; *VIP-коттедж* [kət'tedʒ] (cottage) [43]; *АйКью Девелопмент* [ai kju de'velɔpmənt], Ltd.; *А-Лайф* [a: laif], Ltd.; *A-class*, the construction company; *AcPro & I*, the real estate agency, Active Projects and Investment, Ltd.; *AVS Девелопмент* [de'velɔpmənt], Ltd., the construction company; *СупраАл Бридж*, the production company, Ltd.; *НДизайн* [en di'zain], the interior design studio; *T & T Group*, the design and construction company [37].

Besides, these neologisms are at the juncture of the two most sustainable and strong linguistic processes of 20th and 21st centuries, abbreviation and borrowing. These active trends in the development of lexical and derivational subsystems of the Russian language were described by many researchers: A.D. Vasiliev, E.A. Zemskaya, V.V. Kolesov, L.P. Krysin, V. Shaposhnikov, et al.

Such innovations are exceedingly productive, for the derivational system of the modern Russian language is characterized by broadening the range of motivational bases, mainly due to active involving proper nouns and acronyms in derivational process and their derivatives growth [46: 120-124].

However, along with anglicisms in modern Russian LSPC there is a great number of borrowings from foreign languages, and first of all from languages of the former Soviet Union. The reason is the linguistic processes taking place in the former USSR republics and the labor migration phenomenon. We will illustrate these processes by the example of Kazakhstan.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union the geopolitical and linguistic situation in its every republic has been changing. According to E.D. Suleimenova, “speaking of linguistic situation dynamics and the state of the Russian language in Kazakhstan, the displayed factors influencing the Russian language allow to talk about “kazakhization” (diversification) of the Russian language used in the Internet and Kazakhstan newspapers in 2010. Those factors are directly caused by continuous contact between the Russian language and Kazakh language together with noticeably growing impact of the Kazakh language on the Russian language in Kazakhstan» [32: 81–82].

Stated another way, words borrowed from the languages of CIS titular nations “come” to the Russian language. That is the lexis terminologically ending with *-ism* and having come to replace the Turkisms of earlier epochs. It is called Kazakhisms, Uzbekisms, Kirghisisms, Tadjikisms, etc. [2: 104].

At present, according to E.D. Suleimenova, “quality” of the Kazakhstanis’ Russian language is preserved. This is because it continues to function in all its forms of existence (codified literary language, spoken language, popular language, social dialects) and is not influenced by any local dialect on account of the absence thereof. However, in spite of the mentioned particularities the Russian language in Kazakhstan experiences the more and more increasing influence of Kazakh culture and Kazakh language [32: 90]. Here are examples: *namep* [pΛ'ter] (dwelling, apartment), *макма*

[tʌk'ta:] (slab), *күрек* [ku'rek] (shovel), *күм* [kum] (sand), *жол* [ʒɔl] (road), *жүт* [ʒut] (ice-slick).

It should be noted that grapheme and phonetic structuring of a long known (borrowed) Turkism is changing in some cases, as well as wrong semantic interpretation of a word and its translation takes place sometimes. Thus, some texts are saturated with Kazakh untranslatables having unusual phonemic-literal combinations (cf.: *сандык* [sʌn'dik] (chest) where there is the successfully assimilated Turkism *сундук* [sun'duk] in the Russian language), Kazakh-Russian homonyms provoking wrong associations (*шестиканатная* [ʃestikə'nʌtnʌjə] yurt that might be translated as “six rope yurt” is supported not by six ropes, but by six segments of the yurt base), unusual derivatives (*кошомный* [kə'ʃɔmni] from *кошма* [kəʃma:]), etc. Such facts make it possible to discuss the observed vocabulary extension of the Russian language in Kazakhstan as an old areal of its functioning. Kazakh words are assimilated by the Russian language to a greater or lesser degree of organicity, thus bringing new naming units relevant to residents of the same territory and uniform communicative space into discourse [32: 93].

Due to labor migration the lexis of the CIS countries' Russian language affected by languages of those countries' titular peoples is transferred to the Russian language of Russia. And since in the last decades Russian construction industry compared to other professional fields employs nearly the most number of guest workers from CIS countries having lower living standards than those of Russia, this phenomenon makes its contribution to the number of borrowings in PBS and causes linguistic polyphony of the Russian city's construction sector. Thus, the Russian LSP of modern builders has frequent borrowings not only from the English language are but also from Turkic ones.

In addition to external borrowings the modern builders' professional discourse includes internal ones. The latter is the result of redistributing lexical means within a national language as follows:

- reactivation of lexis, i.e., a dynamic process of returning the lexical layer having been in passive vocabulary in the Soviet period to active use by native speakers. There are three subgroups of the words having moved from the active Russian lexicon to passive one under the influence of different factors in pre-revolutionary and Soviet period, and the factors of reactivating words in every subgroup are defined as follows:
 1. Return of the realities denoted by lexical units of the first group (*guild of builders, commercial apartment building, family mansion*, etc.). Cf.: “On behalf of the Top guild of builders I congratulate you...” [39].
 2. Orientation to western models of state governing and society organizing in Russia led to emerging realities and concepts denoted by lexical units of the second group (*construction business, real estate mortgage, condominium, municipal housing*, etc.). Cf.: “How to get a real estate mortgage...” [11]. Influence of this factor is supported by a tendency of the Russian language as one of the richest world languages for unification of its lexical forms and meanings similarly to other highly developed languages.

3. Reassessment of public opinions on social, political, religious concepts and realities denoted by words of the third group. A whole layer of reactivated terms related to the architecture and construction of religious buildings (*nave, side-alter, dome, laura, arched gable, delubrum, holy doors, undercross apple* и др.) entered to modern LSPC at the turn of the 21st century. [10].
- semantic neologization. Modern dynamics of the Russian language is defined to a large extent by activation of various processes occurring within its semantic neologization. Qualitative transformations of vocabulary take place due to generating meanings of new words and converting those of already existing ones. The result of such processes is newly appeared semantic neologisms being a considerable part of the whole flux of new words in the Russian language at the turn of the 21st century. An example of the semantic renovation is contained in the word combination “*ideology* of low-height construction” where the word ideology does not have formerly usual ideological and political orientation. Quantitative abundance of the semantic neologisms appeared in a process of semantic neologization shows the productiveness of this manner. On the one hand, this is because of the nature of the human mind, i.e., human ability to generalize and systemize several phenomena of the objective world in one word at once. On the other hand, this is defined by the internal linguistic tendency, i.e., pursuing economy of lexical resources as well as derivational ones. At the turn of the 21st century the semantic processes occurs in the Russian language actively, diversely and productively, demonstrating the vitality of the language itself and the creative potential of its speakers. [14: 5-10]
 - use of anthroponyms in names of construction companies or at the creation of brands for construction materials or services. And in the Russian market one can meet both products and companies named after real first and second names of their founders and owners, and those containing fictitious surnames in their names, the latter, however, being aliases of quite definite persons that live and act. The selection of a fictitious surname as a brand is considered to be granting much more latitude to its owner than in case of using a real surname, for it is possible to come up with a really successful meaningful surname. [17]. Besides, there are names arisen in the last decades that include last and first names of famous historical figures, as well as literary characters and mythological creatures. Below are examples of five types of onyms really existing in the construction market of Ekaterinburg.
 1. Real: *Molokov’s Architectural Workshop*, Ltd.; *Sukhov’s Architectural Bureau*; *Barmin-Studio*, the network of art-centers; *Volynskiy & K*, Ltd., the engineering design bureau.
 2. Fictitious, meaningful: *Pokrasoff.com* (from *покраска* [pə'krʌskə] – painting), the service company; *Holodov* (from *холод* [hələd] – freeze), the trading and mounting company in the field of conditioning systems and refrigerating equipment; *Graf Kotlov* (from *сраф* [gra:f] – count and *котёл* [kə'tjəl] – boiler), the trading and mounting company in the field of boiler equipment and heating systems.
 3. Historical: *Tatischev*, the residential estate; *Stroganov*, the office building; *The Ring of Ekaterina*, the business center; *Ermak*, Ltd., the construction and repair company.

4. Literary characters: *Onegin Plaza*, the business center; *Danilo-master*, the trading and mounting company.
 5. Mythonyms: *Антей* [a:n'tei] (Antaeus), Ltd., the trading and construction company; *АТЛАС СТРОЙ* [ət'lʌs strɔi] (Atlas construction), CJSC, the construction company; *Гермес* [ger'mes] (Hermes), the construction and repair company. [37]
- inclusion of lexemes and phrasemes from various jargons, primarily criminal argot, to the construction professional jargon. Thus, the following units are actively used: the lexeme *бугор* / *багор* [bu'gɔ:r] / [bɔ'gɔ:r] in the meaning of a “ganger, boss” [4], the phraseological unit *разводит заказчика на удорожание* [rʌzvɔ'dit'zə'kʌzʃɪkə nə udɔrə'zʌniə] in the meaning of “to convince a customer in the necessity of examining and approving the increased estimated expenditure for construction”. The latter expression is based on the criminal jargon word *развод* [rʌz'vɔd] that means a type of fraud [12];
 - transfer of words from general literary Russian language into the construction jargon as a result of terminologizing or jargonizing their meanings, e.g., the substantive *соска* [sɔskə] (rubber teat) is actively used in the construction jargon in the meaning of “concrete mixing station” [35];
 - use of dialectal and regional lexemes in the professional construction discourse, e.g., the substantive from Pskov parlances *двоеручник* / *двуручник* [dvʌje'ruʃnik] / [dvu'ruʃnik] (two-hander) in the meaning of “carpenter’s plain, which is to be used by two men” [20: 126];
 - involvement of popular words, phraseological units and their misspelled forms, such as *асвальт* [əs'vʌl't], normally *асфальт* [əs'fʌl't] (asphalt);

Innovations in the field of phonetics mainly comprise the professional popular language and include typical for popular language in general instances of substituting, omitting or, on the contrary, adding some sounds into the correct literary form of a word. For example, the forms having the dissimilated consonants *pp* [rr] → *лр* [lr] *коРидор* [kɔri'dɔr], *лабоРатория* [lɔbɔrɔ'tɔriə] → *коЛидор* [kɔli'dɔr], *лабоЛатория* [lɔbɔlɔ'tɔriə] (corridor, laboratory) and an eliminated hiatus between adjacent vowels *брандмауэр* [brʌnd'mauɛr] → *брандмауЗэр* [brʌnd'mauzɛr] (firewall).

The abovementioned examples cause activating a tendency to a style deflation in the field of LSPC. Due to the crisis developments in agriculture and regional industry an influx of people from villages, settlements and small towns have increased significantly resulting in the stylistic deflation of professional construction discourse by the introduced elements of popular language and local parlances. In addition, we have to note increasing a share of participation in the professional construction discourse for persons somehow connected to the criminal environment and being respective jargon speakers as well as people speaking Russian as a foreign language.

A different tendency is “revealed” by **innovations in the field of grammar**. The latter is primarily related to plural masculine nouns in subjective case, among which

dominating forms are those having the stressed ending *-а/-я* [a:]/[ja:] instead of the unstressed endings *-ы/-и* [i] or *-а/-я* [ə]. Thus, in the informal spoken construction language there are such frequent forms as *тросá* [trə'sa:] (ropes), *кабеля́* [kəbe'lja:] (cables), *бульдозерá* [bul'dəze'ra:] (bulldozers), *договорá подряда* [dəgəvə'ra:pədr'ja:də] (contract agreements), *дюбеля́* [djube'lja:] (studs), *силосá* [silə'sa:] (silos), *реперá* [repe'ra:] (benchmarks), *профиля́* [prəfi'lja:] (profiles) and not so frequent forms of neuter and feminine nouns as *средствá* [sred'stva:] (assets), *должностя́* [dəlʒnəs'tja:] (job titles), *клетя́* [kle'tja:] (cages), and the like.

These forms may change their stylistic tone for a word may transfer from one language subsystem to another. For example, the abovementioned innovations *договорá* [dəgəvə'ra:] (agreements), *средствá* [sred'stva:] (assets), *кабеля́* [kəbe'lja:] (cables), *профиля́* [prəfi'lja:] (profiles) are met in the formal spoken construction language more often than their normative analogs, testifying their entering the literary professional construction sublanguage or, in other words, acquiring higher stylistic feature (popular language word → professional jargon unit → spoken language word → neutral term).

On the whole, informal (or semiformal) professional language of modern builders testifies the absence of stability in stylistic features of languages for special purposes, the stylistic dynamism of the latter.

In our view, a crucial factor of the LSPC development in terms of style lowering is drastic social shifts occurred in our country in the late 80s early 90s of the last century and caused, on the one hand, by change of socioeconomic and political system, and on the other hand, by technical progress in the field of IT.

The former denied totalitarian restrictions in the Russian language, weaken and loosened language standards in general, strengthened the personal principle in verbal communication. That resulted in the traditional for periods of sharp turns in the sociopolitical life significant growth of deflated style innovations in spoken language, especially vulgarisms and jargonisms.

The latter, fast development of IT, created prerequisites for the development of information society, i.e., opportunities for free information exchange within the country and practically worldwide, very high relevance level of such exchange making the electronic professional intercourse an extremely popular means of communication. A particular result of such communication is increase in the number of foreign borrowings in the professional construction discourse, more general consequence being decrease of a speech standard. The Russian bookish and written literary language cedes its status of the language normative base to the language of electronic mass media, which has incomparably higher frequency of influencing a target audience and coverage of the audience than other media.

Perhaps, it would be a mistake to consider the role of extralinguistic social reasons in the decrease of a modern professional speech standard as an exceptional and the only important one. To complete the picture, it is also necessary to take into account intralinguistic development rules for language, including LSP.

Firstly, the growth of use frequency for non-normative words including obscene, vulgar, jargon, popular and dialect ones is connected to some special immanent properties of such words and expressions, expressivity and emotional evaluativeness (usually negative) among them; use of invective words allows affect a listener more effectively in some situations [41]; by means of substandard language units a speaker can relieve his inner stress as well as tension in a group of his conversation partners or listeners (usually in a humorous way).

Secondly, the substandard and especially jargon and borrowed professional words are capable of saving lingual efforts. That is most evidently in cases when a professional jargonism (a word or compact word combination) can substitute a cumbersome definition or description of some action. For example: *миксер* [ˈmikser] (mixer) – a motor truck concrete mixer of a large volume (more than 3x3 m) mounted on a chassis having a track of 0.9 m [26: 166]; *вошки* [ˈvɔʃki] (lice) – the shortest self-driving screws no more than 1 cm long (construction finishers' jargon). For example: *We fix a U-profile by "voshki", a couple on each side. And then we'll sheathe it with drywall* [30]; *горбылька* [gərˈbilˈkə] (muntin) – a profile intended for dividing glazed plains of leaves [45]; *кульбит* [kulˈbit] (culbite) – top performance: processing the topping with a double-rotor high speed rotation machine (at the parallel pass) having a different blade angle on the right and left rotors [35].

A similar property of saving lingual efforts is inherent to complex words and acronyms that are increasingly created and used in the professional construction communication in the last decades, for example: *газобетон* [ˈgʌzəbeˈtɒn] (aircrete) – cell concrete produced by introducing gasifier into the mixture consisting of binder, water and ground quartz sand [6: 35]; *ГВЛ* [ˈgɛ ˈvɛ ˈel] (GPB) – gypsum plasterboard [6: 43].

Increase in the number of LSPC lexical units allowing to diminish speech efforts of a speaker and shorten a text is the second most important tendency characterizing modern changes in the Russian professional construction discourse. This tendency in contrast to the first one mostly illustrates manifesting the inner stimuli for language development, the struggle of such antinomies as a speaker vs. a listener, usage vs. language system capacity, a code vs. a text, an informative language function vs. an expressive one, asymmetric dualism of the linguistic sign. At present in PBS there is a priority of a speaker within the first antinomy, that of language system capacity within the second one, a code for the third, an expressive language function for the fourth and the signified for the fifth ones. But the final settlement of those antinomies is impossible because every specific solution of any linguistic antinomy generates new contradictions of the same kind and they are the constant stimulus for language development.

Thus, extralinguistic social factors and intralinguistic laws of language development actively interact in the field of LSPC, defining main directions of its dynamics: stylistic instability, activation of borrowing and acquiring such a property as polylinguality or language polyphonicism, the apparent tendency for diminishing speaker's lingual efforts. The interaction of those factors is natural and necessary for the intralinguistic laws of language development are not asocial (because language itself is a social phenomenon) and social changes are impossible outside the language environment, without communication including professional one.

Finally, it is appropriate to make a conclusion that the language changes of the last decade in the 20th century are of drastic nature caused by historical events in Russia's social life of the turning period. These changes include language democratization connected to the expanding boundaries of lexis use and shifting or even losing language literary standards in some cases resulted in use of substandard and jargon words, language "scientification" caused by large numbers of borrowings and active use of terms in everyday speech, changing boundaries of active and passive vocabulary caused by obsolescence of Soviet realities and return of many phenomena and concepts of times long gone as well as creating neologisms on a mass scale and transforming semantically lexical units of the Russian language due to emerging a large number of new realities in human modern life. For this reason and owing to open borders between countries allowing exchanging both information and various achievements and gains in the field of engineering and science the Russian language is replenished with a large number of foreign words being at different levels of acquisition by the modern language system. The language changes also affected the field of word formation where one can observe traditional derivational patterns and formerly-peripheral ones.

References

1. *Borzyakova A.V.* Development of Russian language word-formation system in 21st century. Biysk, 2006.
<http://5ballov.qip.ru/referats/preview/88623/?referat-razvitie-slovoobrazovatelnoy-sistemyi-russkogo-yazyika-v-hh-veke>
2. *Buribayeva M.A.* Turkic words in Russian language as a result of language contacts. The Irkutsk State Linguistic University (IGLU) Newsletter. № 3, 2013. Irkutsk: IGLU, 2013. P. 99-105.
3. Culture and living of Buryatia people.
<http://xreferat.ru/41/141-1-kul-tura-i-byt-narodov-buryatii.html>
4. Dictionaries and encyclopedias at Academic. Dictionary of Russian argot. – GRAMOTA.RU. V.S. Elistratov. 2002
http://russian_argo.academic.ru/1048/%D0%B1%D1%83%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%80
5. Dictionaries and encyclopedias at Academic. Wikipedia.
<http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ruwiki/1651244>
6. *Ferronskaya A.V.* Production and application of gypsum materials and articles. Terminological dictionary. M.: ASV publishing house, 2006. 263 p.
7. Foreign innovations in modern Russian language (lexicographical and sociolinguistic aspects).
<http://xreferat.ru/31/419-1-inoyazychnye-innovacii-v-sovremennom-russkom-yazyke-leksikograficheskii-i-sociolingvisticheskiy-aspekty.html>

8. *Geranina I.N.* On definition of the concept “foreign embedding”. Bulletin of Penza State Pedagogical University (PGPU) n.a. V.G. Belinskiy. Human sciences. № 4 (8), 2007. Penza: PGPU, 2007. P. 38-40.
9. *Geranina I.N.* On the term “borrowing”. Bulletin of Penza State Pedagogical University (PGPU) n.a. V.G. Belinskiy. Young scientists’ sector. № 6 (10), 2008. Penza: PGPU, 2008. P. 101-103.
10. *Geraschenko M.B.* Reactivation of words by the beginning of 21st century (semantic-lexicographical aspect). PhD thesis in Philology. Belgorod: Belgorod State University (BGU), 2009.
<http://cheloveknauka.com/reaktivizatsiya-leksiki-k-nachalu-xxi-veka>
11. Group of companies “Nedvizhimost Urala”.
<http://www.domnedv.ru/page38/page123/>
12. In a dictionary. Your word in history.
<http://vslovare.ru/slovo/slovar-vorovskogo-zhargona/razvod>
13. Interior solutions by the GlassGuard tempered glass.
<http://glassguard.su/>
14. *Kasyanova L.Yu.* Semantic neologization in Russian language at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century. The Tomsk State Pedagogical University (TGPU) Newsletter. № 5 (56), 2006. Tomsk: TGPU, 2006. P. 5-10.
15. *Khomutova T.N.* Language for special purposes (LSP): linguistic aspect / Bulletin of Penza State Pedagogical University (PGPU) n.a. V.G. Belinskiy. Human sciences. № 27, 2012. Penza: PGPU, 2012. P. 96-106.
16. *Kirillina A.V.* Russian language in Moscow: some changes (2007-2009) // Russian language in the conditions of linguistic and cultural polyphony: /Coll. of scient. papers / Ed. by V.V. Krasnykh. M.: Publishing center “Azbukovnik”, 2011. P. 107-133.
17. *Kovtunov A.F.* Marketological problems of anthroponymic brands. SPb.: Institute of Business and Law (IBP), 2010.
<http://www.ibl.ru/konf/021210/69.html>
18. *Krasnykh V.V.* Polyphony as inevitable reality of contemporary existence // Russian language in the conditions of linguistic and cultural polyphony: /Coll. of scient. papers / Ed. by V.V. Krasnykh. M.: Publishing center “Azbukovnik”, 2011. P. 134-158.
19. *Krysin L.P.* Foreign words in modern Russian language. M., 1968.
20. *Lantsev V.V.* Wooden architecture of the Russian North-West. An illustrated collection of architectural and constructional terms (country dwellings, buildings for public worship). Part 1 “A-3”. SPb, 2002. 230 p.

21. *Leichik V.M.* Science of terminology: Subject, methods, structure. 4th ed. M.: Book house "Librokom", 2009. 256 p.
22. Nature of changes in the system of Russian language at the end of 21st century. <http://xreferat.ru/31/2793-1-harakter-izmeneniy-v-sisteme-russkogo-yazyka-konca-xx-veka.html>
23. NewMIX. What is HDF board?
<http://newmix.ru/stati/chto-takoe-hdf-plita.html>
24. *Popova T.V.* Multilinguality of names in a contemporary megalopolis (as exemplified by the catering establishments in the city of Ekaterinburg) // "Communicative and managerial strategies in social system development: trends, resources, technologies": Proceedings of the International theoretical and practical conference (Ekaterinburg, November 15-16, 2012). Part 1. Integrated marketing communications as a factor of social systems development dynamics. Ekaterinburg: The Institute of Public Administration and Entrepreneurship (IGUP), 2012. P. 220-226.
25. *Popova T.V.* New phenomena in Russian word-formation at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century / Philological class. Scientific journal, № 12, 2004. Ekaterinburg: Ural State Pedagogical University (UrGPU), 2004. P. 42-47.
26. *Rashev V.G.* Engineering structures of railways and highways. Illustrated dictionary. SPb.: Polytechnika, 2008. 456 p.
27. RBC daily. Turkish Renaissance Construction and its partner will complete the construction of the "Moscow-City".
<http://www.rbcdaily.ru/market/562949984158896>
28. Russian language and soviet society. Vocabulary of modern Russian literary language. Sociolinguistic research. Edited by M.V. Panov. M.: "Nauka" publishing house, 1968. 188 p.
29. *Sklyarevskaya G.N., Vaulina E.Yu.* Let's speak correctly! The newest and most widely used borrowings in modern Russian language: Concise glossary. SPb.: The Philology Department of Saint Petersburg State University (SPbGU); M.: "Academia" publishing center, 2004. 224 p.
30. Slovoborg. Popular dictionary of Russian language.
<http://slovoborg.su/tag/%D1%81%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE/4305.php>
31. StroyMaster. Construction company. Price list.
<http://www.stroy-master66.ru/index.php?id=1011>
32. *Suleimenova E.D.* Linguistic processes and politics: monograph / Almaty: Kazakh University, 2011. – 117 p.

33. *Swales J.M.* Research Genres. Explorations and Applications. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. . P. 54.
34. TechnNIKOL. Construction systems. The bituminous primer TechnNIKOL №01.
<http://www.tn.ru/catalogue/mastik/praimer1/>
35. Technopol. Floorist's slang.
http://www.tehnopol-neva.ru/sleng_polovika
36. TeoHim. Topping floors - hardened concrete floors.
<http://www.teohim.ru/beton/info/toppingovye-poly/>
37. The electronic directory 2GIS Ekaterinburg March 2014.
<http://ekaterinburg.2gis.ru/>
38. The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics / Editor-in-Chief R. E. Asher. - Pergamon Press, 1994. P. 663.
39. The First Builders's Guild.
<http://www.1gs-sro.ru/>
40. *Tkachenko A.Yu.* Borrowed words in the system of modern Russian language. M.: 2009.
http://www.0ve.ru/anglijskij/zaimstvovannaya_leksika_v_sisteme.html
41. Unabridged dictionary of Russian expressive discourse / Comp. by V.V. Khimik. SPb.: Norint, 2004. 768 p.
42. *Valgina N.S.* Active processes in modern Russian language: Textbook. M.: Logos, 2001. 304 p. Electronic publication. © The Distance Education Center of Moscow State University of Printing Arts (MGUP). Updated 20.11.2002. Chapter 7.5. Foreign borrowings.
<http://www.hi-edu.ru/e-books/xbook050/01/part-009.htm#i2483>
43. VIP-cottages.
<http://vip-cottages.ru/>
44. Wikipedia. Liquid Nails.
http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%96%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5_%D0%B3%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%B4%D0%B8
45. Window repairing. Professional slang.
http://rem-okon.ucoz.ru/index/professionalnyj_zhargon/0-48
46. *Zemskaya E.A.* Active processes of modern word building // Russian language at the end of the 21st century (1985-1995). M., 1996. P. 120-124.
47. *Zemskaya E.A.* Word-formation as activity. M., 1992.

48. *Zhilina O.A.* Linguostylistic norm in terms of computer technologies // Russian language: historical fate and modernity: International congress of Russian language researchers (Moscow, The Philol. Dept. Of Moscow State University n.a. Lomonosov (MGU), March 13-16, 2001: Scholarly works and proceedings) / Under the general editorship of M.L. Remneva and A.A. Polykarpov. M., MGU, 2001. P 256.



Language Policy in Modern Kazakhstan

Svetlana Zhanabayeva, Kazakh-British Technical University, Kazakhstan
Meirimkul Tuleup, Almaty Institute of Energy, Kazakhstan
Aktoty Suranshiyeva, Abai Humanitarian Pedagogical College, Kazakhstan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0179

Abstract

Kazakhstan is experiencing a very important period in its history. Having gained independence in 1991 it has faced a lot of challenges one of which was its language policy. Historically, Kazakhstan has long been closely linked to Russia. First, it was tsarist Russia, then the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet period the citizens of Kazakhstan have used two languages: Kazakh and Russian. But during the Soviet Union the languages were not equivalent as the Russian language was used in almost every sphere of the urban life, while the Kazakh language was preserved in rural areas and within doors in the towns and cities. As the majority of urban population was represented by Slavic people speaking Kazakh in society was considered backward and Kazakhs were obliged to learn the Russian language to be successful in their careers.

Since independence the country has undertaken many steps to introduce the Kazakh language. Kazakh-medium schools and kindergartens were opened and new laws on the use of the language were passed. Since then there are two main languages in Kazakhstan: Kazakh and Russian. The first language is the state language of the country and the second one is called (not legally designated in the Constitution nor Language Law of 1997 as such) the language of interethnic communication, though the Russian language still preserves its strong positions. The Kazakh language is declared to be the main one (as the state language) but in fact the Russian language could be heard everywhere.

Several years ago the President of the country launched an initiative of using three languages in Kazakhstan – Kazakh, Russian, and English – which made the language situation in the country more complicated.

Language policy in Kazakhstan is one of the most discussed issues both in the country and abroad. Kazakhstan has a unique situation with languages due to its historic development as a former Soviet Union republic. The state language is Kazakh but factually the majority of the population speaks Russian, especially in urban areas of the country. Similar situations have existed in other countries of the former Soviet republics as well but not to the same extent as in Kazakhstan. Thus, Turkmenistan used severe measures including closing the non-Turkmen schools or turning them into mixed ones (with some classes using Russian as the language of instruction) and ending Russian-language broadcasts within Turkmenistan. The extent of linguistic nationalization in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has been somewhere between the pole of Turkmenistan on the one hand and Kazakhstan on the other (Fierman, 2009).

But the problem of the state language exists not only in former Soviet republics. O'Callaghan studied the cases of state language policy in Ireland and Norway. Both Ireland and Norway have built up their state or indigenous languages in their nation building process, but the languages have lost out to the imported language of their former occupants, English and Danish. In his article the author describes and compares the language policy in these two European countries with the situation in Kazakhstan (O'Callaghan, 2005).

As a sovereign country Kazakhstan appeared on the map in 1991, but the issue of language cannot be discussed without going back to its Soviet period as a part of the Soviet Union for about 70 years. Soon after the October revolution the territory of the Soviet Union was divided among the republics and the borders between them were defined according to the Bolshevik decrees. The presence of the particular ethnic group was taken into consideration. As part of this delimitation the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. But territorial unity did not mean common nationality like in the case of the United States of America and other countries. The main thing to unite people of the whole country, the Soviet Union, was language, the Russian language. From the very beginning of the Soviet history the Russians were introduced in every Republic as higher class people, though not so directly. According to official declarations they were called elder brothers (starshii brat) for other nationalities.

Among ideologists there was a lot of discussion of eliminating the notion of nationalities and making all the citizens of the Soviet Union Soviet people. But the process wasn't successful due to the fact that some republics, especially Baltic ones, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, as well as Georgia and Armenia confronted the Russian influence and the language during the whole period of their Soviet history. Such countries as Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan also preserved their homogeneous entity due to a high share of the titular nationality. There were schools and higher educational institutions with instruction in the native languages, two official languages in state and public organizations.

A very different situation prevailed in Kazakhstan. There were very few schools with the instruction in the Kazakh language in cities. For example, in Almaty, the former capital and the biggest city of the country, there were only 3 schools of this type. All the other ones instructed pupils in Russian. Schools with instruction in the Kazakh language could be found mostly in rural parts of the country. As a result, the Kazakhs living in the cities and even a large part of countryside (especially in central and northern parts of the country) could speak Russian.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that at the beginning of the Soviet era many steps were taken to strengthen national language: schools with the instruction in these languages on a vast scale; the best representatives of the non-Russian nationalities were sent to get higher education, and books of local writers were published in Kazakh. This was the way the authorities tried to form a new nation.

But in the second part of the XX century the situation in Kazakhstan has changed dramatically. The Russian language became much stronger and more vastly represented than the language of the titular nation as Kazakhs were called. There were several reasons for that. The first and main reason was the ruling role of Moscow in every sphere of life which spoke Russian and was headed by Russians. As a result, for any Kazakh to be involved in public life and be successful in his career meant to be fluent in Russian. As one of the former Communist Party functionary said: “We tried to learn Russian, spending days and nights because one couldn’t reach any position or just a good job without knowing it. It was very difficult. Trying to make the lives of our children easier and better we all sent them to Russian-language schools” (Zhanabay B., 2013). That was a dramatic reason for strengthening the role of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. For representatives of the titular nation in cities sending children to Kazakh-language schools meant to deprive them of decent life. That led to reduction of the number of such schools. It is important to mention that in higher educational institutions even in Kazakhstan most instruction was in Russian and so it was difficult for a student that graduated from the Kazakh-language school to study there.

A very important consequence of the situation was that Kazakhs were divided into 2 or even 3 parts: the Kazakh-language speakers, the bilinguals and the Russian-language speakers with very low if any knowledge of the Kazakh language. Due to the education received the latter two groups are factually bearers not just of the Russian language but the Russian culture as well. We can say that they are the products of the Soviet policy on formation a new type of the citizen, a Soviet person. But as everything in the Soviet Union was based on the Russian language and culture this kind of Kazakhs became, in fact, Russians with Kazakh appearance and perception of themselves as Kazakhs. “Real” Kazakhs (dominant Kazakh speakers) call them “shala-Kazakhs” which means “semi-Kazakhs”. But most of these “semi-Kazakhs” do not agree with this and often make an effort to learn the Kazakh language and culture. Professor W.Fierman studied this phenomenon and wrote about the difficulty to separate Kazakhstan’s identity from Russia and Russians (1998).

In 1954 Nikita Khrushchev, then leader of the Communist party of the Soviet Union introduced a “Virgin land” program which meant cultivating vast territories in central and northern Kazakhstan. The program brought thousands of Russians and Ukrainians to Kazakhstan which changed the demographic picture of the country. The newcomers enlarged the number of the Russian language speakers and made the Russian language almost the only spoken language in that part of Kazakhstan. So Kazakhs mostly populated southern and western parts of the country with prevailing of non-titular nationalities in the north. As a result, the Kazakh language was left for the countryside mostly populated by Kazakhs (but not in the northern and central parts of the country) while in the cities they made up rather little part.

According to Bhavna Dave (2007) in 1959 Kazakhs made up only 30% of the whole population, while Russians made up 42.7%, the other part was represented by Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Germans, Tatars, Uzbeks, Uygur, and Koreans. She writes that three-fourths of its population “was comprised of European nationalities, notably Slavs and Germans. The titular Kazakhs formed under 10 percent of its total inhabitants” (p.60).

On 22 September 1989 there was adopted the law “On Languages in the Kazakh SSR” in which Kazakhstan following the example of some other Soviet republics proclaimed the language of the titular nation, Kazakh, the state language while Russian was given the status of the language of interethnic communication. Later on by amendments to the Constitution there was determined that “the Russian language should be used on equal grounds along with the state language in state institutions and self-administrative bodies” (Constitution of RK). The Law was strengthened by issuing two normative-legal statements of the Government of Kazakhstan “On Widening the Sphere of Using the State language at State Authorities” and “On Approving the Regulations on the Order of the Control over Observing the Law on Languages” which were supposed to secure further widening and deepening the processes of language building in the country.

The law “On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan” adopted on 11 July 1997 determined the Kazakh language as the state language and underlined that the Russian language can be officially used in state institutions and self-administrative bodies. The State Program of the Languages Functioning and Developing for 2001-2010 offered three directions of language building: widening and strengthening of social and communicative functions of the state language; persevering general cultural functions of the Russian language; developing other languages of peoples of Kazakhstan. But realization of the Law on Languages requires extension of lexical and semantic features of the Kazakh language, entering new terminology. This was depicted in the Concept of State Work on Terminology in the Republic of Kazakhstan, approved by the Government of Kazakhstan on 21 April 2004.

At the same time, speaking at the second Civil Forum the President of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev said: “We should jointly support languages and cultural traditions of all the peoples of Kazakhstan. No one must be restricted in his right to use his native language and culture” (2005). This idea was supported by establishment of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan in 1995 which is according to Bhavna Dave an integral component of President Nazarbaev’s ethnic strategy. “At the centre, the Assembly consists of over 300 representatives of various ethnic groups, and has branches at the oblast level... Its membership is defined as an honour personally bestowed by the President that the recipient may not refuse (Dave, 2007).

To stimulate learning and wide use of the state language by the employees of state authorities on 21 September 2000 there was issued a decree of the Prime-Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Stimulating Administrative State Employees Preparing Documentation in the State Language”. By 2006 in 5 regions (oblasts) of Kazakhstan mainly populated by Kazakh-speaking people (Atyrau, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Mangistau and Shymkent oblasts) office-work was officially converted to the Kazakh language, but factually only about 50% of office-work was in Kazakh. (Round table..., 2006”).

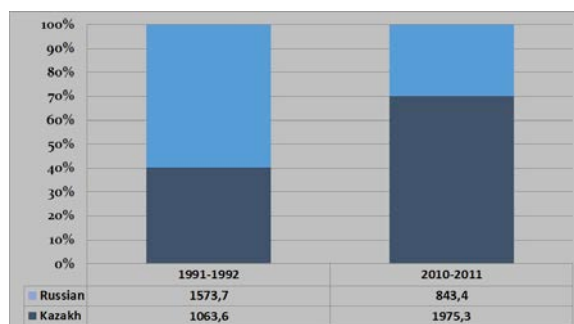
The government several times announced the dates for converting the whole office-work to the Kazakh language but the dates have been changed due to real situation in the country which is not ready to that. Abrupt converting to Kazakh would lead to complication of the social situation in the country. Nevertheless, some national extremists try to foster the process of complete converting to the Kazakh language. Thus, in September 2011 a group of prominent Kazakhstani writers, artists, politicians and public figures demanded that President Nazarbayev excluded from the Constitution the paragraph about the use of the Russian language on the equal grounds along with the State language. There was immediate response from the President Nazarbayev's Counsellor Yermukhamet Yertysbayev who said that the majority of Kazakhstani people would not support such an action and nobody, never and nowhere would force out the Russian language in the country. Some other important political leaders, such as Mazhilis Chairman Ural Mukhamedzhanov and Deputy-Chairman of the leading "Nur Otan" party Nurlan Nigmatulin, supported the position of Yertysbayev. There were other statements underlying that there should be used more mild reforms in the issue of strengthening the role of the Kazakh language in Kazakhstan.

In the interview to the Kazakhstani journalists the former director of the Inner Asia and Uralic Languages Center Professor William Fierman, who has studied the issue of the language policy in Kazakhstan, said that the pace of entering the Kazakh language into every sphere of life was too fast. He proposed to make the process more gradual. Another important thing he underlined was that Kazakhstan with its vast territories is different in the number of titular language speakers and it is impossible to demand equal knowledge of the language in all the parts of it. So, he recommended using different ways of entering the state language in southern and northern parts of the country (Fierman, 2009).

A new stage in the language policy in Kazakhstan started in 2007 when on the governmental level there was accepted a cultural project of the Tri-Unity of Languages – Kazakh, Russian, and English. The project has as opponents, so supporters. The "Letter of 124" as it was called, signed by 124 well-known artists, writers, as well as editors-in-chief of newspapers and magazines published in the country, representatives of intelligentsia and heads of social organizations with the support of 5 thousand people declared that due to the policy of the "tri-unity of languages" the Kazakh language will extinct, while the Russian and the English languages will occupy a leading position. The current practice shows that these misgivings might come true.

Education is the sphere that reflects all the problems of any state without any exclusion. So the language situation in Kazakhstan brought dramatic changes in the system of education due to necessity of time and loss of former. The percentage of Kazakhs with a good command of the state language is rising due to the increase of the number of the Kazakh language kindergartens, secondary schools and courses in Kazakh at higher educational institutions. According to in 1991-1992 1 063,6 thousand pupils attended the Kazakh language schools and 1 975,3 thousand pupils attended the Russian language schools. But in 2010-2011 the situation is different: 1 573,7 thousand pupils attended the Kazakh language schools and 843,4 thousand pupils attended the Russian language schools (Kazakhstan za gody..., 2011). In the

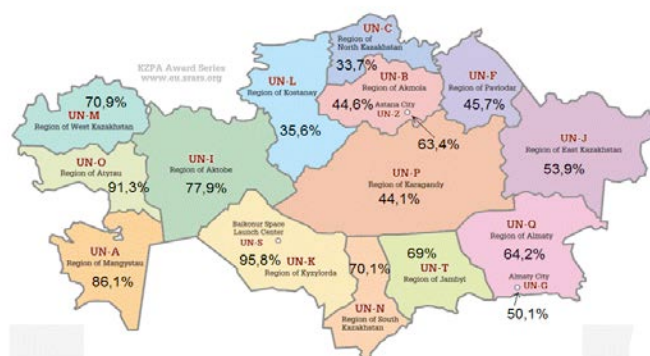
higher educational institutions the number of the Kazakh language tracks exceeded the number of the Russian language tracks.



Pic.1: Number of pupils at Kazakh and Russian language schools.

It is important to say that all these efforts have increased the number of Kazakhstani people speaking the Kazakh language. More children of Russian and other non-titular nationalities go to Kazakh-language schools and kindergartens as those non-Kazakhs who plan to live in Kazakhstan understand that to be a sound citizen of future Kazakhstan their children should be fluent in Kazakh. Another input to the increase of the number of Kazakh-speaking people was made by Kazakhs immigrating to the country from Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China, Russia and some other countries.

The population of Kazakhstan is 17, 186 people now. The majority of them are Kazakhs (52%), Russians make up 31%, Ukrainians - 4%. The other part is represented by Germans (2%), Tatars (2%) and other (9%).



Pic.2: The distribution of the Kazakh population across the country.

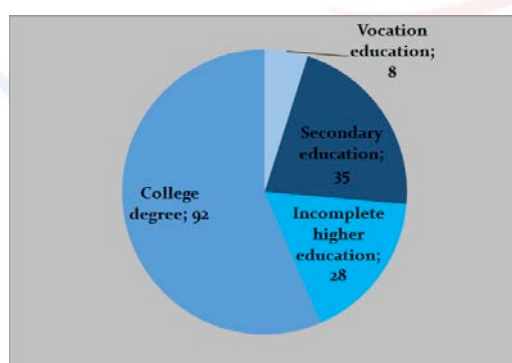
Kazakhs can be divided into two groups: Kazakh with a good command of the state language and those who are Russian speakers with low level of Kazakh. As mentioned before, the latter make up mostly the senior generation who grew up in the Soviet time and graduated from the Russian language schools. But a large percentage of them sent their children to schools with the Kazakh language of instruction.

The issue of the language situation in modern Kazakhstan has been interesting for many researchers. Vast studies were made by Professor Eleonora Suleimenova from the Kazakh National University. She thinks that there is a strong tendency in

strengthening the role of the Kazakh language in the modern society and studying of the sphere of functioning of the state language should be seen only in the field of the Kazakh-Russian bilingualism. In this approach particularly, one can see a positive trend in functioning of the Kazakh language in such spheres as: state bodies, education, mass media, culture and arts, the spheres where the support of the government is possible to the most extent. At the same time, information provision of public administration practically still goes without the Kazakh language which cannot promptly infiltrate into Internet and new mass media thus “losing” more successful languages (Suleimenova, 2011). The idea of making changes in the state language can be found in the work of O’Callaghan who thinks that “minority languages need to be modernized, and this will come at a price, if they are to survive for the long term. Kazakh is a young language in terms of literary history, but little is being done to make it possible to use Kazakh by all walks of life” (2005).

The weakness of the Kazakh language position is exacerbated by the strengthening of the third important language in the multilingual situation in the country, i.e. English. It is becoming more and more popular due to the introduction of the Tri-Unity of Languages Program as well as the work of numerous foreign companies and, of course, widespread use of Internet.

To evaluate the language situation in Kazakhstan and the efficiency of the language policy at this moment of the state’s development we conducted a selective survey among the citizens of Almaty representing different layers of the society, such as university instructors, students, workers of other professions, and pensioners. We used qualitative, quantitative and comparative methods of research and used statistical, demographic and socio-linguistic data. The total number of respondents was 163. Kazakhs made up the majority of them (58,9%), Russians constituted 26,4% and 14,7% of the surveyed were the representatives of other nationalities. There were interviewed citizens of different age, occupation and level of education. 92 respondents (56,4%) have university have a college degree and the rest 71 the interviewed (43,6%) have secondary, incomplete higher or vocational education.

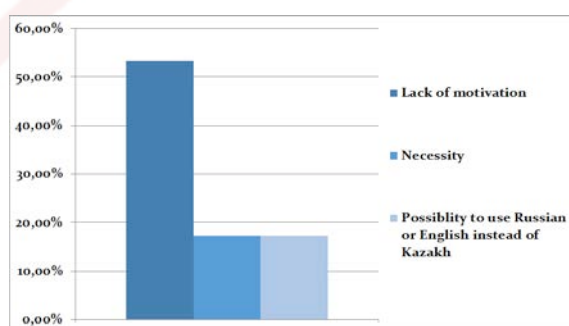


Pic.3: Education level of the respondents.

When asked to evaluate the language situation in Kazakhstan 27 respondents (16,5%) answered they considered it unstable or worsening. The other 83,5% gave a positive evaluation to the situation. Most of the interviewees believe that the current policy of the country meets the needs of our multinational population and takes into

consideration peculiarities of the linguistic, demographic and political situation in Kazakhstan.

One of the main goals of our country is expansion of the use of Kazakh as the state language in every sphere of life. 100 respondents (61.3%) think that the Kazakh language proficiency in the country is not very good, at the same time 24 persons (14,7%) consider it to be good or very good. This shows different attitudes of the Kazakhs and the Russians to the question as the majority of the former would like the state language to be used more, while most of the Russians would not like the strengthening of the Kazakh language in the society. At the same time, most of the Russian speakers underlined that they would like to know the state language. When asked about the problems in learning the language they named lack of motivation (50,3%) and necessity (17,2%) as well as a possibility to use Russian or English instead of Kazakh (17,2).



Pic.4: Problems in learning the Kazakh language

As for the role of the Russian language almost all the citizens of Kazakhstan noted a great role of the Russian language in our society. That was reflected in the answers to the question if they considered it necessary for their children and themselves to learn Russian. 140 people (85,9%) gave a positive answer to the question. The problem is that using it in every sphere of the life prevents proper development of the Kazakh language. The aim of the government should be strengthening of the state language to function as the main language and be used by all the citizens of the country at the sufficient level.

Almost all the respondents consider it necessary for their children and themselves to learn English (85,3%). So far, 55 interviewed people (33,7%) know the language well enough, while 18 people (11%) answered that they do not know the language. As it is shown in the survey, the English language is used, though not very much, by our citizens in Internet (22%), at work places (19%), for reading newspapers and watching television (22%).

We studied the use of the Kazakh, Russian and English languages by Kazakhstani people in different spheres of their life and found out that they mostly use Kazakh and Russian in everyday life and English for reading and Internet. But if they use the first two equally in family, the Russian language is still used more often in other spheres, such as work (studies), public places, office work and interpersonal communication. We underline again that the survey was made in Almaty and the results of the rural population interviewing might be different which we plan to explore in further work.

Here are the data of the current survey:

- Family: 50% Kazakh, 50% - Russian
- Work (studies) – 37% Kazakh, 63% - Russian
- Public places - 41% Kazakh, 59% - Russian
- With friends - 46% Kazakh, 72% - Russian
- Internet - 10% Kazakh, 87% - Russian , 18% - English
- Office work - 40% Kazakh, 60% - Russian
- Television - 37% Kazakh, 63% - Russian
- Newspapers, journals - 30% Kazakh, 60% - Russian, 10% - English
- Fiction - 36% Kazakh, 57% - Russian, 7% - English

Kazakhstan's status as an independent country provides the country's government many tools to promote its policies and protect state sovereignty. One of the policies is to attempt to create conditions in which the Kazakh language will become a consolidating factor that unites rather than separates the multi-ethnic population of Kazakhstan (Fierman, 1998). The results of our survey show that the language policy of the Kazakhstani government to strengthen the role of the Kazakh language is being implemented. The answers of the interviewed reflect real changes in the language situation in the country. The number of Kazakh speakers is increasing with every year but the process is not sufficient for entering the Kazakh language into every sphere of life. To improve the situation there should be taken such measures as opening free Kazakh language courses at work places and in mass media, starting studying the language from the early age (kindergartens) and primary school.

References

- Dave, B., *KAZAKHSTAN Ethnicity, language and power*. New York: Routledge, 2007, 242 p.
- Fierman, W. *Identity, Symbolism, and the Politics of Language in Central Asia*. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61:7, September 2009, 1207 — 1228
- Fierman, W. *Language and Identity in Kazakhstan*. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 171–186, 1998
- Fierman, W. *Yazyk bez politiki*. *Internews Kazakhstan*, February, 15, 2009
Kazakhstan za gody nezavisimosti: 1991-2010. Astana, 2011, pp. 194
- Lauer P.A. *An Education Research Primer*. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, San Francisco, 2006, 167p.
- Nazarbaev, N.A. Speech at the Second Civil Forum, September 12, 2005
- O'Callaghan, L. *War of Words: Language Policy in Post Independence Kazakhstan*. *Nebula: A Journal of Multidisciplinary Scholarship* ISSN-1449 7751, 1.3, Dec. 04 – Jan. 05
- Round table *The Future of Kazakhstan and the State Language*, 2006

Suleimenova E.D. *Macrosociolinguistics*. Almaty, Kazakh University Publishing house, 2011, 404 p.

Zhanabay B., Oral interview. 2013

Main documents on education issues of the Republic of Kazakhstan

- The Law “On Languages in the Kazakh SSR” (1989)
- The Law “On Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan” (1997)
- Normative-legal statement “On Widening the Sphere of Using the State language at State Authorities” (1998)
- The decree “On Stimulating Administrative State Employees Preparing Documentation in the State Language” (2000)
- The State Program of the Languages Functioning and Developing for 2001-2010 (2001)
- Concept of State Work on Terminology in the Republic of Kazakhstan, April 21, 2004
- “The Tri-Unity of Languages” cultural program (2007)
- The State Program of the Languages Functioning and Developing for 2011-2020 (2011)
- Normative-legal statement “On Approving the Regulations on the Order of the Control over Observing the Law on Languages” (2012)

iafor

Teaching Specialized Languages: Case Study of Kazakhstani Students' Opinion

Rashit Zagidullin, Kazakh-British Technical University, Kazakhstan
Aliya Zagidullina, Kazakh University of International Relations and World
Languages, Kazakhstan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0182

Abstract

Worldwide globalization, on the one hand, and the conservatism of education, on the other hand, result in foreign language education lag that makes it necessary to improve language training. Due to the changes that have occurred in the socio-economic sphere, it is necessary to identify educational services demand that has been formed by actual needs of prospective language specialists who are meeting the challenges of the time both in their university and field practice in the real-world environment. A survey of 80 senior students of the Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages was conducted to determine their opinion on methods of teaching foreign languages in general and Pragma-Functional Features of the Use of Specialized Languages course, in particular. Observation and follow-up interviews were carried out as well. The study shows that current use of foreign languages covers all major areas of professional activities. Foreign language teachers should expand the range of courses that present diverse functional usage of modern languages and provide students with knowledge and skills not only in General English (French, German, etc.), but in specialized variants of languages as well.

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1 Introduction

The world socioeconomic breakthrough in the third millennium has brought about radical changes in the demand on the quality and level of foreign language (hereinafter referred to as FL) knowledge. In its turn the latter predetermines both the urgency of drastic revision of the FL education policy and the need for appropriate adjustment of the didactics of FL technologies and the transition to new educational models (Kunanbaeva 2010).

In the literature on the problem it has been repeatedly mentioned that language training at large needs significant improvement (Usmanova 2012). This is particularly necessary for that part of prospective professionals who will do research, work or study abroad, join international or foreign companies in their home countries.

In the current situation the need for highly qualified foreign language teachers who can efficiently work in secondary schools, colleges and higher education institutions of various profiles will be overwhelming.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan specialists of this kind are being trained in specialized universities like the Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages (hereinafter referred to as KazUIR&WL) the graduates of which start their career either at various educational institutions or in those areas of professional activities where FL knowledge is a part and parcel of them.

Having been established in 1941 as Almaty Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages that trained teachers in just three languages (English, German, and French), the present-day KazUIR&WL is a multi-profile research and education complex on training specialists in a wide spectrum of international relations and 17 world languages (Zagidullin, Zagidullina 2013: 304-306).

The Mission of the KazUIR&WL as it is stated on the English website of the university is as follows,

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages is an innovative University, adaptive to the demands of the competitive environment of domestic and foreign labor markets.

Ablai Khan University is a teaching and research university utilizing innovative technologies and management principles.

The University trains a new generation of foreign language professionals, able to combine research, project development and entrepreneurship.

Ablai Khan University's mission is in line with the state policy of enhancing the educational and intellectual potential of the Republic of Kazakhstan, developing "innovative capacity of the nation" as the leading factors in the transition to an efficient knowledge-based economy, sustained economic growth and the formation of civil society (Mission 2014)

Among numerous measures and activities aimed at achieving these lofty goals there are the implementation of effective models of teaching foreign languages and introduction of new specialized courses at different faculties of the university.

One of the models of FL training that provides positive results is the combination of the communicative approach with the analytical learning method in which speech-mental activity, pragma-functional approach to the material selection and situational approach to teaching are taken into account.

Thanks to introducing new courses graduates from the Philology Faculty of the University apart from professional linguistic knowledge acquire some specialization regarding functional and pragmatic usage of a foreign language represented by various types of discourse and text. As a result, they can teach a FL to prospective professionals who will work in different sectors of the economy or act as interpreters and translators.

The students of the Translation Faculty of the university also need to learn about languages for special purposes (LSPs) since in their future professional career they may come across with a wide range of specialized languages.

To improve the professional competence of prospective language specialists - both teachers and translators/interpreters – since 2012-2013 academic year the curricula of the faculties mentioned above have been extended to including Pragma-Functional Features of the Use of Specialized Language course best practices of which are shared below.

2 Meeting the challenges: a new course on specialized languages

One of the aims of the course is to introduce such basic concepts of philology as text and discourse, focusing on their functional-pragmatic variation and a complex set of linguistic, cognitive and extra-linguistic features. Specialized languages embody the functional-pragmatic approach to language. They are languages that seek to fulfil certain special functions and are used in some particular professional or social environment.

The dual task of the course is to prepare a specialist who will be able to work effectively with specialized texts and to prepare a teacher who can help their students to master specialized languages. Hence the course is aimed at familiarizing the students with various types of LSPs and at laying the foundation of knowledge that prospective language specialists will widen, develop and apply in performing their specific professional tasks.

The course was designed for senior (4th year) students of the Philology Faculty and the Translation Faculty. It is a two-credit course that comprises 15 lectures and 15 seminars. In the framework of the course 30 hours are allocated to the Student Independent Study (SIS) during which the students are to do two research projects and 30 hours are allocated to the so-called Teacher-Guided Student Independent Study (TSIS) devoted to doing tasks in particular LSPs.

Though the two faculties have now merged into one - the Translation and Philology Faculty, the majors of the students who are to take the course are as different as they were at the time of introducing the course, namely, Translation Studies and (Foreign) Philology.

2.1 The course content

Within the course the students familiarize themselves with the structural features of language in general and specialized languages in particular, as well as with basic language functions and their compliance with various types of LSPs. The course adopts the plurilinguistic approach involving for the analysis of specialized texts the data from cognitive linguistics, pragmalinguistics, semiotics, cultural linguistics, etc.

Consequently, the students that take the course can analyze various specialized texts in foreign languages and identify structural, semiotic, pragmalinguistic, lexical and grammatical features of different kinds of texts: scientific, official, business, political, journalistic, advertising, religious ones.

Students learn that any specialized language is a multifunctional linguistic formation that being one of the functional varieties of a highly developed literary language carries out the following functions: epistemic (reflection of reality and knowledge storage), cognitive (new knowledge acquisition) and communicative (information transmission).

Students become aware that the concept 'a specialized language' represents a vast space of diverse linguistic elements. Researchers divide these language means into three groups, namely, (a) language means that are found in language in general; (b) language means that are found in all specialized languages and (c) language means that are found only in this or that particular specialized language.

2.1.1 Diversity of specialized languages

The languages of medicine and law were the first LSPs in the human history. Later there appeared languages of chemistry, physics and biology. Nowadays a conglomeration of specialized languages at large includes languages of science, mathematics, logic, linguistics and languages of man-machine communication such as programming languages, information languages (IL), data languages (DML). The latter are the languages with the formal method descriptions, special rules of formation and transformation of expressions and formulas, its own semantics. They are not closed systems and therefore the amount of texts generated is infinite.

Listening to the lectures students learn that the conglomeration of specialized languages at large falls into three broad categories: artificial languages, special languages and specialized languages proper (or LSPs).

Artificial languages are sign systems created for applying in the areas where the use of natural language is less effective or impossible, for example, algorithmic languages of certain systems.

Special languages are the languages that use nonverbal means for information transfer. They are sign languages, dance languages, the language of flowers, to name but a few.

Specialized languages proper (or LSPs) are a collection of all linguistic means used by professionals in a limited sphere of communication in order to ensure mutual understanding among the people who work in this field.

The main distinction of specialized languages lies in the specifics of the plane of content. It is the content that determines the specific address of specialized speech, forms of its functioning, genre and stylistic originality. Differentiating factors of specialized languages appear to be in their vocabulary. On the one hand, there takes place a selection of lexical units that exist in the common-language national and international fund; on the other hand, there occurs the formation (usually after the image and likeness of existing terms) of their own means of expressing the necessary meanings, categories, and concepts.

Above all, specialized languages oppose the language in general use. Technical and scientific languages serve different areas of knowledge. Characteristic features of specialized languages are special terminology and special rules of its choice, usage, and frequency of use. The presence of figures, drawings, diagrams, and tables is a particular component of many specialized texts.

Specialized language is basically a national language that displays a constant traditional tendency to internationalization. This trend is an inevitable consequence of the fact that the boundaries between general and special information are permeable. Professional knowledge and first of all science do not have state, national, ideological and other distinctions. It is this way that there occur various forms of international activities and professional communication all over the world.

Internationalization of LSPs requires, above all, their harmonization at the conceptual level, at the level of the content and scope of the basic concepts. This is performed in two main ways: using international (Greco-Roman) term formation components (prefixes, suffixes, stems) and direct verbal borrowing. In the past the sources of most borrowings were Latin (*process, final*) and Greek (*meter, chronometer*), nowadays it is English. British-American borrowings permeate the languages of economics, commerce, and computer science.

The diversity of specialized languages and the crucial role that they play in the sphere of professional communication made it necessary for researchers all over the world to start studying them as a special phenomenon. As a consequence of this there appeared proper names for specialized languages: *languages for special purposes* in the Anglo-American literature, *Fachsprachen* in the German papers, *FOS* (French for special purposes) that covers the cases of using French in professional and academic areas (Francais 2014). In linguistic papers written in Russian most researchers use a loan translation of the English term *yaziki dlya spetsialnikh tselei* (Russian abbreviation of the latter is *YaSTs*). But since the full form of the term is too long and its abbreviated form (ЯЦИ) is inconvenient and ambiguous, many researchers put the English abbreviation *LSP* in their papers written in Russian.

Much attention is given in the lectures to the current studies of specialized (professional) languages both abroad and in Kazakhstan. It is emphasized that at the present stage of research it is essential to conduct a comprehensive study of LSPs as a

kind of a special semiotic system that functions within the framework of the existing means of communication.

Special themes and special purposes of communication encourage professionals to use professional languages that are less connected to the national affiliation of its speakers and do not depend on the socio-economic structure of the community, ideology and worldview.

Since in the framework of the course it is practically impossible to study features of dozens specialized languages, the prospective teachers and translators/interpreters that take the course focus on some particular LSPs of the foreign languages they are majoring in.

2.1.2 Language of Science

Within the course students learn that specialized languages of science are enveloped by the scientific style the goal of which is to explain accurately and fully the facts described, to show causal relationships between events, to identify the patterns of development.

The scientific style is divided into four subgenres:

1. Scientific proper (represented by theses, monographs, research papers and research reports)
2. Research and academic (textbooks, reference books, encyclopedias)
3. Scientific and technical (instructions, manuals, etc.)
4. Popular science (essays, articles, and television broadcasts).

The language of science is the language of theoretical reasoning, rules and formulas that is used in scientific research, books on specialties, and academic reports. In this case the predominant form of it is a written one, oral implementations are often just the texts that are read aloud.

Oral scientific speech is a direct communication among representatives of a certain branch of science. In addition to terminology it involves the social component of the speech act.

The language of applied science and technology, presented in manuals, instructions and explanations, is used in the technical-industrial area and is located between the language of science proper and special conversational speech.

2.1.3 Legal discourse

The language of law is represented in the legal discourse, which along with the diplomatic, economic, political ones, is related to the institutional type of discourse. The text of legal documents is the main component of the legal discourse that performs information and socio-regulating functions. It is this communicative task that laws - including the country's Basic Law (Constitution) - have.

Legal discourse includes a special terminological system. Key concepts that define the legal profession are 'law', 'legislation', 'compliance with laws'. In addition to the

special terms (*sentence, defendant, crime*) legal documents use clichés typical of the language of law (*criminal group, representative of the prosecution, injured party*).

The performative power of the legal discourse is achieved not only through the use of certain speech acts in accordance with the objectives of regulation and enforcement, but also through the use of typical, fixed (clichéd) language means.

The syntax of a legal text is notable for the range of structures and means that make logical connections. Logical structures denoting cause-and-effect relationships are very frequent. To express them there are used special language means (*in case of, because, as a consequence*).

Lexical and grammatical accuracy of legal language allows fully and unambiguously express every legislative provision, avoiding ambiguities. Compressively not peculiar legal text, is not characterized reductions brackets and numerals. Numerals are usually transmitted words; do not use personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns.

Lexical and grammatical accuracy of the legal discourse allows expressing fully and unambiguously every legislative provision, avoiding ambiguities. Language compression is not peculiar to legal texts. The latter avoid using abbreviations, brackets and numerals. Numerals are usually rendered as words; personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns are relatively rare.

Specific procedures for the analysis of legal texts as well as the reconstruction of the history and conditions of their creation are important aspects of the interpretation of legal discourse. The interpretation of legal texts includes psychological, historical and philological (linguistic) interpretations. Proper names that appear both in national and international law occupy a special place. For example, *Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, Jackson–Vanik amendment*.

Working with legal texts requires extensive use of special literature, lexicographical sources, and electronic resources.

2.1.4 Diplomatic Discourse

The features of the language of diplomacy are vividly manifested in diplomatic discourse, which is a type of institutional discourse. Diplomatic discourse participants are professional diplomats and the purpose of it is to settle international and domestic policy relations (Karasik 2000).

Diplomatic activities date back to the VI century BC. During this period in Greek cities there appeared a practice of selecting people to carry on negotiations; the best speakers and skilled lawyers became the first ambassadors. It is through the skillful use of language that successful settlement of various conflicts between states is reached.

Until the XVIII century some countries used French as their language of diplomacy. Today, the diplomatic language can be used in two ways: as a discourse of professional diplomats and as diplomatic means used in various fields of human activity unrelated to professional diplomacy.

The basis of diplomatic discourse is constituted by negotiations. The strategies of diplomatic talks are implemented both in the most traditional oral speech genre (speeches, statements, discussions) and in the written genre (notes, memoranda).

The characteristic feature of diplomatic speech is the high degree of intertextuality, which is presented in the form of quotations and references to great leaders, historical facts and the positive experience of other countries in dealing with similar problems (Popov 2000, Karasik, 2004).

The aims of diplomatic discourse are to protect the national interests and welfare of the people, to implement foreign policy activities on behalf of the state, to prevent armed conflicts (wars) and to preserve peace.

Key words of the diplomatic language also apply to such concepts as *international image of the country, cooperation, sovereign equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of the subject, loyalty, restraint, tolerance, friendly power, intermediary country*. It is in the language of diplomacy where euphemisms are widely used.

Distinctive features of language communication in diplomacy are exceptional forethought and a high degree of awareness in applying communication strategies when choosing the means for information transfer to achieve the desired result.

2.1.5 Electronic communication

The investigation of the features of electronic communication is one of the rapidly developing areas related to specialized languages. The role of information technology in the life of the individual and the society nowadays is so high that it becomes impossible to ignore their obvious importance.

The specificity of network behavior that acquires standardized forms in terms of dealing with information allows considering the virtual communication as a fundamentally new way of self-expression and self-realization that is gradually developing into a new type of cultural behavior.

The Internet serves as a new communicative space in which communication cannot be limited by traditional texts; inevitably there is a need for wide dissemination of hypertext. In this sense, oral, written and electronic forms of communication can be considered as separate and successive stages of communication development.

Thanks to the Internet the socially significant communication is replenished with new genres of communication, such as e-mails; professional, business, scientific, political, and thematic forums and newsgroups; various forms of distance learning, chats and others.

Network environment is a vast field of creative speech activity in which each participant has an opportunity to communicate their personal linguistic and communicative potential. Electronic discourse combines oral and written discourse types.

A text appearing in the process of Internet communication is a kind of synthesis of the two types of oral and written speech; to be exact it turns out to be a written fixation of oral speech. The syntactic structure of such texts includes some elements that are characteristic of oral statements, such as inversion, elliptical constructions, the predominant use of simple sentences and the use the present tense in the meaning of the future tense. The rules of spelling and punctuation are often ignored. In the field of the network language derivational processes also take place; neologisms are formed on the basis of both morphological (abbreviation) and semantic (metaphorical transfer) derivation.

One of the features of virtual communication is the difficulty in transferring emotional function of speech, but networkers successfully overcome this by changing the spelling of words, multiplying consonants and vowels, making intentional errors, using exclamation/question marks and ellipsis. As additional means of expressing emotions they use any available or specially created graphics, smileys (emoticons), pictures, signs, and avatars. The language used in the Internet communication differs greatly from languages of other kinds of communication in using the channel of information transmission and has its own characteristic features.

Electronic statements are characterized, on the one hand, as lacking paralinguistic features (intonation, tone, voice volume), and on the other hand as involving spontaneity, non-compliance with the rules of syntax, colloquial words and phrases.

Over time, certain language forms are adopted and repeated by most social networkers and people get used to the non-verbal models according to which the networking language develops. Networkers have to adapt the available means to achieve the most complete understanding in the shortest period of time.

2.1.6 Specialized language textbooks

At present there are many special textbooks and manuals aimed at teaching students to deal with texts in their majors and to communicate on professional topics. To work efficiently with such didactic materials, students should master normative grammar in the volume of two courses of liberal arts colleges and have a good command of their basic foreign language at the lexical level. Most manuals use authentic materials from textbooks, scientific papers, newspapers and journals. Texts are provided with lists of words and phrases needed for a deeper understanding of the content of the texts and for conducting discussions on professional topics, as well as with detailed comments, which facilitate the student independent study (SIS), by providing the necessary information of cross-cultural nature and eliminating many lexical and grammatical difficulties.

Taking into consideration the difficulties that arise in the transition from the exercises of uncreative nature to speaking activities, the compilers of textbooks and manuals on specialized languages use primarily the communicative type of exercises to develop professional communication skills and ways of discussion. Students are also trained to work with specialized explanatory dictionaries.

Many textbooks and manuals combine academic, reference, lexicographic and cross-cultural information.

As an example of such didactic materials, *English for Lawyers* (Desyatova 2012) and *Just English. English for Lawyers. Basic Course* (Gumileva et al, 2012) may be given.

The manuals are designed for a broad audience of specialists that learn English for professional communication. Both books include contemporary professionally-oriented material from the legal and political sources of the UK and the U.S.

The texts selected for the manuals allow their users to master legal terminology, explore the basic concepts of law using authentic sources, learn about the history and functioning of the state, political and judicial structures of Great Britain and the United States, as well as to develop skills that are necessary for professional lawyers, namely, text analysis and discussion conduct.

The authors of *Just English* actively apply innovative teaching methods, including the opportunities offered by computer technology, for example, by using the Just English website, where the learners can find both necessary terms and other important materials.

Both manuals proved to be very useful in teaching the basics of legal discourse in the framework of Pragma-Functional Features of the Use of Specialized Languages course.

3 Getting the feedback on the course

To determine theoretical and practical significance of the Pragma-Functional Features of the Use of Specialized Languages course, to identify its strengths and weaknesses in order to remove the latter at the end of each term there were conducted surveys in the oral (interviews) and written (questionnaires) forms.

3.1 Methods and procedure

The surveys were carried out for two years, namely, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years. The respondents are 80 fourth-year students of the Philology Faculty and the Translation Faculty studying English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Polish at the Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages.

The main questions in the questionnaires were the question concerning the methods of teaching a foreign language in general, the question on strengths and weaknesses of the course, the question on the aspects that need more attention in teaching specialized foreign languages.

The students were interviewed after their internship (field practice) at various organizations: secondary schools, universities, consulates, companies, etc.

3.2 Findings and discussion

Most respondents (97.6%) appreciated highly the theoretical and practical importance of the course, particularly highlighting the importance of the application of linguistic

analysis, which can be used both for didactic purposes and for translation or interpreting.

The students that participated in the survey were quite critical on the methods of teaching in general. 90.8% of the senior students believe that teaching methods do not always present systematic and harmonious combination of theory and practice. Almost the same percentage of the respondents (90.0%) expressed the opinion that it is necessary to make interactive methods of teaching more diverse.

As for the course *per se*, while 96.8% of the respondents noted the increasing need for authentic materials and textbooks on specialized languages, 95.2% think that more time should be given to verbal forms, connectors and syntactic features of the organization of specialized texts.

90.0% of the students noted as a positive fact taking into account the characteristics of the systemic organization of language in dealing with LSPs and 90.8 % consider it appropriate to get acquainted with the expressive system of language, to obtain lingvocultural and sociocultural knowledge.

The survey shows that the prospective foreign language teachers and professional translators/interpreters are highly motivated in their professional development: 97.6% of the respondents noted the need for learning the basic concepts and provisions of the field of knowledge the language of which they are studying professionally and 96.8% of senior students believe that it is necessary to expand further their vocabulary of both nationwide words and specific terms with due regard to their compatibility and idiomaticity.

A comparatively low percentage (80,0%) of the students who were quite satisfied with the results of their internship can be explained by the fact that some of the respondents were not trained well enough to meet the challenges of the the real-life professional communication.

97.6% noted the need for learning the basic concepts and provisions of the field of knowledge the language of which they are studying professionally.

96.8% believe that it is necessary to expand further their vocabulary of both nationwide words and specific terms with due regard to their compatibility and idiomaticity.

80,0% of students were satisfied with the results of their internship.

4 Conclusions

The use of foreign languages covers increasingly various areas of professional activities, thus teachers that have a good command of specialized languages are in greater demand than those who have a good command of a common language.

Prospective translators and interpreters should get acquainted with the main features of different LSPs in order to cope with the challenges of their future profession.

Both categories of prospective language professionals should have more courses that expand their knowledge and skills in various functional usage of a foreign language.

References

Kunanbaeva S.S. (2010). *Teoriya i praktika sovremennogo inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya* [Theory and practice of modern foreign language education]. - Almaty: Edelweiss.

Usmanova A., 2012. English language teaching: New challenges, new problems and new solutions // *The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2012: Official Conference Proceedings*. - Osaka (Japan): IAFOR, p. 200-208.

Zagidullin R., Zagidullina A., 2013. Shifting paradigms: Language learning in Kazakhstan // *European Conference on Languages Learning 2013: Official Conference Proceedings*. - Brighton (UK): IAFOR, p. 294-311.

Mission of Kazakh Ablai Khan University, 2014. Available at: <http://www.ablaikhan.kz/en/our-university/university-mission.html> [Accessed 1 May 2014].

Le Francais dans le monde, 2014. №39, p. 20-21.

Karasik V.I., 2000. O tipakh diskursa [On types of discourse] // *Yazikovaya lichnost, institutsionalnyi i personalnyi discours*: Collected papers. – Volgograd: Peremena, p.5-20.

Popov V.I., 2000. *Sovremennaya diplomatiya: teoriya i praktika* [Modern diplomacy: theory and practice]. – Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya.

Karasik V.I., 2004. *Yazikovoi krug: lichnost, kontsepty, diskurs* [Language circle: Personality, institutional and personal discourse]. – Moscow: Gnosis.

Desyatova T.M., 2012. *Angliiskii yazik dlya yuristov* [English for lawyers]: Manual. – Moscow: Omega-A.

Gumileva Yu.A., Koroleva-McAri V.A., 2012. *Just English. Angliiskii dlya yuristov. Basovii kurs* [English for lawyers. Basic course]: Manual. – Moscow: Kyurus.

***Analyzing Oral Reading Fluency:
Exemplifying Students' Needs for a Reading Instruction***

Rania Boudaoud, University of Constantine 1, Algeria

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0190

Abstract

In curricular reading skill integration perspectives, the present work tries to shed some light on the reading level, as demonstrated by oral reading performances, of Algerian college freshmen enrolled in the Department of Letters and English Language. Given that students' oral reading errors can affect comprehension and the whole reading experience, this quantitative study is based on a running record assessment which is a collection of samples of students' oral reading of three passages to determine their reading rate, error rate and accuracy level. Students' oral reading analysis revealed that the great majority of our freshman students find reading *standard* texts frustrating and no one of them is ready to read them independently without teachers' assistance which indicates that the cross-curricular texts that our students are exposed to are far too difficult for them. In a context where the three language skills, speaking; listening and writing, are taught at the expense of the reading skill, these findings, among many others, exemplify students' needs for a formal reading instruction that addresses the basic reading skills per se.

Keywords: Oral reading fluency, textual readability ease, curricular reading skill integration

1. Introduction

The aim behind language teaching is to develop communicative competence that is: improving students' use of the four modes of communication including speaking, listening, writing and **reading** along with enriching their vocabulary banks and their knowledge of the grammatical system. To assure a balance in language teaching, **all** aspects of language skills must be **equally** stressed and carefully dealt with given that each has its own distinctive features. As one aspect of communicative competence, the ability to read is vital for learning. Reading fluency is the ability to read effortlessly and accurately, and it can only be achieved if readers recognize and understand the written language. Given that reading is the main source of knowledge, it is imperative to integrate it in language teaching as a discrete subject where the different reading skills can be taught for their own sake or/and in the different content-area subjects. The present work aims to describe the needs of freshman students of English for a reading instruction that not only addresses the different reading problems that they come against but also allows for enough time to practice and develop a love for reading in English. To achieve our aim, we analysed students' oral reading performances.

2. Oral Reading Fluency

Oral reading is the act of reading out loud written texts. In addition to using it as a reading practice strategy, oral reading is used to determine the kind of difficulties readers come up against while reading, to choose in return appropriate instructional remedies and to check the effectiveness of instructional reading instructions (Reynolds and Fletcher-Jansen, 2002). However, oral reading fluency is not the mere oral verbalisation of written texts but rather a great indicator of comprehension and the whole reading ability as it includes the appropriate and smooth "phrasing, adherence to author's syntax, and expressiveness" (National Assessment Governing Board, 2002: 79). The choice of appropriate reading tone, the successful parsing, the correct pronunciation of words, and the smooth and unconstrained movement from one word to another show readers' great guessing and comprehension ability. In short, oral reading fluency is mainly based on a constant hypothesis making process. According to Bear (1992: 147)), oral reading performances "reflect how the reader is monitoring the text" For that matter, poor reading monitoring skills indicate poor textual comprehension (Pefetti, Landi and Oakhill, 2005).

Oral reading fluency can be summarized in three constituents, namely accuracy, automaticity and prosody. Reading accuracy is the ability to read correctly and incisively. It is generally measured by counting the number of words read correctly in a given period of time (Brassel and Rasinski, 2008). Reading automaticity is the ability to recognize words swiftly and with little amount of operational effort (Johnson and Kuhn, 2013). Prosody in reading is the way of articulating print materials in an expressive way by taking into consideration tone, and rhythmic delivery (Baumann, 2012). Despite its importance for reading comprehension, oral reading fluency tests do not take into consideration prosody and highly emphasize automaticity and accuracy.

3. Oral Reading Errors

Before we indulge into talking about oral reading errors, it is very important to discuss the difference between an error and a mistake. A mistake is the visible and accidental failure of carrying out into action the learned knowledge about the language system (Yang and Xu, 2001). It is not the result of language rules ignorance but rather the

unsuccessful use of those rules. Generally when we point out their mistakes, language users instantly recognize their failure to perform and self-correct themselves. However, an error is the result of language rules ignorance and general lack of language competence. Even if we call the attention of language users to their errors, they will not recognize them as ones. An error is the misconception of language system that can be explained as “second language learners stop short of native-like success” (James, 1998:2). These language development stop shorts can be permanent, in other words fossilized. Fossilization is a stopping in language learning that exemplifies a failure to achieve a full command of the target language which can be resulted from L2 or FL learners’ contentment of their language achievement level, loss of interest or just an inability to keep learning the target language, among many other factors (Han and Odlin, 2006).

Oral reading errors can take five main forms, namely substitution, addition, omission, mispronunciation and word order. When reading, readers can substitute the author’s words with others of their own. For example, instead of saying *I have written the article*, readers read *I have read the article*. Readers can also omit words from the written passage rather than reading them the way they were originally stated by the writer due to either not paying attention to the omitted word or unwillingness to attempt the word. That is to say, instead of reading *I have written the article*, they read *I have the article*. Reading additions can take the form of any insertion of language units. For instance, readers read *I have written the article* as *I have written the boring article*. In addition, reading errors can take the form of sentence structure misperceptions; readers while reading can mess with the original word order. Readers may read *I have read an interesting article* as *I have read an article interesting*. Mispronunciations are the most common reading errors. Readers may misread the word ‘read’ as the past participle of the verb to read with a long ‘e’ in the following example: *I have read an article* (National Assessment Governing Board, 2002; Good and Kaminski, 2002; and elsewhere). The aforementioned errors might not seem that impeding; however, they were given just as examples to explain the different possible forms of oral reading errors.

Oral reading errors can be manifested on three main levels, including syntax, semantics and graph-phonology. Errors at the level of syntax can indicate very low awareness of the rules underlying the language system which will result in grammatically unacceptable reading products. Oral reading errors may also affect the meaning of the text. The different forms of errors, namely substitution or additions, can distort the writer’s intended meaning and therefore the comprehension of the entire text. Errors can be at the level of graph-phonology as well; they indicate readers’ unawareness of the sound-letter correspondence and/or a problem in word visual recognition. Errors can be acceptable at one level and not appropriate at the other. Some oral reading errors can be semantically acceptable in the case where any substitution or omission does not distort the meaning of the original text. For example, if readers substitute a word by another from the same part speech is grammatically acceptable but might not be the case semantically since the substituted word is not related in meaning to the original.

Text Words	Student's Response	Semantic Appropriateness	Syntactic Appropriateness	Graphic Similarity
A barking hound	A barking <u>dog</u>	√	√	X
I had some cheese	I had <u>a</u> cheese	√	X	X
The latter is...	The <u>later</u> ...	X	X	√

Table1: Examples of Error Appropriateness

Oral reading fluency is usually measured by means of a running record test. A running record is a quick and easy test that enables the teacher to know the reader's reading rate, accuracy rate and error rate. It is a one-to-one test where the teacher has to sit with each student individually and administer a text, for more reliability a series of texts, at the reader's level. With the help of a stopwatch, the teacher asks students to read the text's words loudly generally for one minute. Meanwhile, the teacher highlights the student's errors and identifies the type of each error that can always be classified later in a table. Error rate is calculated by dividing the total of words read by the number of errors, and we will get a ratio that indicates how many words the reader managed to read correctly for each error (Marshall & Campbell, 2006). These samples of oral reading can tell us a lot about the cause behind the errors, including L1 transfer and/or word recognition inability, for example. This kind of tests can be used as a diagnosing technique to know about the problems readers come up against and as a progress monitoring activity to know how far the readers have come in overcoming their reading problems and assimilating newly learned reading techniques (Reynolds and Fletcher-Jansen, 2002).

4. Readability and Readability Formulas

Readability is the quality that makes written texts easy to understand. It grades texts according to their level of difficulty. Cooper and Kinger, (2011:93) argue that readability is "a far broader concept than a grade level attached to a piece of text, however. It encompasses all the factors involved in whether or not a given piece is comprehensible to a given reader." They explain that textual readability can be affected by a triangle of the reader and their ability to read the text language, the context in which the text is going to be read by taking into consideration the presence or the absence of assistance and the text itself.

Textual readability is measured by means of readability formulas including Flesch–Kincaid, the New Dale–Chall readability formula, the Gunning Fog, and the SMOG indexes. Since the 1920's, these formulas did not only assist in assessing text difficulty but also in writing texts for a target audience. These formulas decide on textual difficulty based on vocabulary items conversance, sentence structure and length, number of syllables in a word, among many factors (Hiebert, 2002). The results obtained from the Flesch–Kincaid Formula, for example, are twofold: a reading ease score that ranges from 0-100, the lower the more difficult the text is, and an estimated grade level that indicates the educational level, according to the American schooling system, required to comprehend the analysed text as shown in the table below.

Flesch Reading Ease Score	Reading Difficulty	Estimated Grade Level
0–30	Very difficult	College graduate and higher
30–50	Difficult	Between high school and college
50–60	Fairly difficult	High school
60–70	Standard	7-8
70–80	Fairly easy	6
80–90	Easy	5
90–100	Very easy	4

Table 2: Scores for the Flesch–Kincaid Reading Ease Formula (Dreeben, 2010:109 and elsewhere)

Despite the fact that readability formulas were found very useful, some questions have been raised about their accuracy in summing up text difficulty in a score and grade level. Sceptics argue that sentence length and type and number of syllables are not enough to decide on the approachability of a text. They add that readability formulas neglect readers' "interests and background knowledge that are not easily qualified" (Richardson, Morgan & Fleener, 2012:155). George Spache, who proposed Spache Readability Formula, argues that readability formulas are only "close approximations of reading difficulty (or reading ease)" (Escoe, 2001:67). Users should not rely solely on these formulas but rather use them along with some personal appreciation of texts and knowledge of readers to decide on the difficulty of texts.

5. Methodology

In curricular reading skill integration perspectives, the purpose of this study was to know about the actual reading level of freshman students of English as demonstrated by their oral reading performances. The intent was to shed some light on students' ability to read effortlessly and accurately their content-area texts.

5. 1. Participants and Setting

91 freshman students of English from the University of Constantine 1, Algeria participated in this study. This university follows the LMD system which is a three years bachelor, two years Master and three-four years doctorate system. All of our participants are majoring in English as a foreign language. The present work took place in a context where:

There is no formal policy of how to cover the reading skill.

Reading is neither integrated in content-area subjects nor as a discrete subject.

There is neither a pre-service nor an in service training for teachers in language teaching, in general, and in reading, in particular.

Little if not nothing is known about students' reading level.

Classroom observations show students' heavy reliance on word-to-word translation from English to Arabic to understand curricular readings.

The three instances of the English language are taught at the expense of reading.

Admittedly, Study Skill teachers *recently* integrated a chapter of reading, but research has shown that time is a key factor for a proper internalization of any learning

strategies. Students should not only be presented with reading skills but they also should be given enough time to recycle them under the teachers' supervision.

5.2. Data Collection

This study was based on a Words Correct per Minute test (WCPM) which is a collection of samples of students' oral reading of written texts that have been administered to each student individually. Students were asked to read every text for one minute measured with the help of a stop watch. For a better test result reliability, we used three instead of one written passage on topics we made sure that the student participants are familiar with.

We chose the three passages based on their level of readability as tested by Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease formula. Microsoft Word 2007 was used to obtain scores for readability, number of words and sentences, and sentence structure (percentage of sentences in the passive voice). The three texts were classified as standard: neither easy nor difficult with Flesch Reading Ease of 62, 63,3 and 65,8.

In trying to establish a baseline for our analysis, we used readability statistics to assess also some of the texts that our students are supposed to read across the curriculum. The mean score (M=48,55) of these texts' readability ease classified them as difficult as compared to the table of norms (cf. Table 2).

Readability Statistics	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Words in total	54–2003	485.91	448.04
Sentences	2–125	26.91	27.83
Sentences in passive voice (%)	0–85	25.25	19.85
Flesch Reading Ease	21,6–81.8	48.55	15.93
Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level	5.10–15.8	10.44	2.74

5.3. Results and Table 3: Cross Curricular Texts' Readability

The assessor considered any substitutions, additions, omissions, mispronunciations and word order changes at the level of syntax, semantics or/and graph-phonology that were not self-corrected immediately by the students as errors. The median score of the number of words read correctly and errors made when reading the three texts was reported.

Of the total participants (N=91), the highest score was 119 WCPM with an accuracy rate of 92.2% and the lowest was 35 with an accuracy rate of 62%. The analysis of students' oral reading shows also that our students: read five words correctly for every reading error made (ratio) and read an average of 82 words/minute with an accuracy rate of 77,9% which is considered as an unsatisfactory reading level (< 93%) (see table 5).

Students' Oral Reading	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
Words Read Correctly/ minute	35-132	81,34	18,83
Accuracy Rate	60-92,20	77,9	6,04
Error Rate	2,95-12,9	4,93	1,51

Table 4: Students Oral Reading Performance

Score range	Reading level
98-100%	Independent reading level (outstanding)
93-97%	Instructional reading level (satisfactory)
<93%	Furstration reading level (unsaisfactory)

Table 5: Oral Reading Scores and levels (Morgan, et al., 2009:115)

Students' oral reading analysis revealed that all of our freshman students find reading standard texts, which are neither easy nor difficult, frustrating and no one of them is ready to read them independently without teachers' assistance which indicates that college level texts that our students are exposed to are far too difficult for them. It is worth reminding that the texts used in the present study are standard which means that they are easier than the content-texts that our students are asked to read throughout the academic year ($M=48,55$ readability ease).

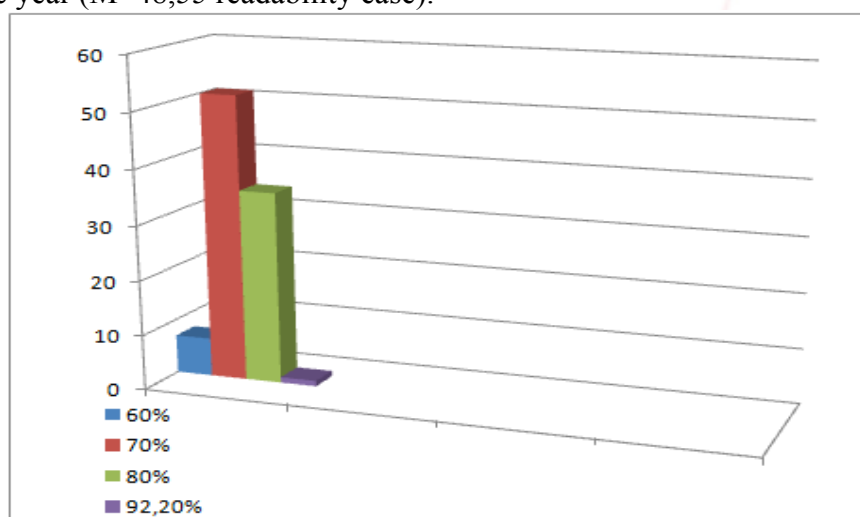


Figure 1: Percentages of Students' Oral Reading Accuracy

Oral reading fluency tests require teachers to choose texts at the same reading level of students. In the process of deciding on the texts that are going to be used in the present study, we have noticed that there is not a reading level according to which different content-area teachers choose texts. Some content-area texts were found approachable while others were difficult just because teachers do not know their students' reading level.

6. Conclusion

It is primordial for students to learn the necessary reading skills possible to be able to survive college reading. In a context where the three skills, writing, speaking and listening, are taught at the expense of the reading skill, these findings among many others exemplify students' needs for a formal reading instruction that addresses the different reading skills per se. It is also important that students take an entrance reading test to help teachers know their students reading level and choose reading texts of appropriate readability levels accordingly. In the present paper, we tried to shed some light on oral reading fluency because research evidence showed that it correlates positively not only with reading comprehension but also with overall reading performances. For readers to be able to have high oral reading fluency, they have to showcase grapho-phonological, syntactic and semantic knowledge in addition to reading monitoring skills that will enable them to foresee possible language problems and seek ways for solving them on the spot.

References

- Baumann, J.F. (2012). *Good Intentions and Unexpected Consequences: The Case of Reading Fluency*. In J.S. Carlson & J.R. Levin (eds), *Instructional Strategies for Improving Students' Learning: Focus on Early Reading and Mathematics*. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Bear, D.R. (1992). *The prosody of Oral Reading and Stages of Word Knowledge*. In S. Templeton & D.R. Bear (eds.), *Development of Orthographic Knowledge and the Foundations of Literacy*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Brassel, D, & T. Rasinski. (2008). *Comprehension that Works: Taking Students beyond Ordinary Understanding to Deep Comprehension*. CA: Shell Education.
- Bussmann, H. (1996). *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. P.G. Tranth and K. Kazzazzi (Eds.). London: Routledge.
- Cooper, J.D., and N.D. Kiger. (2011). *Literacy Assessment: Helping Teachers Plan Instruction*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Dreeben, O. (2010). *Patient Education in Rehabilitation*. Ontario: Jones and Bralett Publishers, LLC.
- Escoe, A. (2001). *The Practical Guide to People Friendly Documentation*. Wisconsin: American Society for Quality.
- Good, R.H, & R.A., Kaminski (eds.). (2002). *Dynamic Indications of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.
- Han, Z., and T., Odlin. *Introduction*. In Z. Han and T., Odlin (eds.), *In Studies of Fossilization in Second Language Acquisition*. NY: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2006.
- Heibert, E.H. (2002). *Standards, Assessments and Text Difficulty*. In A.E. Farstrup and S.J. Samuels (eds.), *What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction*. The International Reading Association, Inc.

James, C. (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. Oxon: Pearson Education Limited.

Johnson, S.D., and M.R. Kuhn. (2013). *Automaticity versus Fluency: Developing Essential Literacy Abilities with Print*. In B.M. Taylor & N.K. Duke (eds.), *Handbook of Effective Literacy Instruction: Research-based Practice K-8*. NY: The Guilford Press.

Marshall, C.J, and Y.C., Campbell. (2006). *Practice Makes Permanent: Working toward Fluency*. In J.S. Schumm (ed.). *Reading Assessment and Instruction for all Learners*. NY: The Guilford Press.

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

An Assessment of English Writing Instruction in Taiwanese High Schools

Ching-ya Chiu, University of Kang Ning, Taiwan

Jia-lin Chen, University of Kang Ning, Taiwan

Feng-cheng Chiang, University of Kang Ning, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014

Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0200

Abstract

Writing has been highly emphasized in language education, and there is no exception in Taiwan. However, based on a series of statistics from College Entrance Examination Center, high school students' performance in English writing is disappointingly low in the entrance admission exams, including General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT), and Advanced Subjects Test (AST). Also, some students are anxious of English writing. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate English writing instruction in Taiwanese senior high schools from several perspectives, including students' and teachers' attitudes, the current situation and future needs. 613 high school students and 10 English teachers participated in this study. Student questionnaires, teacher questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were the three major instruments for data collection.

The major findings were as follows:

1. Students' attitudes towards English writing were positive. They considered English writing was important. However, they encountered difficulties in writing compositions, and thus, they felt anxious and lacked motivation to write.

2. Teachers had positive attitudes toward English writing. They thought English writing was practical for students' future lives. However, they encountered various problems writing instruction, and lack of time for correction is the most challenging.

3. Seventy percent of the students had English writing classes in the third year. Most of the teachers employed a product-oriented approach and used test-oriented materials in English writing classes.

4. Both students and teachers consistently agreed they needed more time for English writing classes.

On the basis of these findings, several pedagogical implications and suggestions are raised.

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Introduction

Writing is defined as a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language for communicating one's thoughts and feelings (Bello, 1997). According to Zamel (1982), writing is a process through which students can explore and discover their thoughts and ideas. The nature of writing can be seen from three perspectives (Chen, 2003). Writing is a process of meaning-discovery (Emig, 1971; Perl, 1980). It is the record of an idea developing (Shaughnessy, 1977). As one writes, what he/she has already written may be reexamined in order to discover the direction of his/her own thoughts and feelings. Also, writing is a medium of social communication. When writing is used as a medium of communication, the focus is on the content of the message. Learners express their own thoughts to others and communicate with others. In addition, writing is a tool of problem solving. As Flower (1985) has proposed, problem solving is an effective approach to teaching writing. Students share the process they write and employ in problem solving, by working out the solutions to the problems. The problems faced by writers in their daily lives are the sources of content for writing (Bitzer, 1968).

In Taiwan, English writing is increasingly being emphasized, partly because it will be tested in two college entrance examinations: the General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT) held in February and the Department Required Test (DRT) held in July. Students' poor writing performance implies that the root of students' difficulties in writing is still unclear and students' needs in writing seem not to be met by what their teachers do. It is notable that although English writing has been highly emphasized, students perform poorly. In addition, students have negative attitudes toward English writing. The majority of senior high school students considered English writing as a difficult and troublesome task (Huang, 2006; Li, 1992). Students are anxious about writing English composition.

Many English teachers adapt teacher-centered and product-oriented approach to teach writing leads to students feel highly anxious about English writing (Chao, 2004) and lose interests in writing (Wu, 2003). Due to the overemphasis on passing a variety of exams in Taiwan, students seem have no motivation and even hold negative attitudes toward writing (Lai, 2004). Students are forced to deal with other subjects besides English writing within limited time in order to pass a number of tests. The heavy burden of correcting students' compositions and teaching writing in a big-sized class are two major problems teachers encounter (Chao, 2004; Chiu, Chung, & Chiang, 2009). Besides, the limited instructional time for English writing classes is another difficulty that teachers face (Wu, 2003; Chiu, Chung, & Chiang, 2008). EFL student

writers' anxiety results from a variety of sources (Cheng, 2004). One of writing anxiety comes from unfamiliar instructional practices of the assigned topics (Feng, 2001) and limited time to complete a writing task (Chiu, Chiang, & Chung, 2010). Another source of writing anxiety concerns with personal beliefs about writing and learning to write, such as the belief that good writing is without errors. The third source is related to self-perceptions such as low self-confidence or limited L2 competence. The final source of writing anxiety is about interpersonal threats such as fear of possible negative evaluation, competitiveness and teachers' harsh attitudes.

Since English writing has drawn increasing attention in recent years in Taiwan. It also plays a very important role in college entrance examinations. However, students still cannot achieve the writing performance. Pervious studies on English writing instruction in Taiwan have focused on teachers' opinions about English writing instruction. However, the existing research on English writing and English writing instruction from both students' and teachers' perspectives is quite insufficient. Therefore, it is worth examining what students and teachers think about English writing and English writing instruction. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to investigate senior high school students' and English teachers' perspectives on English writing instruction. The difficulties students encounter in English writing and the problems teachers face in English writing instruction were also explored. In addition, the current situation of English writing instruction in senior high schools in Taiwan was also included in this study. The present study aimed to find out answers to the following questions.

1. What factors influence students' attitudes toward English writing, including beliefs, anxieties, and motivations?
2. What factors influence teachers' attitudes toward English writing instruction, including beliefs and difficulties uncouncted in writing instruction?
3. What is the current situation of English writing instruction in senior high schools from students' and teachers' perceptions?
4. What support should be provided for English writing instruction in senior high schools in Taiwan?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were 613 3rd year senior high students randomly selected from 8 schools and 10 English teachers from 4 schools. Among the 613 student participants, 30 students were interviewed. In addition, 10 teacher

participants took part in the interview. The main reason for choosing third-year students as participants in this study was that they were attending English writing courses. Besides, they had more complete experience of writing English compositions. Therefore, they would have the latest and most vivid memories of English writing compared with other students in the first and second year.

Instruments

In order to explore students' and teachers' perceptions toward English writing instruction and the current situation of it in senior high schools in Taiwan, four sets of questionnaires and two sets of interviews were employed to collect data. These questionnaires were adapted from Chiu (2006), Hsu (2005), and Kuo (2004). Three experts who have been teaching English for many years and have experiences in foreign language teaching were involved to establish the validity of the instruments. In the pilot testing, Cronbach's α for QSA was .80 for internal consistency reliability, and .82 for the QTA, displaying a high reliability.

Questionnaire of Students' Attitudes toward English Writing (QSA). This questionnaire was designed to obtain information about students' attitudes toward English writing, including students' viewpoints on the beliefs about writing, writing anxiety, and motivation to write (Appendix A). The main section of the QSA consists of 29 items. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 4, lists responses as "strongly disagree," "moderately disagree," "moderately agree," and "strongly agree".

Questionnaire of Teachers' Attitudes toward English Writing Instruction (QTA). This questionnaire was designed to explore teachers' attitudes toward English writing instruction (Appendix B). The questions of the QTA aimed to investigate teachers' viewpoints on writing beliefs and difficulties they encountered when teaching English writing. The main section of the QTA consists of 20 items. The questionnaire also used a four-point Likert scale for teachers to indicate their agreement and disagreement with statements expressing various beliefs about English writing and the difficulties of English writing instruction.

Survey of the Current Situation of English Writing Instruction from Students' Perspectives (SCWS). This questionnaire attempted to survey students' various perceptions of the current situation of English writing instruction. The questions on the SCWS included multiple choice and open-ended items. The questions were

organized into four sections which correspond with four learning situations in relation to English writing in senior high schools.

Survey of the Current Situation of English Writing Instruction from Teachers' Perspectives (SCWT). This questionnaire aimed to survey teachers' various perceptions of the current situation of English writing instruction. These questions on the SCWT included multiple choice and open-ended items. The questions were organized into four sections, which correspond with four different teaching situations with regard to English writing.

Student Interviews. Thirty students in their third year of senior high school were involved in the semi-structured interviews. They were selected randomly after finishing the questionnaires. Each of the students was asked to answer nine open-ended questions that aimed to obtain more detailed information about their perceptions and needs in English writing (Appendix C). The content of each interview was recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Teacher Interviews. In order to obtain a deep understanding of what supports for English writing instruction should be provided to senior high school teachers in Taiwan, ten current English teachers in senior high schools were involved in the semi-structured interviews. They were asked to answer seven open-ended questions (Appendix D). The content of the interviews were used to obtain more insightful opinions to support and supplement the questionnaire data.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study adapted both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data. For the first and second research questions, the data from the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive statistics in terms of frequency and percentage. For the third research question, the quantitative data from the responses of multiple choice questions would be analyzed using multiple analysis. The data from open-ended questions were also analyzed and described. First, similar opinions were grouped. Then, the numbers of respondents who expressed similar opinions were computed. For the fourth research question, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with students and teachers were carefully organized and transcribed respectively. The similarities and differences between collected data were described and presented. The interviews were employed to seek further explanations and support the findings of the questionnaires.

Results and Discussion

Results and Discussion of Research Question One

In terms of the belief in English writing, the results indicated that students thought a good English composition should have smooth sentences, complete structure and organization. In addition, most students thought English writing ability was an important ability that they would need in their future career. They also thought English writing was important for their real lives in the future. Generally speaking, the student participants thought that idea expression, solid organization, and complete structure were the most important issues in writing but it was challenging for them. Item 8 was the question that participants disagreed with the most, with 80.5% disagreement. That is to say most of the participants did not think they were good at writing compositions in English. That was why 45.7% of students thought writing was the most difficult of the four skills in English. The qualitative data was consistent with the quantitative data. Twenty-three out of 30 interviewees thought English writing was difficult and they are afraid of writing class. Therefore, most students did not have confidence in writing English compositions. On the other hand, they agreed English writing was useful and important. Students thought English writing ability was essential in their lives and for their future careers.

As for students' writing anxiety, several factors made students feel anxious when writing compositions in English, including limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, gaining low scores, and not knowing what to write. Among all the items, Item 15 had the highest mean and was agreed with by a vast majority of participants (91.9%), displaying that most participants were worried that they did not have enough vocabulary to express their ideas. In addition, not knowing the correct grammatical rules to apply in writing was another concern for 86.9% of participants. That is to say, students were worried that there were many grammatical errors in their compositions. Furthermore, the results showed 81.5% of participants were worried about gaining low scores in English compositions. In other words, a large majority of the students did not have confidence in writing compositions in English. 75.4% of the participants reported that when writing English compositions, their minds often went blank and they did not know what to write. Question 3 on the students' interview was designed to explore the factors that made them feel anxious when writing English compositions and the responses to this item supported the quantitative data. Nineteen interviewees out of 30 indicated they were anxious that they did not have enough vocabulary and correct grammatical knowledge. Most students reported they did not have sufficient vocabulary and they could not use appropriate words to express their ideas and

thoughts. In addition, they were worried the numbers of grammatical errors in their compositions. That is to say they were afraid of making mistakes when writing compositions in English. They even indicated that they felt it was safer not to write. In this way, they would not have to feel embarrassed if they committed any mistakes.

Thirteen items on the questionnaire were used to investigate the motivation students have in writing. The results showed that students lack motivation to learn English writing. More than half of the participants (65.9%) expressed that they did not learn English writing owing to their interest. That was why 68.1% of participants did not look for other ways of learning English writing and opportunities to practice English compositions except for assigned compositions. Furthermore, 57.6% of the students did not like to participate in writing activities. In addition, 71.6% of students did not like to share the compositions with their classmates. However, 65.4% of them agreed that sharing compositions with others could encourage or help them improve their writing. More than half of the student participants reported that they liked interesting topics and materials. Moreover, 65.5% of the students agreed that if English writing class was taught by teachers they disliked, they would lose interest in learning. As to extrinsic motivation, among all the items, item 19 had the highest mean, agreed with by most of the participants (92.2%). That is to say, students thought learning English writing well could help them improve their individual English ability. On the other hand, 52.2% of the participants neither agreed they wanted to learn English writing well in order to gain praise from parents and teachers, nor that they wanted to make classmates admire them.

The qualitative data, drawn from students' interview 4, was consistent with the quantitative result. More than half of the interviewees studied English writing only for passing exams, not because they were interested in English. Thirty students were involved in the interview and 17 students reported that they learned English writing just because it would be tested in the exams. They regarded English writing as part of the exam. Therefore, most students stated that passing the exam was the only purpose for them to learn English writing. Interviewees indicated that if English writing would not be tested in the exam, they would not study it at all. On the other hand, 13 out of 30 interviewees learned English writing because it would be useful in the future. They thought learning English writing well could help them enhance their English proficiency. Students regarded English writing ability as an essential ability that they would need in the future. They reported that English writing was important for them to study abroad, write papers and communicate with foreigners. In addition, they pointed out English writing would be useful and necessary in their lives and future

careers.

The results of this study indicate that students thought that English writing was important either for passing exams or for their future careers. Although students were not motivated toward and confident about English writing, they still thought English writing was important for them. Most items showed that students were anxious when writing English compositions. The findings of Chiu (2006) have revealed that senior high school students in Taiwan think English writing is useful but they do not have confidence in writing English compositions well. A possible reason for this is that students lack practice and have few opportunities to write compositions in English. Therefore, most students are anxious about the limitations of their vocabulary. In Wu's (2003) study, he mentioned that vocabulary was considered to be the most difficult aspect of English writing by most of the senior high school students. This may have been because they did not have sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas. Another possibility was that they had difficulty in choosing appropriate words. In addition, getting low scores was another concern for most participants. These findings are in line with Lee and Krashen's (2002) study which mentioned that students with high writing anxiety tend to get low scores in English composition. Insufficient vocabulary and grammatical errors led students to gain low scores in English writing, which in turn led to lack of confidence in writing compositions in English.

As for motivation, this study found that most of the students lacked motivation to write compositions in English. A possible explanation for this is that they had not experienced success in writing. Therefore, they lost their interest in English writing. Also, students were not willing to share compositions with classmates although they thought sharing English compositions with others could prompt them to improve their English writing. The results of questionnaire data showed that the participants generally agreed that they did not like to participate in writing activities. Most of the students reported that except for the assigned compositions, they would not look for other opportunities to learn English writing. It is likely that they did not perform well in English writing so that they were not motivated to write English compositions. Walker's (2003) study revealed that success in previous writing experience motivates students to participate in more writing activities, which may also indirectly increase their writing abilities and skills. Moreover, students in this study did not learn English writing because they were interested in English. The qualitative data from student interviews indicated that the main reason why students learned English writing was for the exams, not for their own interests or from intrinsic motivation.

Results and Discussion of Research Question Two

Teacher participants thought smooth sentences and examples were important in writing. They also thought grammar exercises benefited students' writing. Among all the items, Item 1 had the highest mean and was agreed with by a vast majority of participants (90%), displaying that most teachers in this study thought the process of students' composing was of equal importance to the product. All of the teachers (100%) thought that grammar exercises could help students to improve their writing. In addition, 80% of the teachers agreed writing was the most difficult of the four skills in English for students. More than half of the participants thought that students wanted to learn English writing for the following reasons: expressing ideas and exchanging opinions with others, passing exams, and making foreign friends. The qualitative data was consistent with the quantitative data. Most teachers reported that writing was the most difficult of the four skills in English for students. They consistently agreed that grammar exercises were helpful for students' writing. Teachers indicated that passing the exam was the main reason for students to learn English writing.

Several difficulties troubled teachers in writing instruction. Among all the items, Item 18 had the highest mean and was agreed with by a vast majority of teacher participants (90%), displaying that that correcting students' compositions was a heavy load to them. Moreover, most teachers reported students usually wrote whatever came into their minds. All of the participants (100%) agreed that students could not use appropriate words to express their own ideas. Students were not familiar with structure and organization, either. That was why half of the teachers reported that there were many grammatical errors in students' compositions. In addition, most teachers reported that students' motivation to write was low. They indicated that there was not sufficient time for them to teach English writing. On the other hand, 60% of the teachers did not think they were not trained well to teach English writing. That is to say, teachers in this study felt confident in their ability to teach of English writing. Question 4 on the teachers' interview was designed to explore the problems teachers encountered when teaching English writing and the responses to this item supported the quantitative data. Ten teachers participated in the interview and most of them reported that the major problem they encountered was that revising students' compositions occupied much of their time and became a heavy burden for them. There was not sufficient time for teachers to teach English writing. In addition, students usually wrote whatever popped into their minds. Teachers mentioned that most students always failed to organize what they write. Students could not express

themselves with proper words and their writing lacked unity. Therefore, there were many grammatical errors in students' compositions.

From the statistical results presented above, teachers had positive attitudes toward English writing. Generally speaking, most teachers thought the process of students' composing was of equal importance to the product. They agreed that grammar exercises benefited students' writing. Teachers thought a good English composition should have smooth sentences and examples to support its ideas. Similar findings were discovered in the interview data. In their interview responses, teachers reported that smooth sentences and examples were crucial features in a good and readable English composition. On the other hand, most teacher participants thought students wanted to learn English writing well in order to pass exams. The findings were consistent with the interview responses. In the interview, teachers reported that students wanted to learn English writing only for the purpose of passing the writing test in the college entrance exam.

With regard to the difficulties teachers encountered when teaching English writing, the present findings showed that correcting students' compositions was the most serious problem for teachers. A possible explanation is that students' writing abilities are very diverse. Another possible explanation for this is that teachers did not have additional time for correcting compositions. The finding is consistent with those of previous studies (Chao, 2004; Hsu, 2005; Wu, 2003), which indicated that correcting students' compositions was a heavy burden for teachers. Teachers had many compositions to correct, and correcting them had occupied much of their time. On the other hand, students usually wrote whatever came into their minds. That is to say, students were not familiar with structure and organization. They could not use proper words to express their own ideas. As a result, there were many grammatical errors in students' compositions. This corresponds to Kuo's (2004) findings that many students failed to organize what they want to write and lacked grammatical knowledge. Teachers in this study also reported that there was not sufficient time for English writing classes. This is similar to Wu's (2003) and Kuo's (2004) findings that there was not enough time for teachers to teach English writing. Teachers indicated that they even had to sacrifice English writing classes to catch up with the tight schedule of textbooks. On the other hand, teachers had to teach English writing according to what would be tested in the exams. In other words, teachers taught students how to gain high scores in the writing test. Moreover, students' motivation to write was low. Gaining high scores in the writing tests was still the students' motivation. Thus, many teachers could not but be test-oriented when teaching English writing. Hsu's (2005)

study indicated that to meet students' need to succeed in examinations, many teachers had to teach English writing by helping students prepare for the writing test in the entrance exam.

Results and Discussion of Research Question Three

The results of this study indicated that most of the students were not satisfied with the scheduling of English writing classes being implemented only in the fall semester of the third year of senior high school. They did not think this arrangement was appropriate since it gave them less than one year to learn English writing. This arrangement of English writing seems to be too late and too short. Students need more time to learn English writing and practice it. Due to the pressure of college entrance exams, students in their third year of senior high school have to spend a lot of time dealing with other subjects besides English writing. Therefore, the majority of students have only a limited amount of time to allocate to English writing, which makes them feel anxious about it. Students are unfamiliar with English writing and encounter difficulties, resulting in poor scores in the writing test of the college entrance exams. The statistical report from College Entrance Examination Center provides ample evidence of students' poor writing performance. Many students gain zero in English writing each year. In fact, in 2009, 22462 students gained zero in English writing on the General Scholastic Ability Test (CEEC, 2009). In other words, more than 15 % of the students scored zero in English writing. This was more than that in the previous five years.

On the other hand, most teachers in this study had to focus their teaching mainly on the content that is tested in the college entrance exams. One possible interpretation for this is that English writing classes are arranged in the third year, at the time when students are busy preparing for exams. Students have to study so many subjects that they do not have much time to practice English writing. Due to this time shortage, teachers do not have enough time to teach English writing. Therefore, they have no choice but to be test-oriented when teaching English writing, which corresponds to the findings of Li's study (2006) indicating that writing instruction is often test-oriented. In this study, the result also shows that teachers tried their best to help students to perform well in the writing test of the college entrance exams. However, sometimes teachers had to sacrifice writing classes to keep up with the tight and inflexible schedule of the textbooks. Without sufficient time, teachers tended to adopt a product-oriented approach when teaching English writing. In writing classes, students were asked to write compositions within a limited time and then teachers

corrected the finished products.

As for class size, teachers in this study had to teach 30 to 40 students or even more than 40 students in their English writing classes. This confirmed the findings of Kuo's (2004) study, which indicated that the size of the writing class was usually huge. With so many students in a writing class, teachers could not help but to reduce the frequency for students to write English compositions. Correcting students' writing assignments takes teachers a lot of time and is a heavy burden for them. If teachers do not reduce the numbers of compositions assigned, they will have difficulty correcting students' writing assignments efficiently. As a result, teachers can only ask students to revise their compositions once or even do not to ask them to revise. Besides that, teaching so many students with such diverse writing proficiency in a class was hard for teachers. They had difficulties in choosing materials for students. If students could be divided into groups according to their writing competence, the class size would be reduced and this would lighten the load of correction for teachers. It would also be much easier for teachers to pay attention to each student's learning situation and choose suitable writing materials to meet student's individual needs.

As for the assistance that students need from teachers in correcting their compositions, content, organization and conventions were the areas that students most often reported that they needed help. The survey findings were in line with the qualitative data which revealed that students were anxious about their insufficient vocabulary and grammatical errors in their compositions. Without enough vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, the content of the students' writing was poor. Students also stated that it was hard for them to think of what they wanted to express. It is possible that students do not read a lot. As a result, their knowledge of vocabulary and sentence patterns is limited. They did not have enough vocabulary and content ideas to express what they wanted to share with readers. Students' lack of sufficient vocabulary led to poor content in their compositions. They could not produce readable writing. As for conventions, students do not feel they have enough grammatical knowledge, and are afraid of making grammatical errors. Students usually think about the content they want to write in Chinese and then translate it into English. It is likely that students do not know how to put their ideas into a logical order. Native speakers have linear thought patterns whereas Oriental speakers tend to have non-linear thought pattern (Kaplan, 1966). Oriental students tend to organize their ideas in an indirect way whereas English students tend to use a direct and linear model. In addition, Chinese grammatical rules are different from English grammatical rules. Therefore, there are lots of grammatical errors in students' compositions. If students

can develop the habit of thinking in English and reading a lot, they will know how to put their ideas in a logical order. Students also hope teachers will point out organization explicitly. A possible interpretation for this is that students are not familiar with methods of organization, which corresponds to Hsu's study (2005). If teachers could analyze the text further for students, that would help them understand the importance of organization and coherence. Reading well-organized articles would also help students understand more about organization and provide them with models to follow when they write English compositions.

Results and Discussion of Research Question Four

From the interview results, some notable points need to be mentioned. The following discussion concerns the support students and teachers need and their suggestions for English writing instruction. With regard to the support required from teachers, students expected teachers to analyze the structure of essays and explain how to write English compositions for them. A possible interpretation of this is that students were not familiar with the conventions of English writing. Therefore, they wanted teachers to guide them in how to start writing. Model essays and more practice opportunities were needed by students. With more writing models of different genres, students would know how to write compositions in English well and become familiar with English writing. Through constant practice, students could think logically in native-like way, and thus use appropriate mode of expression and correct formats in their compositions. However, it is notable that the model essay of the same topic should not be provided to students read before they write, or students' creativity and originality may be influenced.

As to the support from the school, students expected the school to arrange more English writing classes for them. This may be due to the fact that students felt they did not have enough time to learn writing. There were only two hours for English writing classes in a week. English writing classes were scheduled for both semesters of the third year. However, students still did not have enough hours of writing. It is likely that English writing classes were often used to catch up with the fixed schedule of the textbook. More time and practice opportunity for English writing were needed for students and this would help them improve their writing ability. In addition, students indicated that they needed more reference books on English writing. It is possible that there were not enough books related to English writing available to students. With sufficient reference books, students could understand more about English writing and gain more knowledge about English writing by reading and

practicing. In Chen's study (2003), she mentioned that reading could help students enhance their writing ability. With more reading input, students could have more and better writing output. It is apparent that reading is really a key factor in improving writing. The following are examples of interviewees' responses:

I would like the school to arrange more English writing classes so that I have more opportunities to learn how to write compositions in English. In addition, I don't think English writing classes should be used to teach the textbook by teachers. (Student 15)

There are few books on English writing in my school. I would like the school to provide me with more reference books on English writing so that I can understand what writing is and learn how to write English compositions well. (Student 28)

In their suggestions for English writing instruction, students indicated that they liked interesting topics and learning activities. This may be due to the fact that teachers usually gave students a topic and asked them to write a composition within a limited time in writing classes. All students had to do in English writing classes was to write compositions, and then teachers would correct their writing assignments. However, that seemed to be boring to the students. They wanted to discuss topics with their classmates. Students liked interesting learning activities such as group discussion. Through discussion in groups, their creativity and imagination would be inspired. Moreover, students liked to have individual conferences with teachers. They wanted to discuss their compositions with the teachers. With more individual conferences, students could understand more about the errors in their compositions, know how to revise, and revise compositions more effectively. These translated extracts from student responses refer to suggestions for English writing instruction.

I need more interesting topics and learning activities, so that I would like to attend English writing classes. (Student 3)

Usually I do not know how to start writing the introduction. I expected teachers to give me guidance on how to write compositions in English. (Student 30)

According to teachers' responses, most of them wanted the school to arrange more time for English writing classes, in respond to students' needs. Teachers complained that they did not have enough time to teach writing. This might be because of the text-oriented teaching. Preparing students for the college entrance exams was the main concern for teachers and students. As a result, some teachers even had to sacrifice writing classes in order to catch up with the tight schedule of the textbooks. Teachers needed additional time to spend on English writing. With more time, they could teach students sufficient knowledge of English writing and help

students to build the concept of English writing. In addition, teachers wanted the school to provide them with on-line writing resources and correcting systems. A possible interpretation of this is that correcting students' compositions was a time-consuming job and had become a heavy burden for teachers. Correction software could relieve teachers' workloads when correcting students' compositions. Moreover, students' diverse writing ability was another problem teachers encountered. If students could be divided into groups according to their writing proficiency, there would not be too many students in a class. Teachers could take students' individual needs into consideration and choose suitable writing materials according to their different levels of proficiency. By doing so, English writing instruction would thus be improved efficiently. Here are some translated extracts from the teachers' responses:

Correcting students' writing assignments is a heavy burden for me. Therefore, I need the school to provide on-line writing resources and correcting systems.

(Teacher 1)

There are too many students in a writing class. Therefore, it is not easy to teach students with diverse proficiency in a class. In my opinion, dividing students into groups according to their proficiency is a good solution to the problem of big-sized writing classes. (Teacher 2)

With regard to the suggestions for English writing instruction, time was the key element. Teachers suggested that the school arrange English writing classes earlier, in the fall semester of the second year. In this way, students could start to write English compositions earlier and have more opportunities to practice English writing. They would become familiar with English writing. In addition, teachers wanted the schools to cut their teaching hours. It is possible that too many teaching hours have led to heavy pressure on teachers. If teachers could have fewer teaching hours, they would have more time to correct writing assignments and prepare writing materials for students. Teachers could also give constructive suggestions, give detailed explanations and point out the improvements students have to make. This would help enhance their writing performance. Moreover, more training in English writing instruction was also needed for teachers. A possible interpretation of this is that teachers feel a need to polish their knowledge of English writing instruction. This also corresponds with the findings of Hsu's study (2005). In this study, he stated that teachers need further training to enhance their proficiency in writing instruction. To this end, it is suggested that the school invite university English writing instructors to lecture for students. Most students looked forward to their new life at university. Therefore, university writing instructors could arouse their interest in English writing. Through the lectures given by university writing instructors, students could understand what English writing really is rather than seeing it merely as a subject for

the entrance exams. They would realize English writing was an important and practical ability they should have.

The following extracts reveal their opinions:

Teachers have too many teaching hours. I would like the school to cut the teaching hours so that I can have more time to correct students' writing assignments and prepare writing materials. (Teacher 10)

I suggest that the school invite university English writing instructors to lecture. Students are interested in the life of university. Thus, university writing instructors could arouse students' interests in English writing. Through the lectures of university writing instructors, students can understand what English writing is. (Teacher 7)

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

After analyzing the data and the synthesizing statistical results, the major findings of the present study can be summarized as follows. First, students' attitudes toward English writing were positive. They also thought English writing was important for exams, their lives, and future careers. However, they had difficulties in writing and felt anxious about it. Therefore, most of the students lacked motivation to write English compositions. In addition, they did not look for other ways of learning English writing, or opportunities to practice English compositions, except for the assigned compositions.

Second, the teachers had positive attitudes toward English writing. Most of the teachers agreed that English writing was difficult for their students. Passing the college entrance exams was the main concern of most students with regard to learning English writing. In terms of the difficulties teachers encountered when teaching English writing, correcting students' compositions was the major problem because of time limitations. Moreover, students' low motivation and diverse writing abilities also disturbed teachers.

Third, based on this study, the current situation of English writing instruction in senior high schools was that most students had English writing classes and were assigned English compositions in the fall semester of their third year. From teachers' perspectives, the topics of writing could not but be test-oriented in order to help students prepare for the college entrance exams. When teaching English writing, teachers emphasized content and organization. They corrected students' compositions by themselves and gave each one a score. They marked the errors and directly

corrected them for students or had students correct them.

On the other hand, students emphasized content and organization when doing peer review. When students did not understand the comments that teachers had made or the errors being pointed out, they would ask for help from teachers or classmates. However, students' needs in writing did not seem to be met by what their teachers did. Students did not have enough time to learn writing. Therefore, they were not familiar with English writing and encountered many difficulties. Content, style and conventions were the aspects that students usually had most difficulties with. Also, content, organization and conventions were the aspects students hoped teachers would comment on when correcting compositions.

Finally, students wanted teachers to analyze the structure of compositions, explain how to write them, and guide them to read more writing models. Students also needed more related books on English writing. On the other hand, the teachers wanted class sizes to be adjusted and students to be divided into groups according to their proficiency levels. Moreover, the teachers suggested the school arrange English writing classes earlier, in the fall semester of the second year. As to suggestions for English writing instruction, students and teachers both wanted more time for English writing classes. On the basis of the findings derived from the present study, three pedagogical implications of English writing instruction in senior high schools are proposed, as follows:

First of all, it is recommended that workshops for writing instruction be offered to enhance teachers' professional knowledge. The workshops could be a series, or a semester long, so that the training would be thorough. Teachers need to receive more training in teaching English writing and to learn related knowledge. Some teachers indicated that they have little time or opportunity to improve their writing instruction. A series of writing workshops could be offered to teachers. The theme of the workshops could include general writing ideas and analysis of mistakes. By attending workshops, teachers can interact with experts in English writing instruction and enhance their professional training. Teachers can also share their personal experiences, offer new ideas in writing instruction and provide workable solutions for the problems they have encountered.

Secondly, the use of blogs and emails is recommended to increase the frequency of writing English compositions for students. Teachers can give a topic that is related to students' life experience on the blogs each week. In this way, students can develop

content easily and become interested in English writing based on their own life experience. The use of blogs will not only help students form the habit of writing but also provide students with more opportunities to continue writing outside the English writing classes. Students would become used to writing regularly and more familiar with the formats of English writing and thinking patterns in English. The quantity of students' writing can thus be increased. Through exchanging emails with foreign students, students could improve their writing ability, experience communication with people from other cultures and broaden their content.

Finally, in order to enhance students' motivation to write and relieve their anxiety about writing, cooperative learning activities be employed to increase language production in English writing classes. Cooperative learning is beneficial in learning English writing. Students can work together to complete the writing tasks assigned by teachers. Through working in a group, students can discuss and share ideas with classmates. When doing brainstorming, students can contribute their different ideas. This will not only stimulate their creativity but also motivate them to participate in writing activities. In this way, students can receive assistance from classmates in the process of teamwork. Through the interaction of cooperative learning, students can develop a concept of audience, which makes their compositions more readable. Moreover, peer review can allow students to share their compositions and relieve teachers' heavy burden of correction. Students can also offer constructive feedback to their peers and revise their compositions efficiently. The quality of students' writing can thus be improved.

Reference

- Bello, T. (1997). *Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills*. Eric Digest: ED409746, from <http://ericae.net/edo/ed409746.htm>
- Bitzer, L. (1968). The Rhetorical Situation. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1, 1-14.
- College Entrance Examination Center (2009) Retrieved on July 25, 2009, from <http://www.ceec.edu.tw/AbilityExam/AbilityExamStat/98SATStat/98SATStatIndex.htm>
- Chao, T. C. (2004). *The effects of web-based peer assessment on lowering senior high students' writing apprehension*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Chen, S. J. (2003). *Bridging the gap between reading and writing in English writing instruction for senior high school students*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

- Chiu, C. Y. (2006). *The effects of cooperative evaluation and group rewards with writing & evaluation – Cooperative online learning (WE-COOL) system on senior high school students' English writing achievement and attitudes*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, National Chiayi University, Chiayi, Taiwan.
- Chiu, C. Y., Chung, S. C., & Chiang, F. C. (2008). The Effects of Cooperative Learning & Online Peer Review on High School Students' Writing Achievement. In Wu, S. M. et al. (Eds.), *the English language teaching and learning landscape: continuity, innovation and diversity* (pp. 79-92). Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- Chiu, C. Y., Chung, S. C., & Chiang, F. C. (2009). Cooperative Learning for Argumentative Writing. In Stoke, A.M. (ed.), *PAC7 at JALT2008 Conference Proceedings: "Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads"*(pp.1080-1090). The Japan Association for Language Teaching: Tokyo, Japan.
- Chiu, C.Y., Chiang, F.C., Chung, S. C. (2010). Effects of Online Cooperative Evaluation and Group Rewards on High School Students' Argumentative Writing Attitudes and Interaction Behaviors. In Chan, W. M. et al. (Eds.), *Media in foreign language teaching and learning* (pp.243-268). Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- Emig, J. (1971). *The composing process of twelfth graders*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Feng, H. P. (2001). *Writing an academic paper in English: An exploratory study of six Taiwanese graduate students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York.
- Flower, L. (1985). *Problem solving strategies for writing*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Huang, C. Y. (2006). *The effects of story mapping on picture writing for EFL senior high school students in Taiwan*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan.
- Hsu, J. Y. (2005). *A study of senior high school English teachers' practices and beliefs about writing instruction*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Sun Yat-Sen University Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning*, 16, 1-20.
- Kuo, J. H. (2004). *A survey of the academic preparedness of Taiwanese high school English teachers for the teaching of writing*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan.
- Lai, Y. J. (2004). *A study of college English writing teachers' beliefs and practices*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Changhua University of Education,

Changhua, Taiwan.

- Lee, C. F. (2006). *A study of teachers' perceptions of writing instruction at junior high schools*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Sun Yat-Sen University Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Lee, S. Y., & Krashen, S. D. (2002). Predictors of success in writing in English as a foreign language: Reading, revision behavior, apprehension, and writing. *College Student Journal*, 36, 532-543.
- Li, C. C. (1992). A review of the problems of English composition as encountered by senior high school students: From the perspectives of the Joint College Entrance Examination. *English Teaching and Learning*, 7(1), 7-14.
- Perl, S. (1980). Understanding composing. *College Composition and Communication*, 31, 465-500.
- Shaughnessy, M. (1977). *Errors and expectations: A guide for the teacher of basic writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Walker, B. J. (2003). The cultivation of student self-efficacy in reading and writing. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 19, 173-88.
- Wu, C. P. (2003). *A study on the use of feedback in senior high school English composition: Students' preferences and teachers' practices*. Unpublished master's thesis, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The process of discovering meaning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(2), 195-209.

Appendix A

Questionnaire of Students' Attitudes toward English Writing (QSA)

I. Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female

2. How long have you learned English? _____

3. How long have you learned English writing? _____

4. Do you like English writing?

Yes. Why?

No. Why not?

II. Attitudes toward English writing

		S	A	D	S
		A			D
1	I can express my ideas and exchange opinions with others by English writing.	4	3	2	1
2	I think learning English writing well can make foreign friends.	4	3	2	1
3	I think attending English writing classes is an enjoyable process.	4	3	2	1
4	I think that a good English composition has fluent sentences.	4	3	2	1
5	I think a good English composition has examples to support its ideas.	4	3	2	1
6	I think a good English composition has complete structures and organization.	4	3	2	1
7	I think English writing is important for my real life in the future.	4	3	2	1
8	I think I am good at writing a composition in English.	4	3	2	1
9	I think writing is the most difficult of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in English learning.	4	3	2	1
10	I am worried about gaining a low score in my English composition	4	3	2	1
11	I like to share my English compositions with my classmates.	4	3	2	1

12	I am worried that there are many grammatical errors in my English composition.	4	3	2	1
13	I am worried that I cannot learn the writing skills well.	4	3	2	1
14	I do not like to participate in writing activities	4	3	2	1
15	When writing an English composition, I am worried about my limited vocabulary.	4	3	2	1
16	When writing an English composition, my mind often goes blank and I do not know how to write.	4	3	2	1
17	When writing an English composition, I know the content I want to write and I can give examples.	4	3	2	1
18	I learn English writing because I am interested in English.	4	3	2	1
19	Learning English writing well can help me improve my individual English ability.	4	3	2	1
20	If I learn English writing well, I feel a sense of achievement.	4	3	2	1
21	I like English writing materials that can attract my interest.	4	3	2	1
22	Sharing my English composition with others can encourage me to learn English writing well.	4	3	2	1
23	English writing ability is an important ability that I will need in my future career.	4	3	2	1
24	When I have problems in English writing class, I will ask my teacher and classmates for help.	4	3	2	1
25	I want to learn English writing well in order to be praised by my parents and teachers.	4	3	2	1
26	I want to learn English writing well in order to make my classmates admire me.	4	3	2	1
27	Besides the compositions my teacher assigned, I look for other ways of learning English writing and opportunities to practice English composition.	4	3	2	1
28	I like the topics that can attract my interest in English writing classes even if those topics are difficult.	4	3	2	1
29	I will lose interest in learning if English writing class is taught by a teacher that I dislike.	4	3	2	1

Note: 1 represents strongly disagree (SD); 2 represents disagree (D); 3 represents agree (A); 4 represents strongly agree (SA)

Appendix B

Questionnaire of Teachers' Attitudes toward English Writing and English Writing Instruction (QTA)

I. Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. What is your highest level of formal education?
 Bachelor's Degree Master's Degree Doctorate
3. What was your major? (**You may choose more than one response**)
 Literature Linguistics Applied Linguistics TESOL Others: _____
4. Have you ever taught English writing?
 Yes No
5. If so, how many years have you taught English writing?
 1~3years 4~6years 7~9years More than 10 years
6. Have you ever been trained in English writing instruction?
 Yes No
7. Do you like to teach English writing?
 Yes. Why? _____
-
- No. Why not? _____
-

II. Attitudes toward English writing and difficulties encountered when teaching English writing

		SA	A	D	SD
1	I think the process of writing is of equal importance to the product.	4	3	2	1
2	I think grammar practice exercises help students to improve their writing.	4	3	2	1
3	I think students want to learn English well in order to pass exams.	4	3	2	1
4	I think students want to learn English writing well in order to express ideas and exchange opinions with others.	4	3	2	1
5	I think students want to learn English writing well in order to make foreign friends.	4	3	2	1
6	I think that a good English composition has fluent sentences.	4	3	2	1

7	I think a good English composition has examples to support its ideas.	4	3	2	1
8	I think English writing is important for students' lives in the future.	4	3	2	1
9	I think writing is the most difficult of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in English learning.	4	3	2	1
10	In the process of writing, students usually write down whatever comes to their minds.	4	3	2	1
11	In the process of composing, students cannot use appropriate words to express their ideas.	4	3	2	1
12	There are many grammatical errors in students' compositions.	4	3	2	1
13	When teaching writing, I have the problem of teaching writing according to what will be tested in the exams.	4	3	2	1
14	When teaching writing, I have the problem that students are not familiar with structure and organization.	4	3	2	1
15	When teaching writing, I have the problem of students' writing abilities are very diverse.	4	3	2	1
16	When teaching writing, I have the problem that students' motivation to write is low.	4	3	2	1
17	When teaching writing, I have the problem that there are no appropriate materials to use.	4	3	2	1
18	When teaching writing, I have the problem that correcting compositions is a heavy load.	4	3	2	1
19	If I am to keep up with the heavy school syllabus there is not sufficient time for English writing classes.	4	3	2	1
20	I do not think I was trained well to teach English writing.	4	3	2	1

Note: 1 represents strongly disagree (SD); 2 represents disagree (D); 3 represents agree (A); 4 represents strongly agree (SA)

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Students

1. What is your feeling about English writing?

2. What do you think the importance of English writing in learning English?
3. What makes you feel anxious when writing English compositions?
4. What motivates you learn English writing?
5. What difficulties have you encountered when writing English compositions?
6. How do you deal with these difficulties?
7. What assistance from teachers do you need to improve your English writing?
8. What assistance from the school do you need to improve your English writing?
9. What are your suggestions for improving English writing instruction?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. What is your feeling about English writing instruction?
2. What do you think the importance of English writing in learning English?
3. What do you emphasize when teaching English writing?
4. What problems have you encountered when teaching English writing?
5. How do you deal with these problems?
6. What assistance from the school do you need to improve English writing instruction?
7. What are your suggestions for improving English writing instruction?

***A Preliminary Investigation:
Potential of Implementing Mobile Learning to Foster Oral Communicative Skills
among Chinese as Foreign Language Learners***

ChoyKhim Leow, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
Wan Ahmad Jaafar Wan Yahaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
Zarina Samsudin, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0220

Abstract

Communication is derived from languages, languages enhance communication. While listening and speaking skills are the most direct and feasible approach to acquire foreign language communication skills, learning Chinese as Foreign Language (CFL) requires different approaches due to the language complexity by nature – the unique phonetic system and pictographic characters form. Baddeley’s Model of Working Memory explains, to retain verbal communication in memory, a sub-vocal rehearsal process in the articulatory loop is needed, to prevent phonological information fading away in seconds; Sweller’s Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) explains further the limitations of working memory capacity during learning instruction. Hence, a qualitative phenomenological research was conducted to identify the learning phenomena in Malaysia. Eight respondents underwent semi-structured interviews through the online video-call system “Skype”: Four CFL teachers from International Schools in Penang, Perak, Kuala Lumpur and Johor; and four CFL learners from Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. This preliminary investigation confirmed that CFL learners encounter difficulties in language tones and characters; teachers and learners’ needs are moving in inverse directions: Learners have a thirst for learning oral communication skills in phonetic form; teachers on the contrary, focusing on reading and writing skills in Chinese characters, to prepare learners for paper writing assessments. Hence, alternative learning pedagogy is in need to address the problems for the CFL beginner learners. Mobile learning (social chat-room with peer-tutoring) therefore is suggested to facilitate to assist the CFL learners in acquiring the foreign language, subconsciously; particularly with audio messaging to plays its rehearsing roles for speech-based retention.

Keywords: *Mobile Learning, Oral Communicative Skills, Chinese as a Foreign Language, Peer Tutoring, Audio Messaging.*

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Oral communication, which comprises of listening and speaking skills are the most direct and frequent types of verbal communication in social activities; which differs from reading and writing that are actions in written language and indirect non-verbal communication (Yang, 2009). Human communication largely lies in verbal form, with it occupies 69% of total communicating time each day by college students (Barker, Edwards, Gaines, Gladney, Holley, 1981). Learning to converse in foreign language, particularly Chinese as Foreign Language (CFL) received immense attention following China's economic power on the world stage.

The 'acquisition-learning hypothesis' by Second Language (L2) Theorist - Krashen (1988) explains that to 'acquire' L2, learners undergo the same process as children, learning subconsciously through natural interactions with people in the environments of the target language. The concept of 'learning' however is a conscious, formal instruction process, which are still generally practiced in high schools worldwide, though the efficiency to acquire fluency in spoken language is questioned, due to lack of familiarity with the foreign language (Krashen, 1987). He posited the importance of "acquisition" approach.

While oral communication is concerned, speech processing system in learning CFL requires different set of knowledge and understanding because Chinese language is not alphabetic, but logographic in nature (Everson, 2011). Learners of CFL further hampered with a number of obstacles, when the Romanized phonemes in Chinese language (*pinyin*) violates many principles in English orthography, such as the diacritical markings as well as different sounding system of some initial letters (Bassetti, 2007). Working Memory Model (Baddeley, 1986) and Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) also explain the capacity limitation in learning, which would give implications when learning to acquire listening and speaking skills in Chinese language (XiaoHong, 2011).

Having knew the complexity when learning CFL, learners in Malaysian International Schools have to sit for reading and writing examinations, apart from listening and speaking skills; which then believed to have high probability to affect teaching and learning directions that could ultimately results to unsatisfactory learning outcomes. The challenges in learning CFL, is believed could be facilitated by the promising learning approach – *Peer Tutoring* (PT) , as it is an evidence-based instructional strategy that provides academic and social benefits to the tutor and tutee (Topping & Ehly, 1998b).

There has been extensive empirical research done which outlined the benefit of peer tutoring as a supplement to traditional instruction; that has been used across academic subjects, for diversity of learners, and for both high-performing mentors and low per-performing mentees in an individualized and positive way (Nguyen, 2013). The academic and cognitive gains through PT are shown as below:

Table 1. Academic and Cognitive Gains through Peer Tutoring

No.	Academic and Cognitive Gains	
1	Positively affects mathematics performance (Greenwood & Delquadri, 1995; Kunsch, Jitendra & Sood, 2007)	Overall, PT in mathematics is most effective in improving mathematics performance for students at risk for or experiencing mathematics disabilities, elementary-aged participants, and mathematics computation content (Kunsch, et al., 2007).
2	Improves reading achievement for students of all levels (Scrugg, Mastropieri & Marshak, 2012)	Some established positive outcomes of peer tutoring in reading classes include improvements in key reading skills as well as gains in self-concept and competency in reading (Miller, Topping & Thurston, 2010). Results from a study of PT reading programs in middle schools indicated that students' oral reading rate increased following PT programs.
3	Accommodates diverse students within a classroom	Inclusive writing, which is the practice of teaching disable students alongside non-disabled peers in regular classroom setting, can be facilitated through an emphasis on differentiated learning, where students of varying academic levels receive instruction appropriate for their individual learning styles and speeds (Scrugg, et al., 2012). Differentiated learning, which emphasizes providing students with varied opportunities to acquire knowledge and master skills, can be difficult to implement in a traditional classroom setting (Scrugg, et al., 2012). Peer tutoring can be an effective strategy for educators to facilitate differentiated learning without stigmatizing and alienating students. When peer tutoring is implemented in a class-wide setting, students are able to approach the curriculum at their individual learning level, using strategies to tailor to individual mentees (Kamps, DM., et al., 2008).
4	Promote higher-order thinking (King, 1997)	By explaining concepts in detail, high-level questioning, and the use of supportive

(source cited from Nguyen, 2013)

In light of academic and cognitive gains through PT, which are able to accommodate diverse students within a classroom, for both learning styles and learning ability, this study therefore incorporating PT into mobile learning to acquire oral communication skills in CFL in social-chat-room.

Audio-messaging - the feature that transfers audio information in chat-room is a great learning tool for verbal information retention and encouraging two ways communication. With these recording and playback functions (audio-messaging) integrated in mobile communication technology, learning to converse foreign language becomes much easier. Learners are able to listen to the conversation repetitively and freely, without interference to speaker; also to rehearse and reevaluate

repetitively their own recordings. Learning happens when learners take advantage of learning opportunities offered by mobile technology (O'Malley et. al, 2003).

Research Background

The concept of mobile learning (m-learning) is emerging, yet uncertain. According to Ally (2009) whilst m-learning refers to “any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at fixed, predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies (Brasher& Tayler) – which include mobile devices such as cellular (mobile) phones, portable computers, and personal audio players (Sharples, Taylor, Vavoula, 2007).”

Concepts from Koole's Framework for the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME) Model, which drew from Activity Theory and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) postulates learners may move within different physical and virtual locations and thereby participate and interact with other people, information, or systems – anywhere, anytime.

Taking advantages of mobile technologies, learning foreign language with mobile phone is gaining momentum among young learners: Japanese university students, who learn English as a foreign language (EFL), agreed that they learned more on mobile phones than Personal Computers (PCs), and 99% felt m-learning is a valuable teaching method (Thorton & Houser, 2005). Taiwan EFL learners enjoy using phone in learning, due to its accessibility to materials and flexibility to practice, without time and space constraints; limitation in screen size, on the contrary making the learning contents more manageable (Chen, Hsieh, and Kinshuk, 2008).

It is not surprising, then, to see m-learning also gaining momentum in CFL learning environment, particularly pertaining to pedagogies to acquire oral communication skills. For the fact that CFL learners in Malaysian International Schools are taking Chinese as Foreign Language in their examination, oral communication skills are required to be mastered. The challenge faced when learning foreign language (FL), or more precisely CFL in this context, learners face academic challenges. Few parents speak the foreign language their children studying, resulted less opportunity to reinforce classroom-acquired language skills at home. Worst still, when Chinese characters are mostly represented in morphemes, not phonemes (Yun Xiao, 2011); the helping phonetic system – pinyin, also violated many principles in English orthography (Everson, 2011).

By reasoning of the difficulties in learning CFL, this study therefore, proposing a new learning pedagogy which believed could assist learners of CFL to learn and socially practise their CFL oral communication skills. In other words, mobile learning (social chat-room with peer-tutoring) could realizing “learning and practice” in place to acquire FL oral communicative skills, using the audio messaging in learning to listen and speak the FL.

Still and all, individual instructional preferences has to be given cautionary when designing, developing and delivering information for effective learning outcomes. Sadler-Smith (1996) defines instructional preferences as an individual's propensity to choose or express for a particular instructional technique or combination of

techniques; and there are three instructional preference styles or types (Sadler-Smith & Riding, 1999):

- (a) *dependent learners*: prefer teacher-directed, highly structured programmes with explicit assignments set and assessed by the teacher;
- (b) *collaborative learners*: are discussion-oriented and favour group projects, collaborative assignments and social interaction;
- (c) *independent learners*: prefer to exercise an influence on the content structure of learning programmes within which the teacher or the instructor is a resource (Renzulli & Smith, 1978; Reichmann & Grasha, 1974)

Many have argued that there are significant differences between individual in terms of their instructional preferences (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 2003, Prosser & Trigwell, 1998; Sadler-Smith & Riding, 2004, 1999;), in which if we ignore them may ultimately lead to reduced motivation and engagement with learning process (Bambacas & Sanderson, 2011) .

This study, will be taking learners' individual instructional preferences as moderator variables when designing, developing as well as delivering the mobile learning session as to positively motivate and engage learners by their respective learning styles.

Findings

The findings below are based on literature review and preliminary investigation through interviews. Findings from this preliminary investigation explain the CFL learning phenomena that arise in Malaysian International Schools; validating the learning issues and directing research path, and to propose alternative learning pedagogy to facilitate listening and speaking dilemma that might arise.

This study, therefore suggests to incorporate mobile communication technology into CFL learning – mobile learning (m-learning). Learning oral communicative skills in the social-chat-group environment (existing mobile communication application: whatsapp, wechat, viber). The Model for m-learning could be understood by Koole's (2009) Framework for Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME), as shown in Figure 1.

A. Literature Review

Mobile learning (m-learning) can be effectively implemented in both formal and informal learning from intersection of these three aspects: (1) device, (2) learners, (3) social; following Koole's (2009) Framework for Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME), as shown in the Figure 1. For oral communicative skills are concerned, ability to socially interact competently in the learned foreign language (refers to CFL in this study) is the ultimate target for learning (Yang, 2009). In parallel with this objective, the device, learners and social aspects in m-learning could serve as at extended learning at home after formal instruction in school; acting as alternate solution for revision after class and creating situated learning for "social and cultural practices that people bring to the uses of tools (mobile phone, in this study) they share (Russell, 2002).

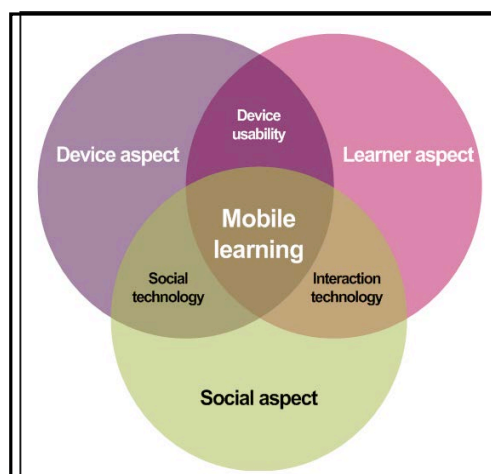


Figure 1. Koole's (2009) Framework for Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME)

The device, learner and social aspects in FRAME Model take into consideration of the following characteristics:

- a. *Device aspect* refers to features of the mobile device – its physical characteristic, input and output capabilities storage capacity, processor speed and error rates.
- b. *Learner aspect* signifies the distinct features of an individual learner – his or her cognitive abilities, memory, learning preferences, willingness to learn, motivation level.
- c. *Social aspect* points to the features required for conversation, cooperation and social interaction – it means sharing and respecting social-cultural paving way for congenial interaction.

Research on Chinese listening and speaking remain limited to date (Jiang & Cohen, 2012). Hence, there is no better time than now to investigate the CFL oral communicative learning phenomenon, and to suggest effective learning pedagogy.

Learners like using mobile devices (Kinash, Brand, Mathew, 2012); they are motivated and engaged while using mobile devices in learning (Al-Fahad, 2009; Wang et al., 2009; Rogers et al., 2010). Jones et al. (2006) proposed six reasons of why mobile learning could be motivating due to six reasons: (1) learners' control; (2) ownership; (3) learning-in-context; (4) continuity between contexts, (5) fun, (6) communication. Therefore this study, is taking a look into how learners perceived mobile could motivate them in their learning.

Learning is fundamentally situated and socially mediated, therefore learning is an interaction with more capable peers, helping the learner through the zone of proximal development (ZPD), as postulated by Vygotsky (1978); and it is through interaction with other learners and teachers, mediated by mobile technologies, that ZPD emerges (Uden, 2007). Learners were more motivated when learning from native speaker (peer-tutoring) by Imura (2004). Learners hope to learn with peers with instant messaging, discussion boards, note sharing and comments in their mobile learning

experience (Kissinger, 2003). Researchers believed that learning environment emphasises participation; responsibility influence the motivational orientation (Ames, 1992), which peer coaching and learning community are typical applications brought by this belief.

Instructional preferences define individual's preferences when referring to receiving instructional approaches from teachers in school, which was categorized into three different styles:

- a. *Dependent Learner* prefers teacher-directed learning seldom contribute, but always receiving information from others, relatively passive in learning.
- b. *Collaborative Learner* prefers discussion-oriented learning, constantly interact with peers, favours group projects, giving and receiving information among peers for meaningful interaction.
- c. *Independent Learner* is prone to self-oriented learning, able to accomplish tasks independently or teacher as the only resource.

B. Teachers from International Schools

Four CFL teachers from local International Schools (which respectively from states Penang, Perak, Kuala Lumpur and Johor) agreed that most of the CFL beginner learners from International Schools generally not able to communicate orally in simple sentences, even after few years attending to formal instructions in school. Main reason was due to the environment factor, whereby they seldom use the Chinese language to converse with friends, and most parents are not Chinese literate, which had then caused revision tougher to be done after school. Listening opportunity also limited inside and outside of the school as everyone is communicating using English as their lingua franca. Most of the times, we are textbooks-based teaching, to prepare learners for writing and reading test - which being prioritized due to the complexity of the Chinese language nature. Therefore to improve learners' oral communicative skills, they need a conducive environment to listen and speak more often. When referring to multimedia, all teachers revealed that they often use books, power point, internet, audio and videos, yet none had ever used mobile device in the teaching and learning session.

C. CFL learners from International Schools

Four CFL learners who study CFL in local International Schools (whom respectively from Korea, Thailand and Malaysia) expressed their core interest when learning CFL, is to be able to communicate orally in Chinese language; they find that teachers in school however, are focusing mostly in reading and writing skills. All of them agreed that learning to read Chinese characters is difficult; they all use *pinyin*, not characters when dealing with oral communication. Three find it hard to converse in Mandarin because they seldom practise with friends, one find it interesting (Korean learner) because he always use the learned language when mingling with his peers. He added, in terms of oral communicative skills, he acquire more from peers than teachers; in classroom lessons, he learn grammar which helps to perfect the language. All revealed often use textbooks, audio and videos; only one has explored mobile applications; yet no teachers had ever used mobile device in the teaching and learning session.

Learning Theories

To facilitate effective learning result in mobile learning environment, learning theories that underpinned the CFL learning are: (A) Second Language Acquisition Theory; (B) Peer Tutoring; (C) Working Memory.

A. Second Language Acquisition Theory

“The acquisition-learning hypothesis” by Krashen (1987) which also known as Natural approach clearly defines two different distinct concepts: learning and acquisition, which need to be understood when learning a foreign language. Language acquisition refers to product of a subconscious process, as it does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill; but involving real and meaningful interactions between people in the target language and culture, where the learner is an active player, as stated by Krashen (1987). It is a process that produces functional skill in the spoken language without theoretical knowledge.

Language learning refers the formal instruction, which involve conscious process – learner attended to the knowledge of the language by learning the grammar, structures and rules of the language. This language learning requires intellectual effort and deductive reasoning; and often seeing teacher as an authority figure while learner is predominantly passive. Learner in this system can hardly ever master the use of the language knowledge in conversation (Krashen, 1988).

Having known the differences of these two foreign language learning system, this study, therefore employs both formal and informal learning to acquire oral communication skills when learning CFL. As explained by Krashen (1987), the most natural way to acquire language is similar to the process when children undergo learning their first language, which is from their act of communicative – oral communication, whereby peers tutoring could encourage the communication activity, as mentioned in the following.

B. Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring (PT) refers to a system of instruction in which learner help each other and learn by teaching (Goodlad & Hirst, 1989). As shown in Table 2, PT shows significant performance results in reading and mathematics skills, which are areas most commonly applied (Fantuzzo & Miller, 2003; Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck & Fantuzzo, 2006; Spencer, Simpson & Oatis, 2009). Having known the nature of acquiring oral communicative skills in foreign language, PT which groups learners with native speakers could provide learning opportunity to communicate using the learnt language in a social-able mobile context.

C. Working Memory

Baddeley and Hitch (1974) model of working memory posited three central executives when mental processing information: (i) a modality-free central executive related to attention; (ii) a phonological loop holding information in a speech-based form; and (iii) a visuo-spatial sketchpad for the coding of visual and spatial information. We can keep information circulating in working memory by rehearsing it

(Wen, 2011), therefore in order to retain information, one repeats the sound of the word or the phrase silently or aloud, for subvocal rehearsal process, as in mentioned (ii) for its Phonological Working Memory (PWM) for both native and second language learning; as this phonological loop in language learning is extensive (e.g. Baddeley, Gathercole, & Pappagno, 1998; Ellis, 2001). Hence, audio recording could retain the phonological information and to be rehearsed as many times as possible for language learning purpose.

Conceptual Framework

The mentioned learning theories and models leading to the formation of the following conceptual framework (Figure 2).

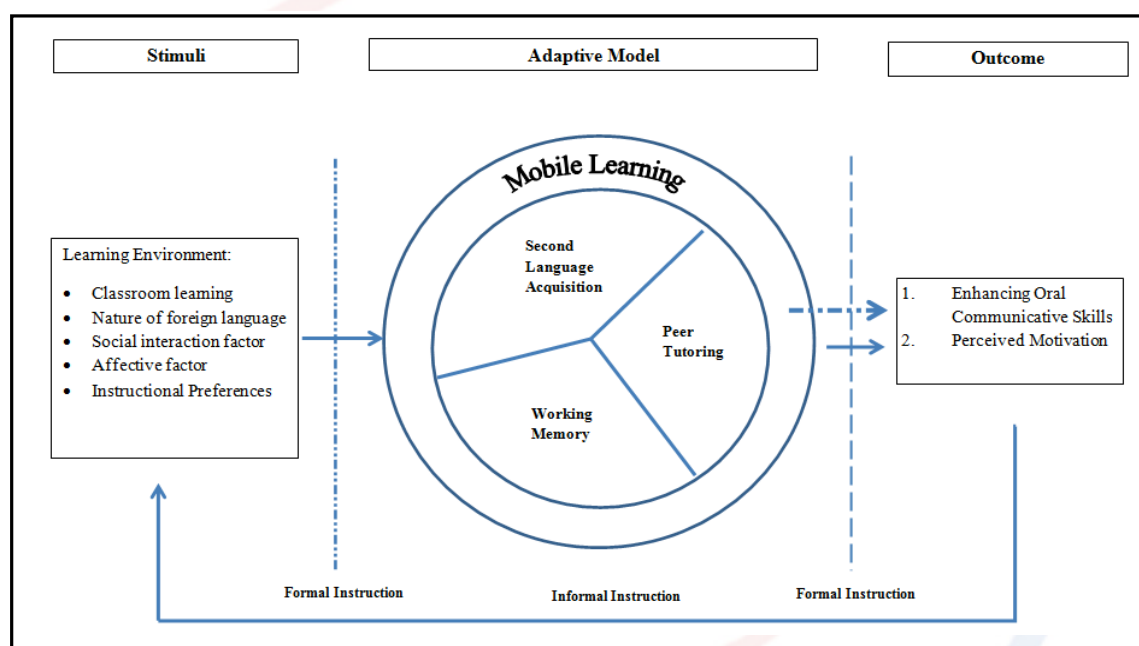


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework of Mobile Learning CFL Oral Communicative Skills

Implications for Learning

The findings from this preliminary investigation parallel with the literature reviews, explained the foreign language learning phenomena among CFL learners. Feedback from teachers confirmed the skills of listening and speaking among CFL learners are rather weak and these definitely impede their oral communicative opportunities using the learnt language. The learning environment is a major platform that needed to be addressed as to provide CFL learners a platform to practice and converse the learnt language.

CFL learners agreed Chinese language listening and speaking requires different learning strategies as it is different with their alphabetic education background (English and Japanese); they often face confusion with tones and pronunciation; seldom converse due to lacking of environment; first thought in mind when conversing in Chinese was using *pinyin* approach, because Chinese characters.

Conclusions

With regard to CFL learning, acquisition of oral communicative skills continues posing great challenges, though these are the essential, fundamental and ultimate objectives when one learning a foreign language. Environment and opportunity were claimed to be the major reasons for acquiring these skills, which researcher believed that mobile learning in a chat-room environment could facilitate these learning challenges.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Centre for Instructional Technology and Multimedia, University Sains Malaysia (USM) for sponsoring the conference fee in this research; and also teachers and learners for their encouraging feedback and comments in validating the learning phenomenon among CFL learners.

References

- Baddeley, A D. (1986). Working memory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baddeley, A D. & Hitch, GJ. (1974). Working memory. The Psychology of learning and motivation. Vol 8. 47-89. New York: Academic Press.
- Baddeley, A D., Gathercole, S., & Pappagno, C. (1998). The phonological loop as a language learning device. The Psychological Review, 105, 158-173.
- Basole, R C. (2004). The Value and Impact of Mobile Information and Communication Technologies. Proceedings of the IFAC Symposium on Analysis, Modeling & Evaluation of Human-Machine Systems.
- Cziko, G A. & Park, P. (2003). Internet audio communication for second language learning: A comparative review of six programs. Journal of Language Learning and Technology, 7(1), 15-27.
- Frenkiel, R. (2002). A brief history of mobile communication, IEEE Vehicular Technology Society News, May, 4-7.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2005). Emerging Technologies. Messaging, gaming, peer-to-peer sharing: Language learning strategies & tools for the millennial generation. 9(1). 17-22.
- Goodlad, S.& Hirst, B. (1989). Peer Tutoring: A Guide to Learning by Teaching, London: Kogan Page.
- Jiang, X L. & Cohen, A D. (2012). A critical review of research on strategies in learning Chinese as both a second and foreign language. Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching. 2(1). 9-43.
- Krashen, S D. (1987). Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. Prentice-Hall International.
- Krashen, S D. (1988). Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. Prentice-Hall International.
- Kissinger, J S. (2003). The social & mobile learning experiences of students using mobile e-books. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network. 17(1). 153-170.
- O'Malley, C., Vavoula, G., Glew, JP., Taylor, J., & Sharples, M. (2005). Guidelines for Learning/Teaching/Tutoring in a Mobile Environment.

- Nguyen, M. (2013). Peer tutoring as a strategy to promote academic success. Research Brief.
- Sadler-Smith, E. & Riding. R. (1999). Cognitive style and instructional preferences. *Instructional Science* (pp. 355-371). Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher. Netherlands.
- Sharples, M., Taylor, J., Vavoula, G N. (2007) A Theory of Learning for the Mobile Age. In R. Andrews and C. Haythornthwaite (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Elearning Research*. London: Sage, 221-47.
- Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary activities: Examining the effect of the platform. 14(2). 95-110.
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load theory, learning difficulty, and instructional design.
- Topping, K J. (1996). The Effectiveness of Peer Tutoring in Further and Higher Education: A Typology and Review of the Literature. 32(2). 321-345.
- Topping, K. & Ehly. S.(1998). Peer – Assisted Learning. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Uden, L. (2007). Activity theory for designing mobile learning. *International Journal of Mobile Learning and Organisation*. 1(1). 81-101.
- Vygotsky, L S. (1978). *Mind and Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wen, X H. (2011). Teaching Listening and Speaking: An interactive approach. *Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Theories and Application*, 2nd edition. United States: Boston, Cheng & Tsui Company.
- Wen. (2011). Teaching listening and speaking: An interactive approach. *Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Theories and Application*, 2nd edition. United States: Boston, Cheng & Tsui Company.
- Yun. (2011). Teaching chinese orthography and discourse. *Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Theories and Application*, 2nd edition. United States: Boston, Cheng & Tsui Company.

Electronic Sources:

- Ally, M. (2009). Mobile learning: Transforming the delivery of education and training. Athabasca University Press, Athabasca. Retrieve April 2, 2014 from World Wide Web: <http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120155>
- Bambacas, M. & Sanderson, G B. (2011). Instructional preferences of students in transnational Chinese and English language MBA programs. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*. 8(1). Retrieve April 2, 2014 from the World Wide Web: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol8/iss1/2>
- Quinn, C. (2007). mLearning: Mobile, Wireless, In-Your-Pocket Learning. *LineZine*. Fall. Retrieve April 2, 2014 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.linezine.com/2.1/features/cqmmwiyp.htm>

Creating a Cross-Cultural Dialogue on Literature: A Study on the Approaches and Outcomes of Using Technology-Enhanced Literature Circles with Taiwanese and Japanese EFL University Students

Wan-lun Lee, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0221

Abstract

The decline in students' reading interest and ability has been one of the major concerns of language teachers. A number of L1 and ESL research findings have shown that the use of literature can increase language learners' reading motivation, and the literature circle, since first introduced by Harvey Daniels in 1994, has been regarded as one of the most effective methods of integrating literature and language teaching. In recent years, due to the rapid development and popularity of computer and the Internet technologies, many L1 and ESL educators have begun to integrate technology into the literature circle, and the technology-enhanced literature circle approach has been widely used with their students. However, the literature circle approach, whether traditional or technology-enhanced, is seldom used in the EFL context. This study incorporates technology-enhanced literature circles into the English language curriculum at the university level. In addition to the use of electronic texts and weblogs, it also formed cross-cultural reading and discussion groups to help Taiwanese and Japanese EFL university students acquire the competence of communicating and cooperating with cross-country EFL learners using the target language. A mixed methods study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of this cross-cultural technology-enhanced literature circle approach from these EFL participants' perspectives. It is hoped that the empirical data and research findings generated in this study will help bridge the gaps in current LC research in the EFL context and provide useful suggestions for the future application of technology-enhanced literature circles in University English courses.

iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1. Introduction

Since the late 1980s, there has been “a move towards integrating language and literature,” and literature has been widely regarded as an ideal and valuable language learning resource in ELT (Paran, 2008, p. 466). For one thing, literary works are authentic materials from which language learners can acquire real language subconsciously (Fox, 1997). For another, literary works, written about various human problems and issues, can enrich language lessons and engage learners’ “intellect and emotions” in a way that “the study of the language alone cannot” (Hill, 1986, p. 108). Furthermore, the reading of a literary work, as noted by Stern (1991), can easily immerse language learners in the world it depicts and help them gain deeper insights into the English-using culture.

In order to help language learners get more benefits outlined above, a variety of approaches to the integration of language and literature have been developed over the past few decades, and among them, the literature circle, first intended for L1 learners only, has drawn more and more attention in the ELT community and proven to be equally beneficial for L2 learners (Alis, 1994). According to Daniels, literature circles are “small, temporary discussion groups” choosing to read the same literary text and discussing it regularly with “discussion roles” (e.g., discussion director, connector, summarizer, and travel tracer) before they select a new text and “move to a new cycle” (1994, p. 13). This approach is “a sophisticated fusion” of “collaborative learning” with “independent reading,” in the framework of “reader response theory” (*ibid.*, p. 17-8). Though initially used as a powerful way of deepening L1 learners’ responses to literature, this approach has been successfully implemented in L2 reading classes to help students acquire the confidence to respond to a literary text, increase their language production and improve both their knowledge and mastery of English as they interact around the same literary work and share their ideas with the other readers in the same group (Collie & Slater, 1987; Samway & Whang, 1996; Brock, 1997).

In recent years, the remarkable advances in computer and online technologies have provided more and more tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication and collaboration, such as email, blogs, chat rooms, discussion forums and Skype, and the integration of technology into literature circle activities has given language learners the opportunity to work with one another regardless of the barriers of time and space. However, though it is not uncommon to find examples of using cross-cultural literature circles with ESL learners, it is still rare to see one in the EFL context, not to mention the use of literature circles with university EFL students of non-English major from different countries. To fill in the gap, a cross-cultural technology-enhanced literature circle project was developed and used with Japanese and Taiwanese EFL university students of non-English major, and a small-scale mixed methods study was conducted to explore the efficiency of this project in promoting cross-cultural communication and interaction around literary texts.

2. The Project: Cross-Cultural Literature Circles through Technology

34 Taiwanese non-English-major students taking my *Freshman English* course for intermediate-level learners at a university in Taiwan and 52 Japanese non-English major students taking a *TOEIC* course offered by a Japanese teacher, Rita Otsu, were divided into 17 literature circle groups in this study. Since the two classes met on different days of the week and used different course materials, the students were

required to work on the cross-cultural technology-enhanced literature circle project with their group members out of class.

Before the project was introduced to the students, they were asked to take a pre-test with TOEIC-style reading comprehension questions, and the pre-test scores were used to form mixed-ability groups, each of which was made up of two Taiwanese students and one to four Japanese students. Within 18 weeks, the students had to complete four LC cycles, in which each group read four short stories and conducted four online group discussions for each story they read. Besides, every group member had to play different discussion roles designed for this technology-enhanced literature circle project, including discussion director, summarizer & recorder, web researcher, passage master & tracker, connector, and vocabulary enricher. For groups of six, these roles could be rotated easily, but in groups of three, four or five, the last three roles became optional. Before each of the four cycles started, each group chose one out of thirty English short stories posted on the literature circle blog, and then every group member had to read the story, post and reply to after-reading comments on the group page on the LC blog, prepare relevant materials for the assigned LC role before the whole group started to discuss the story by exchanging text-based or voice messages via Skype. It usually took the students three to four weeks to complete one cycle, and after the online discussion was done, the recorder had to submit the discussion record and every group member had to complete the evaluation form before the next cycle started.

3. Research Methodology

A mixed-method approach using multiple data sources was employed in this study to get an in-depth understanding of the practice and effects of the cross-cultural technology-enhanced literature circle project. Quantitative data collection instruments include pre- and post-tests as well as pre-course and post-course questionnaire surveys while the qualitative data came from both the students' answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire surveys and my one-on-one student interviews. It should be noted here that the analysis and discussion would draw on and integrate both types of data, but greater priority would be given to the qualitative data, for the study needed qualitative depth to research into the students' views and perceptions regarding this project.

4. Results and Discussion

All the groups completed the four cycles successfully, and most of the participants responded positively to this project. Here are the major findings of this study:

4.1. Learner motivation

Both quantitative and qualitative data show that most of the students liked the idea of working with students from another country, and many of them admitted that it had greatly increased their motivation to take part in this out-of-class project actively. The results of the exit questionnaire survey show that 95% of the respondents agreed that working with group members from another country gave them stronger motivation to do a good job for the LC task. During the interview, some students mentioned that they tried to get every task done well because they wanted to make a good impression on their foreign group members while some said that they felt motivated to spend more of their leisure time on the project because they wanted to form a close friendship with their foreign group members.

4.2 Cultural differences

According to the exit questionnaire survey results, about half of the respondents often found the ideas of their group members from another country very different from theirs, 87% of them agreed that they often found themselves more interested in the ideas shared by their foreign group members, and one fourth of them felt it was hard to make their foreign group members understand their ideas. In the interview data, there was no report on any difficulty or problem caused by cultural differences or misunderstanding, but a couple of Japanese interviewees mentioned that sometimes it was difficult for them to understand the ideas from their Taiwanese group members though they believe it had more to do with their poor English ability than to do with cultural differences. Besides, many Japanese students felt that their Taiwanese group members were better at using English to expressing their opinions, many of which were far more interesting than their Japanese group members'. On the other hand, many Taiwanese interviewees noticed that their Japanese group members often said "thank you" and "yes" or "I agree with you," which made some of them wonder whether these Japanese students were just too polite to disagree or argue with the others, or they were afraid of or even incapable of using English to express their ideas.

4.3 Differences in language competence and learning attitude

During the interview, when asked if there was any significant difference between Japanese and Taiwanese group members in terms of language competence and learning attitude, many interviewees from both groups commented that Taiwanese students had a better command of English and were often eager to express themselves in English while Japanese students usually worked harder but had poorer English ability and contributed less during the discussion. It is also noteworthy that several Japanese students complained that their Taiwanese group members were sometimes late for the discussion or even absent for no reason while a couple of Taiwanese students sometimes felt annoyed because their Japanese group members did not reply their emails or Skype messages regarding important information like the change of discussion time.

4.4 Language outcomes

The comparison of the pre- and post-test scores shows that the participation in the project led to the improvement of the English reading ability of the majority of the students, especially the Japanese ones, who might also have benefitted from the test-taking strategy training of their TOEIC course. According to the exit questionnaire results, 94% of the respondents agreed that reading the short stories had improved their reading ability, 84% of them found writing comments on the LC blog had improved their English writing ability, 94% of them felt that discussing the short stories with their group members had improved their English communication skills, and 88% of them agreed that it got easier and easier for them to communicate with their group members in English. In the interviews, many students mentioned that this project had given them more experience and confidence in expressing their ideas in English, whether orally or through written formats, because they had to use English all the time to make sure that all their group members could understand what they wanted to say.

4.5 The use of technology

Before the project started, almost all the Taiwanese students had been Skype users while half of the Japanese students had to apply for a new account. However, at the

end of the project, 98% of the respondents of the exit questionnaire agreed that Skype was a good tool for cross-country communication, and all the interviewees agreed that Skype was easy to use and suitable for this project though some Taiwanese students strongly suggested using Facebook or Line as well. Furthermore, the questionnaire data also show that 64% of the respondents preferred to exchange text-based messages with their group members via Skype. When asked about the reason for such preference during the interview, Taiwanese students explained that their Japanese group members' English accent had made it really difficult to understand what they were trying to say, while Japanese students admitted that it was really difficult for them to express themselves quickly and clearly in spoken English. As for the literature circle blog, the questionnaire data indicate that 93% of the participants found it useful for the LC task, including reading the short stories and exchanging after-reading comments asynchronously before the group discussion. However, the interview data show that the Taiwanese students thought positively of getting and reading the electronic version of the short stories on the blog while most of the Japanese students admitted that they printed out the stories because they were more used to reading paper-based materials where they could easily write down their notes and the word meaning or underline some important sentences.

4.6 The time-related problems

52% of the respondents of the exit questionnaire often found it hard for them to spend time on the LC task, and among those negative comments on this project in the interview data, the majority were actually complaints about the time-consuming nature of the project and the difficulty of finding time to discuss the short stories synchronously via Skype due to group members' different course or work schedules.

5. Conclusion

It is very encouraging that 93% of the questionnaire respondents would recommend university English teachers to use this cross-country technology-enhanced LC project with their non-English-major students. Although it must be acknowledged that the students might have given positive feedback to please the teacher-researcher, my experience of designing and implementing this cross-cultural technology-enhanced literature circle project as well as the students' positive responses to it still convinced me of the benefits of this approach to integrating literature and language learning and encouraged me to share these with university English teachers who are interested in using literature in their English language curriculum but still wondering how to do it. It is hoped that this study will lay the foundations of using technology-enhanced literature circles to increase non-English-major students' interest in learning English through literature and to create more opportunities for literature-focused communication and collaboration among EFL learners with different mother tongues and from different cultural backgrounds.

References

- Alis, S. (1994). The reader-response approach: An alternative for teaching literature in a second language. *Journal of Reading*, 37, 288-296.
- Brock, C. H. (1997). Exploring the use of book club with second-language learners in mainstream classrooms. In I. S. McMahon, T. E. Raphael, V. J. Goatley, & L. S. Pardo (Eds.), *The Book Club Connection* (pp. 141-158). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Collie, J. and S. Slater. (1987). *Literature in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Fox, T. R. (1997). Refuting the skeptics: the argument for literature in the language Classroom. *Hwa Kang Journal of English Language & Literature*, 3, 29-37.
- Hill, J. (1986). *Teaching Literature in the Language Classroom*. London: Macmillan.
- Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: An evidence-based survey. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 465-496.
- Samway, K. D. and G. Whang. (1996). *Literature study circles in a multicultural classroom*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Stern, S. L. (1991). An integrated approach to literature in ESL/EFL. In M. C. Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (pp. 328-345). Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

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

Using E-learning in Acquiring Japanese Listening Material Predicting Strategy

Vera Yulianti, University of Al Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia
Bembi Mulia Ramadhani, University of Al Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia
Rahmalia Arifin, University of Al Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia
Wening Gayatri, University of Al Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0238

Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of using e-learning as a tool of acquiring listening material predicting strategy. The respondents are seventeen (17) students of University of Al Azhar Indonesia. Considering of their Japanese Language Proficiency Test result, learning experience and living experience in Japan, the respondents are classified as Basic Learners A2 level based on CEFR and JFS (Japan Foundation Standard). News from NHK Radio Station and video clips from NHKTV Course (Erin's Challenge ! I Can Speak Japanese) had been chosen as the listening materials. The respondents were asked to do the tasks inside university e-learning website which has been designed to exercise the ability of predicting listening material contents. Before doing the task, they were given the theme and clues such as keywords, illustrations, and articles to recall and enhance their linguistics and non linguistics background knowledge. Furthermore, they were asked to predict the content by making questions related with the theme, then listening and resuming the content and answering the questions. The result of this study shows that it is effective to use e-learning in acquiring listening material prediction strategy with clues on audio-visual task rather than on audio task.

Keywords: Japanese Listening, Predicting Strategy, E-learning

1. Introduction

Based on the survey held by The Japan Foundation in 2013, Indonesia ranked the 2nd in the world as a country with highest number of Japanese learners, just below South Korea. Although it ranked the 2nd, there is a lack of the Japanese learning materials compared to other countries. The target of foreign language learning which achieving the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, requires extra efforts to attain the target due to some problems in learning, especially related to obtaining self-learning materials which are not limited by time and space.

Related to the listening materials, it is more difficult to find it because the chance of getting interaction with the Japanese native speakers directly is low. Furthermore, there is only limited radio or TV program broadcasted in Indonesia that employs Japanese language. Moreover, online audio-visual materials are hard to understand, especially for the beginners since they still have limited vocabularies and grammatical knowledge.

On the other hand, since 1980, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* has been developed and improved and it gives wide influence toward foreign language learning, especially interactive learning process. Nowadays, ICT does not only play a role as the learning resources, even more, it has a role as an online communication tool in the foreign language learning process (Regine Hampel, 2010 in Michael Thomas & Hayo Reinders, 2010: 131). It also happens on the utilization of web-based social media recently which then brings a new challenge as well as a chance for foreign language learning to improve (Michael Thomas & Hayo Reinders, 2010: 6).

In Indonesia, ICT has experienced massive development recently. In the past years, it was difficult to get online access, but along with the development in mobile phone as one of ICT media, now people find it easier to access information through online. Furthermore, the price of a mobile phone is getting more reachable with multiple technologies and applications provided. It benefits them as user since it takes only a little time to go online. Therefore, the number of mobile phone users is increasing continuously. In addition, the technology available in the mobile phone does not only allow the users to have a conversation through phone call or make written communication through short message service (SMS), but also to upload and download audio-visual files which then widen the chance to communicate in different way.

By analysing the explanation above, the background of the problem is actually related to the lack of listening materials for Japanese learners in Indonesia, while on the other side, there is sharp increase in the development of mobile phone as an ICT medium which eases the users to have information and learning materials online. Thus, the questions which appear in this research are:

- a. to what extent is the effectiveness of E-learning to increase the chance of accessing materials for listening conversation?
- b. What kind of listening ability can be achieved by utilizing E-learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Standard of Beginners in Foreign Language Learning Based on CEFR

According to CEFR (2011: 24) in *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment*, it is stated that the targets of learning that should be attained by foreign language learners in the basic level are as follows.

In Basic User A1, learners are supposed to comprehend and use some general expressions and phrases in daily conversation. Furthermore, they should be able to introduce themselves and others, and answer some questions related to their personal information such as address, the people whom they know, and the things belonging to them. Moreover, they must be able to interact with easy and simple wording as well as understanding others' statements in a slow manner.

While in the Basic User A2, the abilities that need to be acquired are improved and the level of difficulty is increased. Learners have to understand sentences and expressions which are commonly used in daily conversation related to them and their family. In addition, they have to be able to express it in public places such as shopping centres and public services. Moreover, they need to communicate with simple sentences and are able to give and take order in daily life. They also have to explain their background and the information of people surrounding them.

2.2. The Standard of Beginners in Learning Japanese Language According to JFS

国際交流基金 or The Japan Foundation (2010 : 10) in Japan Foundation Standard (JFS) for Japanese Language Education 2010 states that beginners in Japanese language learning can be divided into two categories, A1 and A2. Beginners in A1 and A2 have to meet competency standards as follows.

For beginners in A1, they have to comprehend simple expressions, introduce themselves and the people surrounding them, and understand information from others. Meanwhile for beginners A2, they must be able to explain and state about the things in their surrounding and understand other's explanations when they are introducing themselves.

2.3 Foreign Language Listening Strategy

Matsumoto (2008:22-45) in 聞くことを教える(Kiku Koto wo Oshieru) said that there are six strategies for foreign language listening, which the learners must be mastered. On this research strategies will be focused on one strategy, that is predictions strategy. Moreover, he explained that in order to improve the ability of predicting listening material, this following ways is a way that can be drilled to the learner. This are the following ways:

First, is using visual material Shows such as drawings, photos, tables, charts and other that have related to listening materials. Second is showing related ideas with the situation of listening materials, while providing keywords. Third, is providing articles or writing that related to listening materials. Forth, is providing initial questions that can stimulate learners

3. Methods

This research was conducted on Japanese listening class III at the University of Al Azhar Indonesia about 20 people. Collected data was conducted by giving preliminary tests ,early questionnaire, structured task and questionnaire at the end. For the purposes of preliminary tests and structured task of the radio broadcast, advertising internet, NHK TV (Nihon Housou Kyoukai) and DVD produced by The Japan Foundation, was adapted into listening teaching materials that suitable for beginner level. The standard ability for beginner level adjusted to the standard of the ability of foreign speech, CEFR (*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) and the standard Japanese language proficiency, JFS (*Japan Foundation Standard*). Then the material is uploaded to e-learning system of Al Azhar Indonesia.

Before the listening assignment begins, there will be preliminary tests and the spread of questionnaire to measure the readiness respondents to use e-learning material. Then listening material that are already uploaded on the e-learning was assigned to respondents by structured. Structured assignment includes, structured listening audio visual material and do the assignment for evaluating the understanding of the material. At the end of assignment there is evaluate from the questionnaire for listening skill with certain strategies based on early questionnaire, structured task and last questionnaire.

This research listening strategy is focused on strategy to prediction listening material, than the e-learning material used is made by providing stimulant stimulant to predicting listening material as expressed above Matsumoto, that the visual content, keywords, related articles and questions at the beginning. As for the material selected with attention to themes that suit beginners Basic User A2. The theme of the materials is as follows:

Audio visual Material about " DVD Rental Places in Japan," this material was taken from the DVD 1 broadcast TV NHK "Erin's Challenge! I Can speak Japanese "NHK Japan 2007. This material is in the form of stimulant questions

Audio Visual Material about "Smart Pet" ads on Youtube about multi function gadget that is connected to the iphone. This material is for the question stimulants

Audio Material about the "watching a movie on the Internet" of NHK radio e-na Nihongo. Stimulant for this material is a article

Audio Material about "computer Mouse for people with disabilities" from NHK radio e-na Nihongo. Stimulant for this material is a article

Audio visual Material about "Japanese House" this material is taken from the DVD 2 broadcast TV NHK "Erin's Challenge! I Can speak Japanese "NHK Japan 2007. This stimulant material is a keyword (hint) and questions

Audio visual Material about the "the meaning of transportation in Japan" DVD 2 broadcast TV NHK "Erin's Challenge! I Can speak Japanese ". This stimulant material is a keyword (hint) and questions

The background of the respondents can be seen as on the chart 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 below.

4. Results and Discussion

5. Conclusion

The effectiveness of using e-learning in acquiring predicting listening material content has been shown on results and discussion above. The conclusion of this study is explained below. First, using e-learning in speaking practice for beginner Japanese learners is more effective in condition using audio visual material instead of audio material. Second, in acquiring strategy of predicting learning material content, it should use various kinds of stimulants, especially using a related article.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge use of international seminar grant of Research and Public Services Center (LP2M UAI) at the University of Al Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia.

References

Council of Europe. 2011. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp, accessed at March, 1, 2013 10.00 p.m

国際交流基金, 2010. 「JF日本語教育スタンダード (第二版)」, http://jfstandard.jp/pdf/jfs2010_all.pdf, downloaded at February, 8, 2013 09.a.m

Michael Thomas & Hayo Reinders . 2010. *Task Based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology*: Continuum International Publishing Group, New York

松本功. 2008. 「聞くことを教える」. 国際交流基金、東京

CBI Method: an Approach to Teaching English at a Vocational University in Indonesia

Nurmala Elmin Simbolon, Curtin University, Australia
Dr Gregory C Restall, UniSA, Australia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0239

Abstract

Studies show that the content-based Instruction (CBI) approach can encourage student interaction in second language (L2) learning. Students can practise their L2 skills in the CBI classroom using content-based materials which in turn stimulate their levels of participation. This study involved the classroom teacher and students studying Certificate III in English Proficiency and Certificate III in Children's Services concurrently in a TAFE SA college in Adelaide, South Australia. The purpose of the study was to investigate how the method worked and the strategies the teacher used in this particular context, and to examine whether the CBI method would suit the Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) classroom in Pontianak State Polytechnic (POLNEP, a vocational university) where the researcher works as a TESOL teacher. The qualitative research included observations, using a camera, and an interview for data collection. The in-depth interview with the classroom teacher was conducted after recording several sessions of students' performances of certain learning tasks set in the curriculum. The interview was used to augment the video data by investigating how the CBI approach together with the teacher's strategies through the teaching procedures could stimulate student interaction during the learning and teaching process. This small-scale study suggested that the CBI approach enhanced student interaction in the classroom. Some recommendations were made as to how it could be effectively used at POLNEP.

KEY WORDS: CBI approach, student interaction, IRF structure

Introduction

This paper examines the strategies used by one English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher at a campus of a Technical and Further Education South Australia (TAFE SA) college in Adelaide, South Australia within a Content-based instruction (CBI) approach. The students were studying for a Certificate III in English Proficiency and a Certificate III in Children's Services concurrently. Their purposes for studying both programs were to work as early childhood educators in Child Care Centres or to run a Family Day Care Centre. The study was conducted as a critical reflection on redesigning the English curriculum of Pontianak State Polytechnic (POLNEP), a state vocational university in Indonesia. The findings from the study were to be used to inform a teaching model for the English classes (POLNEP, 2009a) at POLNEP, which teaches content-specific vocabulary and translation under the guise of English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

POLNEP is a government-funded vocational university which equips students with technical skills in a range of fields of study such as engineering, agriculture, administration, and fisheries (POLNEP, 2009a). More than fifty per cent of curriculum learning is designed to be practical at POLNEP. The Fisheries Department, as one of the eight departments in this university, has three study programs which are Fish Processing, Fish Cultivation, and Fish Catching (POLNEP, 2009b). The learning objectives of these programs and the characteristics of the research setting at POLNEP are similar to those of the students selected for this study at a campus of TAFE SA who are prepared to apply their technical skills, including their communicative skills in an additional language, in the workplace. On completion of the study program, the students at TAFE SA will be granted a Certificate III in English Proficiency and a Certificate III in Children's Services, while the students at POLNEP will receive certificates to work as seamen or fishery consultants in a fish processing company.

Content-based instruction (CBI)

CBI has been practised in various ways and with varying outcomes in international contexts such as North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia (Stoller, 2008). Some studies offer evidence of the benefits of this approach in enhancing the students' interaction and participation in classroom learning. For example, Lo's study (2013), focusing on the difference between Humanities and Science lessons in motivating the students to produce language, found evidence that the CBI approach contributes to the development of the students' use of the language. Moreover, the findings of Nguyen's (2011) study showed the students had increased motivation and higher achievement.

Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003) define CBI as the 'integration of particular content and language teaching.'(p.2). It is an integrated approach to language instruction which takes topics, texts, and tasks from content in the target language, but which still focuses on working with the knowledge of the target language (Stryker, 1997; Stoller, 2008). This means that the materials of the subject matter are used as meaningful instructional input (Krashen, 1989) for foreign/second language learners. The students in the CBI classroom are expected to read authentic materials which are not deliberately selected for an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, but

rather for the purpose of communicating the meaning (Stryker, 1997). Consequently, reading activities become one of the main means of learning (Lankshear, 2003) where the teacher is able to give input to the learners through the authentic materials. With this input, learners will be provided with several opportunities to enhance their interaction in the L2 (Second language).

be more involved in exploring the themes and topics. This has the potential to occur because the subject matter provides the students with more relevant topics of their own subject matter to learn the target language (Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

focus on learning the L2, rather than learning about the language. During the classes, the students will be trained to use the language. For example, instead of asking the students to read a staged dialogue between the child carer and the parents in a given context, it will be recommended that the language be used, for example, in a child care centre setting, and the conversation is demonstrated in a role play.

encounter technical vocabulary through the subject matter (Stryker, 1997). In the CBI approach, the specific words become essential vocabulary as those words become the theme for the learning process. Words like 'special diet', 'nappies', 'toilet change' are some key words in the learning tasks.

These four strategies promote the CBI approach because the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are designed to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989).

Task based learning (TBL)

Task based learning (TBL) plays an important role in the CBI approach (Willis, 2001; Murphy, 2003), consequently it must be incorporated into this instruction. In TBL, the teacher sets exercises and tasks (Davison, 1989) which are closely similar to the students' real work. These kinds of tasks result in meaning-focused communication (Ellis, 2003). For an activity to be classed as TBL, it must meet certain criteria including having a work plan, involving a primary focus on meaning, reflect a real-world process of language use, having the possibility of involving any of the four language skills, engaging cognitive process and having a clearly defined communicative outcome. To achieve these characteristics, task design is essentially challenging. In meeting these criteria, a TBL approach can strengthen the direction of the learning goal when used in conjunction with a CBI approach in the classroom.

Improving the student interaction in the classroom through TBL and CBI is closely related to the teacher's role as a facilitator (Tudor, 1993). The teacher is not the knower, but the learning counsellor, who facilitates the students' learning. Chaudron (2005) holds that this role requires needs analysis prior to setting the learning goals. In this study, the selection of child care services' topics and teaching strategies suggest the use of a needs analysis. Thus, these classes were judged (Tudor, 1993) to fit within the CBI approach.

Classroom interaction

In the classroom, interactions are predominantly prompted by meaning negotiation (Chaudron, 1988; Swain 1998). Rather than working individually, students can utilize a number of interactions to help solve problems. These interactions include teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, and classroom interaction.

Teacher-student interaction is carried out mostly in the form of questioning. Most of the questioning is in the form of display questions (David, 2007), which means that the teachers ask questions for which they know the answer. This is conducted in order to promote and stimulate student participation during the classroom learning and also to facilitate meta-talk (Swain, 1998) which may trigger student interaction by giving the answer, or even by asking a question. Furthermore, teacher-student interaction, in a role play, for example, can be used to provide a model for the learners.

Another interaction is student-student interaction. In spite of the students' different levels of language competence, Howarth (2006) argues that student-student interaction is required to boost the practice time, encourage collaboration, provide socialization, and stimulate students' motivation. The interaction can be in the form of, for example, a role-play or group discussion. Additionally, student-student interaction also gives the teacher the opportunity to take a step back and observe the students from the side lines, thereby further pinpointing the individual student's needs.

Finally, classroom interaction is interaction involving participants in the classroom. The interaction can be a discussion, report, or concluding the on-going lesson. In an EAL classroom, interaction can be prompted by deliberate meaning negotiation. This meaning negotiation can be stimulated in teacher-student and student-student interactions. Interaction is a sign of student participation (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Moquel, 2004). Even quiet students can still be considered to be participating through their attention to the learning process (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

The CBI method can be used to stimulate student interaction. Using the subject matter as the language materials can contribute to students' interest in the interaction. Then the teacher's questioning (Moquel, 2004) about the ideas in the content will stimulate students' responses. This technique encourages student participation (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). For example, after reading one topic of the subject matter, the teacher may ask students to identify the new technical vocabulary. In this way, the familiarity with the materials can trigger student meta-talk, and consequently student interaction.

In summary, both research and learning theory suggest the CBI approach, in conjunction with TBL, has the potential to develop student interaction in the learning and teaching process. The overall research question for this study was how the English teacher uses the CBI approach to develop student interactions in a technical and vocational setting. The question was broken down into the following two specific questions:

What are the factors which contribute to the success of the CBI teaching method developing the student interaction during the learning process?

What are the teaching strategies that the teacher uses to increase student interaction?

Methodology

This qualitative case study (Creswell, 2007) used a classroom observation was conducted with a set of digital video recorders. The purpose of using this tool was to capture the entirety of classroom activities (Nunan, 1992) during the practice of this teaching method. The cameras were used to record both evidence of the students' learning and the teacher's teaching methods. Thus, the focus of the first video camera was on the students' activities and reactions during the learning process. The second camera was focused on the teacher in order to capture her methods and strategies in implementing CBI.

The second part of the study involved an in-depth interview with the teacher after the observation period. The questions for the interview were open-ended (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) which allowed for more detailed explanations. The in-depth interview was carried out using the 'funnelling model' (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). General questions such as what the teacher's opinion was about the CBI approach were at the beginning. After that, more specific questions focusing on the teacher's strategies and rationales in teaching particular skills in English were asked. The interview concluded with a question of the challenges the teacher encountered during teaching.

Data Analysis

The video recordings depicting the three types of interaction were investigated using a qualitative content analytical approach (Willis, 2006; Crano & Brewer, 2002). The data were analysed using interactional narrative analysis (Reissman, 2003). As one of the research aims was to determine the level of student participation in the three kinds of interactions within the CBI classroom learning, every aspect of the conversations was scrutinized. The conversations included interactions between the teacher and the students, between two students, and classroom interaction. The conversation produced in these three different contexts was analysed and linked to the teacher's strategies in order to answer the research question of this inquiry. In short, this interactional narrative approach was useful in studying the relationship between the speakers and what factors behind the interactions contributed to the student interactions. From this analysis, the factors contributing to the increased student interaction in the CBI classroom were then examined and linked with the strategies the teacher used.

In the interview, the teacher explained her planning process for the particular teaching episodes observed. It was presented in a narrative style (Silverman, 2003; Willis, 2006) so that the theme of the inquiry-based lesson's outcomes could be identified. This strategy was used to assist in organising and analysing the data. Teacher's explanation was to identify which features of the CBI approach had supported the teacher's strategies and how the teacher had incorporated the TBL approach and other methods into her teaching practice.

In answering the research questions, a thematic narrative data analysis approach (Reissman, 2003) was used to analyse the information gathered. The data from the interview were linked with the data from the video recordings. Following this, the data from the three interactions were explained and linked with the data provided by the teacher during the interview. The evidence from video recordings corroborated the information obtained from this interview.

Findings

Classroom Observations

From the classroom observation, three kinds of interaction were observed and analysed. Table 1 presents the interaction types.

Table 1: Three kinds of interaction (adapted from Swain, 1998)

Interaction/code	Activities
Teacher-student/TS	Asking students about the material Discussing the reading
Student-student/SS	Demonstrating role play
Classroom/CI	Reporting group work to class Commenting on the peer's report

First is the teacher-student interaction. As Table 1 indicates, this particular interaction was in the form of questioning or discussion of the reading materials. After asking the students to read sections from the documents, or learning guides, the teacher asked the students some questions about the video footage, such as: “Do you remember what reflective listening is?” and “What do you do with reflective listening?” These questions were designed by the teacher to support the learners’ recent knowledge, especially about their previous lesson and also to provide them with scaffolding input before they demonstrated the final task. David (2007) calls these kinds of questions ‘display’ questions, which means that the teacher asks questions for which she already knew the answer. In the transcription from video recording below, the teacher used this technique after the class finished reading the materials:

Teacher: “So as you can see from those elements, it’s all about building relationships with family and exchanging information with the family about the child. So where would you be doing that?”

Student 3: first....

Teacher: “Yes, that’s right, who said that?” Yeah, where would you be doing that?

Student 3: “On the first interview?”

Teacher: “Yes, at the first interview with the parents and with the family”

This above interaction between teacher and students provided learning opportunities for the learners in a number of ways. First of all, the learners were stimulated to provide an answer which would enhance their spoken communication skills. Furthermore, this questioning technique also provided an information gap prompting the students to produce meta-talk before one student voluntarily gave the answer. In this instance, the teacher-student interaction provided a learning opportunity where the students were given a chance to recall their prior knowledge and to communicate their ideas. Even though it took some time for the students to give the answer, the teacher still encouraged the students by providing clues in enhancing the student meta-talk. For example, instead of directly giving the answers herself, the teacher gave the clue “what about something to your voice (as an active listener)?” to trigger

a student response. In this way, the students responded by demonstrating the answer directly “hmm hmmm”.

Teacher-student interaction was predominantly utilised during the first few moments of this teaching and learning process. There were three sub topics in this particular lesson, reflective listening, assertiveness, and conflict resolution. Each topic was stimulated by the teacher’s questions. Hall (2009) emphasizes that teacher-student interaction plays an important role in contributing to interactional practice during classroom learning. This could be presented in the Initiation-Respond-Feedback (IRF) structure (Hall, 2009). For example,

Teacher: Ok if we ask an open question, what do we stop people from doing?

Students: -----silent -----

Teacher: That’s the hard question, ok? I really asked you a really hard open question, so if we ask people an open question, what do we stop them from doing?

Student 2: Give, er... gave a short answer

Teacher: Yes, stop them from giving you a short answer, like what?

Classroom: Yes, or no

Teacher: Yes, or no, that’s right, excellent, you can remember a lot, excellent.

From the above extract, the teacher used the questions to initiate interaction in the classroom, before one student gave a response. The teacher directly offered feedback. The teacher’s question and response played an important role in enabling an effective and productive teacher-student interaction to occur. Furthermore, within the particular interaction of this recording clip, the teacher’s questioning had stimulated meta-talk and noticing gaps (Swain, 1998) because the first time the teacher asked the question, the students remained silent. This moment was not an unproductive moment, as there may have been an internal dialogue about the question in the students’ minds. The students may have been utilising this time to process the question and formulate an appropriate response. In regards to the teacher’s feedback, one of the characteristics of the CBI approach was reflected in this particular recording, viz. that the focus was learning to use the language, not learning about the language. For example, when the student said the words give, or gave, the teacher did not comment on the correct form, rather, she provided a complete correct sentence “stop them from giving you a short answer.” This strategy of modelling correct language was noticed by the students, as was seen in the teacher-student interaction, when they were discussing conflict resolution:

Teacher: What if it never improves? What is the only solution?

Student 1: Stop care for....

Student 2: Stop caring from the child

From this conversation, it seemed that Student 2 had noticed the particular word ‘stop’ from the previous discussion, or session with the teacher. In this way, learning was progressing during the classroom lesson.

The second type of interaction was student-student interaction. The interaction had the potential to occur because of the following factors – gap information, negotiation of meaning and gap noticing (Swain, 1998) – which were all utilised through the teacher’s teaching strategies and the designed learning activities. In this study, as

Table 1 shows, this particular interaction is presented in a role play. The teacher's ways of teaching and the learning activities played an important role in triggering this interaction. For example, when the teacher instructed the students to do a task in a role play demonstrating being reflective listeners, two students had already indicated meaning negotiation in their interaction before preparing the role play,

Student 5: What about if I told you like...

Student 7: Ok, that's what I said to you, whatever you say for me, whatever, just make up your.... You are the parent, but I would answer to you. It depend on me, whatever you talk to me, I will answer to you.

Student 5: Oh, okay

In this recording, it was clear that the students noticed of gaps in knowledge and performance because it seemed that Student 5 felt unsure what to say in the role play. This gap contributed to the interaction because it enabled the other student, Student 7, who understood what they had to demonstrate, to explain that to her peer. Furthermore, this gap promoted their interaction by providing the opportunity for them to negotiate the meaning (Swain, 1998). In regards to pair work, Watanabe and Swain (2007) argue that collaborative work has positive benefits when there are noticeable gaps in language production between the students. In this way, the students were encouraged to interact in completing the tasks. Furthermore, the designed learning activities were based on the content of their subject matter enabling the students to interact naturally. For example:

Student 1: You don't mind if I am 20 minutes late do you?

Student 4: Wait a second, I'll have to check my record if you come late, I'll check it in my note. I will stick in my rules; I have to follow the family day care policy.

Student 1: I don't think it's gonna be late again because I'm going to be there in 20 minutes

Student 4: Are you sure?

Student 1: Yes, I am sure

Student 4: Ok, I tick it in my record

In this extract it seems that the context given to the students in the role play helped them to interact as they were familiar with the topic. This enabled them to improve their performance in the role play.

The last kind of interaction, the classroom interaction was classroom discussion which occurred during the group work report. When one group had presented their report to the class, classroom interaction could be anticipated. In this way, teacher-student interaction occurred again where the teacher gave feedback on the students' work and also student-student interaction happened as the other students voluntarily gave their responses on their peers' reports.

Student 3: I don't make lunch today, so can you supply it to my child?

Student 10: Sorry, what happened?

Student 3: Yesterday I work late that's why I woke up late this morning so I didn't have time to prepare the lunch.

Student 10: that's fine, I will supply it today, but next time, you must tell me before one day notice and you must pay for the charge.

Student 5: Yes, I will supply it today, but I warn the parent that next time I will charge the parent

Teacher: But you can charge the parent for this too

Student 5: No, that's ok, but I will warn the parent for the next time will be charged

Student 9: But Lucy, what about if the parents not provide the lunch for the child, I think it's charged

Student 5: But sometimes we have to understand the payment, one time, that's fine

Student 7: If it is emergency, that's fine

Student 9: But....

It seems clear that Student 5 and Student 7 gave their group ideas which differed slightly from Student 3 and Student 10's about charging the lunch order differently. In this scenario, the students' communicative skills were being developed while they were consolidating their learning about child care procedures. The topics were of interest to them and so they contributed their ideas during classroom discussion. In this way, classroom interaction occurred naturally (Brinton, et al, 1989). Moreover, it was evident that the report task/activity played an important role in motivating the students to participate in classroom learning. This happened because the students' prior knowledge promoted their participation in classroom learning.

Interview

The teacher's responses were analysed using the thematic narrative approach. After transcribing the interview with the teacher, the data was categorized based on the narrative structure designed for that purpose. It meant that the three parts of the interview, beginning, thematic section, and closing contributed to answering the research question, especially in seeking her strategies in using the CBI approach to increase student interaction. In the beginning, the teacher was asked to explain her personal ideas about the CBI approach. She said that using the CBI approach in the classroom teaching meant that the content used for the learning was interesting for the students. Therefore, the students would be motivated to study English using the four language macro skills. This meant it was crucial that the teacher prepares interesting materials. In the thematic section, the teacher explained her strategies in using this approach. Table 2 classifies the teacher's strategies.

Table 2: The teacher's strategies in using the CBI approach (adapted from David, 2007; Brinton, et al, 1989)

Strategies	Actions
Questioning	asking the meaning of new vocabulary asking for students' ideas from the reading materials reflecting a student's question back to the class
Planning the content-based tasks	matching the tasks to the content suggesting role play topics, such as the child carer interacting with a child's parents/family

Modelling a role in the role play	demonstrating the role of a child carer performing a role as the parent
-----------------------------------	--

First of all, the teacher scaffold the content and increased the English vocabulary each week because she realised that in the content-based learning approach, vocabulary played an important role in the learning process. Table 2 suggests, dealing with new vocabulary in reading activities (Crandall & Tucker, 1990; Stryker 1997). Rather than directly giving the meaning of the words, the teacher always used questions, or asked the students to discuss the new vocabulary in a group to determine the meanings of the new words. This questioning technique of teacher-student interaction facilitated learning so that the students were stimulated to interact by responding to the teacher's questions and by negotiating with their peers. Furthermore, the discussion also helped students to interact with each other. In this way, information gap and noticing gaps (Swain, 1998) was one way to stimulating student participation to occur during the CBI classroom. When the students responded to the teacher's questions, she always gave feedback on their responses with compliments such as 'excellent', 'good', and 'wonderful'. This seemed encouraging students to participate in the learning activities. Furthermore, the feedback of form was implicit as in the following extract:

Teacher: That's the hard question, ok? I really asked you a really hard open question, So if we ask people an open question, what do we stop them from doing?

Student 2: Give, er... gave a short answer

Teacher: Yes, stop them from giving you a short answer, like what?

While student 2 was making efforts of choosing the right form of 'give', the teacher gave feedback implicitly by repeating the word 'give' in appropriate form. The teacher was aware of practising the Initiation-Respond-Feedback (IRF) structure (Hall, 2009). She did this deliberately and consciously in her role as the students' learning facilitator.

The second strategy the teacher used within the CBI approach was planning learning tasks which reflected real life situations in Child Care Centres. She supplied the job descriptions from Child Care Centres in the country. In one particular lesson, the focus was on maintaining communication with the children's parents, or family. The teacher planned tasks to be demonstrated in a role play representing the conversation between the child's carer and parents. The teacher realized that content-based learning could not be conducted without a suitable task. Not only did she use CBI to design learning activities, but she also incorporated it into summative assessment tasks in the sessions recorded in the study.

As indicated on Table 2, the last strategy the teacher used involved her modelling a task before the students were required to carry out the tasks given to them. For example, the teacher took the role of a child carer and asked the students to act as the parents. In this way, the students understood what they were required to do. In the video recording, the teacher's role play could not be viewed because the recorded learning activities were a review of a lesson of the course. It was in the interview that the teacher discussed how modelling was one of her strategies to support students to perform their role well.

In the close of the interview, the teacher was asked about the challenges that she encountered using the CBI approach. The teacher noted that she did more self-critical reflection on her teaching practices, asking herself whether she had given the students enough English instruction to achieve their English proficiency while studying their subject matter. The teacher stressed that in the CBI approach, there was still a need for explicit language instruction (Stryker, 1997).

Conclusions

In answering the first research question, the factors which promote student interaction or participation in EAL learning activities include the information gap, and noticing knowledge (Swain, 1998). Consequently opportunities for these to occur need to be made available to students by EAL teachers in their teaching methods and strategies. The interview revealed that the classroom teacher in this study made explicit use of these factors in her teaching practice.

In answering the second research question, from the classroom observation, the teacher used student interaction, which was mostly in the form of display questions (David, 2007), to produce more benefits from her teaching with the CBI approach. This questioning technique played an important role in facilitating student learning. As the CBI approach encountered technical vocabulary, the teacher's questioning technique provided the learners with information gap. This created the opportunity for interactions to occur as the students worked with each other to determine the meaning of new terms.

The interview with the teacher disclosed that the CBI approach had supported her teaching methods by using authentic materials as the content for the language learning. She focused on building the content and vocabulary. This meant that reading authentic materials such as guidelines for Child Care centres became the basis for the lessons.

In addition, student-student interactions were triggered by the design of the learning tasks, which reflected the language required for future careers. Within these particular interactions, the factors contributing to student interaction were utilised. For example, in role plays the students often practiced the new language which involved meaning negotiation, and more interaction was encouraged at this stage.

In short, the teacher had facilitated the factors the factors developing student interaction with her CBI teaching strategies.

Recommendations

The CBI approach has the potential to benefit the teaching in a vocational university in Indonesia such as POLNEP whose curriculum concentrates on practical lessons, which is similar to the classroom of the research context. . In the Fisheries Department students study their courses while simultaneously taking their English course. The content can help students to participate in the language classroom learning in the designed learning activities. In addition, English lecturers of this particular university in Indonesia are recommended to use authentic materials, which so far has been absent in this context. The authentic materials may include manuals or

work instruction booklets from industries such as fish processing and fish catching, where the students have the potential to find work. In this way, the CBI method can make learning useful and relevant to students' needs. In short, further empirical research was recommended to conduct at POLNEP.

References

Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). Input and interaction in language classrooms. In D. Allwright & K. M. Bailey (Eds.), *Focus on the language classroom: an introduction to classroom research for language teachers*. Victoria: Cambridge University Press.

Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., & Wesche, M. B. (1989). *Content based second language instruction*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., & Wesche, M. B. (2003). *Content based second language instruction*. Michigan Classic Ed, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Chaudron, C. (1988). Learner behaviour in second language classrooms. In Michael H. Long and Jack C. Richards (Eds.), *Second language classroom: research on teaching and learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chaudron, C. (2005). A task-based needs analysis of a tertiary Korean as a foreign language program. In Michael H Long (Ed), *Second language needs analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crandall, J. A., & Tucker, G. R. (1990). Content-based language instruction in second and foreign languages. In Sarinee Anivan (Ed), *Language teaching methodology in the nineties*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.

Crano, W. D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). 'Content Analysis. In W. D. Crano & M. B. Brewer (Eds.), *Principles and methods of social research*. (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Five qualitative approaches to inquiry. In J. W. Creswell (Ed), *Qualitative inquiry to research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

David, O. F. (2007). Teacher's questioning behaviour and ESL classroom interaction pattern. *Humanity and Social Sciences Journal*, 2(2), 127-131.

Davison, C. (1989). A topic-based approach to course design. In C. Corbel (Ed), *Options in teaching English to adult speakers of other languages*. Victoria: Deakin University.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). California, USA: Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Ellis, R. (2003). Task-based assessment. In R. Ellis (Ed), Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Fraenkel, R., & Wallen, N.E. (2009). How to design and evaluate research in education. (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Grabe, W., & Stoller F. L. (1997). Content-based Instruction: Research Foundation. In Marguerite A. S. & Donna M. Brinton (Eds.), The Content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content. Los Angeles: Longman.

Hall, J. K. (2009). Interaction as method and result of language learning. *Language Teaching Journal*, 43(2), 202-215.

Howard, P. (2006). Increasing student interaction. Retrieved 13 May, 2010 from <<http://teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/increasing-student-intearction>>

Krashen, S. (1987). Second language acquisition theory. In S. Krashen (Ed), Principles and practice in second language acquisition. England: Prentice-Hall International.

Lankshear, C. (2003). From reading' to the new Literacy Studies. In C. Lankshear (Ed), New literacies: changing knowledge and classroom learning. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lo, Y. L. (2013), L2 learning opportunities in different academic subjects in content-based instruction – evidence in favour of ‘conventional wisdom’, *Language and Education*.1-21.doi: 10.1080/09500782.2013.786086

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., & Alexander, L. (1990). Interview. In V. Minichiello, R. Aroni, E. Timewell, & L. Alexander (Eds.), In depth interviewing: researching people. Melbourne: Longman.

Moquel, D. (2004). What does it mean to participate in class?: integrity and inconsistency in classroom interaction. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 39(1), 19-29.

Murphy, J. (2003). Task-based learning; the interaction between tasks and learners. *ELT Journal*, 57 (4), 352-360.

Nguyen, T. C. N. (2011). Content-based instruction in the teaching of English for Accounting at Vietnamese College of Finance and Customs. *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 90-100. From <www.ccsenet.org/elt>

Nunan, D. (1992). Classroom observation and research. In D. Nunan (Ed), Classroom observation and research. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak (2009a). Retrieved 10 October, 2012 from <<http://polnep.ac.id/page.php?3>>

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak (2009b). Retrieved 10 October, 2012 from <<http://ikp.polnep.ac.id/page.php?65> >

Silverman, D. (2003). Analyzing talk and text. In K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Stoller, F. L. (2008) Content-based Instruction. In N. Van Deusen-Scholl and N. H. Hornberger (eds), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd Edition, Volume 4: Second and Foreign Language Education, 59–70. # 2008 Springer Science+Business Media LLC.

Stryker, S., B. (1997). Content based instruction: from theory to practice. In S. B. Stryker (Ed), *Content-based instruction in foreign language education*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Swain, M. (1998). Focus on form through conscious reflection. In Catherine, Doughty, and Jessica, Williams (Eds.), *Focus on form in classroom second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tudor, I. (1993). Teacher roles in learner-centred classroom. *ELT Journal*, 47(1). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2003). Narrative analysis. In M.S Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. Futing Liao (Eds.), *The Sage Encyclopaedia of social science research methods*. Sage: Sage Publications.

Wanatabe, Y., & Swain, M. (2007). Effect of proficiency differences and patterns of pair interaction on second language learning: collaborative dialogue between adult ESL learners. *Language Teaching Research Journal*, 11(2), 121-142.

Willis, D. (2001). Task-based language learning. In D. Willis (Ed), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, K. (2006). Analysing qualitative data. In M. Walter (Ed), *Social research methods: an Australian perspective*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

*An Analysis of the Correlation between Gender and Learning Style
in Second Language Acquisition: A Case Study.*

Magdalena Trinder
The University of Rzeszow, Poland

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0264

Abstract

Whilst it has been long accepted that learning style plays a pivotal role in successful Second Language Acquisition, the role of gender remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. It remains impossible to examine the influence of each factor in isolation; however, it is the contention of the author that pairs of factors may be analysed in conjunction in order to determine the extent to which gender has any influence on the acquisition process. Using a novel approach to the collection of research results on test groups, it is the intention of the author to examine if it is at all possible to draw conclusions as to the extent to which gender plays a role in language learning. The article will briefly discuss the theoretical background before describing the research methodology. Finally, an attempt will be made to analyse the results and frame any tentative conclusions.

Key words: Second Language Acquisition, quantitative research, gender, learning style.

Introduction

In 2007, the Department for Education and Skills in the United Kingdom published a report into the correlation between gender and education, which was prompted by a marked increase in the performance and attainment of girls over boys: indeed, at the age of 16, girls achieve an average of 10 percentage points higher than boys in the national GCSE examinations. Given the relative lack of attention that has been paid to the investigation of gender on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this report acted as an inspiration to delve deeper into the relationship between the gender of a language learner and their success in the learning process. As a part of this wider research project, it was felt necessary to investigate the correlation between the gender of the learner and various other individual learner differences. Thus, this paper is dedicated to a practical investigation of the relationship between the gender of the learner and their learning style, in order to ascertain if there is any way in which one might establish a clear correlation between the two variables. The research project was conducted on a variety of students over the course of a single academic year, and it is hoped that the tentative conclusions outlined below will provide the basis for further research on a larger scale into the tricky question of the influence of gender on attainment in SLA.

The first task will be to provide an overview of the current state of research into the areas of gender and learning style in SLA. Then, an elaboration of the research procedure will ensue before finally turning attention to the results of the case study, which will be first presented before being discussed, and the conclusion will be put forward that there is sufficient evidence of a difference between the learning styles of males and females to warrant further, large scale investigation.

Theoretical Origins

While the field of SLA itself heralds back to the pioneering work of Stephen Krashen (1977), investigation into the various factors which influence the levels of attainment of the learner were not really subject to fully-fledged research until the publication of Peter Skehan's *Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition* (1989). In this work, the author highlights the fact that success in SLA is subject to an array of disparate influences, including aptitude, motivation, learning strategy, personality and other cognitive abilities. Within this final banner subject, a small amount of attention was paid to the question of individual learning styles (which should be differentiated from learning strategy, in that learning strategy indicates the method which the learner consciously attempts to acquire and reinforce new knowledge, while learning style indicates more the way in which the learner subconsciously interacts with new material). One of the earliest exponents of learning style was Kolb (1976), who put forward a complex description based on the contrast between an activist and reflective style of learning. He propounded that learners could be categorised on the basis of whether they demonstrated a preference for the active experimentation with new knowledge, or reflective observation and also a reliance upon learning through concrete experience or abstract conceptualisation. This results in learners being categorised in one of four main types, which corresponds to a particular stage in his proposed learning cycle. This original model was used as the basis for later work by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford in the field of defining the learning style of managers in order to assist in the construction of personal development plans. These two

researchers developed a learning styles questionnaire based on their practical observations, which will be discussed in greater detail later. The one drawback with this research is that it was not really constructed with SLA at the forefront of the considerations of the researchers.

This reservation leads us to the crux of the issue here, which is that very little practical experimentation has been conducted into the theoretical correlation between SLA attainment and learner style. Hummel (2014) discusses the question in a general sense, highlighting just one academic attempt to implement the work of Kolb in a practical language environment. It seems that a more prosperous avenue of exploration could be the investigations of Reid (1987) into the importance of perceptual styles. In this case, the emphasis is on the notion that learners have a preference for either visual, auditive, kinesthetic, tactile group or individual learning. However, two corroborative studies which were carried out (reported in Hummel: 2014) showed mixed results in the field, and further research into how memory works indicates that our ability to memorise things based on perception is reliant upon all of our senses working in conjunction, and that there is no such thing as a 'visual learner'.¹ Consequently, when it comes to the relationship between learning style and success in SLA there is no conclusive empirical evidence to support the claims that this does have some impact. Indeed, there is very little agreement as to what we mean when we refer to learning style.

When we turn our attention to the prickly subject of gender² and SLA, we find a paucity of persuasive and definitive ideas on the subject. Much investigation has been conducted into communication strategies, and the differences between what males and females actually say. Clearly, this is an extension of the investigation into the different ways in which L1 use is reflected in the contradictory genders, and highlights the aggressive way in which males attempt to interrupt the conversation and talk for longer periods of time, while females use more personal pronouns and adverbials, and tend to use longer sentences with a wider range of vocabulary on display.³ Clearly, when it comes to the reproduction of L2, we would anticipate a difference along the lines previously explained, but this does not address the question which pertains to who is better at learning a second language, or if, in some way, gender does have some influence. In a study by Kimura (2006, cited in Shakouri and Saligheh, 2012: 4) it was demonstrated that females have a more accurate grammar bank and express themselves more correctly than males, which would go a long way to explaining why females seem to have better results in tests. Shakouri and Saligheh (2012) go further to report that females are said to be better at reading than males,

¹ For a full discussion of how memory works, see Duggan (2012), or the classic work by Dale (1969), to name but two sources.

² It is clear that there is sufficient scientific debate as to the nature of gender that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to provide an accurate and comprehensive description of the notion of gender. Despite the idea that there are 'hard-wired' differences between the male and female brain, these differences shall be ignored due to lack of compelling empirical evidence. Instead, we shall work along the lines suggested by Cordelia Fine (2012), who suggests that gender is nothing more than a socio-cultural concept which is reinforced by the maintenance of social stereotypes for the role of males and females. Consequently, instead of attempting to identify the brain gender of individuals, we shall focus on the physical sex of the participants of the study, and will use the terms gender and sex interchangeably.

³ This subject is well treated by the likes of Aslan (2009) and Gascoigne (2002) [in:] Shakouri and Saligheh (2012).

which is, in their opinion, due to the fact that females have a more positive attitude towards the task than males, but, in part, this is connected with the fact that females were clearly more interested in 'female' topics. Again, we are drawn towards Ellis (1994), who indicates that, based on a number of theoretical assumptions, one would expect differences in strategy and personality to be reflected in differences in attainment.

Obviously, in an ideal world one would enter into a comprehensive discussion of the supporting literature pertaining to the relevant fields, but owing to the limitations of space inherent in a short paper, it is felt better to give a brief oversight. The conclusion that we are left with is that, while there is a general consensus on the fact that learning style and gender do have some influence on SLA, there is no clear agreement as to exactly what that influence is, and, indeed, what we are referring to.

Methodology

Having briefly examined the current state of play of research into our chosen fields, let us now turn our attention to how the case study was conducted. In this part of the paper, attention will be paid to the question of quantitative research, a brief description of the groups under investigation, the use of Audience Response Systems (ARS) as a data collection platform, and the learning styles questionnaire which was used in order to ascertain the learning styles of the individual participants.

The question of the basic method of research boils down to two questions, first, whether the project should be of a qualitative or quantitative nature. Punch (2005: 16), helps to clarify the key difference between the two ideas: *quantitative research has typically been more directed at theory verification, while qualitative research has typically been more concerned with theory generation*. In this case, it is the intention of the author not to explore virgin territory, but to attempt to prove, or disprove the existence of some already formulated theoretical assumptions (in this case the role of gender and learning style in SLA). Consequently, a quantitative approach has been adopted. Secondly, the use of single case research design is often adopted in research in the social sciences when one wishes to investigate the influence of a given variable factor. In the research project which follows, as no attempt will be made to examine the performance of the individuals at a given moment, nor is it intended to attempt to chart the progress of the learners, this approach has not been adopted. Instead, the gender of the students was ascertained during their first meetings, and the learning style questionnaire (to be discussed shortly) was administered as a part of an introductory lesson devoted to needs analysis.

We may now turn our attention to the groups who were subject to investigation, as their selection is an essential question from the perspective of the credibility of any research project or case study, as there should be absolutely no element of arbitrariness or so-called 'incidental factors'. For any research to be reliable it is essential to ensure that any random variables have been accounted for, in order for the final results to be as credible as possible, and that any such influences might also be factored in to a discussion of the results, and their potential influence on any conclusions may also be considered.

In this specific case, the choice of groups was primarily dictated by the areas that were to be investigated, especially the question of learner style. Because of the convoluted and linguistically demanding nature of the learner style questionnaire that was used, it was considered of essential that the participants in the study have a certain level of maturity and self-awareness, not to mention the prerequisite language knowledge to be able to respond to the questions with confidence and authority. This automatically precluded any groups of young learners and infants as they would require a completely different method of analysis in order to ascertain their individual learning styles. As a result, five groups were chosen; three are based in a private language school and two are university students in the first year of their bachelor studies, all coming from Poland, and all being Polish citizens with Polish as a first language.

The three groups which attended the private language school consist of a total of twenty one learners, more or less equally divided along gender lines (ten male and eleven female). Also, they represent a fairly even level of language proficiency as they all correspond to the level C1 on the Common European Framework of References for Language.⁴ Another reason for their selection was their relatively uniform age range, as it has been suggested that learners of different ages have varying developed knowledge of language strategies and comparing younger and older learners might provide a skewed set of data for later analysis. In addition, one important aspect of the groups in question was the proximity of their language competence. All three of the groups in question were involved in private language learning for an extensive period of time, and, as a result, their level of linguistic competence was, if not ideally matched, at least comparable. This approximate uniformity is of incredible importance when it comes to the analysis of the collected data as it would reduce the possibility of random response or answers based purely on conjecture. Another key aspect here is the motivation of the students. With younger learners it is more difficult to be certain that the learning process is something which is a voluntary act. With older learners, one may safely assume that even if there is a negative attitude towards the language (or the process of language learning), then at least there is sufficient motivation (either intrinsic or extrinsic) to guarantee that this will not have a negative influence on the acquisition process. Thus, in the case of the three groups from the private language school, the assertion can be made that, with the exception of gender, learner style and personality (which is subject to an independent investigation) they present a remarkably homogeneous sample for analysis.

When it comes to the University Students, there is a lesser degree of homogeneity. There are a total of twenty students, of which there are six males and fourteen females divided into two groups. They are also of a much greater diversity in terms of their age, and social background. Their motivation is less predictable (meaning that they only attend classes on alternate weekends, and also have to pay for their studies), but it may safely be assumed that they are attending voluntarily, without duress, meaning that there is a high level of intrinsic motivation across the sample. Given the entry level requirements of Polish Institutions of Higher Education, the minimum level of competence is B2, but there is a slightly lower level of uniformity as some of the

⁴ This is a European project intended to allow for a standardised method of assessment of language competence, regardless of the language which is subject to assessment.

learners are level C1. However, their level of maturity and life experience means that they present a reliable sample in terms of the Learner Styles questionnaire.

Of course, in a perfect world, the demographic of the group should contain an identical number of male and female participants (and be of a much larger scale for the generation of a compelling corpus of data), but this was impossible to achieve given the fact that language learning in Poland is a distinctly female dominated activity, especially in an academic environment. Thus in future studies this would be one variable element of the experiment which would need rectification.

The next area which requires explanation is the data collection platform, which in this case is the ARS, which employs the use of PowerPoint presentations and audience response cards. This method was felt to be optimal from the very outset because it provides a perfect way of collecting data in an unobtrusive manner. Thus, handing out lengthy questionnaires in printed form was immediately excluded as it tends to have a negative impact on student motivation, and also the student is fully aware of the fact that they are participating in a piece of academic research, which means that their responses are less likely to be spontaneous and genuine. Indeed, in a critique of modern sociological and psychological research methods, Professor Richard Wiseman (2010) indicates that when the subject of research is presented with a questionnaire they start to contemplate which answer the researcher wants to hear, or what is the 'right' answer to the question. With the use of ARS this problem is obviated as the research question in point can be integrated into the general lesson content without the students being aware of the fact that they are subject to any type of scientific investigation. Furthermore, owing to the privacy afforded by the use of the response cards, the problem of collusion among the subjects is reduced.⁵

Now we may turn our attention briefly to the choice of questionnaire, and despite the misgivings and elements of doubt mentioned previously, the Learner Style Questionnaire developed by Honey and Mumford (2006) was chosen as it is both based upon the pioneering work of Kolb, and has been subject to continuous development and adaptation since its inception at the beginning of the 1980s. While it is not universally acclaimed in the scientific community, the results and calculations are based on over 10,000 completed surveys, meaning that there is a substantial corpus of data to support the findings. In essence, the test, as in that proposed by Kolb, identifies four key areas of the learning process, and attaches a style to it. The results of the participants can be used to ascertain which of the four learning styles the respondent has a preference for. The four styles are outlined in brief below, with a short description of the main features of a learner with this preference.

The first style is the Activist, who has an inclination to take action, and put things to the test in a practical way. These learners are enthusiastic about novelty and have little interest in what occurred previously. Also, they have a great desire to be the centre of attention. The Reflector is almost the diametric opposite of the Activist, especially in that they prefer to spend time in contemplation prior to taking any action. They have a tendency to read things more than once, and welcome any opportunity to repeat

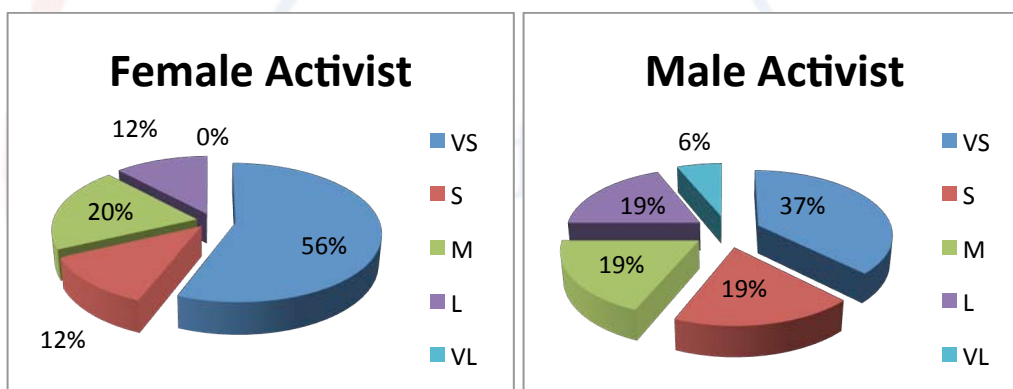
⁵ Obviously, it would be naïve to think that there would be no collusion whatsoever, but its instance is certainly reduced when people have to answer questions separately by entering their answers into a response card rather than writing them on a piece of paper.

previously covered material. The Reflector is happiest when able to take a back seat, and are also, as a consequence, rather good at listening. The Theorist has an innate desire to place things into a larger context, and establish how things fit within a specific pattern. Everything has to be logical for them, and they have a tendency towards being a perfectionist. Finally, the Pragmatist has a desire to see how ideas and theories work in practice. They enjoy the process of investigating new ideas, and also how problems may be overcome.

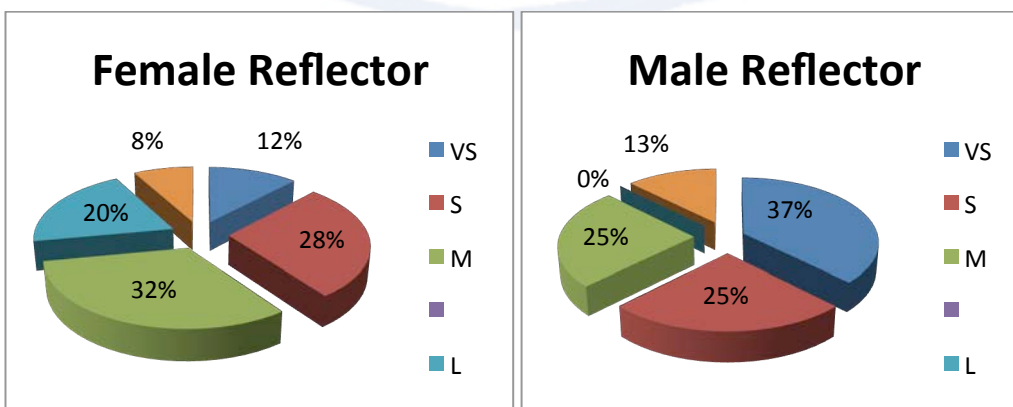
In this investigation, the full 80 question version of the learning style questionnaire was used, and – as previously mentioned – the test was incorporated into the first lesson pertaining to the question of the needs of the students, and how exactly the lessons could be tailored to each individual to be of most benefit. The responses were collected using the ARS, and the results are illustrated below.

Results

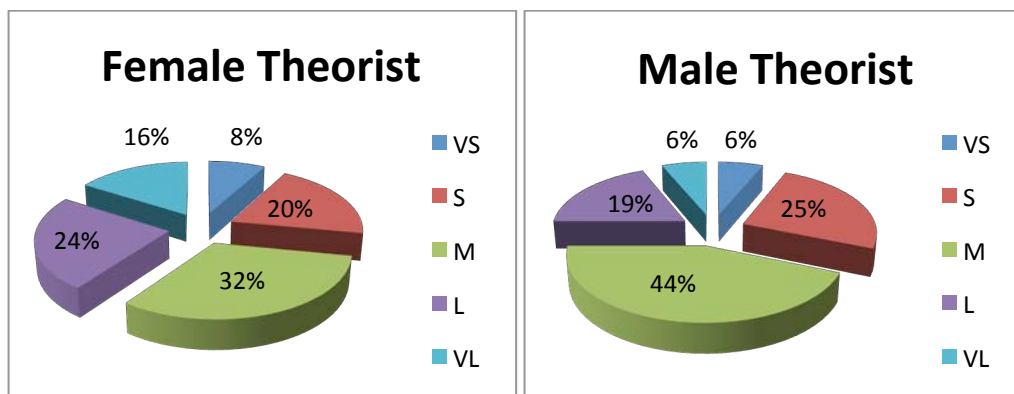
The results of the survey were collated and shall be presented in pie chart form for ease of comparison, and then the implications will be discussed. The first of the four learner styles is the Activist:



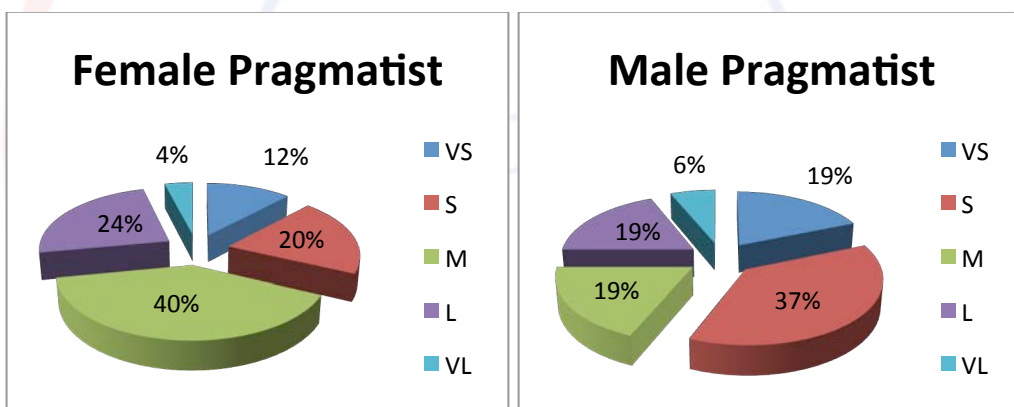
The majority of the female respondents, 56%, showed a very strong preference for an Activist learning style, while a further 12% had a strong preference. The remainder had either a moderate or low tendency. Conversely, just 37% of the male respondents showed a very strong inclination towards an Activist style, with a further 19% had a strong preference.



Just 12% of the female sample had a very strong preference for the Reflector style, while a further 28% had a strong inclination. In contrast, 37% of males demonstrated a very strong bias towards the Reflector style, with a further 25% being strongly inclined.



In terms of the Theorist style, the difference was far less marked, with 8% of females and 6% of males having a very strong inclination, and 20% of females and 25% of males having a strong preference.



Finally, 12% of female participants had a very strong preference for the Pragmatist style, with a further 28% having a strong inclination. In stark contrast, 37% of males had a very strong bias and 25% were strongly inclined to being Pragmatists.

Discussion and Conclusions

The first and most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that there is no clear indication that it is possible to say that all males have an inclination towards one or two learner styles, while all females have a contrasting preference. It would have been somewhat misguided to expect such results, and it is with relief that it is possible to confirm that this is not a fact. Analysis of the data does, however, allow one to draw some tentative conclusions in terms of general trends which go beyond the realms of margin of error. Returning to Ellis (1994), it would appear that his basic premise that males are more adventurous is, according to the results obtained here, erroneous. Indeed, the clear indication is that more females prefer the Activist style, with a 19% differential in the tendency for a very strong preference. This indicates that Females have a stronger inclination towards getting involved in something new and learning from novel

experiences. Conversely, males are three times more likely to have a strong inclination towards the Reflector learning style, which indicates a more considered and careful approach to learning, with a clear emphasis on the collection and analysis of information. Interestingly, neither males nor females had a bias towards the Theorist style of learning, which begs the question as to why? This question in itself would present an interesting topic for further research, and one shall refrain from hypothesising excessively at this moment in time, but one feels a slight inclination towards the fact that the relative youth of the participants (the mean age being just 19 years and 4 months) might have a part to play. Finally, when one turns one's attention to the Pragmatist style, it is possible to see a slight male inclination, with a ration of 3:2 in favour of male orientation towards a very strong preference.

One further interesting point of analysis concerns the number of respondents who failed to show a very strong preference for any of the learning styles. In the female sample, it was 7 out of 25 participants, which gives 28%, and of these 7 individuals, 2 also had no strong preferences for any of the learning styles. In the male sample, all of the respondents had at least a strong preference for one of the learning styles, but 4 out of the 19 participants had no very strong preference, giving a total of 21%. Again, this might be attributed to the lack of experience or wisdom of the subjects, but this would be purely speculative and should be subject to further investigation in order to ascertain a compelling explanation.

So, in summary it would appear that the data provided by this limited study indicates that females have an inclination towards novelty and creative learning which has a constant change of focus. Males, on the other hand, would appear to be far more analytical in approach, with a clear preference for analysing and contemplating information, before being allowed to draw their own conclusions in their own time. Clearly, making sweeping assumptions on the basis of such a small sample group would be irresponsible at best, but it is hoped that, at some point in the future, a larger scale analysis will prove a more compelling case for a clear link between gender and learning style.

References

- Brown, H.D. (2000) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New York: Longman.
- Duggan, J. (2012) 'Notes on Multimodal Learning Through Media & Dale's Cone of Experience.' Retrieved from: <http://www.taasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Working-on-the-Wow-Side-Handout-4.pdf> (27/03/2014)
- Ellis, R. (1994) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. New York: OUP.
- Fine, C. (2012) *Delusions of Gender*. London: Icon Books.
- Hummel, K. (2014) *Introducing Second Language Acquisition: Perspectives and Practices*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Honey, P. and Mumford, A. (2006) *The Learning Styles Questionnaire*. London: Pearson.
- Honey, P. and Mumford, A. (2006) *The Learning Styles Helper's Guide*. Berkshire: Peter Honey Publications.
- Kolb, D.A. (1976) *The Learning Style Inventory: Technical Manual*. Boston: MA McBer.

- Krashen, S. (1977) 'The Monitor Model for Adult Second Language Performance.' [in:] M. Burt, H. Dulay and M. Finocchiaro (eds.), *Viewpoints on English as a Second Language*. New York: Regents.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. And Long M. (1991) *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. Harlow: Longman,
- Mackey, A. and Gass, S. (2012) *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition: a practical guide*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Neuman, W. (2014) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 7th edition*. Harlow: Pearson,
- Punch, K.F. (2005) *Introduction to Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Reid, J. (1987) 'The Learning Style Preferences of ELS students.' [in:] *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 87-111.
- Shakouri, M. and Saligheh, N. (2012) 'Revisiting Age and Gender Influence in Second Language Acquisition.' [in:] *Advances in English Linguistics* 1:1,1-6.
- Skehan, P. (1989) *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold,
- Wiseman, R. (2010) *59 Seconds: Think a little, change a lot*. London: Pan Books.

The logo for the International Association for Applied Linguistics (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a light blue one in the foreground and a light red one behind it, creating a sense of depth and movement.

***Improving Learning and Teaching for Undergraduate Students Using
Constructivist Approach***

Krittawaya Thongkoo, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
Nopasit Chakpitak, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai University, Thailand
Kannika Daungcharone, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

The Fourth Annual Asian Conference on Technology in the Classroom
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0275

Abstract

This study evaluates the constructivist teaching in College of Arts, Media and Technology (CAMT), Chiang Mai University - Chiang Mai, Thailand. There are four majors in CAMT which are Knowledge Management, Software Engineering, Animation and Modern Management and Information Technology (MMIT). MMIT program merges students from different disciplines such as information technology, management and industrial and promotes the construction of new multidisciplinary knowledge. Constructivist learning and strategies in constructivist learning can improve learning and practical of students more efficiency. MMIT fosters enhanced learning and focuses on information technology theory practice in multidisciplinary approach. Constructivist learning through courses allows students to develop their individual requirement. This paper introduces the evaluation of the contribution methods for teachers and learners based on the idea of the constructivist approach. Finally, constructivism promotes the learner's skills to practical and solves real problems outside the classroom.

1. Introduction

Undergraduate education in Thailand requires effective methods for teaching and learning due to the undergraduate education has changed over the last years because the integration of Information Technology (IT) into the classrooms has provided innovative teaching/learning environments to students (Tsai et al.,2011).

There are four majors in College of Arts, Media and Technology which are Knowledge Management, Software Engineering, Animation and Modern Management and Information Technology (MMIT). MMIT program merges students from different disciplines such as information technology, management and industrial and promotes the construction of new multidisciplinary knowledge. So the most students have difference background.

The new way creation is a necessity for learning in order to improve the standards and the quality of university education. For this reason, various attitudes are discussed in the field which considers the new strategies by the effect of the recent technological improvements. Hence, this paper evaluates and integrates the possibilities of using contemporary progressive computer technologies combined with the constructivist learning theory in the field of system analysis processes.

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning based on the idea that knowledge is constructed by the knower according to his/her experiences. Learners should be considered to be active individuals seeking meaning.

This research also acknowledges instructional by proposing student centred processes which encourage the students to be interactive, process oriented, open minded, initiative, self-controlling participatory, and collaborative. This kind of design procedure requires the construction of the knowledge through both traditional way and virtual design environments.

2. Constructivism: Philosophy of Education

Constructivism, as philosophy of education, is based on the belief that students can construct and conditionalize knowledge by themselves. This knowledge is embedded with knowledge creators. So knowledge from each knowledge creators is an individual's knowledge is constructed their own. Students will determine or participate in determining what to learn and how their learning. Then adjudge what to learn, how to learn and how to improve their learning by their own. Additionally, students can apply what they have learned to use through real life experience. On the other hand, the facilitation of the learning environment depends on the helping from teachers.

Constructivist is the theory of knowledge (Von Glasersfeld, 1995) with a view that involves two main aspects.

- Knowledge is the activity with the enthusiasm from students; the students will not need to be receiving only from the environment.
- Know is the adaptation process that needs to modify all time by using the experience of learners in the real world.

Constructivist learning usually starts with a question, a case, or a problem based on the idea that students construct new knowledge from their experiences. (Mona, 2013)

In typical constructivist sessions, as students work on a problem the instructor intervenes only as required to guide students in the appropriate direction. Essentially, the instructor presents the problem and lets the students go. (Susan and Elizabeth, 2004)

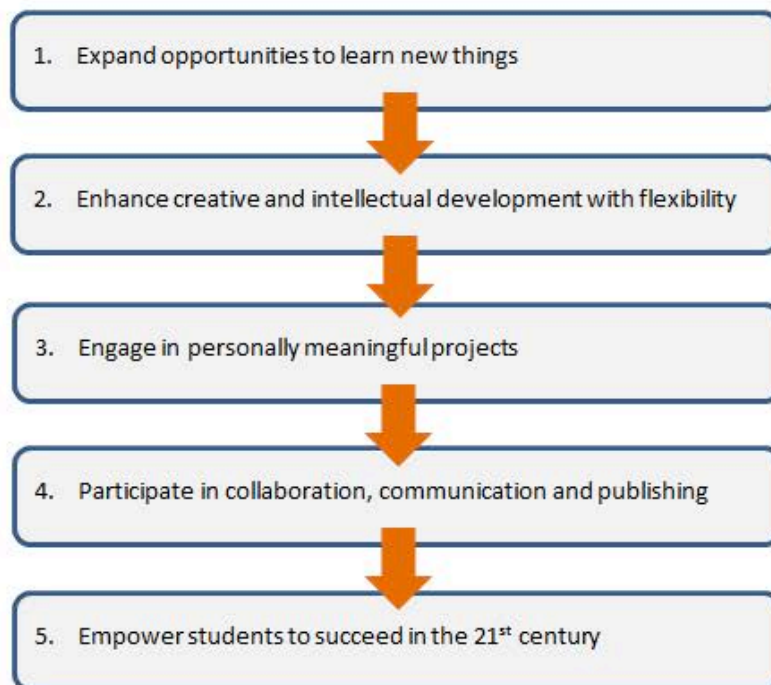


Fig. 1 Constructivist Learning (Mona, 2013)

3.1 Instructional design using constructivism approach

Instructional design based on the constructivism theory, Bednar et.al. (1991) has provided the following requirements:

1. Learning Constructed: knowledge is constructed from the learning experience. This creation process can be representing knowledge from the learners' mind.
2. Interpretation personal: learning is interpreted as real world of the individual "learning as a result of interpretation by individual experiences.
3. Learning active: learning is that the learner has to act which developed on the basis of experience.
4. Learning Collaborative: meaning to learn a variety of concepts. The development of the own concept is derived from the various sharing in the group and modified to create the knowledge representation at the same time to meet the diverse concepts or while there is an exchange of knowledge by discussing offer various comments from each other. Students will modify their structure of knowledge and create a new own knowledge meaning.
5. Learning Situated: should occur in the actual class (situated or anchored) "Learning must be appropriate to actual conditions or reflect the actual conditions ".

6. Testing Integrated: testing should be integrated into the learning task (Task) that should not be separated from the learning "learning measurement is how the students use the knowledge as a tool to foster the idea in the learning content".

3.2 Evaluation strategies

For efficient instruction, the constructivist evaluation has a key role as an alternative assessment. Approaching collaborative strategies of learning, teachers would change their conceptions about evaluation, moving the interested point to strategies involving students to work with complex tasks or to face the real-life problems. Alternate conception of evaluation enhance demands on teachers, such is engaging students in setting evaluation criteria. Briscoe (1994) found that when beliefs about teaching and constructivist learning theory implicit in alternate conflicted conventional test practices returned. The conflict may be solved when teachers are redefining their metaphor of assessment from that of "fair judgment" to providing a "window into a student's mind", thereby reconciling assessment with their new concept of teaching (Rolheiser & Ross, 2003).

Self-evaluation is defined as students judging the quality of their work, based on evidence and explicit criteria for the purpose of doing better work in the future. According to Self-Evaluation Maintenance model (Tesser, 1986) people are motivated to evaluate themselves positively, so they will change their behavior or/and their beliefs so as to see themselves in a positive light. One's affective response is generally positive to favourable feedback tends to be self-enhancing. The affective response is generally positive to favourable feedback and negative to unfavourable feedback. Self-evaluation may be defined as students judging of the quality of their work based on evidence and explicit criteria, to do better work in the future. Doyle (2008) found that self-evaluation is a potentially powerful technique because of its impact on student performance through enhanced self-efficacy and increased intrinsic motivation.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the expected result is the construction of concept maps in e-learning has positive effects on learning performance. If knowledge maps can be adequately applied in e-learning design, learning performance and computer self-efficacy may be increased. These results of this research could make a breakthrough and give a big change from existing browse-based e-learning materials design style to knowledge-map based one to gain the better learning performance.

References

Briscoe, C. (1994). Making the grade: Perspectives on a teacher's assessment practices, *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 7, 4, 14-16, 21-25, ISSN-1056-3997. Available from: <http://www.eric.ed.gov>, Accessed: 2010-06-21.

Doyle, T. (2008). *Helping Students Learn in a Learner-Centered Environment: A Guide to Facilitating Learning in Higher Education*. Sterling, Virginia, Stylus.

Rolheiser, C. & Ross, J. (2003). Student self-evaluation: what research says and what practice shows. Retrieved from www.cdl.org/resourcelibrary/articles/self_eval.php?type=su

Susan E. Cooperstein and Elizabeth Kocevar-Weidinger. Beyond active learning: a constructivist approach to learning. Reference Services Review, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Volume 32, 2004.

Tesser, A. (1986). Some effects of self-evaluation maintenance on cognition and action. (In R. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), Handbook of motivation and cognition, 435-464. New York: Guilford Press.

Tsai, W-T., Li, W., Elston, J., & Chen, Y. (2011). Collaborative learning using wiki web sites for computer science undergraduate education: A case study. IEEE Transactions on Education, 54(1), 114-124.

Von Glasersfeld, E. A constructivist approach to teaching. In L. P. Steffe & J. Gale (Eds.), Constructivism in education (pp. 3-15). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995.

The logo for the International Association for Language Acquisition (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a larger, light blue outer arc and a smaller, light red inner arc. The arcs are positioned such that they appear to frame the text, with the red arc being slightly offset from the blue one.

Teachers Cognition on Teaching Reading Strategies and their Instructional Practices

Hazel Joaquin, Capiz State University, Philippines
Editha Magallanes, Capiz State University, Philippines

The Asian Conference on Language Learning
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0286

Abstract

This study was grounded on the notion that teachers' cognition had a great impact on their instructional practices especially on their teaching methodologies. A profound indulgent of this unique relationship between beliefs and practice had been the subject of interest of many scholarly works to further improve teachers' educational growth. Thus, this qualitative study aimed of investigating teachers' cognitions on the importance of teaching reading strategies and on ascertaining the congruence or incongruence of this belief system in their instructional practices. A survey questionnaire, classroom observation, and interview were utilized in determining teachers' cognitions on teaching reading strategies and instructional practices on teaching of reading. The results disclosed that teachers were found to have strong cognitions on the importance of teaching reading strategies on the teaching of reading to achieve comprehension. These cognitions were identified to be congruent with teachers' instructional practices such as unlocking of difficult words, translating text into mother tongue, finding the topic sentence for each paragraph, summarizing the text, outlining the events, retelling the text, teaching students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph, noting details, asking comprehensive questions after reading task, and using visual support.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' cognition refers to teacher's beliefs. Borg (2003) defined teacher cognition as the teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitude. These beliefs according to Chou (2008) are closely related to their knowledge, attitude, views of learners, attitudes toward learning, and conceptions of teachers' roles in teaching practices.

Moreover, teacher cognition according to Xiaohui & Li (2011) is the "unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the classroom as well as their judgments and reflections on their teaching practices. It plays a pivotal role in a schematic conceptualization of teaching and therefore, considered to be a critical impetus of teacher improvement and an intrinsic factor of teacher behavior.

Many researchers have ventured on investigating the foreign or second language teachers' tacit beliefs about teaching like the studies conducted by Al-Shabibi (2004), Gahin (2000), and Breen (2001). As evidence, a number of research studies have revealed the influence of teachers' cognitions in determining their professional practices such as their lesson planning, decision makings, and classroom methodologies. The field of teaching has been concerned with finding innovations through this type of research and bringing them to the teachers for use.

Nespor (1987) added that the information and knowledge about teachers' belief systems are extremely important in terms of improving both professional preparation and teaching effectiveness. According to Harste and Burke (1977) teachers make decisions about classroom instruction or behaviour in light of theoretical beliefs they hold about teaching and learning. Thus, their beliefs influence their aims, methodologies, learning aids, and classroom interaction patterns and routines.

According to Al-Touby (2002), Calderhead (1995), and Woods (1995) teacher cognition is currently viewed by many educational researchers as a paradigm shift in research in the field of teaching. The main predictor of the behaviour of teacher in a classroom is his/her guiding theory usually determined by a set of beliefs and values about what constitutes an effecting teaching-learning process. This guiding theory is enhanced as the teacher continues to widen his experiences as a teacher and a learner at the same time. El-Okda (1998) as cited by Khonamri & Salimi (2010), emphasizes that the present researcher argues that those beliefs can act as a filter that shapes teachers' interpretation of theory. They, therefore, function as blinkers that do not allow teachers to see any other viable alternative way inside a classroom setting.

Trends in research in the area of reading have focused on reading-related strategies, and strategy-training studies. Such studies have found that strategy training leads to improved reading performance (Singhal, 2001 as cited by Khonamri & Salimi, 2010). Certainly there are many educators who have proposed or supposed the relationship between what teachers believe about how reading takes place and how they develop reading skills in their classroom. This teacher's belief is referred to as teacher cognition.

However, it has been realized that empirical investigation of this relationship has been limited and is a relatively recent development (Pace & Powers, 1981). The gap

between theory and practice is getting wider and wider in education and language teaching in particular. Further, Chou (2008) contends, “the little amount of studies on investigating teachers’ beliefs in the area of second language reading instruction have indicated an unclear picture of teachers’ belief construct in teaching reading”. Therefore, more researches on exploring teachers’ cognitions and the actual instructional practices regarding the teaching of reading are necessary.

Thus, this present qualitative study aimed of investigating the construct of teachers’ belief systems about reading strategies among language teachers, exploring the degree of discrepancies or consistencies between teachers’ cognitions about reading strategies and their instructional practices in the context of teaching reading in a Philippine setting. Thus, by assessing the link between personal beliefs and practices in the teaching of reading, this study anticipated to help teachers become more effective and efficient in their field and at the same time increase student achievement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teacher Cognition

Teacher cognition is considered to be a critical impetus of teacher improvement and an intrinsic factor of teacher behavior.

Richards (2000) exemplified that teachers have their personal philosophies or maxims of teaching. These so called maxims are composed of teachers’ belief systems or cognitions which involve “the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning over time”. It seems that this construct of a belief system involves knowledge and assumptions. Therefore, teacher cognition is considered to be a critical impetus of teacher improvement and an intrinsic factor of teacher behavior as exemplified in the research conducted by Calderhead (1996); Carter (1990); Fenstermacher (1994); Richardson (1996); and Verloop, Van Driel & Meijer (2001).

Another significant contribution in the body of knowledge on teacher cognition is the work of Woods (1996). He developed a cognitive model for the study of teachers’ belief, assumption, knowledge which he called BAK. The model is composed of three key elements such as the classroom events/actions, the planning that precedes these events and actions, and the understanding/interpretation that follows them”, (Woods, 1996 as cited by Li, 2000). According to Woods (1996), the planning/expectation of classroom events depends on teachers’ belief system and background knowledge structures, which involve knowledge of plans, goals, the world, the culture, the language script, and relevant contexts. Classroom actions are carried out with the intention of operating the plans. What happens in the classroom adds to the teachers’ understanding/interpretation. The three elements interact with each other and form a coherent psychological system of teacher cognition (Li, 2000).

Further, Clark & Peterson (1986) agree that teachers’ theories and beliefs represent a rich store of knowledge, and argue that teachers make sense of their world and respond to it by forming a complex system of personal and professional knowledge. In referring to beliefs as personal knowledge, Kagan (1992) in his research conducted argues that much of a teacher’s professional knowledge can be more accurately

regarded as belief. He certainly believes that as a teacher's experience in the profession increases, this knowledge grows richer and more coherent and forms a highly personalized pedagogy or belief system that constrains the teacher's perception, judgment and behaviour. Richards & Lockhart (1994) as cited by Li (2000), also emphasizes that beliefs are built up gradually over time. They argue that beliefs consist of both subjective and objective dimensions, and serve as the background to much of the teachers' decision making and classroom actions. Beliefs seem to be interconnected and multi-faceted. They strongly influence both perception and behaviour. Pajares (1992) claims that belief's filtering effect "ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing." It is therefore believed that beliefs exist in connection to other beliefs and may in fact contradict with one another.

Freeman (1989) and Johnson (1990) also began to recognize the importance of exploring the cognitive dimensions of teachers' thoughts, attitudes and decisions, and how they may affect the nature of instruction. There are several themes that can be identified in research on teacher's beliefs. One of them is on the beliefs of teacher in relation to classroom practices, which relate to the present study. Teachers' beliefs in relation to classroom practices are by far the most researched theme nowadays with regards to teacher cognition. In the study of Gatbonton's (1999) as cited by Li (2000), relating to the patterns of pedagogical knowledge of seven experienced ESL teachers in the USA, revealed that teachers' thoughts and decisions related largely to language concerns (such as explaining new vocabulary and creating contexts for meaningful language use).

Another study on teacher's belief was the study conducted by Chou (2008). His study basically explored on the assumption that teachers were highly influenced by their beliefs. He focused on the construct of teachers' belief systems about reading approaches among 42 university instructors and explored the degree of discrepancies or consistencies between teachers' beliefs about reading theories and their practical teaching activities in the EFL setting of Taiwan. The results of the investigation showed that there were no significant differences between the participants' beliefs and their use of each reading approach. This result, however, did not conform with the studies conducted by Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis (2004) where they found evidence of incongruence between SL teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices related to form-focused instruction. Such inconsistencies as stated by Fangs (1996) are not unexpected due to the demands and complexities of classroom life which constrain teachers' abilities to provide instruction that aligns perfectly with their beliefs.

Moreover, there has never been consensus among researchers for a clear cut definition of reading strategies. This diversity is largely due to the way the term has been used in different contexts such as first, second, or foreign language learning (Cohen, 1998). However, research on second language reading strategies indicates that strategies refer to conscious reading behaviour. They include a wide range of cognitive mental activities which include skimming, scanning, predicting, guessing, making inferences, confirming or disconfirming inferences, identifying main idea and rereading (Carrell, 1998 as Cited by Li, 2000).

Therefore, in this study, reading strategies were investigated with relation to teachers' beliefs about such strategies and their actual instructional practices.

Teaching Reading Strategies

Research in reading instruction in the last decades of the 1990's tended to focus on general explanations and descriptions of reading strategies employed by competent and incompetent readers. Less attention was given to the actual implementation of reading strategies instruction from a teaching perspective as well as teachers' beliefs of the importance of these strategies (Hua & Kim, 2000) as cited by Kuzborska (2011).

Willingham (2007) as cited by Kuzborska (2011) postulated that the innovative change in language approaches inclusively affects the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. In reading lessons, rather than traditionally focus on the decoding of words and sentences, teachers are strongly recommended to foster both students' interpretive and productive skills, as well as to provide them with instruction on reading strategies. In a reading class, teachers guide the use of reading strategies, showing students how to utilize them in order to cope with texts in an unfamiliar language said Eske (1988). Likewise, helping students in acquiring good reading strategies or techniques is considered to be the appreciated characteristics of a good language teacher (Lessard, 1997).

According to Kuzborska(2011) a commonly held belief by all the teachers was that the advanced level students had already developed their reading skills and that they could read and study new words by themselves. No teacher "intervention" was thus believed to be necessary to help their students learn how to read for academic purposes or deal with new vocabulary. As a result, the teaching of reading was associated with assigning students tasks for their homework, and in class, just checking the answers.

Woolacott (2002) conducted a series of interviews to identify teachers' beliefs and strategies about reading instruction among two experienced 7th grade teachers. The results highlighted the importance of teachers' beliefs that in turn had a strong impact on the choice of teaching approaches. The findings have contributed to the application of teaching practices and understanding teachers' decision making.

Ghonsooly (1997) have identified several cognitive reading strategies. These are:

- *Using background knowledge.* This strategy refers to using knowledge about the world and the contents of the text that contribute to understanding and processing of texts.
- *Prediction.* This means predicting the content of the text based on the information presented in part of the text.
- *Repetition to get the meaning of the word.* The reader repeats a word or a phrase in order to remember or retrieve the meaning from the long term memory.
- *Paraphrase.* It refers to the reader's attempt to provide either synonyms or antonyms for a word or restating the content of a sentence in his words.
- *Inference.* It refers to using the context or knowledge of suffixes and prefixes to get the meaning of the unknown word.

- *Inference (Reprocessing to get the meaning of a word)*. This refers to the act of rereading a phrase, a clause, or a sentence in order to infer or guess the meaning of an unknown word.
- *Translation*. This is using the L1 to provide equivalent for a word or stating the contents of the sentence.
- *Watchers*. It refers to reader's attempt to keep an unfamiliar item or vocabulary in mind to be tackled later on by getting help from other words coming later.
- *Using the dictionary*. This is the simple act of referring to the dictionary to look for the meaning of a word.
- *Decoding*. This is breaking the word into syllable in order for easy pronunciation or processing of words.
- *Word identification based on phonological similarity*. This refers to an attempt to get the meaning of an unknown lexical item, by comparing it to its closest neighbors.
- *Grammatical analysis*. This is using the knowledge of grammar to interpret and understand a word, phrase, or sentence
- *Imagery*. This is using visual images and visualizing the content of the text in order to understand.

Instructional Practices

Classroom instructional practices are thought to have been influenced by teachers' beliefs. An in-depth understanding of this link is important for the improvement of teachers' professional growth and effectiveness

It has been recognized by scholars that teachers possess theoretical beliefs about language learning and teaching and that such beliefs and theories tend to shape and influence the nature of their instructional practices (Gebel & Schrier, 2002; Davis & Wilson, 1999; Woods, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Freeman as cited by Macalinao (2011) views teaching as a decision-making process based on the categories of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness.

Generally, teachers make three kinds of decision such as planning, interactive, and evaluative. Macalinao (2011) affirmed that before a lesson could be taught, it must be really planned carefully. She further reiterated that during the lesson, another level of decision is involved wherein the teacher has to make on-the-spot decisions about the different aspects of the lessons. Then after the lesson, the teacher makes decision about the effectiveness of her lessons and what reinforcement up will be done.

Statement of the Problem

1. What cognitions do teachers hold about teaching reading strategies?
2. What instructional practices in teaching reading do these teachers make?
3. Is there congruence between teachers' cognition on teaching reading strategies and their instructional practices in teaching reading?

Significance of the Study

The study hoped to contribute valuable inputs to the following:

English Teachers. This may be utilized as a frame of reference or benchmark for teachers to assess and reflect on their teaching practices to find out which of these instructional practices need to be change or modified. A constant reflection of the on-going pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices among teachers makes them assertive in trying new methodologies or options which will make their teaching more effective and innovative. Likewise, teacher's continuous assessment of his/her own classroom instructional practices will eventually make him/her a well informed teacher of his/her own professional development and aspects of teaching.

Teacher Educators. The result of the present study could offer teacher educators authentic accounts of the actual beliefs and actions of teachers during a classroom instruction. These insights from the result of the study could be a basis for orienting pre-service teachers to be more cautious of their ways and how their beliefs may affect their practices and behaviours in teaching.

Future Researchers. This study can serve as reference for future researchers who are inclined in digging deeper the links on how cognitions may shape the teaching practices of teachers. Likewise, it may serve as basis on what aspects of cognitions should they explore more using other variables and medium which need further investigation.

Corpus of Knowledge. The findings of this present study may add valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge about teachers' cognitions and instructional practices, whether these cognitions are congruent or not with their classroom instructions. Such results may conform or contradict to the findings of other scholarly research. Further, outcomes may add information on how teachers perceive the importance of using varied strategies in teaching reading to achieve comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design employed in this study was qualitative with quantitative support which generally focused on teacher's cognition on teaching reading strategies and their actual classroom practices.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at Capiz State University Main Campus during the first semester of school year 2013-2014.

Respondents of the Study

There were only four English teachers handling English subjects in the Laboratory High School. Due to their limited number, the total enumeration was used as respondents of the study. They were composed of two males and two females whose length of teaching experience ranged from four years to 10 years.

Research Instruments

The research instruments utilized in the study were (1) survey questionnaire about the teachers' beliefs on teaching reading strategies which was adopted from Chou (2008), (2) classroom observation to find out if their beliefs were congruent with their instructional practices, and (3) interview with the teachers to ascertain their pedagogical beliefs and to reveal the whys on their actions or practices.

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Chou (2008), however, the researcher made some modifications of the questionnaire in order to suit to the present study. The modified questionnaire had been validated by three experts who were all English teachers teaching reading. A criterion for validating Teachers' Cognitions on Teaching Reading Strategies Questionnaire was made for a panel of experts. The said criteria were composed of six items answerable by yes or no. Then it was tried out with two teachers who were also requested to give their comments and suggestions for its improvement. Since one of the three experts noted that two items in the questionnaire were duplication, one item was changed. With the replacement of one item in the questionnaire, a final set of statements was constructed and distributed to respondents.

The questionnaire is a five point Likert scale, in which 1 indicates the least importance or the least agreement on a certain statement, while 5 signifies the most important or strongest agreement of the item. The 20 items were classified into five categories of reading strategies. Items 1-3 described the linguistic knowledge, such as studying vocabulary, integrating grammar and reading the text aloud. Item 4 was related to translation, namely translating English texts into L1. Items 5-8 were concerned on conceptual driven basis, such as activating background knowledge or understanding the connections between paragraphs. Items 9-16 dealt on cognitive strategies, such as guessing, scanning or skimming. Items 17-18 were on metacognitive strategies, such as monitoring learners' reading comprehension. And, items 19 and 20 were classified as aided strategies.

Classroom observation was also conducted among the respondents' classes. The purpose of observation in the context of the study was not to evaluate the teaching, but to observe teachers' actions to assess the extent to which their self-reported practices corresponded to what actually happened in the classroom.

An interview was also done to further confirm and clarify some of the teacher's perceptions regarding their beliefs and practices in the teaching of reading. To completely capture the instructional practices and interview, an audio recording was used in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study generally employed a triangulation approach involving a survey, classroom observation, and interview.

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents for them to answer before a classroom observation was done. This was done as an initial attempt of finding out their cognitions on teaching reading strategies. They were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement in the questionnaire on a scale of five, with 1 as the least and 5 as the strongest.

Classroom observation was also done on the four teacher respondents as a data collection strategy to gather information about their instructional practices. The observation done focused only on noting their instructional practices in the teaching of reading. The full accounts of the lessons under study were collected with the use of audio tape recording. Classroom observations were done twice on the respondents. The data were then transcribed to produce observation transcripts and had the teacher concerned rechecked it. Through this strategy, the researcher was able to take a detailed account of classroom activities.

Interview was another data collection technique employed in the study. The main purpose of the interview was to dig out the rationale or belief behind the teacher's observed practices in relation to teaching reading strategies. The interview with the respondents was done once after the classroom observation period. Before having an interview, a copy of the transcript was given to the concerned teachers for recalling purposes. The full account of the interview was also recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data from the questionnaire which served as the baseline information were gathered and sum up for analysis.

After conducting classroom observations, the researcher analyzed the data gathered to make key instructional episodes of the classroom activities or events. These key instructional episodes reflected the instructional practices of the teachers.

The data gathered in the interview depended upon how teachers described what they did in particular lessons and on their explanations why they did such things. The transcripts of the interview were analyzed by the researcher and compared them on the analysis of the data taken from class observations and then looked for statements in the questionnaire concerning teacher's cognition about teaching reading strategies

The weights, numerical ratings, and corresponding descriptive interpretation used in the questionnaire were the following:

Weight	Numerical Rating	Descriptive Interpretation
5	4.5 - 5.0	Extremely Important
4	3.5 - 4.49	Very Important
3	2.5 - 3.49	Somewhat important
2	1.5 - 2.49	Less Important
1	1.0 - 1.49	Not Important

RESULTS

Teachers' Cognition on Teaching Reading Strategies

Table 1. Weighted Mean and Descriptive Interpretation of Teachers' Cognitions on Teaching Reading Strategies

Statement	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Unlocking of difficult words	5	Very Important
2. Integrating grammar	4	Very Important
3. Asking students to read aloud the text	4.5	Extremely Important
4. Translating the text into mother tongue or L1	5	Extremely Important
5. Activating the schema or background knowledge	4	Very Important
6. Connecting sentences and paragraphs	2.7	Somewhat important
7. Teaching the types of the text (i.e. exposition, comparison and contrast)	2.2	Less Important
8. Identifying title	2.7	Somewhat important
9. Guessing the meaning of difficult words	2.2	Less Important
10. Scanning important information or details	3.7	Very Important
11. Skimming the passage	3.7	Very Important
12. Teaching students how to find main ideas	5	Extremely Important
13. Teaching students how to summarize	5	Extremely Important
14. Teaching students how to do outlining	5	Extremely Important
15. Retell the text	5	Extremely Important
16. Teach students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph	5	Extremely Important
17. Asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension	5	Extremely Important
18. Asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension	5	Extremely Important
19. Teaching students how to use dictionaries	3.5	Very Important
20. Using visual support	5	Extremely Important
Overall Weighted Mean	4.16	Very Important

Table 2 presents the weighted mean and descriptive interpretation of the responses of respondents for each statement in the questionnaire.

The data in the table show that of the 20 statements of teachers' cognition on the importance of teaching reading strategies 11 of these have a descriptive interpretation of *extremely important*. These are statements #1 (*Unlocking of difficult words*), # 3 (*Asking students to reading aloud the text*), # 4 (*Translating the text into mother tongue or L1*), # 12 (*Teaching students how to find main ideas*), # 13 (*Teaching students how to summarize*), # 14, (*Teaching students how to do outlining*), # 15 (*Retell the text*), # 16 (*Teach students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph*), # 17 (*Asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension*), # 18 (*Asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension*), and # 20 (*Using visual support*).

Five statements received a descriptive interpretation of *very important*. These statements are # 2 (*Integrating grammar*), # 5 (*Activating the schema or background knowledge*), # 10 (*Scanning important information or details*), # 11 (*Skimming the passage*), and #19 (*Teaching students how to use dictionaries*).

Two statements got a descriptive interpretation of *somewhat important*. These include # 6 (*Connecting sentences and paragraphs*) and # 8 (*Identifying title*).

There are also two statements that have a descriptive interpretation of *less important*. These are statements # 7 (*Teaching the types of the text (i.e. exposition, comparison and contrast)*) and # 9 (*Guessing the meaning of difficult words*).

Table 2. Summary of Teachers' Cognitions by Criterion

Cognitions	T1	T2	T3	T4
1. Unlocking of difficult words	5	5	5	5
2. Integrating grammar	4	4	4	4
3. Asking students to read aloud the text	5	5	4	3
4. Translating the text into mother tongue or L1	5	5	5	5
5. Activating the schema or background knowledge	4	4	4	4
6. Connecting sentences and paragraphs	3	3	3	3
7. Teaching the types of the text (i.e. exposition, comparison and contrast)	2	2	2	3
8. Identifying title	3	3	2	3
9. Guessing the meaning of difficult words	2	2	2	3
10. Scanning important information or details	4	4	4	3
11. Skimming the passage	4	4	5	3
12. Teaching students how to find main ideas	5	5	5	5
13. Teaching students how to summarize	5	5	5	5
14. Teaching students how to do outlining	5	5	5	5
15. Retell the text	5	5	5	5
16. Teach students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph	5	5	5	5
17. Asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension	5	5	5	5
18. Asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension	5	5	5	5
19. Teaching students how to use dictionaries	5	3	3	3
20. Using visual support	5	5	5	5

Table 2 presents the summary of teachers' cognition per criterion. As revealed on the data, the four teachers gave the same ratings on some of the criteria. They indicated unanimous rating of 5 on criteria #1 (*Unlocking of difficult words*), #4 (*Translating the text into mother tongue or L1*), #12 (*Teaching students how to find main ideas*), # 13 (*Teaching students how to summarize*), # 14 (*Teaching students how to do outlining*), #15 (*Retell the text*), #16 (*Teach students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph*), #17 (*Asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension*), # 18 (*Asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension*), and # 20 (*Using visual support*). They also gave a unanimous rating

of 4 on criteria #2 (*Integrating grammar*) and #5 (*Activating the schema or background knowledge*). And, on criterion # 6 (*Connecting sentences and paragraphs*), they all rated it 3. These results implied that the four teachers had strong beliefs on items 1, 4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20. They believed that these teaching strategies were extremely important in the teaching of reading.

Data also further revealed that they had varied ratings on some of the criteria on cognitions about teaching reading strategies. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 gave a rating of 4 to criterion #3 (*Asking students to read aloud the text*), while Teacher 3 gave a rating of 4 and Teacher 4 gave a rating of 3. On criterion #7 (*Teaching the types of the text such as exposition, comparison and contrast*), Teachers 1, 2, and 3 gave a rating of 2, while Teacher 4 rated it 3. Criterion #8 (*Identifying title*), Teacher 1, 2, and 4 marked it 3, while Teacher 3 marked only 2. When it came to criterion #9 (*Guessing the meaning of difficult words*, Teachers 1, 2, and 3 had a rating of 2, but Teacher 4 rated it 3. For criterion #10 (*Scanning important information or details*), a rating of 4 was given by Teachers 1, 2, and 3 while Teacher 4 gave only 3. Teacher 3 gave a rating of 5 on criterion #11 (*Skimming the passage*), Teachers 1 and 2 gave it 4, and Teacher 4 gave it only 3. And, on criterion #19 (*Teaching students how to use dictionaries*, Teacher 1 rated it 5, while the rest rated it only 3. The results on the other hand implied that teachers also differ on their beliefs on which teaching strategies were the best and important in the teaching of reading. It could also be inferred that these teachers thought that there were no one best teaching method applicable in different classroom settings and instructions.

As what has been recognized by scholars that teachers possess theoretical beliefs about language learning and teaching and that such beliefs and theories tend to shape and influence the nature of their instructional practices (Gebel & Schrier, 2002; Davis & Wilson, 1999; Woods, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). This confirmed to Richards (2000) claim that teachers have their personal philosophies or maxims of teaching. These so called maxims are composed of teachers' belief systems or cognitions which involve "the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning over time".

Teachers' Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading

Table 3. Summary of Teachers' Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading

Instructional Practices	T1	T2	T3	T4
1. Unlocking of difficult words	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Integrating grammar			✓	
3. Asking students to read aloud the text	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Translating the text into mother tongue or L1	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Activating the schema or background knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Connecting sentences and paragraphs			✓	✓
7. Teaching the types of the text (i.e. exposition, comparison and contrast)				
8. Identifying title	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Guessing the meaning of difficult words				
10. Scanning important information or details				
11. Skimming the passage			✓	

12. Teaching students how to find main ideas	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Teaching students how to summarize	✓	✓	✓	✓
14. Teaching students how to do outlining	✓	✓	✓	✓
15. Retell the text	✓	✓	✓	✓
16. Teach students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph	✓	✓	✓	✓
17. Asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓
18. Asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension	✓	✓	✓	✓
19. Teaching students how to use dictionaries	✓			
20. Using visual support	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3 shows the summary of the instructional practices of the four teachers in their reading classes. Data revealed that the four teachers usually begun their reading classes by *unlocking of difficult* words as exemplified by Teacher 1:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher1)

T: What do you think is the meaning of the first underlined word, scorching – scorching flames?

S: Hot...

T: Correct. It means extremely hot. How about invincible?

S: It means ma'am strong.

T: Yes, that's right. What about the next word slithered?

S: Move along.

T: The last one, who can answer it?

S: Shelter or protection..

On the other hand, Teacher 3 used *integrating grammar* in correcting the grammatical error in a student's sentence. The grammar teaching had been done due to ungrammatical sentence written as example by the student. In this instance, the teacher had perfectly inculcated grammar lessons in his reading class proving that grammar may be taught anytime as needed. Such instructional decision made by the teacher conformed on his cognition on integrating grammar in any lesson. Such strategy was considered very important by the four teachers in their answers on the survey questionnaire on teachers' cognitions on teaching reading strategies.

He further did a thorough explanation of the grammar rule by switching to the mother tongue in doing the explanation such as "...Meaning, *kung ang subject ta isa lg dapat and verb ta singular man.*" This switching to mother tongue of the teacher aimed to emphasize understanding among students of the basic rule to be observed in grammar which he held a strong cognition. This teaching strategy was considered extremely important by the four teachers as indicated in the survey questionnaire. As stated:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 3)

S: My brother were amazed of the show.

T: Is it correct class?

S: Wrong sir.

T: Why is it wrong? What's wrong with it? The use of the Be Verb *were*, right? It must be what?

S: Was...

T: Yes, it must be was. Remember that if your subject is singular, your verb must also be singular. Meaning, *kung ang subject ta isa lg dapat and verb ta singular man.*

Asking students to read aloud the text was also used by the four teachers in their respective classes as indicated also in their answers on the survey questionnaire. To wit, Teacher 2:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 2)

T: Are you done? Now, who can read the first paragraph aloud?

S: (Student read)...After reading....

T: What is the first paragraph all about? Who are the characters mentioned here?

S: Rama, the eldest son.

It could also be noticed that the four teachers employed the strategy of *translating the text into mother tongue or L1* in rephrasing the question. Switching to mother tongue was also evident in the teaching though only done very minimal. This was supported by her strong belief on translating the text into mother tongue or L1 which was also an effective way of letting students understand the reading text. This classroom practice of the teachers was confirmed on their answers on the survey questionnaire where they gave a rating of 5 with a descriptive interpretation of extremely important on the said item. As stated in the following extract:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 1)

T: Why is the king sad? *Naman nagakasubo sya?*

S: He could not say no to Kaikeyi's request to make Bharata the king despite of the rule.

T: Yes. Who can continue reading the next paragraph?

S: (Student read the next paragraph.)

It could be drawn from the extract that Teacher 1 had *activated prior knowledge or background knowledge* of the students in her reading class before proceeding to the main lesson or topic by asking questions such as "Have you heard about the story of King Arthur?" and What striking character have you heard about him?. This instructional practice of Teacher 1 in presenting her lesson conformed on her cognition that activating the schema or background knowledge was an important teaching strategy in the teaching of reading. As shown in the survey questionnaire, the four teachers gave a rating of 4 with a verbal interpretation of very important. To wit:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 1)

T: Have you heard about the story of King Arthur?

S: Yes, ma'am.

T: What striking character have you heard about him?

S: Brave

S: Strong

T: What else?

S: He's a legendary king.

Teaching students how to find main ideas was found to be extremely important by the four teachers in their answers on the survey questionnaire on teachers' cognitions on teaching reading strategies. In the following extract, Teacher 4 was trying to teach the students on how to grasp the main idea of the paragraph read by telling them the purpose of the text. He connected it with the next paragraph by saying, "How is it connected with next paragraph?" Such strategy was believed by him as somewhat important. As manifested in Teacher 4's instructional practice:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 4)

T: What is the main idea in paragraph 1? Does the paragraph tell a story or expose something:

S: Tell something....

T: Alright..How is it connected with next paragraph?

The teachers also *used the title of the reading text* in guessing who might be the character in the story as reflected in their answers on the questionnaire. Teacher 1 for example said, "From the title alone, who do you think is the main character in the story?" It can be inferred that one instructional practice of the teacher was identifying the title and relating it to the main character of the story. This practice was believed to be somewhat important by the teacher in her belief of teaching reading strategies. As revealed in the class of Teacher 1:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 1)

T: Very good!. This morning we are going to read one of the longest epic of the world entitled Ramayana. From the title alone, who do you think is the main character in the story?

Ss: Rama...

As revealed on the survey questionnaire, all teachers had an extremely important cognition on *asking questions to note details*. For instance, Teacher 3 employed asking question as springboard of his lesson relating it to the wants and aspirations of students in life. This practice of Teacher 4 was clearly seen on his strong cognition on the importance of strategies such as ask simple recall questions to note details in the story and asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension. As Teacher 3 said:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 3)

Ss: Yes, sir!

T: Good! Now, I'll give you time to scan over the news papers you have and take note of the hottest issues or news written there. You will be reading your output in class once you are done with it. You follow the steps we had discussed on how to do scanning. Is it understood?

Teacher 1 also asked students to predict the main idea of the paragraphs as she allowed them to *read the text silently* in 15 minutes. Such instructional practice was congruent with her cognition that teacher must teach students on how to find main ideas in the text being read. Based from that practice of the teacher, it could be noticed that she gave students the provision to *predict the main idea of the paragraph* as they go on with their individual readings. This classroom practice was common to all teachers.

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 3)

Ss: Rama...

T: Okay, Let's see. I'd like you to read the story silently for 15 minutes. As you read, I want you to take note of the main idea of each paragraph.

Teacher 1 encompassed a strong cognition on teaching students how to use dictionaries by asking if students had a dictionary with them. It can be noticed that the teacher valued the importance of dictionary in vocabulary building of students as revealed in her answer in the questionnaire. As reflected in her class:

Classroom Observation Extract (Teacher 3)

T: Do you know the meaning of these words? Do you have a dictionary with you? Okay, who can give the meaning of the first word?

S: Galore means in large quantities or numbers.

Teaching strategies such as *teaching students how to summarize, teaching students how to do outlining, retell the text, ask simple recall questions to note details in the story, asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension, and using visual support*, were all manifested in the classroom practices of the four teachers. Such practices were upheld by them with strong cognitions as reflected on their answers in the survey questionnaire on ascertaining their cognitions about the importance of such teaching reading strategies.

Congruence between Teachers' Cognitions and Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading

The following data focused on teachers' cognitions on teaching reading strategies, drawn from the questionnaire, interview, instructional practices in teaching reading as reflected in their actual classroom presentations during the classroom observations. The sets of data were presented qualitatively per teacher respondents.

Data were presented in tabular form. The first column was labelled teachers' cognitions, the second column was instructional practices, and the third column was the remarks. This data presentation (adapted from the study of Macalinao (2012)) presented evidence of the extent to which the teachers' instructional practices were congruent or consistent with what they do in their actual classes. If there was consistency of their cognitions and instructional practices, the column for remarks was labelled convergence, and if there was inconsistency of the cognitions and instructional practices, the column for remarks would be divergence.

Table 4. Congruence between Teachers' Cognitions and Instructional Practices in Teaching Reading

Teachers' Cognitions	Instructional Practices	Remarks
1. Teachers believed that unlocking of difficult words was very important.	Lessons were presented by vocabulary building such as identifying the difficult words and giving their corresponding meanings.	Convergence on cognition and practice is evident.
2. Teachers believed that integrating grammar was very important.	Inculcated grammar lesson by correcting erroneous sentence of student.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
3. Teachers believed that asking students to read aloud the text was extremely important.	Asked students to read aloud the reading text	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
4. Teachers believed that translating the text into mother tongue or L1 was extremely important.	Switching to mother tongue in explaining the meaning of words and grammatical rules.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
5. Activating the schema or background knowledge was very important.	Activated prior knowledge or experience before presenting the lesson proper by asking questions.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
6. Teachers believed that connecting sentences and paragraphs was somewhat important.	Connect sentences with the succeeding sentences.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
7. Teachers believed that teaching the types of the text (i.e. exposition, comparison and contrast)	No instructional practice adhered on teaching the types of text in presenting	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.

was less important.	the lesson.	
8. Teachers believed that identifying title was somewhat important.	Relating the title to the theme of the story.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
9. Teachers believed that guessing the meaning of difficult words was less important.	No instructional practice adhered on guessing the meaning of difficult words.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
10. Teachers believed that scanning important information or details was very important.	Asked students to do scanning in browsing for the hottest issues or news in the newspaper.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
11. Teachers believed that skimming the passage was very important.	Asked students to do the skimming of important news in the newspapers.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
12. Teachers believed that teaching students how to find main ideas was extremely important.	Asked students to look for the main idea of the paragraph as they read the story silently.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
13. Teachers believed that teaching students how to summarize was extremely important.	Students were asked to summarize the text read.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
14. Teachers believed that teaching students how to do outlining was extremely important.	Students were required to do outlining in summarizing the story read.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
15. Teachers believed that retell the text was extremely important.	Asked students to paraphrase the stanza of the poem.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
16. Teachers believed that students must be taught in predicting the main idea of the paragraph	Asked students to predict for the main idea of the paragraph as they read the story silently.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
17. Teachers believed that asking questions constantly to monitor reading comprehension	Students were asked questions constantly to monitor reading	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.

was extremely important.	comprehension after reading each paragraph.	
18. Teachers believed that asking comprehensive questions after reading task to check comprehension was extremely important.	After reading the whole text, students were asked to answer the comprehension check questions.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
19. Teachers believed that teaching students how to use dictionaries was very important.	Encourage to use the dictionary.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.
20. Teachers believed that using visual support was extremely important.	Use picture, newspaper, and hand-outs.	Convergence between cognition and practice is evident.

The results revealed that the cognitions of four teachers were convergence with their instructional practices as reflected in their classroom instructions. This means that the instructional practices they manifested match with the cognitions they held on teaching reading strategies. Such decisions made by the four teachers were apparent in their beliefs system which somehow shaped their ideologies, methodologies, behaviours, attitude, and even values. As what Clark & Peterson (1986) in their study explained that teachers' actions were in a large part caused by teachers' thought processes, which then in turn affect teachers' actions.

It could be noticed that teachers had almost the same beliefs and assumptions of items they considered extremely important in the teaching of reading. As Richards (2000) exemplified that teachers have their personal philosophies or maxims of teaching. These so called maxims were composed of teachers' belief systems or cognitions which involve the information, attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning over time.

Results of the unstructured interview also showed that their instructional practices were based on what they believed helpful to their students or on their belief system which also referred to as cognition. Such claim conformed to Woolacott (2002) series of interviews to identify teachers' beliefs and strategies about reading instruction among two experienced 7th grade teachers. The results highlighted the importance of teachers' beliefs that in turn had a strong impact on the choice of teaching approaches. The findings have contributed to the application of teaching practices and understanding teachers' decision making.

DISCUSSION

All teachers in the study hold among themselves strong beliefs on the importance of teaching reading strategies. They believed these reading strategies were extremely important in their teaching of reading. All of them highly appreciate the strong help of reading strategies in enhancing students' comprehension of the reading text, sub-skills developments and even appreciation of the texts. Richards (2000) exemplified that teachers have their personal philosophies or maxims of teaching. These so called maxims are composed of teachers' belief systems or cognitions which involve the attitudes, values, expectations, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning. Among the extremely important strategies they considered were unlocking of difficult words, translating text into mother tongue, finding the topic sentence for each paragraph, summarizing the text, outlining the events, retelling the text, teaching students in predicting the main idea of the paragraph, noting details, asking comprehensive questions after reading task, and using visual support. This finding confirmed the study done by Kuzborska (2011) that the beliefs that were identified as congruent with practices of the majority of the teachers reflected a skills-based approach to reading instruction, emphasizing vocabulary, reading aloud, translation, and whole class discussion of texts. In the study of Van Anh (2012), among the most important strategies to be instructed were activating already-known knowledge in pre-reading, skimming and scanning in while-reading and summarizing in post-reading. Indeed, teachers were confident that employing such strategies will generally bring innovation in their methodologies and eventually contribute something good among students. Further, research on second language reading strategies indicates that strategies refer to conscious reading behavior. They include a wide range of cognitive mental activities which include skimming, scanning, predicting, guessing, making inferences, confirming or disconfirming inferences, identifying main idea and rereading (Carrell, 1998 as Cited by Li, 2000). As cited by Kuzborska (2011), Wellingham (2007) postulated that the innovative change in language approaches inclusively affects the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. In reading lessons, rather than traditionally focus on the decoding of words and sentences, teachers are strongly recommended to foster both students' interpretive and productive skills, as well as to provide them with instruction on reading strategies. Likewise, Eske (1988) said that teachers guide the use of reading strategies, showing students how to utilize them in order to cope with texts in an unfamiliar language.

The findings of the study showed that teachers' actual classroom instructional practices of reading strategies were observed to be convergence to their self-reported cognitions and interview about teaching reading strategies. In other words, there was a consistency between what teachers reported in the questionnaire and real teaching practice. The possibility that explains this match is that teachers possess theoretical beliefs about language learning and teaching and that such beliefs and theories tend to shape and influence the nature of their instructional practices (Gebel & Schrier, 2002; Davis & Wilson, 1999; Woods, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Woolacott (2002) conducted a series of interviews to identify teachers' beliefs and strategies about reading instruction among two experienced 7th grade teachers. The results highlighted the importance of teachers' beliefs that in turn had a strong impact on the choice of teaching approaches. The findings have contributed to the application of teaching practices and understanding teachers' decision making. However, such findings of the present did not conform to the study of Basturkmen,

Loewen, & Ellis (2004) where they found evidence of incongruence between SL teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices related to form-focused instruction. Such inconsistencies as stated by Fangs (1996) are not unexpected due to the demands and complexities of classroom life which constrain teachers' abilities to provide instruction that aligns perfectly with their beliefs.

CONCLUSION

The present study realized its goals of identifying the construct of teachers' belief systems and their instructional practices regarding teaching reading strategies. The results indicated that the participants highly believed that a wide range of reading strategies were important in reading comprehension. The teachers' instructional practices appeared to be dominated by their beliefs, which may have originated from the methodological approaches that were prominent when they were learning or began teaching. A match between these cognitions and instructional practices exists on teachers pedagogical systems. This means that teachers' hold cognitions on teaching reading strategies are congruent to their instructional practices in the teaching of reading. Their actions and behaviors inside the classroom are greatly shaped by their ideologies which they believed extremely important. The truth that there is an evidence of a strong relationship between the teachers' cognition and their classroom practices permits us to declare that this study corroborates the notion that English teachers teach in accordance with their theoretical beliefs and that differences in theoretical beliefs may result in differences in the nature of literacy instruction (Borg, 2003 & Borg, 2006). As what Al-Touby (2002), Calderhead (1995), and Woods (1995) said that the main predictor of the behavior of teacher in a classroom is his/her guiding theory usually determined by a set of beliefs and values about what constitutes an effecting teaching-learning process. This guiding theory is enhanced as the teacher continues to widen his experiences as a teacher and a learner at the same time.

RECOMMENDATION

Calling teachers' consciousness about their cognitions or beliefs about teaching reading strategies fosters deeper reflection on how a teacher's tacit knowledge affects the way they apprehend and take action upon information in their classrooms. Hopefully, this study may stipulate a springboard for further discussion and an impetus for teachers' critical self-inquiry on the teaching of reading and reading instructions purposes. As this study highlights the importance of professional development directed toward helping the teachers, may they find this study helpful to them especially on reassessing their beliefs and practices as well.

Further, this study beckons for more research on teachers' cognitions and practices in reading instructions in order to broaden our knowledge of how teachers think and act and how this gap can be bridged by research.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, M., Mohamed, S., Krishnasamy, K., & Issa, J. H. (2009). Use of reading strategies in developing students' reading competency among primary school teachers in Malaysia. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(2), 310-319.

- Anderson, N. (1999). *Exploring Second Language Reading: Issues and Strategies*, Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- Baker, L., & Brown, A. L. (1984). Metacognitive skills and reading In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (vol. 1, pp. 353-394). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81–109.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- Calderhead, J. (1981). Stimulated recall: A method for research on teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 51, 211–217.
- Calderhead, J. (1996). Teachers: beliefs and knowledge. In D. Berliner & R. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of research on educational psychology*.
- Carrell, P. L., Devine, J., & Eskey, D. (1988). *Interactive approaches to second language reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chou, Y. C. (2008). Exploring the reflection of teachers' beliefs about reading theories and strategies on their classroom practices. *Feng Chia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 16, 183-216.
- Cohen, A. D., & Brooks-Carson, A. (2001). Research on direct versus translated writing: Students' strategies and their results. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85(2), 169–188.
- Davis, M.M. & Wilson, E.K. "A Title 1 Teacher's Beliefs, Decision-making, and Instruction at the Third and Seventh Grade Levels," *Reading Research and Instruction*, Vol.38, No.4 (1999), pp.290-299.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- El-Okda, M. (2005). EFL student teachers' cognition about reading instruction. *The Reading Matrix*, 5, 43–60.
- Freeman, D. (1993). Renaming experience/reconstructing practice: Developing new understandings of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9(5/6), 485–497.
- Gebel, A., & Schrier, L. L. (2002). Spanish language teachers' beliefs and practices about reading in a second language. In J. H. Sullivan (Ed.), *Literacy and the second language learner (Research in second language learning)* (pp. 85–109). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Harste, J. C., & Burke, C. L. (1977). A new hypothesis for reading teacher research: Both the teaching and learning of reading is theoretically based. In P. D. Pearson (Ed.), *Reading: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 32–40). Clemson, S.C.: National Reading Conference.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hua, L & Kim, H. W. (2008). Exploring pedagogical reasoning: reading strategy instruction from two teachers' perspectives. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(1), 96-110.

Hudson, T. (2007). *Teaching second language reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khonamri, F. & Salimi, M. (2010). The interplay between EFL high school teacher's beliefs and their instruction practices regarding reading strategies. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 4 (1), 96-107

Kuzborska, I. (2011). Links between teachers' beliefs and practices and research on reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 23(11), 102-128.

Lessard, C. M. (1997). Language learning strategies: An overview for L2 teachers. *The Internet TESL Journal* 3 (3), 34 – 37

Macalinao, M. (2012). ESL teacher's pedagogical systems and instructional practices. Philippine Normal University. (Unpublished Dissertation)

Richard, R. D. (2003). Teaching reading and grammar translation. *Teacher Talk*, 17. Retrieved June, 1st from <http://www.cape.edu/docs/TTalk0017.pdf>

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pajares, M.F. "Teachers Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol.62, No.3 (1992), pp. 307-332.

Sigel, I.E. "A Conceptual Analysis of Beliefs," in Sigel, I.E. (Ed.), *Parental Belief Systems: the Psychological Consequences for Children*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1985, pp.345-371.

Singhal, M. (2006). *Teaching reading to adult second language learners: Theoretical foundations, pedagogical applications, and current issues*. USA: The Reading Matrix.

Vân Anh, Bùi Thị.(2012).Instructing Cognitive Strategies. Luong Van Tuy

Wilhelm, K. & Li, H. (2008). Exploring pedagogical reasoning: Reading

Wellingham, T. D. (2007). The usefulness of brief instruction in reading comprehension. *American Educator Winter*, 39-50.

Woolacott, T. "Teaching Reading in the Upper Primary School: a Comparison of Two Teachers' Approaches," Brisbane, Australia: Annual conference of the Australian, Association for Research in Education, December, 2002.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



The Employment of Vocabulary Learning Strategies by ELT Students

Sümeyra Bagatur, Hacettepe University, Turkey

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0297

Abstract

The present study was developed in order to investigate the English vocabulary learning strategies use by Turkish ELT students on EFL context in the fall semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The participants in this study were 60 students who studied in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program at the Department of ELT in Hacettepe University in Turkey. The effects of independent variables such as gender and the type of high schools on students' vocabulary learning strategies use and correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and students' lexical competence grades were investigated. The instrument that was used in this study was a survey with 25-items based on Schmitt's questionnaire (1997). The Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) questionnaire uses five Likert-type responses. The questionnaire was first piloted by the researcher with 30 students then administered to the all participants. Descriptive statistics (means, percentage, standard deviation, and frequencies), Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Rs), Mann-Whitney u test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used to analyze the data. The results of research questions showed that the subjects of this study used vocabulary language learning strategies at the medium level, with a mean of 3.05. Determination strategies were reported being used more than other strategies groups at a high level, with a mean of 3.43. Also, the results indicated that gender and the high school type factors have not effects on strategy use.

Key words: Vocabulary Learning Strategies, Learning Strategies, Foreign Language Learning.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the studies that have been conducted by Chamot (1987), Cohen (1998) and Oxford (1990) made the important role of language learning strategies in the field of foreign language learning and teaching clearer. At the same time by starting the new shift in the field of education as learner-centered approach and applying it in educational system, learners and students are asked to have an active role and responsibility for their learning process. In order to learn effectively and use English language, students and learners need to learn and use proper and useful learning strategies for long-term learning. In this respect, according to Schmitt (1997), for the emphasis on more exposure to the language, vocabulary learning strategies have very important role in second or foreign language learning. Self-directed learners and students directly or indirectly use language learning strategies in their learning process. Students and learners consciously choose these strategies to solve problems and organise their knowledge and skills (Cohen, 1998; McDonough, 1999). According to Oxford (1990, 2001), language learning strategies have great contribution to autonomous learning. Moreover, Wenden (1991) believes autonomous learners have ability to apply learning strategies properly and independently.

In this study, the role of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) as the main part of the language learning strategies in foreign language learning is investigated which has received much attention in recent years. However, limited studies have been conducted in Turkey to investigate the usage of vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) in foreign language learning by Turkish ELT learners. Exploring these strategies has always helped learners to improve their skills in foreign language learning. According to Oxford (1997), “these strategies can be affected by variables like motivation, attitude, gender, learning styles and etc.”

2. Statement of the problem

In the field of the foreign language learning, there are some factors that have effect on the students' language proficiency like learning style, teaching style, students' background knowledge of the English language, students' self-efficacy, gender, and motivation. One of the most important difficulties related to the successful foreign language learning is the students' poor vocabulary knowledge which can be the reason for getting low proficiency level of the language. For the reasons mentioned above it is necessary that more scientific studies be carried out in foreign language contexts for students to be more aware of using vocabulary language learning strategies to develop their language proficiency and their lexical competence. Also, foreign language teachers should be informed about how effectively they can teach foreign language learning strategies to the learners and make use of best strategies.

3. Purpose of the study

This study intends to see how students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University use vocabulary language learning strategies to develop their language proficiency in language learning. The main objective of the study is to investigate the frequency of vocabulary learning strategies use based on the Schmitt's Taxonomy and to indicate the effects of factors such as gender and high

school graduation on vocabulary learning. Also, it argues which vocabulary learning strategies are useful to develop students' language proficiency and explores whether there exists any correlation between strategies and students' lexical competence course grades. In this respect, this study aims to highlight ELT students' awareness of vocabulary learning strategies and their roles in successful language learning in EFL context. This may also lead teachers to provide training on when, where and how the strategies should be used. Furthermore, students also need to learn how to evaluate their use of strategies so that a positive outcome of strategy use can be achieved.

4. Research Questions

According to the above mentioned research objectives and purpose, the following research questions will be asked:

1. What vocabulary learning strategies are frequently used by ELT students?
2. Is there any correlation between vocabulary learning strategies and foreign language achievement?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference between vocabulary learning strategy use and gender and high school graduation?

5. Literature Review

According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are particular activities adopted by learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations." Using learning strategies has important role in vocabulary learning and depends on students' attempts to a large extent. Many researchers have specified and determined a number of vocabulary learning strategies that are used by the language learners. Vocabulary learning strategies are considered as a subdivision of language learning strategies. Since the late seventies language learning strategies have attracted much attention. A vocabulary learning strategy is a special instructional tool or attitude for directly or explicitly word learning as well as the independent word learning skills. Nation (2001), states "vocabulary learning strategies enable students and learners to take more responsibility for their own learning process." He believes that a large number of vocabulary can be acquired by using vocabulary learning strategies. Gu and Johnson (1996), in their study used a long questionnaire to specify the strategies that Chinese university learners use in English vocabulary learning. By looking at the results they found that use of strategies for retention was correlated with higher vocabulary size but not language proficiency. In another study, Schmitt (1997), by survey, investigated the use of vocabulary learning strategies, by specification of most useful strategies on 600 Japanese EFL students. Using a bilingual dictionary, written repetition, verbal repetition, saying a new word aloud, studying spelling of a word, and taking notes in class were found as most used and most helpful ones. According to the results, dictionary strategies and repetitions were used more by Japanese learners. On the other hand, imagery and semantic grouping strategies were less used by the learners. Moreover, word forms and mechanical memory strategies were emphasized by the learners of this study.

Among different vocabulary strategy classification, Schmitt's classification (2000) is the basis for this study. According to Schmitt's classification, strategies are categorised in determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies

groups. Learners by using determination strategies determine the meaning by using dictionaries, guessing the meaning from the context and identifying the parts of speech and constituent elements. In other words, “determination strategies are individual learning strategies that help learners to identify the meaning of new words without the other’s help (Schmitt, 2000).” Social strategies are used to determine the word definitions by asking teachers, classmates and native speakers. In other words, “social strategies can encourage learners to interact with each other and learn from each other (Schmitt, 2000).” Also, these strategies can be used for stabilization of the information by speaking to native speakers or language teachers outside the class. Memory strategies are the strategies that language learners use to recall the vocabulary. In other words, “memory strategies help learners to acquire the new words via mental processing by connecting their background knowledge to the new words” (Schmitt, 2000). Schmitt (2000) stated, “Cognitive strategies deal with mechanical aspects of learning vocabulary and are not related to mental processing.” Repetition, note taking, highlighting new words, making lists of new words, using flashcards to record new words, putting English labels on physical objects, keeping vocabulary notebooks are more common cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies are students’ capability to find opportunities to learn and then record and review those experiences. In other words, metacognitive strategies include monitoring, decision-making, and assessment of one’s development. Some examples of metacognitive strategies include using English language media, studying new words many times, paying attention to English words when someone is speaking English, studying new words many times, and skipping or passing new words.

6. Method

6.1. Participant

The participants in this study were 60 students who studied in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program at the Department of ELT at Hacettepe University at fall semester of academic year 2013-2014. Simple random sampling technique was used to choose 60 students for this study. To determine the sample size, the Kukran formula is used. All the students involved were Turkish and selected from second and third classes of ELT department, BA program, who were 44 females and 16 males in number. The considered students in this study were who took Lexical Competence Course and its test in their first year of BA. Also, students’ background education that is the type of high schools students graduated was considered as one of independent variable in this study that might has effect on students’ vocabulary learning strategies use.

Table 1: Demographic description of participants (Students)

Categories		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	16	26.7
	Female	44	73.3
	Total	60	100
Class	B	30	50
	C	30	50
	Total	60	100
High School	A-H	17	28.3
	A-TTH	38	63.3
	Other-H	5	8.3
	Total	60	100
Grade of Lexical Competence	2.5-3	23	38.3
	3-3.5	20	33.3
	3.5-4	17	28.3
	Total	60	100

6.2. Instrument

The method for collecting data in this study was a survey method. The instrument that was used in this study was a survey with 25-item based on Schmitt's questionnaire (1997) presented in his taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies with the purpose of collecting quantitative data. There were 56 strategies within 6 categories in Schmitt's Taxonomy. But, only 25 strategies were adopted in the questionnaire due to some limitations. The questionnaire was improved by the researcher and tested on selected students in pilot study. The data collection instruments consisted of two parts. The first part sought information about the subjects' personal characteristics, including gender, class, high school and grades of lexical competence course. The second part of the questionnaire contained 25 items and six subsections (Cognitive strategies, Metacognitive strategies, Social strategies (Discovery), Social strategies (Consolidation), Determination strategies, Memory strategies) relating to vocabulary learning. The questionnaire was first piloted by the researcher with 30 students then participants were invited to comment on ambiguous items as a measure of content validity. In order to test the reliability of the students' view on the Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) as a whole, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated. The students' view on Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) exhibited a high degree of reliability ($\alpha = 0.789$) therefore we place considerable confidence in it. The Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) questionnaire uses five Likert-type responses for each strategy item ranging from 1 to 5 Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Seldom (2) to Never (1). In this study, learners were asked to respond to each item based on an honest assessment of their language learning strategy use. A reporting scale can be used to tell students which groups of strategies they use the most in learning English: (1) 'High Usage' (3.5 or above), (2) 'Medium Usage' (3-3.50), and (3) 'Low Usage' (3 or below). Scale ranges were developed by the researcher.

6.3. Data collection and analysis

The data for this study were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 25 items measuring students' vocabulary learning strategy use. The type of the questionnaires was a 5-point Likert type scale. For this reason data collection of this research is quantitative (ordinal). The questionnaire was administered to 60 ELT students attending English Language Teaching Department at Hacettepe University in the first semester

of 2013-2014 academic year. Students were asked to write their Lexical Competence Course Grades on first part of the questionnaire who had passed it in the first year of BA program or in the first class of ELT program. In the present study, descriptive statistics (means, percentage, standard deviation, and frequencies) were used to rank order the strategy categories from the most preferred to the least preferred category. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Rs) was used in order to reveal whether there was a significant relationship between the vocabulary learning strategies use and students' lexical competence grades. For identifying the impact of gender on strategy choices Mann-Whitney u test and for the impact of high school type on the use of strategies the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. After the codification of data, the researcher used SPSS version 17.0 for windows to analyse the collected data.

7. Results

Research question 1. What vocabulary learning strategies are frequently used by ELT students?

The interpretation of the findings is made based on the average score of the use of the strategies as the following criteria: low use, if the average is between 3 or below; medium use, if the average is between 3-3.50; and high use if the average is between 3.50 or above. As we can see in Table 2, strategies 21, 3, 7, 19, 12 with means of 4.43, 3.60, 3.60, 3.55, 3.53 have been used more by students in high usage level. The means of five mentioned items are higher than 3.50. Strategies 10, 8, 24, 6, 14, 22, 15, 1, 11 with means of 3.46, 3.43, 3.41, 3.40, 3.35, 3.28, 3.23, 3.08, 3.03 have been used in medium usage level by students. All mentioned nine strategies ranked in 3-3.50 mean. Strategies 13, 2, 9, 25, 16, 18, 5, 17, 23, 20, 4 respectively have been used in low usage level by students with means of 2.95, 2.71, 2.61, 2.61, 2.56, 2.55, 2.51, 2.31, 2.18, 2.16, 2.15.

Table 2: Preference of language learning strategies by EFL students

Strategy category	Strategy No.	Strategy statement	Rank	Mean
High usage (M= 3.50 or above)	MET 21	I listen to English songs and news.	1	4.43
	DET 3	I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.	2	3.60
	SOC 7	I know some new words when working in group works.	3	3.60
	COG 19	When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly.	4	3.55
	MEM 12	I study a spelling of new words.	5	3.53
Medium Usage (M =3- 3.50)	SOC 10	I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries.	6	3.46
	SOC 8	I practice English in group work activities.	7	3.43
	MET 24	I am not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them.	8	3.41
	SOC 6	I ask my classmate for meaning.	9	3.40
	MEM 14	I speak words out loud when studying.	10	3.35
	MEM 22	I memorize word from English magazines.	11	3.28
	COG 15	I repeatedly practice new words.	12	3.23
	DET 1	I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Turkish language.	13	3.08
	MEM 11	write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it.	14	3.03
	Low Usage (M= 3 or below)	MEM 13	I use physical actions when learning words.	15
MEM 2		I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings.	16	2.71
SOC 9		I ask native speakers for help.	17	2.61
MET 25		I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge.	18	2.61
COG 16		I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.	19	2.56
MET 18		I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook.	20	2.55
SOC 5		I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning.	21	2.51
COG 17		I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs.	22	2.31
MET 23		I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts.	23	2.18
COG 20		I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.	24	2.16
SOC 4		I ask the teacher to translate the words into Turkish.	25	2.15

MET (Metacognitive strategies), DET (Determination strategies), SOC (Social strategies (discovery)), SOC (Social strategies(consolidation)), COG (Cognitive strategies), MEM (Memory strategies).

The findings showed that in six strategy categories, the respondents most frequently used determination strategies at the highest mean score (3.43). Meanwhile the least used strategies were cognitive strategies with the lowest mean score (2.76).

Table 3: Frequency of Overall Strategy Use

Strategy Category	Mean
Determination	3.34
Social (Discovery)	2.91
Social (Consolidation)	3.16
Memory	3.10
Cognitive	2.76
Metacognitive	3.03

Research question 2. Is there any correlation between vocabulary learning strategies use and foreign language achievement?

The results of conducting Spearman correlation test between independent variable: Vocabulary Learning Strategies and dependent variable students' lexical competence grades indicated that Correlation Coefficient is not significant, ($p > 0.05$). The results indicated there is weak correlation between mentioned variables, ($R_s < 0.40$). In other words there is not any correlation between students' lexical competence grades and using vocabulary learning strategies.

Table 4: Spearman's Correlation between Students' Score and Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Vocabulary Strategies	Learning	N	Correlation Coefficient	Sig
		60	0.072	0.583

Research question 3. Is there any statistically significant difference between vocabulary learning strategy use and gender and high school graduation?

The second question investigates to see any differences in using vocabulary learning strategies by EFL students concerning their gender. To find out any difference between male and female students in using vocabulary learning strategies according to their gender, the researcher used Mann-Whitney u test. After conducting Mann-Whitney u test, the result revealed that mean ranks of the males and females in using strategies were similar to each other ($|z| < 1.96$), ($sig = 0.336$, $p > 0.05$). Consequently there was not statistically significant difference between strategy use and gender between students. So gender does not have any effect on strategy use.

Table 5: The Effect of Gender on Vocabulary Learning Strategies use between students

Strategies	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Z	Sig
Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Male	16	26.91	-0.963	0.336
	Female	44	36.81		

For analyzing the effect of school type on vocabulary learning strategy use, Kruskal-Wallis test was used by the researcher. After conducting Kruskal-Wallis test, the results showed that there was not considerable significant difference between three types of high schools and using vocabulary learning strategies. By looking at the result, we can see that mean rank of students' three types of high schools nearly are the same. In other words, there are not noticeable differences between school types in

strategy use (Sig= 0.727, $p > 0.10$). These results confirm that the types of schools do not have any effect on vocabulary learning strategy use between students in this study. Table 6: The Effect of High School on Vocabulary Learning Strategies use between students

Strategies	N	High School	Mean Rank	Sig
Vocabulary Learning Strategies	17	A-H	29.91	0.727
	38	A-TTH	31.49	
	5	Other-H	25	

A-H (Anatolian High School), A-TTH (Anatolian Teacher Training High School), Other-H (Other types of High Schools)

8. Discussion

Descriptive statistics was employed to investigate the effect of the six types of vocabulary learning strategies on developing students' language proficiency and foreign language achievement that ELT learners report using. In general, there was not a noticeable difference among the frequency of each strategy group that EFL learners report using all in medium-use level. According to the mean rank order of the frequency of use, the most frequently used strategy was determination strategies and followed by Social (Consolidation), Memory, Metacognitive, Social (Discovery), and Cognitive Strategies. The finding of this study revealed that determination strategies were the most frequently used ones. In addition, the frequency mean of overall strategy use was 3.05, which showed in medium use.

Conducting Spearman's correlation test to find the correlation between six types of vocabulary learning strategies: metacognitive strategies, determination strategies, social strategies (discovery), social strategies (consolidation), cognitive strategies, memory strategies and students' lexical competence grades in two classes indicated that there is not correlation between independent variable: vocabulary learning strategies and dependent variable (foreign language achievement or students' lexical competence grades). Statistically significant differences were not found between male and female learners in their overall strategy use. The results of the Mann-Whitney u test to analyse the effect of gender factor on using six types of vocabulary learning strategies between students groups revealed that there was no significant difference in strategy use between male and female groups of students. Z value for six types of strategies is lower than 1.96, ($|z| < 1.96$) and P value is higher than 0.05, ($p > 0.05$). Also, there was not noticeable difference between the mean rank of the male and female groups. Statistical values of Z and P showed that there were not significant differences between strategy use and students' gender. According to these results, it is understandable that the gender does not have any effect on strategy use.

By conducting Kruskal-Wallis test for analysis the effect of students' graduated high school on strategy use between students, the results revealed that there is not any statistically significant difference between the type of high school and strategy use. Mean ranks of strategy use between students were based on the high school type similar to each other. Total p value for all six types of strategies, is higher than 0.05 (Sig= 0.727, $p > 0.10$). Therefore these results indicated that there are not statistically significant differences between high school type and using strategies in this study.

9. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to identify vocabulary learning strategies that ELT students use at Hacettepe University to develop their language proficiency in foreign language learning. There were two reasons for choosing the second and third years EFL learners studying at the Department of ELT at Hacettepe University. Firstly, it was assumed that these learners learned English in English language learning institutes and different high schools before entering to the university. Secondly, they had fewer problems with the language strategies as they were expected to use these strategies in the first year of learning instruction. The results of research questions showed that the participants of this study used vocabulary language learning strategies at the medium level, with a mean of 3.05. Determination strategies were reported being used more than other strategy groups at a high level, with a mean of 3.43. In conclusion, it can be said that this study revealed the vocabulary learning strategy use profile, especially determination strategies of the Turkish ELT learners studying at the Department of ELT in Hacettepe University. Participants of this study were found using vocabulary learning strategies at a medium level whereas they reported using determination strategies at a high level.

9.1. Implications of the Study

As the first implication, this study suggests Turkish students should be exposed to many vocabulary learning and language learning strategies. According to the findings, some students did not have any knowledge about the existence of many different learning strategies and they had never thought before, either. If the students can find vocabulary learning strategies suitable and useful to their learning, this might increase and improve their vocabulary knowledge and size. Another implication of the study is that English language teaching in Turkey needs to be better planned. English is one of the core subjects in education system of Turkey. Therefore, the resources available are not sufficient to meet the needs of this program. There are many students who need to learn English with more knowledgeable teachers. Also, students are often placed in public schools into large English classrooms which is not beneficial to language learning in any sense. Finally strategy training for the students can be very useful for them to be responsible, self-directed and autonomous learners.

9.2. Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations for this study. The first is the sample size of participants. Sample size is not enough to generalize conclusions. The second is related to the data collection procedure. More reliable results with multiple data sources such as incorporating a survey questionnaire for teachers, classroom observations, and interviews with the teachers can be useful.

9.3. Suggestions for Further Research

This study confirmed teachers' and students' concerns, questions in EFL context. Some English teaching issues related to the EFL contexts were not sufficiently addressed in the existing literature. The participants of this study showed themselves as unsuccessful language learners. Therefore, more attention should be paid to research and to the special features of English learning and teaching in EFL context. As the present study was carried out, the researcher found out many relevant issues that remained unanswered, that could be potentially served as research questions for

related studies. As recommendations for further research some of these issues are listed below:

1. Turkish students' learning styles and their characteristics in learning English. Teachers' awareness in this aspects can help them to develop new and different English teaching methods to solve unique issues in EFL classrooms.
2. Administrators' perceptions of utilized teaching methodologies in Turkish EFL classrooms can suggest a clear understanding of the perceptions and expectations of administrators who run language institutes.
3. How do demographic factors such as age, gender, years of experience, and school type (public, private) affect students' perceptions of English classrooms in EFL context? Answers to these questions in a large research context are useful to get more concrete analysis of the demographic factors and school type in Turkish context.

References

- Chamot, A.U. (1987). The learning strategies of ESL students. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning*. (71-84). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman.
- Gu, Y. & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language Learning*, 46 (4), 643-679.
- McDonough, S. H. (1999). Learner strategies. *Language Teaching*, 32, 1-18.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Newbury House.
- Oxford, R. L. (1997). Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction: Three communicative strands in the language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 443-456.
- Oxford, R. (2001). Language learning strategies. In R. Carter & D. Nunan, *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages*. (166-171). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (1997). Vocabulary learning strategies. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (199-227). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenden, A. (1991). *Learner strategies for learner autonomy*. New York, London: Prentice Hall.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Definitions

This is of vocabulary learning strategies is designed for students who learn English as a foreign language. You will find about vocabulary learning strategies. Please read each statement.

Put (√) in the box (5, 4, 3, 2, or 1) that tells the degree of opinion on the strategies you use to learn English vocabulary. Please mark the statement that most describes you.

5 = always use it

- 4 = often use it
- 3 = sometimes use it
- 2 = seldom use it
- 1 = never use it

Part I: General Information

1. Gender Female Male
2. High-School Graduation:
 - Anatolian High School
 - Anatolian Teacher Training High School
 - Other types of high schools
3. Grade received in Lexical Competence Course:
4. Class:.....

Part II: Statements of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Put (√) in the box which most describes your opinion on the strategies you use to learn English vocabulary.

Example:

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of Frequency				
	Always 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Seldom 2	Never 1
1. I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Turkish language.			√		

PART II:

The Statement of Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Degree of Frequency				
	Always 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Seldom 2	Never 1
1. I use a bilingual dictionary to help me translate English words into Turkish language.					
2. I use pictures illustrated in the textbook to find the word meanings.					
3. I learn meaning of words by identifying its part of speech.					
4. I ask the teacher to translate the words into Turkish.					
5. I ask the teacher to put an unknown word into a sentence to help me understand the word meaning.					
6. I ask my classmate for meaning.					
7. I know some new words when					

working in group works.					
8. I practice English in group work activities.					
9. I ask native speakers for help.					
10. I learn words about the culture of English speaking countries.					
11. I write a new word in a sentence so I can remember it.					
12. I study a spelling of new words.					
13. I use physical actions when learning words.					
14. I speak words out loud when studying.					
15. I repeatedly practice new words.					
16. I write a new word on a flash card so I can remember it.					
17. I learn words by listening to vocabulary CDs.					
18. I record vocabulary from English soundtrack movies in my notebook.					
19. When I try to remember a word, I write or say it repeatedly.					
20. I make vocabulary cards and take them with me wherever I go.					
21. I listen to English songs and news.					
22. I memorize word from English magazines.					
23. I review my own English vocabulary cards for reviewing before the next lesson starts.					
24. I am not worry very much about the difficult words found when reading or listening, I pass them.					
25. I use on-line exercise to test my vocabulary knowledge.					

Using the L1 in L2 Teaching and Learning: What Role Does Identity Play?

John Trent, The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0309

Abstract

This article examines language teachers' attitudes towards use of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) learning and teaching from the perspective of teacher identity. Drawing on a theory of identity as both experiential and relational, in-depth interviews are used to explore the perspectives of six preservice English language teachers in Hong Kong who had recent experiences of medium of instruction (MOI) policies and their implementation within Hong Kong secondary schools during an eight week teaching practicum. The results suggest that MOI issues presented significant challenges to the participants and their students as they struggled with multiple identities at the institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels. Implications for language teacher education, the formation and implementation of policies towards use of the L1 in L2 teaching and learning, and future research are discussed.

Key words: The L1 in L2 learning, teacher identity, discourse analysis

Introduction

Research into the role of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) teaching and learning presents a complex picture. In summarizing the arguments suggesting that the L1 is a hindrance to L2 learning, Wigglesworth (2002) cites the perceived role of the L1 in inhibiting thinking in the L2, its use as a crutch for learners whose interlanguage becomes fossilized, and its role in diverting classroom time from the target language. However, these negative sentiments need to be weighed against a series of supposed benefits to use of the L1 in L2 learning and teaching, including reducing learner anxiety, raising awareness of the similarities and differences between the L1 and L2, promoting identities of competence amongst learners, and affirming the value of the learners' L1 as their primary means communication and cultural expression (Auerbach, 1993; Cummins, 2007; Schweers, 1999; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). This divergence of opinion is reflected in Wigglesworth's (2002) assessment of the state of research and practice:

While there is a role for the use of the first language in the classroom it is absolutely critical that it is constrained within very clearly delimited guidelines, that it is used judiciously and carefully, and most importantly that it is used only with full awareness of the learning functions it plays in the classroom. (p. 28)

The current study explores debate about the use of L1 in the L2 classroom from a practitioner focus by exploring one group of Hong Kong preservice L2 students and teachers' judgments about and use of the L1 within their classrooms. A contribution of this study is to consider how use of the L1 shapes, and is shaped by, identity. Although identity has been identified as an issue of growing importance in understanding second and foreign language teaching and learning contexts (Riley, 2006), its role in teachers' judgements concerning use of the L1 in L2 classrooms has not been fully explored in the literature. This is a significant omission given that, as Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) suggest:

In order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities. (p. 22)

While previous research has identified the importance of identity in language learning and use from the viewpoint of the learner (Virkkula & Nikula, 2010), this study seeks to heighten understanding of the link between identity, language use, and language teaching and learning by considering the perspectives of language teachers. The paper begins by exploring the rationale underpinning use of the target language and the L1 in the L2 classroom, including both policy and practice within the Hong Kong context. Next, a framework is outlined for investigating identity construction. Data is then presented demonstrating how six Hong Kong preservice English language teachers' use of the L1 within their second language classrooms shaped, and were shaped by, their developing identities. Finally, the results of the study are discussed in terms of this theoretical framework of identity construction and implications for language learning, language teacher education, MOI policy making within schools, and future research are considered.

L1 in the L2 classroom

The endorsement of a ‘target language only’ policy in the L2 classroom is often based on the belief that students should be afforded maximum exposure to the target language and that use of the L1 threatens the attainment of this goal (Macdonald, 1993). However, Cummins (2005) argues that a separation of the L1 and L2 reflects a “two solitudes” (p. 588) approach that is underpinned by three assumptions about language teaching and learning: that the target language should be used exclusively for instructional purposes, that translation between L1 and L2 should be discouraged, and that the two languages must be kept rigidly separated.

Cummins (2005) questions these assumptions, pointing to empirical research which suggests that the L1 can represent an important resource in L2 language acquisition. For instance, Anton and DiCamilla (1998) refer to the L1 as a psychological tool that aids language acquisition by assisting learners to construct collaborative dialogue as they undertake meaning-based language tasks. According to Macaro (2005), the avoidance by teachers of the L1 in L2 classrooms can lead to input modifications that could prove detrimental to language learning. These modifications include repeating, speaking more slowly, and substituting simple words for complex words. Macaro (2005) suggests that while these effects may have a teaching function, they can also lead to “the teacher hogging the discourse space and, used unsparingly, leads to ‘the dumbing down’ of the classroom discourse” (p. 73).

Another issue addressed in the literature concerns the conditions under which L1 could be used in the L2 classroom, the extent to which it should be used, and for what purpose. Cook (2001) proposes that language teachers should consider four factors in their use of the L1: Can something be done more efficiently through the L1? Will use of the L1 assist L2 learning? Do students feel more comfortable if some topics or functions are dealt with through the L1? Will use of both languages help students in their use of the L2 beyond the classroom? Although Cook (2001) maintains that “it is clearly useful to employ large quantities of the L2, everything else being equal” (p. 413), he argues that the L1 could be used to provide instructions and explanations, establish interlinked L1 and L2 knowledge in students’ minds, and for students to carry out learning tasks through collaborative dialogue with fellow students. Turnbull (2001), however, tempers this enthusiasm for use of the L1, arguing that relying too extensively on the L1 could deprive students of target language input. According to Turnbull (2001), teachers should strive for a “judicious and principled use of L1” (p. 535).

Recent research has also investigated use of the L1 in the L2 classroom from the perspective of stakeholders, including language teachers and their learners. Brooks-Lewis (2009) investigated the perceptions of tertiary level language learners and found overwhelming support for inclusion of the L1 in foreign language teaching and learning. Song and Andrews (2009) examined the medium of instruction (MOI) beliefs of four English language teachers at a tertiary institution in the People’s Republic of China, noting that both teachers’ attitudes towards the MOI and contextual factors, such as the L2 abilities of teachers and students and time pressures, may work together to affect teachers’ MOI-related classroom behaviours.

L1 in the L2 classroom: The Hong Kong experience

While evidence presented in the preceding section suggests the need to reconsider attempts to exclude the L1 from L2 classrooms, language-in-education policy in Hong Kong appears to endorse, either explicitly or implicitly, a ‘target language only’ position. For example, it is recommended that English language teachers in Hong Kong “should teach English through English and encourage learners to interact with one another in English” (Curriculum Development Council, cited in Swain, Kirkpatrick, & Cummins, 2011, p. 1). More implicitly, a series of “good practices” that have been identified as being used within some Hong Kong schools and which are thought to enhance students’ English language proficiency, including maximizing student opportunities to engage in meaningful use of the language inside and outside the classroom and ensuring students are provided with necessary scaffolding to perform activities in English, make no mention of a possible role for the L1 (Education Commission, 2005, pp. 64-65).

Despite language policies that either explicitly or implicitly endorse exclusive use of the target language, classroom research suggests that some teachers and their students do alternate between the L1 and L2 within the foreign language classroom (Pan & Pan, 2010). In the case of Hong Kong, Lin (2005) suggests that switching between Cantonese and English within L2 classrooms is an example of “teachers’ and students’ local, pragmatic, coping tactics” (p. 46). Carless (2008) discovered that teachers in Hong Kong often encountered difficulties in stopping use of mother tongue, and encouraging students to use English, within group work tasks in the L2 classroom.

The possibility of a mismatch between Hong Kong language-in-education policy, with its emphasis on a target language only approach, and the reality of language use in the classroom underscores the importance of accounting for the role individual stakeholders, including local school authorities, teachers, students, and parents, can play in the implementation of language policies in schools (Lin & Man, 2009; Menken & Garcia, 2010). This study contributes to the understanding of language policy in schools from the perspective of the individual by using the analytical lens of teacher identity to explore the experiences of six preservice English language teachers and their English language department heads during an eight week teaching practicum in different Hong Kong secondary schools. The following section describes the theoretical framework of teacher identity that was used to analyze these stakeholders’ beliefs and experiences regarding use of the L1 in L2 classrooms.

Teacher identity in discourse and practice

Danielewicz (2001) defines identity as “our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are” (p. 10). According to Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005), a comprehensive understanding of teaching and teachers requires attention to both “identity-in-discourse” and “identity-in-practice” (p. 39). Identity-in-practice describes an action-orientated approach to understanding identity, underlining the need to investigate identity formation as a social matter, which is operationalized through concrete practices and tasks. For example, the research by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) emphasizes the role of participation with others in socially valued activities within communities of practice. Wenger (1998)

conceptualizes community in terms of three dimensions; the mutual engagement of participants in practices, the negotiation of a joint enterprise, and the development of a shared repertoire. Within a community, identity construction occurs as “an experience” in terms of different modes of belonging: engagement, imagination and alignment (p. 173). Through engagement individuals establish and maintain joint enterprises and negotiate meanings. Engagement allows us to invest in what we do and in our relations with other people, gaining “a lived sense of who we are” (Wenger, 1998, p. 192). Imagination refers to creating images of the world and our place within it across time and space by extrapolating beyond our own experience. Alignment coordinates an individual’s activities within broader structures and enterprises, allowing the identity of a larger group to become part of the identity of the individual participants (Wenger, 1998, pp. 173-174).

The other aspect of a comprehensive understanding of teacher identity construction is discourse (Varghese et al., 2005). Discourse, which refers to the “beliefs, attitudes, and values that exist within particular social and cultural practices” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 11), plays a central role in poststructuralist theory, in which identity construction is thought to occur as individuals identify with particular subject positions within discourses (Davies, 1994; Howarth, 2000; Weedon, 1997). In this view, language and identity are mutually constitutive; while language presents to the individual historically specific ways of giving meaning to social reality, “it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). From a poststructuralist perspective, such construction is a process of struggle because “the individual is always the site of conflicting forms of subjectivity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32).

This approach to discourse has empirical implications for the investigation of teacher identity formation. In particular, exploring the power different discourses have to shape the development of teacher identities requires attention to the role of language. However, Wenger’s (1998) framework has been criticized for its failure to develop a coherent theory of language in use (Creese, 2005). To address this limitation, this paper draws upon Fairclough’s (2003) model of identity formation, which argues that “what people commit themselves to in texts is an important part of how they identify themselves, the texturing of identity” (p. 164). Fairclough (2003) examines the commitments an author makes in terms of both modality and evaluation. Modality refers to what individuals commit themselves to in terms of truth, obligation and necessity, and is displayed in the use of modal verbs, such as ‘should’ and ‘must’, and modal adverbs, including ‘probably’ and ‘possibly’. Evaluation describes what is believed to be desirable or undesirable and can be expressed in terms of what is considered good or bad, as well as useful and important.

While such evaluations can be expressed explicitly, through the use of terms such as ‘wonderful’ or ‘dreadful’, they can also be more deeply embedded in texts through, for example, invoking implicit value systems that are assumed to be shared between author and interpreter (Fairclough, 2003, p. 173). Finally, this paper examines the texturing of teacher identities in terms of ‘legitimation’, that is, the ways in which individuals explain and justify their various commitments to truth (Fairclough, 2003, p.98). The strategies for legitimation Fairclough (2003) considers include authorization, which occurs when reference is made to tradition, laws, or institutional authority, and rationalization, which relies upon references to the utility of a particular

course of action. Other means of legitimation are moral evaluation, or legitimation by reference to value systems, and mythopoesis in which legitimation is established through narrative (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98). Based on this theoretical framework, the collection and analysis of data was guided by the following research question:

What role does teacher identity play in shaping the judgements of one group of English language teachers in Hong Kong towards the use of the L1 within their classroom?

The study

Participants and settings

The principal participants in this study were three male and three female ethnic Chinese preservice teachers, who were aged between 22 and 24 and reported Cantonese as their L1, participated in this study. At the time of the study, the six participants were completing the final year of a four year Bachelor of Education degree, majoring in teaching English as a second language at a tertiary level educational institution in Hong Kong. The student teachers were invited to take part in the study as they had all had experience of language policy and its implementation within local Hong Kong secondary schools. Thus, all the student teachers completed their primary and secondary level education in local Hong Kong schools and were about to undertake an eight week teaching placement (practicum) at various secondary schools. Sampling decisions also reflected the need to include participants who were willing and able to share their understandings and experiences of language policy and use in the classroom during their teaching practicum, as well as the desire to attain a gender balance. In addition, six English department heads located in each of the different schools in which the student teachers undertook their teaching practice also took part in this study. The names of participants used in this paper are pseudonyms.

The six student teachers undertook their teaching placement at different local secondary schools across Hong Kong. Following the handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997, the Hong Kong Government introduced a policy of mandatory mother tongue education which resulted in the adoption of Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI) in 75% of government funded secondary schools at junior secondary levels. The remaining 25% of schools were permitted to adopt English as the medium of instruction (EMI) (Tsui, 2007). Two participants, Sarah and Christine, completed their eight week teaching practice in an EMI school, while the remaining student teachers – Bernard, Jason, Norman, and Rebecca - undertook their practicum in CMI schools. During their teaching practice, the participants taught a variety of secondary level English language classes, ranging from secondary one (grade 7) to secondary four (grade 10). Schools in Hong Kong are also banded from one to three, with one being the highest, meaning that students are of a high level of academic ability and motivation. In this study the two EMI schools, attended by Sarah and Christine, were classified as band one schools. Bernard, Norman, and Rebecca completed their teaching practicums in band two schools, with Jason teaching in a band three school. Several student teachers reported that although Cantonese was the L1 of the vast majority of their students, some classes contained a small number of students who had recently arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China and who

spoke either Putonghua or a regional Chinese dialect as their mother tongue. In the case of these students, the participants indicated that their proficiency in Cantonese was generally good.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection and analysis was underpinned by a concern for establishing the credibility of this qualitative study. Rallis and Rossman (2009) outline three strategies that can be useful in establishing this credibility. First, data should be collected over a significant period of time. In addition, triangulation should be sought through, for instance, the use of multiple data sources. Finally, credibility can be established by sharing descriptions and interpretations with participants to see if they agree. The section outlines how each of these strategies was addressed within the current study.

To account for the first strategy suggested by Rallis and Rossman (2009), collecting data over an extended period of time, three sets of semi-structured interviews, which were audiotaped and transcribed, were conducted with each of the preservice teachers at intervals through their eight week teaching practice. At the initial interview, prior to commencement of their teaching practice, student teachers were asked to describe their beliefs about language learning and teaching and their experiences of and attitudes towards the use of the L1 (Cantonese) in the English language classroom. A second interview was held with each student teacher at approximately week four of their eight week teaching practicum. In this interview the student teachers were required to explain the policy of their practicum placement school regarding language use in the English classroom, whether they had difficulties in implementing this policy, and whether or not they were able to overcome such challenges. A final set of interviews, carried out after the completion of the practicum, asked the student teachers to reflect on their experiences of classroom language use during the teaching practice, if their beliefs about the use of the L1 in the English classroom had altered, and if so, why.

The issue of triangulation through the use of different data sources, the second way in which Rallis and Rossman (2009) suggest credibility can be established in qualitative research, was addressed by conducting interviews with the English department heads in each of the six practicum placement schools. Each department head was interviewed once about the language policy of their school, any challenges they and other English teachers might face in implementing that policy, as well as their own attitudes to the use of the L1 in the L2 classroom.

Analyses and interpretations of the data were attained in a recursive, iterative manner, as I moved between the data and related research literature on identity construction. As interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times, salient themes and tentative categories that appeared of potential relevance to answering the research question were constructed from the data rather than from any preconceived hypotheses. The identity categories that emerged reflected the language used by participants and included “follower”, “flexible teacher” and “decision making teacher”. The analysis of these categories is illustrated in the following comment offered by one student teacher, Jason, as he reflects on his discussions with the school principal regarding a language policy which mandated the complete exclusion of the L1 from the English classroom:

‘He (the principal) said all the teachers must follow the policy, so that’s what I did, I was just a follower of the Hong Kong education policy’. (Jason)

Jason names the identity category “follower”, legitimizing his claim to this teacher identity by invoking the institutional authority vested in the Hong Kong Government’s education policy. His need to adopt this identity category is underscored through the use of a strongly modalized statement of necessity in which he refers to the principal’s directive that “all the teachers must follow the policy”. As different identity categories emerged from the interviews, more theoretical categories were constructed from both the data and the conceptual framework described above. Examples of these categories included “engagement, language, and identity” and “identity conflict”.

Hypothesis about the relationships between the students teachers’ perceptions of MOI policy, its realization in the classroom, and teacher identity construction were developed for each of the participants. These emerging understandings were tested against data collected from other participants in a form of “cross-case analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 195), and were confirmed, modified or discarded. Finally, participants were consulted for their interpretation of the findings and further refinements to the identity categories were made. By doing so, I was able to incorporate member checking within the processes of data collection and analysis, which is the third of the strategies for establishing the credibility of a qualitative study outlined by Rallis and Rossman (2009).

Results

Classroom language policy

One way in which linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions is through the explicit introduction of identity categories. For example, in reflecting on how the language policies of their respective schools positioned them as teachers, participants introduced identity categories such as “policy follower”. The comments from Jason and Sarah are representative of the views of the student teachers:

Extract One

The principal told me, when I first got here (the school), that the school policy is ‘absolutely no Cantonese in the English classroom’, at all, because he wants to give the students more chance to listen to and use English. In CMI (Chinese medium instruction) schools like this, he said that the English lesson is almost the only chance they get to listen and think and use English and if I don’t follow this rule I would be taking away the chance for students to learn more English. He said all the teachers must follow the policy, so that’s what I did, I was just a follower of the Hong Kong education policy. But it’s really difficult, in reality, in the classroom. (Jason)

Extract Two

Because, according to the government policy, this is officially an EMI (English medium instruction) school, I was told by the panel (department) head that they are

strict about the rule – ‘no Cantonese should be used in teaching’ - and I must obey this rule because she said if I don’t follow the policy parents will complain that the school is not using English to teach their children. But this is not a ‘real’ EMI school, actually I have trouble sticking to the policy, I found out that they (students) sometimes don’t understand when I speak to them in English, so their proficiency is not what I expect in EMI so following the ‘no Cantonese’ policy is a burden to my teaching sometimes. (Sarah)

Jason and Sarah use the identity category “follower” to describe their initial encounters with the language policy of their respective schools. For these student teachers, the importance of taking on the identity of someone who follows language policy is underpinned by strong statements of necessity. Jason, for example, recalls the advice he was given that teachers “must follow the policy”. For Sarah, the language policy requirements of her school are strictly enforced, so that being a follower of the school’s language policy is presented not as an option but as a necessity. Linguistically, this has the effect of seeming to reduce the agency available to any individual teacher - they are, as Jason puts it, “just a follower of the Hong Kong education policy”. This lack of negotiability is underscored by the adamant assertions that both preservice teachers use when either reporting on the policy itself (“absolutely no Cantonese”) or in describing its implementation (“they are strict about the rule that no Cantonese should be used”). The requirement that limits teachers to the exclusive use of the L2 in the language classroom is legitimized through several means, including impersonal authority in which language use is presented as a school “rule” or “policy”. However, both Sarah and Jason do not restrict their descriptions of the force of impersonal authority to the organizational level of the school. Sarah, for instance, refers to her school as “officially an EMI school”, a discursive strategy that has the effect of situating her school’s language policy within the broader discourse of medium of instruction policy in Hong Kong. Jason engages in a similar process of extrapolation from his own experiences within individual schools to the broader issue of language policy in Hong Kong in his reference to “the Hong Kong education policy”.

Other means for the legitimization of school language policy included rationalization, where references were made to the utility of the language policy. Jason is told that by taking on the identity of “follower” his students will have the opportunity to listen to, think in, and use English. In this case an assumed value is invoked, namely that providing students with such opportunities is indeed a desirable goal for the language teacher. The force of this assumed value is underscored by Jason’s immediate qualification that the failure to fulfill this policy will result in the teacher imposing a loss on students, specifically their opportunity for language learning (“taking away the chance for students to learn more English”). Linguistically, this statement has the effect of appealing to the value that taking learning opportunities away from students is not a desirable position for a teacher. Another means for the legitimization of the English only policy occurred through mythopoesis, or moral tales. Sarah recalls a cautionary tale which warns of the negative consequences if teachers fail to observe the language policy of this school: “parents will complain that the school is not using English to teach their children”.

Despite these attempts at policy legitimization, extracts one and two also contain evidence of dissonance on the part of both preservice teachers. For example, Sara’s

strongly modalized statement that “this is not a ‘real’ EMI school” appears to challenge any attempt to legitimize language policy using the impersonal authority of the school itself. Evidence of the effects of this disquiet on the student teachers’ appear in their references to the “burden” (Sarah) created by the exclusive use of English within the classroom and the belief that being a follower of such a language policy is “really difficult, in reality, in the classroom” (Jason), where terms such as “burden” and “difficult” invoke a negative evaluation of both schools’ MOI policy. This strategy of calling into question the official language policy of their school, has the effect of opening a gap between the policy as explained to the participants by school authorities such as principals and the reality of language use in the classroom, an issue explored in greater detail in the following section.

Five of the six English department heads who participated in this study and who taught in band one and band two schools described above, argued that their school adhered to a strict ‘target language only’ policy within the English language classroom. A single department head, Grant, who worked in a band two CMI school, suggested a more flexible approach. Representative comments from department heads are shown in extracts three and four:

Extract Three

Our school policy is that teachers must use English during the lesson...if they don’t, if they use Cantonese, they’ll be criticized by the principal and by parents. (Jasmine)

Extract Four

For teachers in this school using Cantonese (in English language lessons) is frequently necessary because of the low (language proficiency) level of our students. In fact, if we use English only then a lot of discipline problems occur, students would be off-task easily. (Grant)

Both English department heads deploy strong modality to support their school’s differing approaches to use of the L1 within the English language classroom. In the case of Jasmine, this commitment to truth is underscored by the use of the term “must”, while Grant uses the equally emphatic description “necessary” to signal his support for the frequent use of Cantonese by English teachers. Both department heads also legitimize their respective positions by reference to mythopoesis, in which cautionary tales outline the negative consequences of not adopting the approach to use of the L1 in the English classroom which they endorse. According to Jasmine, use of the L1 will result in teachers being criticized, while Grant suggests that an ‘English only’ policy within his school would lead to classroom discipline problems.

Classroom language in practice

This section describes how the student teachers’ perceptions about the use of Cantonese in the English language classroom were shaped through their relations with both full time English language teachers and students within their placement schools. For some of the preservice teachers, it was through these relations that they initially learned of the scope that can exist within some Hong Kong schools for what was described as “flexibility” in the day-to-day implementation of language policy.

Several participants reported that full time teachers within their placement school had provided them with advice that appeared to contradict the dogmatic language policy pronouncements suggested in extracts one and two.

Extract Five

I was told by the English teachers that the (language) policy is more flexible than what the principal told me...The principal told me stick to English in class but the teachers said 'you can use Cantonese in the class otherwise students won't understand everything you are teaching. We often switch between English and Cantonese. But be careful, don't let them (school authorities) know we told you this otherwise we could be in trouble for breaking the policy'. So now I'm flexible; when I teach, I do switch between English and Cantonese. It helps, it means we can go through the work quicker, it helps in keeping up with the teaching schedule...but it's sort of confusing, it feels sneaky, like I can only do this if the principal doesn't find out or see me doing this. So, what about those visits when I'm observed by the department head or by (my university supervisor)? What can I do then? Should I negotiate with each of them about Cantonese and English use? It's not clear when I can and can't use Cantonese and how much; makes me feel frustrated. (Bernard)

Extract Six

Although this is an EMI school, I found out from the teachers that it's not necessary to use only English in class. I was told we could use Cantonese to explain some things, or I might let the students discuss in Cantonese during their group work. It's more practical, it helps the students learn some difficult vocabulary. In fact, I think this is what actually happens in classrooms in many other schools in Hong Kong, it's common. But, I don't know why they (the school) have to pretend about the 'use English only' rule. I think it's for the parents; they (the school) want to protect their image of being an EMI school because in Hong Kong it's more prestigious to be an EMI school. So, it's like there are two policies, one inside the school and the other for outsiders. I think it's silly and it could put the teachers in a difficult position, if there's no clear policy, what should we say to the parents if they ask us 'why do you speak in Cantonese in the English lessons?' I'm confused about it. (Christine)

When compared to the adamant assertions participants provided in extracts one and two regarding the language policies of their placement schools, extracts three and four reveal a softening of this stance. Whereas the modality of extracts one and two presented the use of English only in language classrooms as a necessity, Bernard and Christine's weakened commitment to truth regarding the implementation of this policy in the classroom is reflected in their use of terms such as "can", "could", and "might", rather than "must", to describe the "flexible" way in which language policy was interpreted in many classrooms. This apparent shift from rigid enforcement of English only to the flexible use of Cantonese and English in the classroom is, in part, welcomed by the participants. Flexibility is positively evaluated because "it helps" and "it's practical", where what is helpful and practical is taken to be desirable. Legitimization for this conclusion occurs through rationalization, that is, an appeal to the utility that the preservice teachers believed such flexibility offered. Specifically, it is argued that gains accrue to both learning ("it helps the students learn some difficult

vocabulary”, Christine) and teaching (“it helps in keeping up with the teaching schedule”, Bernard).

For Bernard and Christine, these positive evaluations are offset by a series of apparent reservations about “flexibility” in language use. Linguistically, dissonance is displayed in descriptions of flexibility as “confusing”, “sneaky”, “silly”, and “difficult”, all of which represent explicit markers of participants’ negative evaluation of certain aspects of such flexibility. Furthermore, the use of a flexible approach to language policy in the classroom appears to underline an ‘us and them’ division between teachers and school authorities. This discursive division is reflected in Bernard and Christine’s use of the inclusive “we” to describe teacher’s use of the L1 in the English classroom (“we often switch between English and Cantonese”; “we could use Cantonese to explain some things”). In contrast to this inclusiveness, the preservice teachers established an oppositional ‘other’ to describe their relations with school authorities: “don’t let them know...”; “I don’t know why they (the school) have to pretend...”.

In addition to school authorities and their English language teaching colleagues, the preservice teachers’ interpersonal relations with students also shaped their perceptions of the use of Cantonese in the English classroom. In terms of their professional and professional identity construction, participants argued that the use of the students’ mother tongue reflected a desired to be teachers who are “responsive to what students think”, as well as allowing these student teachers to become “closer” to students. Jason’s comments are representative of the views expressed by the participants:

Extract Seven

Students asked me ‘please explain that in Chinese, we don’t understand’. As a teacher, I should be, and as a teacher I want to be responsive to what students’ want, so if I can speak in Cantonese it’s better for me and the students. (Jason)

In constructing his teacher identity, Jason refers to certain values and judgements about the nature of teachers and teaching, including the need for teachers to be responsive to student needs: “as a teacher I must be responsive to what students’ want”. This adamant statement of necessity is immediately followed by the term “so”, which has the effect of connecting Jason’s use of the L1 in the classroom to the achievement of the identity of a “responsive teacher”, with the lexical item “better” providing an explicit positive endorsement of this approach to language use: “so if I can speak in Cantonese it’s better for me and the students”.

Beliefs about L1 in the L2 classroom

Each student teacher was asked to describe their own position regarding the use of Cantonese in the English language classroom. Norman, Sarah, and Rebecca provided comments that were representative of the perspectives provided by the participants:

Extract Eight

My belief is that, ideally, schools in Hong Kong must have an official policy that lets individual teachers be decision makers about using Cantonese in English classes. For my own case, I believe that pair and group work are essential to language learning because they can help students use the language. I support students using Cantonese

in these situations because it encourages them to participate more with their peers. Then, after the group work, I ask them to use English to write up the results or to make an oral presentation to class. (Norman)

Extract Nine

I think that for most new teachers, discipline is a big issue. Schools should let them (teachers) use some Cantonese in the English lesson, especially in lower band schools, like to explain how to complete a task and the procedures to follow. This would definitely help with this (discipline); students will be on-task more and more interested in the lesson. (Sarah)

Extract Ten

After doing my (teaching practicum) I believe that, for teachers, school policy ought to let language use in the classroom be decided by them (teachers), how much and how often to use Cantonese in English lessons. For students, they will certainly feel less anxious about using English in the class if they can discuss things, like difficult vocabulary and abstract ideas, first in Chinese and then in English later. If they feel not as anxious they'll really enjoy the English lesson lots more. So therefore, if they're happy in the lesson, I think they'll improve their learning. (Rebecca)

In these extracts, the student teachers employ terms such as “I believe that...” and “I think that...” to preface a series of uncompromising commitments to truth about the desirability, for both teachers and students, of using the L1 in the L2 classroom. These statements of belief function to endorse the use of the students' L1 within the English language classrooms of Hong Kong in different contexts and for different purposes. Examples of settings in which Cantonese can function as a valuable tool for both learning and classroom management are thought to include pair and group work activities, providing explanations for task procedures, and clarifying the meaning of difficult vocabulary and abstract ideas. The strength of such commitments, signalled by terms such as ‘definitely’ and ‘certainly’, is legitimized primarily through the use of rationalization, in which different types of utility gains are identified. For instance, Norman argues that the use of L1 can encourage students “to participate more”. According to Sarah, utility gains are represented in terms of improved discipline, while Rebecca identifies benefits in the form of reduced student anxiety. Given their endorsement of the use of Cantonese in their classrooms, Norman and Rebecca position individual teachers as arbiters, as “decision makers” (Norman), about “how much and how often to use Cantonese in English lessons” (Rebecca). The use of the terms “must” and “has to” means that these statements carry a strong degree of obligation in terms of what action the participants believe Hong Kong schools are required to take in relation to the MOI issue.

The strategies deployed by participants to legitimize their support for the use of, as Sarah puts it, “some Cantonese” in the English classroom, contain implicit elements of moralization. For example, Sarah depicts her students as “on-task” and “more interested in the lesson” when some Cantonese is used, where it is assumed that students being on-task and interested are qualities that are desirable in the English language classroom. Her descriptions of student behaviour also appeal directly to a discourse of the classroom as a disciplined environment, in which students display a

high level of interest in completing tasks assigned by the teacher. Rebecca's linking of the use of Cantonese to reduced student anxiety and to enjoyment of the lesson is supported by an explicit appeal to a discourse of student happiness, which is, via the use of the expression "so therefore", unambiguously linked to the outcome of improved language learning ("so therefore, if they're happy in the lesson, I think they'll improve their learning"). Norman's strategy for the legitimization of his beliefs rests upon an appeal to the authority of elements of contemporary educational discourse, in particular the endorsement of group and pair work, that were central to the Bachelor of Education program that the participants were undertaking.

Discussion

Using the L1: Engagement and identity

Engagement in practice is central to identity construction because identity is produced "as a lived experience of participation in specific communities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). Engagement allows individuals to explore, partly through interaction with other participants, how they can take part in activities and practices, what can and cannot be done. One of the communities the preservice teachers participated in was their placement school, in which engagement in the practices of English language teaching was defined in part through interaction with school authorities, such as the school principal. The effects these relations of interaction had on shaping the student teachers' engagement with use of the L1 within the classroom, and on the formation of their teacher identities, were discursively revealed within extracts one and two, where adamant statements of belief recounted participants' understandings of what "must" happen in relation to language use in the English classroom.

The determined stance some school authorities were thought to adopt against the use of Cantonese was an important part of the participants' engagement in teaching because it underscored some of the competencies of English language teaching and teachers that were valued by school authorities. These competencies, which included using only English in the classroom, providing students with the maximum number of opportunities to listen to and speak in English, were reified in "school policy" (extract one) and enforced through relations of power that were displayed in cautionary tales warning of the consequences for any teacher who deviates from this MOI policy. For the student teachers, this form of engagement with school language policy suggested an identity of "follower", which positioned them as "just following the (school) policy" (extract one).

The student teachers conceptualized engagement in practice not only through relations with school authorities, but also in terms of interactions with other English language teachers within their placement schools. Participation in a community of fellow English language teachers also shaped the participants' identity construction through their ability to display certain competencies in relation to the use of the L1 in their individual classrooms. However, in contrast to the identity of MOI policy "follower" described above, the student teachers were encouraged by fellow English language teachers to be "flexible", an identity position reflected in classroom practices that allowed for use of both English and Cantonese.

This duality of engagement in the use of the L1 – as “follower” and as “flexible”- was most explicitly captured in Christine’s depiction of the existence of “two language policies” (extract six), and hence two different modes of engagement in terms of classroom language use, within the placement schools. A further form of engagement with the use of learner’s L1 that shaped the construction of teacher identities occurred through the participants’ relations with students within their placement schools. These relations underscored participants ongoing positioning as “students” and shaped their attitudes towards use of the L1 in the classroom as they recounted their own language learning experiences.

Using the L1: Imagination and identity

As a mode of belonging, imagination involves looking beyond the here and now of engagement in specific practices and activities by creating relations of identity across space and time. The student teachers recognition of their own experiences of L1 use in the L2 classroom in terms of “follower”, “flexible”, and “student” as reflecting broader patterns of language policy and use was therefore an important part of their ongoing work of identity construction. The identity “follower”, for instance, was connected by the student teachers to current Hong Kong educational policy, in particular the identification of schools as using either Chinese or English as the medium of instruction (extracts one and two). This identity connection appeared to limit student teachers to a deterministic path of identity formation in which the power relations underpinning such official policy positions meant that they “must” take up the identity of MOI policy “follower” (extracts one and two).

Other connections, however, worked to break down such determinism. For example, the identity “flexible” was connected by participants not with official government policy, but rather with the reality of “what actually happens in classrooms in many other schools in Hong Kong” (extract six). Linguistically, the freedom that this identity position afforded teachers was marked by a shift from unequivocal pronouncements about what “must” happen to more measured assessments of what “can” (extract five) be practiced in relation to the use of the L1 within the English language classroom. Connecting engagement in MOI policy and use in the classroom to broader enterprises was also achieved by participants reaching into the past, to their own recent experiences as students, shaping their teacher identity formation by allowing identification with the classroom language needs and wants of their current students.

The work of imagination allowed the student teachers to conceive of a future in which their engagement with use of the L1 in L2 learning and teaching was reflected in new and different identities, such as “decision maker” (extracts eight to ten). This was an imagined identity that implied very different forms of engagement with the use of the L1 for English language teaching and learning from that of both the “follower” and the “flexible” teacher. The identity positions “decision maker” and “follower” were differentiated in terms of the capacity the former offered teachers to determine when and to what extent they could make use of the L1 at the level of the individual classroom. This distinction suggests the important role agency plays in teacher identity construction (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). For example, realization of the identity “decision maker” could empower the student teachers by emphasizing their

ability to shape language policy and use within the context of their individual classrooms.

As Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) point out, teacher identity is the product of the interaction of agency and structure, the latter drawing attention to the ways in which institutions, such as schools, can shape teacher identity construction. Thus, the identity “flexible” teacher failed to achieve the status associated with official recognition as a component of the school’s language policy, and was therefore evaluated negatively as a “sneaky” form of participation (extract five). The student teacher’s desire to have their preferred identity position of “decision maker” officially recognized by their placement schools suggests that the relations of power and status that would result from the reification of this identity within school language policy are crucial to its realization in classroom practices and activities.

The work of imagination can result in either a sense of affinity or of dissociation from certain identities. The participant’s location of their individual MOI experiences within the classrooms of their placement school with broader systems of language policy in Hong Kong – indexed by the identity category “follower” – was negatively evaluated, a linguistic strategy that signalled their dissociation from this teacher identity. A similar sense of dissociation appeared to characterize the participants’ evaluations of the connections they made to language teachers across Hong Kong who were “flexible” in their use of the L1. In contrast, the student teacher’s enthusiastic embrace of the teacher as the “decision maker” about use of the L1 in the classroom suggested an affinity with this identity position.

Using the L1: Engagement and identity

Alignment contributes to identity construction by bringing the actions and practices of the individual into line with the requirements of institutions such as schools, and can take different forms, including coercion and allegiance (Wenger, 1998). Coercion, for instance, appeared to underpin the alignment of the student teacher’s use of the L1 in the classroom with the identity “follower”, as participant’s recounted cautionary tales that described the implications of not conforming to this identity position. The student teacher’s negative evaluation of the “flexible” teacher suggests that their allegiance was reserved for the identity position “decision maker”. Linguistically, this allegiance was evident as the student teachers couched their descriptions of “decision making” teachers in terms of strongly modalized statements that detailed what “should” and what “ought to” happen in terms of language policy and use within individual schools.

Language policy as identity conflict

The combination of engagement and imagination is a powerful force for identity construction because engagement “provides a place for imagination to land, to be negotiated in practice and realized into identities of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 217). The language policies and practices of the student teachers’ placement schools with respect to use of the L1 meant that although engagement in the classroom provided an opportunity for the identities of “follower” and “flexible” teacher to “land”, the identity position “decision maker” appeared to be marginalized, an outcome that was revealed discursively in the participants’ understandings of how different identity positions were realized within their schools. For example, while the

modality used to describe the identities of “follower” and “flexible” teacher positioned them as available identity positions that “must” (extracts one and two) or “can” (extracts three and four) be currently enacted, the identity “decision maker” was constructed as an ideal (extract six), one that was not realized in the contemporary practices and activities of language teaching as experienced by the participants. This could imply the marginalization of the competencies associated with the identity “decision maker”, reflecting the possible failure of school authorities to acknowledge the competencies that, in relation to language policy and use in the classroom, appeared to be most highly valued by the student teachers.

Identity construction requires that individuals reconcile their different forms of membership in different communities by constructing “an identity that can include different meanings and forms of participation into one nexus” (Wenger, 1998, p. 160). The preservice teachers found this identity work problematic due to the failure of their schools to recognize the competencies associated with their preferred identity position of “decision maker” about the use of the L1 within the classroom. Yet, Wenger (1998) does not adequately theorize how individuals might react to the identity conflicts implied by such marginalization, nor explore the potential impacts such conflicts can have on the task of identity reconciliation. Indeed, Wenger (1998) has been criticized for providing a “benign model” (Barton & Tusting, 2005, p. 10) of community, one that downplays issues of power, conflict, and exclusion (Fuller, Hodgkinson, Hodgkinson, & Unwin, 2005). However, understanding and addressing these identity conflicts is likely to be crucial to the management of these student teachers’ boundary crossing experiences as they move from their teacher education programme to take up full time language teaching positions in Hong Kong secondary schools.

The following section considers the implications of these findings for schools in Hong Kong and other analogous educational settings that may experience language-in-education policy as teacher identity conflict.

Beyond conflict: Implications for language policy in schools

School authorities and other stakeholders should acknowledge that the negotiation of school language policy may need to confront the social antagonisms that appeared to characterize teachers’ relations of engagement and imagination described above. As Howarth (2000) explains, “social antagonisms occur because social agents are unable to attain their identities, and because they construct an ‘enemy’ who is deemed responsible for this ‘failure’ ” (p. 105). For example, unable to realize the marginalized identity position of “decision maker” within their schools, the student teachers in this study experienced a “blockage of identity” (Howarth, 2000, p. 105).

To avoid preservice teachers casting school authorities and experienced English language teachers as an “enemy”, the formation of school language policies should include attempts to assist student teachers and other stakeholders move beyond such potential for identity blockage. This task could be approached from a poststructuralist perspective, which, as described earlier in this paper, argues that identity construction occurs through “the identification by the individual with particular subject positions within discourses” (Weedon, 1997, p. 108). Because discourses describe a partial fixation of meaning that is socially produced and historically specific, all discourses are necessarily contingent, meaning that subject positions are not pre-given or fixed

but rather “precarious, contradictory, and in process” (Weedon, 1997, p. 32). It is this contingent character of all subject positions that opens the possibilities for their deconstruction.

Overcoming such identity blockage would begin by revealing to different stakeholders, including preservice teachers, English language teachers, and school authorities, the constructed nature of identity categories such as “follower”, “flexible” and “decision maker”. For example, as part of their teaching practicum experiences, student teachers could be required to interview MOI policy stakeholders, such as school authorities, English language teachers, and students, seeking their views about when and to what extent the L1 might be used within the English language classroom. These insights may help overcome antagonistic relations by allowing student teachers to “occupy the subject position of the other” (Spivak, 1990, p. 121), comprehending language policy and use from the point of view of other stakeholders, “and to see whether one’s own understanding can be elaborated, made richer, expanded in light of the new way of seeing made possible by listening to the other” (Davies, 1994, p. 27).

Analysis of the interview data might also be used to reveal to preservice teachers how, in relation to language policy and use, they are positioned in terms of one identity category or another. Making this positioning visible might allow preservice teachers to position themselves differently in relation to existing discourses within both their university and placement schools. For instance, seeing the effects of discourses that position them as either “follower”, “flexible” or “decision maker” can assist in allowing them to resist discourse they find undesirable and to see themselves not as one or another of these types of teachers but rather as occupying all categories. This outcome is consistent with the emphasis in poststructuralist theory and practice of revealing to individuals the existence of “multiple ‘I’s” (Davies, 1994, p. 34), and of fostering their ability to move between them.

These recommendations can be extended beyond the case of preservice teachers. School authorities should find ways to acknowledge the role of teacher identity in the formation of MOI policy within Hong Kong schools. As a first step, school authorities could interview language teachers, exploring their attitudes towards language teaching and learning, their beliefs about how the L1 might help and hinder such teaching and learning, as well as their thoughts about current language policies within the school and the struggles they face to teach the English language within the structures of such policy. This data could then serve as one input to the formation of MOI policies within schools. In doing so, school authorities would signal to language teachers, especially new teachers, that their input is valued within the negotiation of meaning that matter in relation to school MOI policy. This would make an important contribution to assisting all teachers identify with the institution because it involves recognition of their competencies within the negotiation of meanings, and in the sharing of the ownership of those meanings, which are important components of identity formation.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that language policy can be one source of identity conflict for teachers that can result in antagonistic relations between teachers and other stakeholders, such as school authorities. These findings have implications for the formation and implementation of language-in-education policy beyond Hong

Kong. In particular, bilingual educational policy throughout the Asian region must afford identity in teaching a prominent role in the formation and implementation of such policy. This approach, consistent with Lin and Man's (2009) call for a bottom-up approach to language policy formation in Asian educational contexts, would acknowledge teachers as active agents who play a crucial role in determining the dynamics of language-in-education policy in local, situated contexts.

The current study was limited by the small size of the sample and a focus on the perspectives of preservice and inservice teachers. Future research should therefore use the analytic lens to explore identity from the perspective of other stakeholders, such as educational policy makers, school authorities, and students, all of whom play an important role in language-in-education policy construction and implementation.

References

- Anton, M. & DiCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 54, 314-342.
- Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27, 9-32.
- Barton, D. & Tusting, K. (2005). Introduction. In D. Barton and K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice. Language, power, and social context* (pp. 1-13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brooks-Lewis, K. (2009). Adult learners' perceptions of the incorporation of their L1 in foreign language teaching and learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 30, 216-235.
- Carless, D. (2008). Student use of the mother tongue in the task-based classroom. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 331-338.
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern language Review*, 57, 402-423.
- Creese, A. (2005). Mediating allegations of racism in a multiethnic London school: What speech communities and communities of practice can tell us about discourse and power. In D. Barton, & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice. Language, power, and social context* (pp. 55-76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J. (2005). A proposal for action: Strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. *The Modern language Journal*, 89, 585-592.
- Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10, 221-240.

- Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves. Identity, pedagogy, and teacher education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Davies, B. (1994). *Poststructuralist theory and classroom practice*. Geelong: Deakin University.
- Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32, 601-616.
- Education Commission (2005). *Report on review of medium of instruction for secondary schools and secondary school places allocation*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government printer.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse. Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P., & Unwin, L. (2005). Learning as peripheral participation in communities of practice: A reassessment of key concepts in workplace learning. *British Educational Research Journal* 31, 49-68.
- Howarth, D. (2000). *Discourse*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Lin, A. (2005). Critical, transdisciplinary approaches to research on language in education. In A. Lin & P. Martin (Eds.), *Decolonization, globalization: Language-in-education policy and practice* (pp. 38-54). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lin, A. & Man, E. (2009). *Bilingual education Southeast Asian perspectives*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Macaro, E. (2005). Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: A communication and learning strategy. In E. Llorca (Ed.), *Non-native language teachers. Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession* (pp. 63-84). New York: Springer.
- Macdonald, C. (1993). *Using the target language*. Cheltenham, England: Mary Glasgow.
- Menken, K. & Garcia, O. (2010). Introduction. In K. Menken & O. Garcia (Eds.), *Negotiating language policies in schools* (pp. 1-10). New York: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pan, Y. & Pan, Y. (2010). The use of L1 in the foreign language classroom. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 12, 87-96.

- Rallis, S. & Rossman, G. (2009). Ethics and trustworthiness. In J. Heigham & R. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics* (pp. 263-287). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Riley, P. (2006). Self-expression and the negotiation of identity in a foreign language. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 16, 295-318.
- Schweers, C. (1999). Using L1 in the L2 classroom, *English Teaching Forum Online* 37, 2.
- Song, Y. & Andrews, S. (2009). *The L1 in L2 learning – Teachers beliefs and practices*. Muenchen: LINCOM.
- Spivak, G. (1990). *The post-colonial critic*. New York: Routledge.
- Swain, M., Kirkpatrick, A., & Cummins, J. (2011). *How to have a guilt free life using Cantonese in the English class: A handbook for the English language teacher in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Research Centre into language Acquisition and Education in Multilingual Societies, Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Turnbull, M. (2001). There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but...
The Canadian Modern Language Review, 57, 531-540. .
- Turnbull, M. & Dailey-O’Cain, J. (Eds.) (2009). *First language use in second and foreign language learning*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 4, 21-44.
- Virkkula, T., & Nikula, T. (2010). Identity construction in EFL contexts: A case study of Finnish engineering students working in Germany. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 20, 251- 273.
- Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wigglesworth, G. (2002). The role of the first language in the second language classroom: Friend or foe. *English Teaching*, 57, 17-29.

Strategies in learning and producing lexical intonation of Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language by English L1 learners

Richard LaBontee, The University of Oxford, UK

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0315

Abstract

This study investigates the use of language learning strategies employed by learners of Chinese as a foreign language in the learning of the lexically semantic tones of Chinese language. Specifically, this study sought to; 1) describe what strategies adult learners of Chinese as a foreign language use, 2) look at these strategies in the light of current language learning strategy taxonomy, and 3) look for patterns in the types of strategies used.

Two instruments were devised for this study: a SILL Questionnaire Modified for Chinese Tone Learning Strategies and Oral Interviews. Through statistical and qualitative analysis performed on the data collected by these two instruments, 1) a list of strategies was created and compiled according to thematic categories and patterns describing them, and it was found that 2) cognitive and memory strategies are most reportedly used by Chinese tone learners while affective strategies are least reported. Some tone learning strategies were used more often than others, implying that certain language learning strategies trends exist in Chinese tone learning. Suggestions for further study include investigations into patterns and themes observed in Chinese tone learning in this study and further investigation of the most popular and least popular tone learning strategies and their effectiveness in helping Chinese foreign language learners learn tones.

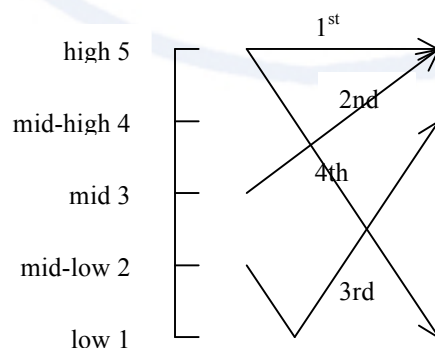
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Around the world, the number of people studying Mandarin Chinese has dramatically increased in recent years. Ethnologue data indicates that Mandarin Chinese has over 178 million second language (L2) speakers in the world today. According to the Xinhua News Agency of Mainland China, over the course of five years, the number of language learners taking the HSK (Chinese Proficiency Exam) rose an astounding 537%, from 117,660 in 2005 to 750,000 in 2010. With such explosive global popularity, further research into Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) learning is not only warranted, but necessary. Though a literature base concerning the tonal features of Chinese has been well-established (i.e., Hua & Dodd, 2000; Wan, 2007), knowledge of effective forms of learning and producing those intonations within a L2 context have yet to be thoroughly studied. This study will therefore endeavor to investigate what methods, or learning strategies native English speakers employ in learning and producing Mandarin Chinese tones through the use of qualitative and quantitative means.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese is a tonal language, meaning the semantics of Chinese lexicon spoken aloud are affected by the prosodic intonation of words uttered (c.f., Botinis, Granström & Möbius, 2001). Chinese tone production has traditionally been described by recording pitch contours on a 5-level range rising from low (1) to high (5) (Chao, 1930) and confirmed by acoustic measurements ranging between 80-140 Hz (Wang & Li, 1967; Xu, 1999). Spoken Chinese operates with four distinct tones labeled, first (flat), second (rising), third (inflected) and fourth (falling), which dictate semantics of the utterance (see fig.1). The lexically tonal nature of the Chinese language has led to great difficulty for first language (L1) speakers of non-tonal languages (i.e., English) to speak or perceive accurately (c.f., Chen, G.T., 1974; Shen, 1989; Hu, 2010). That said, some effort in the applied linguistics community has been dedicated to research into Chinese tone production (Hu, 2007; Guo & Tao., 2008) and Chinese tone perception (Lee, Vakoch & Lee, 1996; Wang, Spence, Jongman & Sereno, 1999).

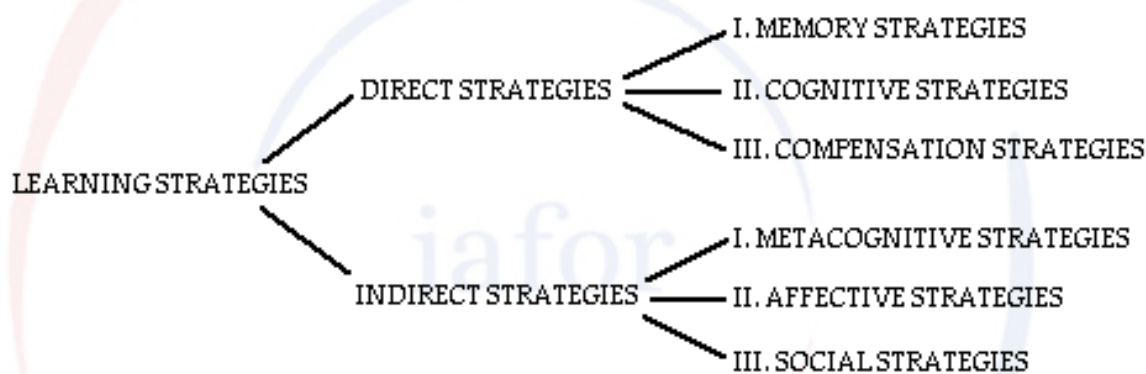
Figure 1: Chao's (1968, p.25) graph of Chinese tones



A language learning strategy has been described as a conscious activity (mental or physical) enacted to reach a goal or intention, facilitating learning (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Researchers of language learning strategies (LLS) have constructed various

theoretical models to better define LLS (Tseng, Dörnyei and Schmitt, 2006; Oxford, 2011). It was Rebecca Oxford's Language Learning Strategy model (1990) that provided a baseline for categorizing of strategies encountered in this study. Her model assumed language learning strategies could be sorted into six theoretical categories stemming from direct or indirect strategy usage; Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective and Social strategies (see fig.2). However, recently it has been proposed that forcing LLS into universal taxonomies detailing categories of strategy use (i.e., cognitive strategy, etc.) ultimately stifles further research in the field due to inconsistencies and confusion (Rose, 2012). It has been suggested that, "[LLS] categories can emerge from data in order to develop a taxonomy, which is appropriate to the language-learning context" (ibid, 2012; p.143), thereby allowing for freedom from generalizing data, and retaining context-specific findings. This study therefore also exhumed a preliminary group of themes found in Chinese tone learning strategies (see section 5.2.2).

Figure 2: Oxford's (1990) LLS taxonomy



Chinese language has been generally considered to be one of the most difficult languages for English speakers to study as a L2 (see Ross, 2001). This is due to difficulties that stem from the grammar, aural reception, vocabulary, recall, oral production and pronunciation (see Huang, 2000; Chiang, 2002; Hu, 2010). Samimy and Lee (1997) found through questionnaires provided to native English speakers, speaking Chinese is more difficult than understanding the language – speaking came only second to writing in perceived difficulty of language learning aspects.

LLS in CFL learning research has been applied to facilitating the learning of Chinese for non-native Chinese speakers across several aspects of CFL learning including character, pronunciation, and vocabulary learning (see McGinnis, 1999; Hui, 2011; Yin, 2003; Shen, 2005). However, few advances have been made into uncovering the importance and effectiveness of strategy use in the learning and mastery of tones specifically (Hu, 2007; LaBontee, 2013), though most LLS studies in the CFL context concentrate on ideographic character learning (Ke, 1998, Shen, 2005). The current literature seems to offer only a cursory examination of LLS in Chinese tone-learning, merely providing lists of popular or unpopular LLS amongst CFL learners, but not extending the scope of said research into the effectiveness of LLS indicated as used by CFL learners. The literature also indicates that there has been no focused attempt at creating a theoretical model of LLS found in the Chinese tone-learning context.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions for this exploratory project have emerged from the review of SLA literature involved with Chinese tones and LLS.

1. When studying CFL, what LLS are employed by adult English L1 learners to remember how to produce accurate lexical intonation?
2. According to categorical taxonomies of LLS that have already appeared in LLS literature, what kinds of strategies to adult CFL learners employ to better learn Chinese tones?
3. Are any themes or patterns observed across the entire participant sample in terms of LLS reported?

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study will attempt to expand the strategy elicitation phase of Hu's (2007) work in attempts to provide a work dedicated to discovering the types of strategies employed specifically for LLS tied to Chinese tones. Such LLS will be described as tone learning strategies (TLS) in this study. The research design includes quantitative data collection in the form of questionnaires and qualitative data in the form of oral interviews.

The following criteria were set for participant sampling in this study:

1. Participants needed to be English-native speakers;
2. Participants needed to be engaged in, or have been engaged in the past in CFL classes or learning.
3. Participants needed to be over the age of 18 in order to qualify them as 'adult'.

Participants were not disqualified because of nationality, time spent learning Chinese, time spent in Chinese speaking environments, self-perceived level of Chinese proficiency, degree, or second language spoken.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire used in this study had two sections, a demographic survey and a 50-item section designed to gauge respondents' frequency of TLS use. The final questionnaire used was based on Oxford's Survey Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (1990), but manipulated to reflect TLS. Reliability of the SILL has been measured using the Cronbach alpha for internal consistency and has high validity measures in content-validity, or the extent to which a measure represents all facets of a construct (Oxford, 1986), and criterion-related validity, or the extent to which are demonstrably related to concrete criteria in the 'real world' (see Oxford and Burry-

stock, 1995 for related studies). It is often used in language learning strategy research.

The questionnaire was adapted to reflect the kinds of strategies learners used in tone study rather than in language study. This modification was achieved by maintaining Oxford's six categories of strategies, but amending the statements (or in some cases deleting statements and replacing them) whereby focusing them on strategies potentially used in tone learning, rather than the original 'second language' focus of the 50-item version of the SILL.

The adapted version of the SILL used in this study was distributed on-line for the convenience of the researcher and participants.

4.3 ORAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The second instrument designed for this study was a combination stimulated recall via the reading aloud of short, simple Chinese sentences and a semi-structured interview that followed directly after a read aloud task. The purpose of this instrument was to gather qualitative data from Chinese language learners concerning the strategies that they report employing in learning Chinese tones. There were 8 Chinese sentences that the reader/interviewee was asked to read out-loud, then a list of 10 questions that the interviewer would pose to the reader in a semi-structured fashion following the read aloud task. The elicitation of spoken Chinese was designed to allow participants to have a Chinese language experience that they could reflect upon in the interview questions. Questions were deliberately designed and posed to allow free response in reflecting on learning and producing Chinese tones, but not to guide or influence any response given.

4.4 PROCEDURE

The questionnaire was prepared online for the convenience of participants as well as this researcher in data collection. Participants were redirected to a demographic survey web page that required them to input the same demographic information that participants in the live interview phase were asked to fill out. Participants, after finishing the questionnaire, were thanked for their time and generosity. Each interview session lasted between 30-45 minutes, depending on amount of time needed to discuss each part, whether or not the participant had questions regarding the research, the speed in which they spoke, or the length of the interview.

5.0 FINDINGS

5.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Data collected from the questionnaire was entered into SPSS data analytics software and run through various statistical analyses. The internal consistency of the six constructs of Oxford's learner strategy taxonomy as represented by the adapted SILL questionnaire was analyzed through a Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis. These six constructs were used in this study's data analysis in order to investigate trends of high or low strategy use in questionnaire mean responses. For memory strategies (9 items) a Cronbach's alpha of .741 was recorded, for cognitive strategies (14 items), .708; for

compensation strategies (6 items), .356; for metacognitive strategies (9 items), .812; for affective strategies (6 items), .658; and for social strategies (6 items), .699. Compensation strategies perhaps suffered the lowest reliability score due to its low amount of items and because of the many adaptations made to the original statement script (see methodology section 3.4.1). In other critical studies of the SILL (see Park, 2011), the compensation strategy factor has failed to reach the .60 acceptable level of Cronbach alpha coefficients. Overall, the questionnaire performed well in its reliability analyses.

The responses given for the questionnaire were analyzed by calculating the mean response for each item (answered between 1, or ‘Never or almost never’ to 5, or ‘Always or almost always’ on a Likert-scale). The means of learning strategy use responses to questionnaire statements ranging from 1-5 were classified as reporting low usage (< 2.5), average usage (2.5-3.5), or high usage (> 3.5).

Out of all strategy items on the questionnaire (N=50), the overall mean usage by all participants (N=36) was reported at 2.96 (SD = 1.248), indicating that participants used the learning strategies represented by the questionnaire more than not. The lowest mean use of any individual strategy was reported as 1.17, with the highest reported at 4.58. (see table.1)

Table 1: Reported Strategy Frequency of Strategy Use

	ALL	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
Whole sample (N=36)	2.96	2.62	3.16	3.50	2.97	2.08	3.05

Strategies were reported as being used at an average rate by all participants, 28% of all statements being reported with low use, 48% reporting average use and 24% reporting high use (See table.2).

Table 2: Reported Frequency of Strategy use: Low-Average-High

Reported use	ALL	Memory	Cognitive	Compensation	Metacognitive	Affective	Social
N =	14	3	7	0	3	4	2
36	(28%)	3 (33%)	7 (50%)	0	3 (33%)	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
Low	24	6	5	4	3	1	3
Avg	(48%)	6 (67%)	5 (50%)	4 (67%)	3 (33%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)
High	12	0	5	2	3	1	1
	(24%)	0	5 (36%)	2 (33%)	3 (33%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)

The questionnaire data overall indicates that CFL learners do indeed utilize a variety of strategies to help their tone learning, though not to an overly high extent. Some strategies are used less or more often than others.

Across all participants, affective strategies were reported as being the least used, memory, cognitive, compensation and social strategies are most often averagely used, and cognitive skills being reported as used at a high rate.

As for particular strategies indicated by the questionnaire, the affective strategy, “I talk about learning Chinese tones on social networks or messenger programs with others” was the lowest scoring strategy ($m = 1.17$, $SD = .507$) reported. The memory strategy, “I remember the tones of words by remembering words that have the same tone in groups” ($m = 1.72$, $SD = 1.137$) and the affective strategy, “I give myself a reward or treat when I do well using Chinese tones” ($m = 1.72$, $SD = 1.186$) were also amongst the lowest reportedly used strategies within the questionnaire.

The cognitive strategy, “I try to speak the tones of Chinese like native speakers of the language” ($m = 4.58$, $SD = .732$) and communicative strategy, “I will make guesses for the tones if I cannot remember the right ones in Chinese” ($m = 4.58$, $SD = .604$) were the most used strategies out of all the items on the questionnaire.

5.2 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

5.2.1 ORAL INTERVIEW

This researcher and a qualified inter-rater (native English speaker with Chinese learning background) both read through the interview transcriptions separately to identify strategies reported or discussed by interviewees in the interview transcriptions. The researcher and inter-rater then compared categorizations and resolved any discrepancies in strategy identification and then subsequent categorization using Oxford’s (1990) LLS category taxonomy. 133 instances of TLS elicited through interviews were identified, while two strategies were discarded from the final tally due to inter-rater discordance (98.5% agreeability) as to whether or not they qualified as a strategy. Qualifying strategies were defined as being any technique that a learner could use to help them better learn the Chinese tones. Of the 133 instances of TLS elicited, a final total of 42 strategy groupings were created for the TLS reported in interviews.

Of the TLS reported in the interview data, the most frequently reported TLS included rote and repetition strategies (10), reading aloud with vocabulary study (7), miming native speakers (6), listening to and repeating audio materials (5), flashcards (4), making routines with materials (4), and using a dictionary (4).

The 42 strategy groupings that emerged were analyzed with a bottom-up approach in attempts to cluster together alike strategy groupings to generate themes represented by all or most of the learning strategies discussed in the interviews. The 42 unique Chinese tone-learning strategies were arranged thematically into categories in which similar strategies fit. All strategies listed by interviewees fit into one of the 7 thematic categories generated (see table.3).

Table 3: Thematic categories generated from interviews

Thematic Categories	# of instances
Rote / Repetition reliance	30
Association reliance	26
Speaking / Conversation reliance	25
Awareness / Listening reliance	25

Correction / Mistakes reliance	14
Analytical reliance	9
Avoidance reliance	4
TOTAL	133

These seven thematic categories were developed in an attempt to better describe TLS as a phenomenon separate from but not autonomous from language-wide LLS taxonomies, such as Oxford's six categories.

5.2.2. INTERVIEW PATTERNS

There emerged certain trends and patterns of thought amongst the interviewees concerning the learning of Chinese tones and their importance to speaking Chinese language. Though the questions posed to interviewees were originally designed to elicit learning strategies in Chinese tone learning, many of the nine questions that appeared in the semi-structured interview script were responded to in a fashion that elicited some patterns of participants' feelings and beliefs. Some patterns are described below and accompanied by examples of quotes taken from interview transcriptions. Other patterns emerged, but cannot be included here due to space restrictions and scope.

Question 1 (Q1) asked, "When you were speaking those sentences, were you concerned with speaking the tones correctly? Why/Why not?" Two camps of thought emerged from the 14 participants. Either participants were concerned with saying the tones of words accurately (P1, P2, P4, P6, P10, P11, P13, P14), or not (P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, P12). Reasons for concern ranged from belief that the exercise of reading Chinese out loud for the interview was focused around them saying the tones accurately or because the tones are a concrete part of the language. Reasons for lack of concern in saying tones accurately involved the difficulty in remembering, the belief that speed was more important than accuracy in being understood, that saying tones had become merely automatic, and even that natives don't need tones to understand Chinese language.

"... Tones are important! ... if you don't say them right then you're not speaking the language in the native way." (P10)

"...I learned that if you say it fast enough some people won't notice if you mess up on the tones... I feel the tones are the hardest part to remember of Chinese." (P3)

Q2 asked, "Was it difficult to remember the tones of the words correctly? Why/why not?" Participants again seemed to filter into two separate camps. Either participants thought tones were very easy, or automatic, to remember (P1, P2, P6, P9, P10, P12, P13), or that tones are indeed very difficult to remember accurately (P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P11, P14). Those who decided tones were easier or more automatic to remember noted that tones were very difficult to remember when they were beginners, but now that they have been learning for an extended amount of time, tones came more easily. Those who found tones difficult to remember associated this with lack of studying, that pronunciation was easier, that pitch of a whole sentence was easier than the individual tones of words, and that without pinyin, tones were impossible to memorize for recall.

“...I can always remember the sound, but the tone is the thing that I can never [remember]...” (P3)

“I would say [learning Chinese] started out to be very difficult and it gets easier with time... and now it’s much easier to remember tones.” (P6)

Q4 asked, “In your opinion, are the tones in Chinese important to say correctly? Why?” Most participants responded that they did believe tones were important to say accurately in some way, but also added a series of caveats to their endorsements. Those who believed that tones were extremely important to say accurately (P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P10, P14) stated that this was because mispronunciation of tones will lead to miscommunication (P1, P2, P4, P6, P8, P14) or that you may not be taken seriously when speaking to natives (P10). Others believed that accurate tones were somewhat important, but not completely so (P3, P5, P7, P9, P12, P13). This was due to the belief that everyday conversation did not require tone accuracy, though formal situations would, that if you can speak quickly you will be better understood than if you speak slowly and accurately, that situational context is more important than accurate tones in a conversation, or that it was only important in the beginning stages of learning Chinese language.

“... I mean, you’re just not taken seriously if you can’t say the tones properly.” (P10)

“Because if you say [the tones] incorrectly you could be saying something totally rude!... and people won’t understand what you’re saying.” (P14)

Q9 asked, “Do you think you have trouble producing the Chinese tones because of your English first-language background? Why/Why not?” Participants responded mainly in the affirmative, believing that their first language did have an influence on some part of their Chinese tone speaking ability (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P13, P14). The spheres of influence native English was believed to have on Chinese language production involved unfamiliarity with tonal language systems, influence on pitch and speech patterns, influence on grammar and pronunciation, and difficulty understanding characters in a holistic sense. Those who did not believe English had an impact on their Chinese language ability (P3, P9, P12), believed that learning any new language will present unique problems regardless of your native language, that after studying a language long enough your native language will no longer influence it, or due to not wanting to speculate an answer.

“...there’s definitely still interference from English to Chinese with respect to the fact that when you speak in English you’re putting tones not on individual words but on parts of the sentence and you still want to do that when you are speaking Chinese... I still want to do that when I’m speaking Chinese.” (P6)

“I think that just your Native language will always influence the way you pronounce words [in another language]” (P14)

Some other patterns also emerged throughout the interview transcription data that were not specifically tied to any questions, but rather were discussed in a variety of contexts, but held common themes. These themes included, but were not restricted to:

Speaking the tones has become an automatic process for the learner in which they no longer need to think explicitly about the tone of a word to say it accurately (P7, P9, P12, P13),

Learner does not focus on tone learning or believes they can be understood without saying tones accurately (P3, P4, P5, P8, P9, P12).

Learner believes that having musical skills or some understanding of musicality will facilitate better learning and use of Chinese tones (P2, P8, P12).

Several patterns of thought found in the interview data reflected beliefs in the importance of tones or using tones accurately in Chinese speaking to be understood, or in what may be important in learning and subsequently using Chinese tones in an effective way. These beliefs do not necessarily describe TLS directly, but are important in gathering a better understanding of the CFL learner's disposition as a tone learner, and can have an impact on the way they learn or strategies they may chose to employ in learning.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 When studying CFL, what LLS are employed by adult English L1 learners to remember how to produce accurate lexical intonation?

This study has shown that some TLS used by CFLL are used more often than others. Of the final TLS groupings from the interview data, speaking conversationally with native speakers, using rote or repetitive practice, miming native speaker speech, speaking words out loud while reading or writing, and learning from making mistakes count as the most frequently reported TLS from participants of this study.

The most used instances of strategies were the cognitive strategy, "I try to speak the tones of Chinese like native speakers of the language" and the communicative strategy, "I will make guesses for the tones if I cannot remember the right ones in Chinese" according to the questionnaire. Both of these strategies were reflected within the strategies reported in the oral interviews, reflected in the 'Social' and 'Avoidance' thematic categorizations.

This study attempted provide a description of each common strategy grouping, then adhere that strategy to a taxonomic categorization and finally attempting to produce certain thematic categorizations of those strategies to better describe TLS reported through various data collection instruments. Where Hu (2005) identified a final 47 TLS in her study, and Shen (2005) a final 30, this study identified a final 42 from interview data.

6.2 According to categorical taxonomies of LLS that have already appeared in LLS literature, what kinds of strategies to adult CFL learners employ to better learn Chinese tones?

Oxford's (1990) taxonomic categorization of LLS guided this study in investigating whether or not TLS also follow this description of strategies employed by CFL learners (section 4.5). It was found that across most of the instruments' data results,

participants of this study reported memory and cognitive strategy types most commonly, with social strategies trailing closely behind. Affective strategies were reported the least amongst participants.

The more common use of memory and cognitive strategies also reflects the commonly reported use of association techniques reported in learning Chinese tones in this study. Many of the interviewees utilized techniques that allowed them to associate Chinese tone with a separate keyword, context, event, person or even gesture. These are, according to Oxford (1990), memory strategies to help language learners better remember a language item through some kind of association. These techniques were popular with CFL learners in this study, perhaps due to tones being a somewhat unmapped, or non-obvious component of Chinese words.

Cognitive strategies were mostly characterized through repetitive or rote techniques used by participants to help them remember accurate tones of Chinese words. This kind of behavior corresponds to vocabulary learning strategies seen in the literature (for example, Gu and Johnson, 1996), which would subsequently liken the learning of Chinese tones to the learning of vocabulary. Chinese tones are one component of Chinese vocabulary items, so this concept could very well hold some truth.

The very little use of affective strategies could have possibly been caused by the nature of Chinese tone learning. As tones are a difficult part of Chinese language to master, it is possible that rather than learners attempting to regulate their confidence and feelings of frustration in their tone learning, they resort to ambiguity of the importance in learning and using tones accurately.

Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of LLS is not of a perfect design, as each category of strategies is not autonomous from the others, and certain instances of LLS could be sorted into several groups depending on the way it is used and for what end. That said, TLS may not fit well into Oxford's taxonomy due to the specificity of the target to be better learnt: Chinese tones. Just as there are more specific strategies that appear more often in certain language learning contexts (e.g., vocabulary learning strategies, Chinese character learning strategies), perhaps TLS should also have their own unique scheme built to describe them. The findings of this study offer a foundation to begin such a scheme in that it has both listed strategies used in Chinese tone learning, and explored themes and patterns found therein.

6.3 Are any themes or patterns observed across the entire participant sample in terms of LLS reported?

During the qualitative data analysis phase of this research project, themes and patterns began to emerge from the responses given in the interview transcriptions. These themes or categorizations were developed in a bottom-up fashion after frequencies of unique Chinese tone learning strategies had been determined. The themes were designed to include all strategies reported. These thematic categorizations were not, however, meant to be taxonomic representations for all learning strategies, nor even all Chinese tone learning strategies, but rather a working categorization system meant to describe better the strategies found in this study and subsequently allow for further analysis across groups of strategies, rather than individual instances of strategies only.

The themes presented by the categorical groupings of TLS instances reported reflected results from data collected in all parts of this study. For example, the memory/association strategy themes revealed from the questionnaire open-ended question data and interview data are probably connected to the comparatively high numbers of 'memory strategies' (second largest) reported in this study, as described by Oxford's LLS taxonomy. Similarly, the 'repetition reliance/practice' thematic categories that arose from open-ended question and interview data is most likely linked to the comparatively high number of 'cognitive strategies' (first largest) found in the questionnaire, open-ended question, interview and learning journal data. This triangulation of similar strategies or patterns observed in separate instruments' data analysis and results could bolster the validity of each of those findings in this study.

The most striking theme regarded in the oral interviews was perhaps that many CFL learners did not find executing accurate tones in Chinese was important to being understood by others. Although the tones of Chinese are an integral component to both learning and utilizing Chinese language effectively, they remain a topic that about half of the interview participants in this study believed to be unnecessary to focus on in learning. This may be related to the way that these different learners were taught CFL, and the amount of emphasis their instructor put on this learning. If so, this would be relevant pedagogic information for CFL teachers, as their emphasis or focus on certain aspects of Chinese language study would have some effect on the learning locus of their students.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This project was able to uncover interesting data describing the most frequently used Chinese tone learning strategies by Chinese foreign language learners across the entire sample. It also was able to expose a host of thematic patterns that developed throughout the Chinese learning strategy data, describing better some attitudinal patterns in Chinese foreign language learners concerning the tones of Chinese.

The most frequently used Chinese tone learning strategies across all participants found in this study include using repetition out loud, written, or internally, interacting with native speakers conversationally, asking questions, or by mimicking their speech, using flashcards, and by learning from mistakes.

Themes that reoccur throughout the data sets include the use of repetition strategies in learning Chinese tones, having interaction with native speakers, associating accurate tones with a kind of context to help remember, and to self-correct or get your mistakes corrected so one can learn the accurate tones better.

Across all participants in the questionnaire and interview datum, memory and cognitive strategies were the most used out of Oxford's six LLS categories for Chinese tone learning specifically. Social strategies were also used often across all groups, but not as much as memory or cognitive strategies. Affective strategies were used least across all groups in all data collection instruments administered. Participants who spent a limited amount of time in China reported higher usages of memory strategies than did those who spent a significant or extended amount of time in China.

The findings in this study offer the field of learning strategies in CFL tone learning a foundation to build upon for further study into tone learning strategies. Such research would surely lead to pedagogic implications with which to help guide individual and classroom learning for CFL students.

8.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As more LLS are investigated in the Chinese Tone Learning context it begs the question; will LLS categorizations also hold true for specifically Chinese TLS? Are strategies used in Chinese tone learning isolated from more holistic LLS, or is there substantial enough amounts of interaction between individual aspects of language learning and language learning en masse to not require a distinction? Further research would need to be carried out to address these questions with more focus.

Some of the strategies reported by CFL learners in tone learning are more popular than others, whereas other are used quite seldom. However, the scope of this study did not allow for the investigation into the effectiveness of these more popular and less popular strategies upon Chinese tone learning. Are the most used strategies more effective in learning Chinese tones? Are the least used strategies less effective in learning Chinese tones? Which strategies are the most effective? Which are the least? These questions would need to be addressed in another phase of research, possibly stemming from the results discussed in this study.

iafor

9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, J. R. (1993). *Rules of the mind*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ao, Q. (1999). A descriptive study of teachers' error correction of Chinese tones during Chinese as a foreign language instruction: a sociocultural perspective. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh.
- Baddeley, A. D. and Hitch, G. (1974). Working memory. In G. Bower (Ed.), *The psychology of learning and motivation* (pp. 47–90). New York: Academic Press.
- Bialystock, E. (1980). On the relationship between formal proficiency and strategic ability. Paper presented at the annual meeting of TESOL, San Francisco, Calif, March 1980.
- Birdsong, D. (Ed.) (1999). *Second Language Acquisition and the Critical Period Hypothesis*. New Jersey/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Catford, J. C. (1988). *A Practical Introduction to Phonetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Chao, Y., R. (1968). *Language and Symbolic Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, Y. F. (1995). *Language learning strategies used by beginning students of Chinese in a semi-immersion setting* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.
- Cheng, C. (1971). A synchronic phonology of Mandarin Chinese. *Project on Linguistic Analysis, University of California, Berkeley* 14, pp. 1-105
- Chiang, M., (2002). An investigation of students' perspective on Chinese language learning. *Journal of Chinese Teachers Association* 37, 1, pp.47-62.
- Cohen, A., D. (1987). Studying learner strategies: how we get the information. In Wenden, A. & Rubin, J. (eds) *Learning Strategies in Language Learning*, Prentice-Hall International, UK, Ltd.
- Cohen, A., D. (1998). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language*. London: Longman.
- Cohen, A., D. & Macaro, E. (Eds) (2007) *Language Learner strategies: Thirty years of research and practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, V. (1993). *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. London: Macmillan.
- De Larios, J. C., Murphy, L., and Manchon, R. (1999). The use of restructuring strategies in EFL writing: A study of Spanish learners of English as a foreign language. *Journal of Second Language Writing*. 8, pp.13-44.
- Ethnologue. Data available from <<http://www.ethnologue.com>> [Accessed 1st June 2013]
- Foddy, W. (1993). *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and practice in social research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foreign Service Institute, USA. Data available from <<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/>> [Accessed 1st June 2013].
- Francis, A.L., Ciccoa, V., Ma, L, Fenn, K.M. (2008). Perceptual learning of Cantonese lexical tones by tone and non-tone language speakers. *Journal of Phonetics*, 36(2), pp.268–294.
- Graham, S. (1997). *Effective language learning*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Grainger, P.R. (1997). Language-Learning Strategies for Learners of Japanese: Investigating Ethnicity. *Foreign Language Annals* 30(3), pp. 378-385.
- Gu, Y. and Johnson, R., K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language Learning*, 46, pp.643-679.
- Guo, L. & Tao, L., (2008). Tone Production in Mandarin Chinese By American Students: A Case Study. *Proceedings of the 20th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-20)*, 1, pp.123–138.

- Gui, M., (2000). Meiguoyingyu yudiao dui meiguo xuesheng xuexi hanyu shengdiao de ganrao. *Shijie hanyu Jiaoxue*, 51, 89-93 [The interference of American English intonation. *The World Chinese Teaching*, 51, 89-93.]
- HESA. Data available from <www.hesa.ac.uk> [Accessed 1st June 2013]}
- Hu, B. (2005). Chinese tone learning strategies and tone competence: an exploratory study. (Unpublished MSc Dissertation). University of Oxford.
- Hu, B., (2010). The challenges of Chinese: a preliminary study of UK learners' perceptions of difficulty. *Language Learning Journal*, 38(1), pp.99–118.
- Hui, A.N. (2011). Language Learning Strategy of Hong Kong Putonghua Learners. *Educational Research Journal*, 26(1), pp.17–39.
- Huang, J. (2000). Students' major difficulties in learning Mandarin Chinese as an additional language and their coping strategies. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No: ED pp. 440 – 537.
- Hui, A.N., (2011). Language Learning Strategy of Hong Kong Putonghua Learners. *Educational Research Journal*, 26(1), pp.17–39.
- Katamba, F. (1989). *An Introduction to Phonology*. London: Longman.
- Kinsella, K. (1995). Understanding and empowering diverse learners. In: Reid, J.M. (Ed.), *Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL Classroom*. Heinle, Boston, Mass, pp. 170-194.
- Koda, K. (1990). The Use of L1 Reading Strategies in L2 Reading. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 12(04), pp.393–410.
- Levine, A., Reves, T., and Leaver, B.L. (1996). Relationship between language learning strategies and Israeli versus Russian cultural-educational factors. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross cultural perspectives* (Tech. Rep. No. 13, pp.157-166). Honolulu: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawai'i.
- Li, N., C. and Thompson, S. A. (1977). The acquisition of tone in Mandarin – speaking children. *Journal of Child Language*, 4, 185 – 199.
- Li, N., C. and Thompson, A., S. (1978). The acquisition of tone. In Fromkin, A., V. (ed) *Tone: a linguistics survey*. London: Academic Press.
- Li, N., C. and Thompson, A., S. (1989). *Mandarin Chinese: a functional references grammar*. London: University of California Press.
- Macaro, E. (2001) *Learning Strategies in second and foreign language classrooms*. London: Continuum. Pp.282
- Macaro, E. (2003). *Learning Strategies in Foreign and Second Language Classrooms*. London: Continuum. Pp.284
- Macaro, E. (2006). Strategies for Language Learning and for Language Use: Revising the Theoretical Framework. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(3), pp.320–337.
- Macaro, E. (2007). Do near-beginner learners of French have any writing strategies? *Language Learning Journal*, 35(1), pp.23–35.
- McGinnis, S., (1999). Students goals and approaches. In *Mapping the Course of the Chinese Language Field*, ed. M. Chu, 151–68. Chinese Language Teachers Association Monograph Series Volume III. Kalamazoo, MI: Chinese Language Teachers Association
- Miracle, C. W. (1989). Tone production of American students of Chinese. *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 24, pp.49 – 56.
- Mitchell, R., and Myles, F. (1998). *Second language learning theories*. London: Arnold.
- Mullins, P.Y. (1992). *Successful English Language Learning Strategies of students Enrolled at the Faculty of Arts*. Unpublished Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, United States International University.

- Ohala, J.J., (1972). The physiology of tone. In: Hyman, L.M. (Ed.), *Consonant Types and Tone*. Southern California Occasional Papers in Linguistics 1, pp. 1–14.
- O'Malley, J. M. and Chamot, A., U. (1990). *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, L.R. (1986-present). *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*. Various versions. Tuscaloosa, AL: Oxford Associates.
- Oxford, L.R. (1986). Development and psychometric testing of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). ARI Technical Report 728. Alexandria, VA; Army Research Institute. Appendices as ARI Research Note, pp.86 – 92.
- Oxford, L.R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategy: what every teacher should know*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Oxford, L.R. and Burry – stock, A., J., (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the strategy inventory for language learning (SILL). *System*, 23, 1, 1 – 33.
- Oxford L.R. & Erhman, M.E. (1995) Adults' language learning strategies in an intensive foreign language program in the United States. *System*, 23, pp. 359-386.
- Oxford, R.L. & Nyikos, M. (1989). Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73/3, pp.291-300.
- Oxford, R. L. & Schramm, K. (2007) Bridging the gap between psychological and sociocultural perspectives on L2 learner strategies. In Cohen, A. D. and Macaro, E. (eds) (2007) *Language Learner Strategies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Park, G.-P. (1997). Language Learning Strategies and English Proficiency in Korean University Students. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30(2), pp.211-221.
- Park, G.-P. (2011). The Validation Process of the SILL: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis. *English Language Teaching*, 4(4), pp. 21–27.
- Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2013), published by British Education Research Association.
- Ross, C., (2001). Evaluating intermediate Chinese textbooks. *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 36, 1-22.
- Samimy, K.K., and Y. Lee. (1997). Beliefs about language learning: perspectives of first-year Chinese learners and their instructors. *Journal of Chinese Teachers Association*, 32, 1, pp. 40–60.
- Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Seliger, H.W. (1983). Learner interaction in the classroom and its effect on language acquisition. In H.W. Seliger & M.H. Long (Eds.). *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. pp. 89-107.
- Shen, S., X. (1989). Toward a register approach in teaching Mandarin tones. *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 24, 3, 27 – 47.
- Shen, H.H., (2005). An investigation of Chinese-character learning strategies among non-native speakers of chinese. *System*, 33(1), pp.49–68.
- Sung, K.-Y., (2011). Factors influencing Chinese language learners' strategy use. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 8(2), pp.117–134.
- Takeuchi, O. (1993) Language learning strategies and their relationship to achievement in English as a foreign language. *Language Laboratory*, 30(1993), pp. 17-34
- Tseng, W.-T., Dörnyei, Z. & Schmitt, N. (2006). A New Approach to Assessing Strategic Learning: The Case of Self-Regulation in Vocabulary Acquisition. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), pp. 78–102.

- Van Hell, J.G. and Mahn, C.A. (1997). Keyword mnemonics versus rote rehearsal: Learning concrete and abstract foreign words by experience and inexperienced learners. *Language Learning*, 47, pp. 507-546
- Wan, I.-P., (2007). On the phonological organization of Mandarin tones. *Lingua*, 117(10), pp.1715–1738.
- Wang, Y., Spence, M., Jongman, A., Sereno, J., (1999). Training American listeners to perceive Mandarin tones. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 106(6), pp.3649–58.
- Wang, Y., Jongman, a and Sereno, J., (2001). Dichotic perception of Mandarin tones by Chinese and American listeners. *Brain and language*, 78(3), pp.332–48.
- Wayland, R. & Guion, S., (2004). Training English and Chinese listeners to perceive Thai tones: A preliminary report. *Language Learning*, (December), pp.681–712.
- Wenden, A. (1987) Metacognition: an expanded view of the cognitive abilities of L2 learners. *Language Learning*. 37/4), pp. 573-597
- Weinstein, C. and Mayer, R. (1986). The teaching of learning strategies. In M. Wittrock (ed) *Handbook for Research on Teaching*, New York: Macmillan.
- White, C., M. (1981). Tonal pronunciation errors and interference from English intonation. *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association*, 16, 27 – 56.
- Willing, K. (1994). *Learning Strategies in Adult Migrant Education*. National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Sydney.
- Wong, L.L.C. & Nunan, D. (2011). The learning styles and strategies of effective language learners. *System*, 39, pp. 144–163.
- Woo, N. (1969). *Prosody and phonology*. M.I.T. Ph.D. Dissertation. Available from Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Yin, J. H. (2003). Survey of American university students' memory strategy use of Chinese characters. *Journal of the Chinese Language Teacher Association*, 38, pp. 69-90.

Exploring Online Newspapers to Improve Law Undergraduates' Ability to Express Opinions Critically

Faridah Musa, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Sithalechmy Krishnaiyer, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Maryam Mohamed Amin, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Wee Siok Eng, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia
Nuretna Asurah Ahmad, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0320

Abstract

A growing problem identified in a study among law undergraduates in a public university is the lack of critical reading and writing skills. An innovative measure was taken to improve the critical writing ability of first year law undergraduates through the use of online newspapers as a springboard to read and comprehend legal issues that would lead into an opinion writing task. An action research was conducted to identify the effectiveness of reading online newspapers to improve opinion writing on legal issues. This paper focuses on the respondents' awareness of reading current legal issues in online newspapers. It also presents the problems faced in reading current legal issues from online newspapers. A Likert-scale and an online open-ended questionnaire were administered to nine first year law undergraduates. The results show that while most of the respondents seem to have not quite acquired the ability to express opinions critically, they are, however, aware that online newspapers are a good source of opinions on legal issues. Thus, this paper makes further recommendations on using online newspapers effectively to improve the critical writing ability of law undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

Law is language and words are the essential tools of the legal profession. In fact, 'Legal English may well be the most challenging of all occupational varieties of English for outsiders to comprehend (Belcher, 2009). Success in law, therefore, demands that legal professionals possess a combination of high competency of both plain and legal language for accuracy and precision in speaking, reading and writing. However, the findings of a survey by the Malaysian Bar Council reported that "new entrants to the legal profession do not have basic attributes like English proficiency, communication and critical thinking skills and commitment to the profession, which is vital for the career". The survey responses also indicated that lawyers with foreign law degrees generally fare better in these areas than those with local qualifications, except where "commitment to firm" is concerned. (Cheng, Nicholas, 2012).

The challenge to produce more competent lawyers is even greater as not only is legal English complex and perplexing but most law students do not even possess mastery of general English. "Legal English, with its inherent complexity, in lexis and syntax (Tiesma 2000; Bhatia 1993; Gibbons, 1990 among others) for instance, has remained a challenge to lay persons especially those with a lack of competence in English (Ibrahim, 1998) and unfortunately, this is the case of many of the law undergraduates in UKM (Ibrahim, 1998; 2001, 2011).

The need for law students to be proficient in English is evident even in the early years of their legal training when they are expected to participate actively in various academic based activities such as tutorials, mooting sessions, client counselling and negotiation. All these are part of the rigorous training law undergraduates go through to better prepare them for the workplace which includes the ability to read critically, speak clearly and argue convincingly.

However, the current scenario at the university shows a disconcerting gap between the demands of the legal training and the capabilities of law students. Ibrahim, et al, (2011) highlighted this problem and revealed that "while the lack of competence in English is a problem, the Law Faculty has also identified a growing problem among its undergraduates, which is the lack of critical reading and writing in their tasks". Therefore, in an effort to improve the critical thinking skills of first year law undergraduates, the English for Law course introduced two components, namely 'Focus Group Discussion' and 'Opinion Writing' which entailed extensive reading and exploring current legal issues from online newspapers. The online newspapers will serve as a springboard to trigger respondents' thought processes in discussions which would lead into an opinion writing activity.

This study aims to find out the usefulness of using online newspapers as a tool to enable law students to critically express opinions on current legal issues in writing.

Research Objectives:

To gauge respondents' awareness on the importance of reading current legal issues in online newspapers.

To investigate the usefulness of reading online newspapers to improve opinion writing on legal issues.

To identify the problems faced in reading current legal issues in online newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of expressing opinions for law students

A law student should have the ability to express opinions critically. Formulating opinions well both orally and in writing is one of the basic skills an aspiring lawyer should possess and the ability to read and write critically forms an integral part of a law student's repertoire. Opinion writing is "...an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences...such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create ..." (<https://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/english.../writing/.../text-types-and-purpose/>). In fact, good legal writing should be clear, concise, logically consistent and coherent with the whole body of law (Faruqi, 2012, pg 36).

However, in the legal profession, opinion writing is highly important and its significance cannot be underestimated. In fact, 'judicial opinion writing is public writing of the highest order; people are affected not only by judicial writing but also how they are written' (Lebovitts, 2008). He further reiterates that an 'opinion's quality is determined by tone, organization, style method and reasoning and judicial opinions and it is crucial that the content of judicial opinions meet high ethical standards' by ensuring accuracy and honesty in research, facts and analysis. He further adds that the criteria of good legal writing, among others such as good grammar and spelling, is conciseness, clarity, precision and organisation.

Therefore, getting law students to engage in opinion writing is a good way to introduce them to good writing practices and prepare them for the more complex and demanding task of formulating sound arguments based on logical reasoning and analysis. In fact, the Faculty of Law in this university is "the pioneer in combining traditional teaching methods with Problem-Based Learning, which focuses on self-directed learning and the development of active inquiry and critical reasoning skills, even from the first year. Students carry out projects which are based on real life problem" (Bidin, 2014).

Equipping law graduates with transferable skills

The need to produce legal graduates with readily transferable skills has been recognised at an international level, both in the United States and in England (Christensen & Kift, 2000). It is important, therefore, that the law graduates be equipped with the appropriate skills to enable a smooth transition from the academic world into the workplace. However, evidence from the United States and Canada show that professional education in law schools has failed to develop in practitioners the competencies required for the practice of law. This is also true in the Malaysian scenario where recent reports of graduates being deficient in soft skills have become a source of great concern to the government. "Among the reasons cited for the unemployment was the lack of language proficiency particularly in English." (Ji, Yu, 2013). Apart from other soft skills, a graduate is also expected to be proficient in English (Ismail, 2011).

Specifically, in the legal profession, the findings of an employability survey conducted by the Malaysian Bar Council showed that "there is divergence between

the expectations and requirements of employers, and the attributes and skill sets of some of the new entrants to the Bar" (Leong, 2012). Two of the four skill sets referred to were proficiency in spoken and written English and communication skills. Thus, it cannot be denied that the ability to articulate well takes the new graduate one step further in his quest to land a promising career and enhances his professional image.

Two of the many other fundamental lawyering skills recommended in the MacCrate Report are legal analysis and reasoning and communication. (<http://www.uchastings.edu/career-office/docs/overviewoflawyering.pdf>). In a research report, Employer Satisfaction with Graduate Skills, graduates were found to be deficient in the area of communication skills as cited in Christensen & Kift, 2000. In a pilot study conducted to study employers' perspectives by the Sydney Law School, skills such as arguing positions orally and in writing, and writing legal advice were rated as important by large and smaller law firms and government agencies and the "current wisdom is that law students should be taught skills" (Peden & Joellen, 2005).

Studies have shown the extent to which being able to communicate well orally and in writing are much sought after skills in the workplace today especially among law undergraduates. Effective communicative ability is one of the top key competencies sought by industry in the twenty-first century workplace (Ranjit & Wahab, 2009). Thus, teaching opinion writing to first year law students in their first semester is an initial and small, but significant step to introducing them to the all important writing skills.

The use of online newspaper to teach opinion writing

Newspapers have long been used as both a teaching and learning tool in the language classroom and constitute a rich resource for teaching reading skills, improving vocabulary, and developing writing and speaking skills (Brown, 1999). The accessibility of the Internet has now added a new, exciting dimension to using newspapers in the classroom: the online newspaper. Online newspaper builds on the technological advances we have to create rich multimedia content that can be accessed across a range of devices (Galligan, 2012). The benefits of the online newspaper over the conventional newspapers includes the fact that it is free, synchronously available, easily retrievable from the archives, being easily accessible on all technical gadgets such as smart phones and i-pads. Additionally, the possibility to print it out and use it as normal paper or save it to disk, open it in a word processing program and edit for one's own purposes is another advantage (Krajka, 2000).

Furthermore, online newspapers constantly update readers on a myriad of current issues and contain editorials, feature articles either from guest writers or resident columnists as well as the 'Letters to the Editor' section. Furthermore, articles students use in their analyses can be found in many different online newspapers such as The Malay Mail and The New Straits Times; thereby providing them with different perspectives. Hence, they learn to read deeply, question, engage in divergent thinking, and grapple with real life issues before producing their own critical opinion

writing piece. Students learn to construct their own arguments in their writing and in the process become more discriminating critical thinkers and writers.

Shad Saleem Faruqi, an eminent law professor and expert in Constitutional Law further reiterates that law students should seek constantly to improve their command of the language by reading law books, journals and newspapers (Faruqi, 2012). Indeed, online newspapers create an atmosphere which exposes law undergraduates to current socio-legal issues that are constantly updated by the millisecond, presenting them with a multitude of differing accounts of real life, and authentic critical opinion writing (Cottrell, 2011; Galligan, 2012).

METHOD

The respondents in this study were nine first year undergraduates from the Faculty of Law who were taking 'English for Law', a course offered by the Centre for General Studies. They had attained a band of 3 and 4 in the Malaysian University Entrance Test (MUET). This signifies that they are modest to competent users of the English Language.

Two instruments were used in this study. The first was a 4-level Likert scale questionnaire comprising 18 statements (referred as 'S') on the use and effectiveness of online newspapers. The second instrument was an online questionnaire using Google docs which comprised eight 'open-ended' questions. The latter was administered after respondents had completed the post-intervention writing task and the Likert questionnaire. The purpose of the open-ended online questionnaire was to elicit more information on the effectiveness and problems of using online newspapers to improve ability in expressing opinions critically. All responses from the online questionnaire are unedited and they are written as 'R' with a number, to indicate the respondent.

FINDINGS

The following are the findings based on the responses from the Likert and open-ended questionnaire:

i. Benefits of Using Online newspapers

No	Statement	SDA	DA	SA	A
1.	The online newspaper enables me to read the news more quickly.	2	0	5	2
2.	The online newspaper is easy to use.	1	1	2	5
3.	It is easy to locate the different sections in the online newspaper.	1	2	1	5
4.	It is easy to navigate around the online newspaper.	1	1	5	2
5.	It is more interesting to read about current issues in the online newspaper.	0	1	5	3
6.	The online newspaper is a good source of opinions on legal issues.	1	1	3	4
7.	The online newspaper helps me to understand legal	1	3	4	1

	issues better.				
--	----------------	--	--	--	--

Generally, the respondents agree that online newspapers are indeed beneficial and useful since news items can be read more quickly and also online versions are easier and more convenient to use when compared to printed versions (S1-3). The following are some responses on this aspect from the open-ended questionnaire:

“fast, easy access, current’ (R7)

“easier, practical and free” (R5)

“online newspapers save my time,...no need to bring newspaper everywhere we go.” (R1)

The above results show that most of the respondents do not face problems when using the online newspaper. This indicates that they are familiar with online newspapers and use online materials often as they find it easy and fast to get information. This is not surprising as the respondents are part of the technology-savvy and digitally connected generation, more commonly known as Generation-Y. As pointed out by the respondents, having smart phones and tablets assist them in accessing current issues online:

“everyone has a smart phone right now. We just need to bring the phone or ipad along and we can online to know the current issues.” (R1)

“students tend to be motivated....using technology namely smart phones and tablets..” (R7)

“the news is literally at our finger tips and to be precise, in our little gadget called handphone..” (R9)

Further, the respondents found it more interesting to read about current issues in the online newspaper. This could be attributed to the fact that most online newspapers update news items very often. In fact, The Star, a popular and reputable local newspaper, states on its website that news is “updated every five minutes”. As one respondent noted,

“...latest information can be obtained easily because sometimes the printed versions print out the news late.” (R8)

Most of the respondents agreed that the online newspaper is a good source of opinions on legal issues and that the online newspaper helped them in understanding legal issues better as it is a good medium to do so (S 6&7).

As one respondent stated:

“mostly when people did not satisfied about the law, they will write it and post it to the newspapers.....any decided cases also been stated in the newspaper to inform the people. So, by reading newspapers, we can be more alert about our legal system through a wide perspective. Furthermore, most newspapers also have their own column for people to express their opinion about any current issues, especially legal issues.”(R8)

However, this is not always true as opinions from the general public may not necessarily be ‘expert’ opinions for the reason that they may not be well-versed in the legal field. This can be seen in the following statement from a respondent:

“.....because as they are online sources, we cannot trust them fully and still have to read from books which are more trustable sources.”(R3)

The above indicates that some respondents have the ability to be discerning and selective when reading. They do consider the credibility of the writers, reliability of the source and are consciously aware of reading ‘between the lines’ and making inferences.

ii. Awareness of the Importance of Expressing Opinions

No	Statement	SDA	DA	SA	A
8.	I am more aware of words/phrases used to express opinions.	1	2	4	2
9.	I am more aware of current socio-legal issues.	0	2	5	2
10.	I am more aware that the choice of words/phrases used by writers to convey the writers’ tone.	0	2	6	1
11.	I am more aware that the choice of words/phrases used by writers to convey the writers’ view.	0	2	6	1
12.	I realise the importance of being able to express my opinions well.	1	1	4	3
13.	I am aware of how to express opinions critically.	0	2	7	0
14.	I realise the importance of presenting my arguments well.	0	0	5	4

The findings in this study also revealed that respondents were more aware of words and phrases used to express opinions (S8) and current socio-legal issues (S9) after reading articles found specifically in the ‘Letters’, ‘Editorials’ and ‘Columnists’ sections of the newspapers. Newspapers contain articles offering opinions on different current issues, including social and legal, and reading these contribute to greater awareness. Incidentally, specific words and phrases used to convey tone and view were emphasised to the respondents during the intervention stage of the research (S 10 & 11) and this could have helped them to be more aware of the choice of words and phrases to convey arguments and opinions.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents realized the importance of being able to express their opinions well while seven respondents strongly agreed that they were more aware of how to express opinions critically (S12 &13). The above finding is supported by the following statements expressed in the online open-ended questionnaire:

“...for example, contract law is a solution solving subject which requires student to think critically and precisely to answer the question and this is where we could use writer’s opinion as our answer.” (R6)

“...we need to express our own opinion for a certain case.” (R1)

Moreover, all respondents generally agreed that they realize the importance of presenting their arguments well (S14). This is not surprising as one of the skills deemed important in the legal field is the ability to form sound arguments and present

them in an articulate and convincing manner. In the course of their studies, law students spend a considerable amount of time on reading cases and pick out contentions put forth by both sides of either a civil or criminal dispute. They are also expected to identify the ratio decidendi of a particular case. This can only be done well if the student is able to follow and analyse the judge's arguments and reasoning. Identifying good arguments with sound reasoning is the first step to being able to present one's own arguments well in court. Moreover, respondents participate in moot sessions and respond to essay type questions in their content courses where the ability to present arguments well is important.

iii. Ability to express opinions critically

No	Statement	SDA	DA	SA	A
15.	Reading the online newspaper helps enhance my critical thinking skills.	1	0	6	2
16.	I am able to use relevant words/phrases to express my views effectively.	0	5	4	0
17.	I am able to present my arguments well in writing.	0	4	5	0
18.	I am generally more confident in expressing opinions critically in writing.	0	4	4	1

With regard to the ability to express opinions critically, the majority of respondents strongly agreed that reading the online newspaper helps enhance their critical thinking skills (S15). This could be attributed to the fact that many articles found in newspapers give readers different perspectives on issues, especially those having legal implications. For instance, when amendments to the PCA (Prevention of Crime Act) was being deliberated on in the Malaysian Parliament, many articles appeared in various online newspapers offering readers differing views and arguments on this important issue. Thus, respondents felt that reading such articles enabled them to analyse issues critically.

As mentioned above, although all the respondents realised the importance of being able to present arguments well, not all seem to be able to translate this realisation into their writing. In fact, slightly more than half of the respondents disagreed that they were able to use relevant words and phrases to express their views effectively (S16). However, the remaining respondents strongly agreed as reported below:

“...I learnt to properly express opinion with the right words and proper manner.” (R3)

Only five respondents say they were able to present their arguments well in writing while 4 disagreed (S17). This could be because they felt that they need more practice and guidance on how to present arguments in writing. This then shows that merely reading the opinion sections in the online newspapers alone is insufficient to build confidence in opinion writing. Perhaps language and the mechanics of writing may be a problem for these respondents.

In response to whether respondents are generally more confident in expressing opinions critically in writing (S18), five respondents affirmed that they did. These responses are similar to those in an earlier statement (S17) probably because

respondents perceive that if they are able to present their arguments well in writing, then it means that they are generally more confident as well.

iv. Problems faced in reading current legal issues in online newspapers

Findings from the online open-ended questionnaire reveal that despite the respondents being technology savvy, there are still some who faced difficulty in using online newspapers probably due to several factors such as:

a. Lack of navigation skills and unfamiliarity with the interface

A few respondents lacked navigation skills and this resulted in difficulty in locating the different sections in online newspapers. This problem was aggravated by the fact that some of them were unfamiliar with the interface of the newspapers. As highlighted by the respondents:

“... I confuse to click which icon as every icon seemed like the same.” (R1)

“...sometimes it annoying when I have to scroll down and down...” (R8)

“I didn’t have the knowledge of it. So if I didn’t know how to go where to find the articles. I also had troubles to manage the website.” (R9)

b. Inability to select and distinguish socio-legal issues

This study also revealed that respondents were unable to find, select and distinguish articles which were relevant to their legal studies and those which dealt with current legal issues being debated in the country. This could be either because they were not aware of these issues due to a lack of general reading, to the existence of different online newspaper resources or the nature of the websites of online newspapers which sometimes can be overwhelming. Besides the numerous news (national, regional and international), there are myriad issues discussed daily. One respondent referred to this problem as “too much news until cannot choose the one suits for my legal studies.”(R5).

c. Poor connectivity

Internet connectivity is a major concern of campus students in this study, and some respondents also complained that some places on campus had unreliable internet connections. This connectivity problem inevitably affects access to online newspapers and their interest to read current news. As stated by a respondent:

“Not every place have wifi, so I only can use online newspapers depend the place”. (R1)

“...the internet in UKM sometimes a bit slow so on that moment I have to refer to the printed version. The disadvantage of using mobile phone, pc and tab is sometimes it is NOT RESPONDING which is really annoying” (R8)

CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that the online newspaper has opened new, promising possibilities for law students and EALP (English for Academic and Legal Purposes) teachers and could prove to be an invaluable tool in language teaching and learning in this millennium. The respondents, though a modest number, indicated greater

awareness of the benefits of using the electronic newspaper to improve their understanding of current socio-legal issues and enhance their critical reading and writing skills. The exposure to the online newspapers has stimulated their interest to read news and views on current socio-legal issues and although they have not quite acquired the ability to express opinions critically, the experience has enriched their language and drawn their attention to the crucial aspects of critical opinion writing.

This study also proposes that EALP teachers adopt a 'blended approach' in teaching where there is an integration of both conventional and new methods of using online materials such as those in the online newspapers. This will not only be more appealing but provide a good source of useful information and on-going discussions on current legal issues which is vital in the legal profession. However, while it may be premature to state that using online newspaper will significantly improve students' critical thinking and writing, it is beyond reasonable doubt that the accessibility, currency and time-flexibility of online newspapers adds an exciting dimension to learning and promotes independent and lifelong learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since students face difficulty in finding and selecting articles on current socio-legal issues, teachers could expose students to such issues in the classroom by selecting useful sections such as Letters to the Editor and editorials found in online newspapers. Students can be guided in identifying the useful expressions for expressing opinions critically and once students are proficient in selecting relevant articles, they can be encouraged to read independently and engage in meaningful discussions in class. These discussions could help trigger the thought processes and generate debate and promote critical thinking and analysis on such issues.

With regard to unfamiliarity with the interface of the online newspapers and lack of navigation skills, students should be exposed first to the interface of online newspapers to familiarize themselves with the different parts and eventually build up their confidence in accessing the online newspapers themselves. To optimise the benefits of the online newspaper, reading activities need to be followed up with writing practice and adequate guidance and examples from the online newspapers. Since the findings also show that students lacked the ability to present their arguments well in writing, more time should be allotted to writing activities. Students need to be exposed to the rudiments of good opinion writing such as language, organisation, precision, critical thinking and formulation of sound arguments.

Finally, to help improve law students' ability to express opinions using the online newspaper, internet connectivity within the campus has to be improved by the university administration. Easier and faster accessibility to online newspapers would also motivate students to increase their readings to include broader issues both locally and abroad and ultimately mould them into legal professionals who are intellectually active, innovative and capable of critical thinking. With this transformation, the university and nation will slowly but surely achieve its goal to produce a more knowledgeable and highly skilled human capital to meet the challenges of the competitive global market.

REFERENCE

- Author unknown. (2013). Overview of Lawyering Skills and Values, Office of Career & Professional Development. Hastings College of the Law. Retrieved from <http://www.uchastings.edu/career-office/docs/overviewoflawyering.pdf>.
- Author unknown. (2014). Argument and opinion writing.(Online). Retrieved from <https://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/english-language-arts/writing/text-types-and-purposes/text-types-and-purposes/>.
- Belcher, D. (2009). What ESP is and Can Be: An Introduction. In English for Specific Purposes in Theory and Practice, Belcher, D (ed.) pp. 1-20. Michigan ELT, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.press.umich.edu/title>
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). Analysing Genre – Language Use in Professional Settings. London: Longman.
- Bidin, A. (2014). The Faculty Dean's Message. Retrieved from <http://www.ukm.my/fuu/>
- Brown, Ian. (1999). Internet treasure hunts – A treasure of an activity for students learning English. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. V, No. 3. Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Brown-TreasureHunts.html>
- Cheng, N. (2012). The Star, (online) 21 October 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com.my/story.aspx/?file=/2012/10/21/nation/12205345&sec=nation>
- Christensen, S. & Kift, S. (2000). Graduate attributes and legal skills: Integration or disintegration. Legal Education Review. Retrieved from http://www.ler.edu.au/Vol%2011%20No%202/Christensen_Kift.pdf
- Cottrell, S. (2011). Critical Thinking Skills. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Faruqi, S. (2012). How to impress examiners. The Star, 26 July, pp.29.
- Faruqi, S. (2012). Law and the language. The Star, 13 December, pp.36
- Galligan, F. (2012). Why the printed paper is still king of the news. Retrieved from <http://www.swets.com/blog/why-the-printed-paper-is-still-king-of-the-news#.U4fdGHa27G4>
- Gibbon, J. (ed) (1994). Language and the Law. Singapore: Longman.
- Hager, P. & Gonczi, A. (1991). Competency-based standards: a boon for continuing professional education? Studies in Continuing Education, 13 (1), pp24-40. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0158037910130103>
- Ibrahim, N. and Awang, A. H. (2011). With the greatest respect, I cannot agree...: an investigation into the discourse of dissenting in selected Malaysian judicial opinions. 3L; Language, Linguistics and Literature, The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies., 17 (special issue). pp. 45-60. ISSN 0128-5157
- Ibrahim, N. (2001). Can Language Teachers teach Legal Writing? Insights from an EALP class. In Voices and Discourse-Mediating Spaces., A Festschrift to honour Prof. Madya Dr. Harriet Wong. Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Bahasa.
- Ibrahim, N. (2000). Building Bridges: The Case for Specialist Informants in EALP (English for Academic and Legal Purposes) in Jurnal 3L: Language, Linguistics and Literature
- Ibrahim, N. (1998). Reading Legal Cases. Kuala Lumpur: Fakulti Pengajian Bahasa.
- Ismail, N.A., (2011). Graduates' characteristics and unemployment: A study among Malaysian graduates. International Journal of Business and Social Science Vol. 2 No. 16

- Krajka, J. (2000). Some possibilities for using online newspaper in the ESL classroom. *TESL Journal*, 5 (4), 4. Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Krajka-OnlineNews.html>
- Lebovits, G., Curtin, A.V., & Solomon, L. (2008). Ethical Judicial Opinion Writing. *The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics*, Vol. 21, pp. 237-238.
- Leong, C. (2012). Press Release: Bar Council Surveys Explore Employability of New Law Graduates and Working Conditions of Young Lawyers. (Online). Retrieved from http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/press_statements/press_release_bar_council_surveys_explore_employability_of_new_law_graduates_and_working_conditions_of_young_lawyers.html.
- Peden, E. & Riley, J., (2005). Law graduates skills - A pilot study into employer's perspectives. *Legal Education Review*. Vol. 15, No. 1 & 2, pp. 87-124. Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1034823
- Ranjit, S.M. (2009) Make Yourself Employable. Kuala Lumpur: TQM Consultants Sdn.Bhd., pp.12-14
- Tiesma, P. M. (2000). *Legal Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Zandt & David, E. (2009). Foundational competencies: innovation in legal education. *Faculty Working Papers*, paper 197. Retrieved from <http://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1196&context=facultyworkingpapers>
- Yu Ji. (2013). Close to half of Malaysian graduates either jobless or employed in mismatched fields. *The Star*, (online) 27 July. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Community/2013/07/27/Close-to-half-of-Malaysian-graduates-either-jobless-or-employed-in-mismatched-fields/>

Supporting Language Learners Autonomy in Higher Education: The Self-Study Hour at The University Of Nottingham Ningbo China

Giovanna Comerio, The University of Nottingham, China
Filippo Gilardi, The University of Nottingham, China

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0354

Abstract

Despite recent changes in learning cultures and practices in the Chinese educational system, students' autonomy development is still limited (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Consequently, at the Language Centre of The University of Nottingham Ningbo China a self-study program has been inaugurated whereby students are directed to engage in self-study together in a classroom supervised by their tutor. This program has been monitored by the authors of this paper who have devised reflective questionnaires, a self-study log and conducted focus groups with students and local high school teachers. Students' autonomy development has been influenced by a gradual acquisition of the ability to allocate study time and develop an accurate learning agenda - goal setting, choice of resources, monitoring, and assessment.

This paper describes these results and how independent learning teaching practices have been developed to help teachers support students learning autonomy.

Introduction

Research on Chinese foreign language students has depicted a contradictory portrayal of them. For some researchers they are mainly motivated in their studies by family, group and teacher pressures (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Shi (2006) underlines that learners are becoming more independent in their choices, learning preferences and strategies, and that gradually their relationship with the teacher is changing. Students ask for more active classes, and a variety of teaching strategies and resources; they are learning to study with peers and their relationship with the teachers is shifting towards the model friend–friend.

Some studies focusing on study strategies show that memorization plays a fundamental role in students learning (Ding, 2007), while other studies underline the difference between memorization and repetition, and show students' strategies may shift gradually from surface to a deep or at least a so-called “achievement” approach (Watkins & Biggs, 1996, Chapter 4). A number of researchers describe Chinese students as usually quiet or even passive (Chan, 1999), although recent research has shown that some of this behavior could be interpreted in a socio-cultural perspective (Gao, 2006) or related to power, the context of learning, the motivation or as a result of teaching practices taking place mostly at the end of secondary school and related to an efficient preparation for the final examinations (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006). Shi (2006) also warns that differences could also be found according to the socio-economic status of the students.

At the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), a British university established in mainland China, the notions of autonomy and responsibility are crucial. Therefore students are expected to develop in depth learning abilities, to become able to decide on learning resources, techniques and strategies, and to manage their time according to their targets and weaknesses.

In order to help students develop these skills, in 2011 the UNNC Language Centre decided to add an extra contact hour, the “Self-Study Hour” (SSH), to be scheduled for the first two years of language learning out of three. After the first year it appeared that while there was a general agreement on the final aim of SSH, there were important differences in practices put in place by teachers. For example, some organized resources and activities for students to choose from. Others elaborated plans to help students gradually develop metacognitive skills needed for analyzing learning needs, monitor their own activities and assess their achievements. Some teachers were still continuing to take the full responsibility for their students' learning and others were using the SSH as an extra teaching hour.

The two authors of this study felt the need to elaborate a common practice to provide students with the same learning experience but at the same time respecting the different tutor teaching styles. After a discussion of the key concepts that guided the authors while outlining their SSH, the present study describes how the authors and their students organized the SSH and how and to what extent this influenced the students' autonomy acquisition and self-perception as language learners. It also aims at presenting how the practice of the authors was thereafter shared with colleagues in the Language Centre and gave rise to shared guidelines.

Key Concepts

The role of motivation

In order to have students developing and using their reflective skills they should be autonomous decision makers and self-determined individuals, feeling motivated in what they do. As Deci and Flaste (1995) put it, “people need to feel that their behaviour is truly chosen by them...that the locus of initiation of their behaviour is within themselves rather than in some external control” (p. 30). Furthermore, being able to make their own choices motivates and “encourages people to fully endorse what they are doing” (p. 34). Autonomy development and the integration of the academic regulations are achieved by supporting socializing agents (i.e. teachers) who create a supportive learning environment (Deci et al., 1994). This should be characterized by a consistent effort to foster students intrinsic motivation; a regular and constructive feedback; appropriate limit setting and explanations of their rationale; a consistent effort to foster students need for competence by working with them on strategies and capacities needed for achieving their goals.

Self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning is defined as goal-oriented in other terms it aims at “reducing a discrepancy between a current perceived state and a goal relevant to a performance or learning” (Dunlosky & Ariel, 2011, p. 105). The question is how learners can get organized for doing so, and how cognitive and metacognitive skills interplay for supporting or not the construction of a learning plan. It has been observed by researchers that students “develop an agenda on how to allocate time to various study items and use this agenda when selecting items for study” (Ariel et al., 2009, p. 433), and that failing to learn happens when students do not construct any learning agenda; when they do not follow their plans; or when the agenda itself is not regularly updated according to the results of monitoring and controlling or the new adjustments that can arise from different requirements in terms of time allocation and items to learn (Ariel et al., 2009). Ariel et al. (2009) also noted that students’ allocation of time is optimistic in that they usually plan to learn a high number of items in a small period of time.

Methodology

Results of a Preliminary Study

In a preliminary study, Managing Autonomy, quantitative research methods have been used to design a questionnaire with two basic aims. Firstly to obtain data to define to what extent, at the beginning of the academic year, students were able to plan their SSHs based on their language learning objectives, their confidence in the different language skills and their perceptions of what could help them in their language learning. Secondly, to generate statistics and trace the variation of the influence of the previous factors on students ability to set their learning objectives.

At the beginning of the first semester 2012/2013, 36 beginner level students were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding motivation and strategies of their language learning. Students rated communication as very important, and personal

interest, work and study opportunities as an important initial motivation to start studying a language. For continuing their study, in the same questionnaire these factors are rated as slightly more important than the teacher and the textbook. Additionally, 50% think they need to feel sure before speaking.

At the end of the semester data analysis shows a diminution of the initial motivation factors and an increased importance of the teacher's role despite the activities developed for supporting student independent learning in the SSH. They feel less shy and are willing to take risks, but the proportion of those who need to feel sure of the correct structures before speaking rose to 59.05%.

As Ehrman (Arnold, 1999, Chapter 5) points out, second language acquisition is a disorientating process: this may be why our students, who are experiencing individual autonomy, after one semester appear to be less confident in their skills.

The Present Study

The finding about the increasing role of the teachers urged us to reflect on the theoretical concepts underlying our practices.

We agreed that the aim of the SSH is not for students to learn a particular language topic. It aims at students developing reflective skills. To help them we devised a reflective circle: 1) Planning 2) Activity/Monitoring 3) Assessing. In the first phase of Planning, students construct simple and realistic plans including time allocation, specific items to learn, and resources to be used according to their own learning agenda. During the SSH they should monitor their achievements of their learning goals so to evaluate the effectiveness of their plans and readily make any necessary adjustments. In the third phase they write in a log their comments on achievements and adjustments so to be able to effectively plan for the next SSH. As both plan and personal log are key moments in the development of a consistent self-regulated learning agenda, the authors devoted particular attention to them.

One teacher asked students to email their plans with a detail of the resources to have individual feedback. Later on students were asked to put the SSH hour plan within the frame of the six weekly self-study hours outside of the class and to write after each session a comment on how things went, how successful the study was, and to link it with the future plans. The teachers emphasized the special significance of becoming able to create a developmental plan where specific goals fit in progressively more global objectives. The SSH was decided by the teacher and usually happened in the language lab where every student had access to computers and on-line materials.

The second teacher asked students to share their weekly plan - goal and strategies - on an on-line forum so that feedback could come not only from the teacher, but also from fellow students. The teacher feedback consisted mainly of questions about activities and resources to be used, as students found it problematic to distil main objectives into specific goals and then to connect them. The SSH was decided by students and because of the availability of individual electronic devices as tablets and mobile phones it was generally held in a normal classroom. Since during the six weekly self-study outside of the class and the teaching hours students were encouraged to work in team, they maintained this format during the SSH as well.

Based on this we organized student focus groups with two aims. Firstly, to clarify the students' perception of the teachers role and their language learning motivation through group discussion of the key questions of the questionnaire. Secondly, to ascertain what was students' understanding of the SSH through development of cognitive maps.

In addition we organized focus group with Chinese teachers of French in a local high school to appreciate to what extent our students' dependency on teachers was still affected by the learning habits and expectations they developed in the high school. We tasked them to develop cognitive maps based on the concepts of "The good teacher" and "The good learner".

Data description

Teachers' role

Students' view. Students went through the questions of the questionnaire and confirmed that at the beginning the main motivation of language learning is personal interest and career, or even "showing off" with high school classmates. They also confirmed that, afterwards, teachers assume an important role as personal motivators (they are described as friendly and caring). The teacher is defined as a "leader" giving "the strength", "a friend giving guidance, also support", but also somebody "pushing" students, although it is acknowledged that in "a British university you have to learn by yourself". An adjective which was often repeated is "patient". Finally, very interestingly, a student said: "I don't need a teacher to know many things..., if I like him or her I will try my best to study".

Motivation in continuing to study a language is intertwined with the teacher figure: if he or she is appreciated as a teacher, or if there is a personal relationship with the teacher, then the student will feel motivated in their studies. A student who spent the first semester with a teacher and the second with another said that she felt and suffered from the difference in terms of teacher guidance: the feedback on the forum from the second compared with the individual email feedback from the first one was felt as a detachment. The second teacher was perceived as distant and less caring, and this affected the learning motivation. Only later did the student understand that, since the SSH was not to continue in the final year of study, the progressive detachment was somehow needed by students who would ultimately lose part of their teacher support.

High School Teachers' view. First of all teachers defined the good teacher as somebody who wishes to improve their own teaching methods, and who is patient with students. Likewise, as with our student focus groups, they pointed out that a good teacher is willing to explain the same concept many times. Furthermore, it is the duty of the teacher to check the homework done and to share the solutions in class. Also in their opinion, teachers should care and "love all of them without making exceptions between the better and weaker students". The loving teachers know how to communicate with their students, are loved by them and are a good example.

For these teachers, students' motivation is mainly a teachers concern: it is the teacher that should motivate students by organizing engaging and clear classes.

But what are good students? They are first of all hard working - memorizing, doing homework, and studying the textbook by themselves -, well behaved, intelligent - being able to prioritize own learning, but within the handbook and teachers suggestions -, well mannered - respecting teachers and parents. The final statement about students appears symmetrical to the final statement about teachers: “We prefer a well-mannered student, with no good scores, rather than a student with good marks but impolite”.

The Self-Study Hour

While developing the cognitive maps students evaluate the SSH hour as useful in that it may help develop learning strategies, but most of all stressed the importance of the presence of the teacher. For one focus group teacher’s organization is very important. As they appreciated the team activities during the teaching hours, they also agreed that team-work should be also exported to the SSH. However, as a variety of competences help in learning from each other, they asked for teachers to indicate the members of the groups, and asked for a weekly change of composition. Students understand that the purpose of the SSH is not only to learn something about the French language, but also to learn how to learn. However, they would like to see both happening in the SSH. Therefore, they proposed a longer SSH - 90 minutes instead of 50 - for the group to discuss the resources brought in before the actual self-study activities. The same students state that SSH had no or little impact on their self-study outside of the class, because they are not controlled by teachers. Again, students stressed that the teachers’ role in checking every time the log - which reminds us of the Chinese teachers of French checking the homework at the beginning of each class. Students commented that the log was not the most helpful resource, even if they liked to have comments on that either by individual emails or on the forum.

The teacher of the second focus group included the SSH in a weekly plan, for students to understand the continuity between in-class and out-of-class autonomous learning. The students considered the SSH as an opportunity for identifying problems, finding resources, creating a weekly learning routine. In this way, the SSH really encouraged students to create their own Agenda Based Regulation (ABR) (Dunlosky & Ariel, 2011, p. 120). Students think at the SSH as a part of the process of finding their own way of using the university learning opportunities. This could be considered as a very good understanding and personal processing of the SSH. However, when asked to imagine the perfect SSH, the same students would still rely on teachers and tests.

Also this group proposed a 90 minutes SSH, but here students would bring to class their own individual plans and resources, and study alone for one hour, independently. The last 30 minutes are for interaction with fellow students and teacher for solving problems and doubts. What is most important is that “that hour is in my control”, but the teacher is never forgotten. The teacher’s task during the SSH is to give feedback and suggest how to learn more effectively... on-the-spot – in real time. The issue highlighted by this group was how to identify their own weaknesses: a student mentioned the marks, so the group proposal was to hold a weekly or monthly formative assessment, which could help the planning of the SSH.

Moving forward

The workshop

A workshop was held with the colleagues of the UNNC Language Centre in June 2013. The authors of this study discussed early findings and their experiences, and all the colleagues were divided into groups so as to elaborate on their own ideas about the SSH and propose different formats. Later on, Guidelines for the whole Language Centre were elaborated. There were four group threads:

The first group of colleagues started off with 2 questions: How to guide students to be autonomous? Which strategies can we develop? Students would start by assessing themselves at the end of each learning unit and taking a formative test so as to become able to compare their own perception of learning with an external measure of learning. Students would also bring their own resources and share with both classmates, in pairs or groups, and the teacher, whose role would be to mentor the students. Students would be free to choose the topic to focus on and how to work, but they would still need to fill in the log to have a trace of their plans.

The second focus group started by sharing what teachers had previously done in their classes. In some classes students had been given a topic to prepare in advance. Alternatively, students came to the class with their own material and worked individually or in groups on it, in one case using the language laboratory facility. The teachers in this group have not asked students to fill in the log. After reflection on the students' experiences, the teachers agreed that in the future they would guide students' reflection on learning outcomes and how to achieve them. They would have also focused on making students familiar with the vast array of learning resources available in the university.

For the colleagues in the third group the log was the starting point where students were guided to state their learning objectives, which could be listed and ticked. They agreed that students should not be told what they have to do, but made aware of the tools available for them to choose from. They agreed that the SSH should be free time for students to use according to their own priorities. They focused on how students could assess their own learning, how they can have feedback on it, in order to fill in their log and continuously re-adjust their goals. Self-assessment and peer-assessment were also discussed.

The fourth group focused on learning strategies that students could bring to the SSH. Using others as a learning resource by interacting with them, either in person, on-line or through authentic materials - movies and songs - was the key-point. Using Moodle as platform to share their logs was perceived as a useful way to encourage peer-learning.

The guidelines

A guideline coming out of all these experiences and discussions was then formulated. It is divided into five steps:

In the first step language tutors need to introduce the SSH to students, emphasizing that it is all about students devising their own learning priorities, planning for them, finding suitable resources, and monitoring and controlling their achievements. In order for students to do so on a regular basis, the second step is for teachers to provide students with a log to record their goals and reflect on their achievements. Our own experience together with student comments tell us how difficult it is for them to engage with this reflection and see the benefit of it, but this research tells us that students would not be able to allocate the correct amount of time and prioritize the items to study.

To facilitate students' findings and sharing resources, teachers could either open a forum on Moodle or keep a short period of time at the beginning of the class for students to present their material.

In the last phase, teachers are to prepare self-assessment questionnaires - in terms of "I am able to"/"I am not able to" - on the four skills and, if they wish, there is the possibility of developing a system of peer-assessment and/or peer-mentoring.

Teachers are first of all seen as learning facilitators who should give students regular individual feedback on their logs - four times per semester - and on their learning strategies. It is important that teachers move away from the key-role that students bestow on them as far this is possible: tutors should not indicate students what resources they should use or what skills they should work on. Finally, it is crucial that both students and teachers understand that the main goal of the SSH is not to learn the language, but to discover how to learn by using the language problems and goals as a mere tool.

Conclusions

Chinese students studying in our university experience both linguistic and cultural challenges that may influence the development of their culture of learning, and ultimately their academic achievement. The central role students attribute to teachers is perhaps the key aspect of their culture of learning. Being an authoritative or friendly teacher, his/her ascendancy is deeply rooted in the current schooling culture. As we found out in the focus groups, both teachers and students appreciate each other for the quality of the personal relationship rather than for the intellectual performance. At the same time economic and cultural changes happening in Chinese society can challenge these values and require students to readjust their cultural beliefs. In order not to negatively affect this complex situation, working on behaviors could be advisable.

The SSH is one of the strategies teachers can put into practice for helping students develop own self-regulated studying habits, and gradually develop the related metacognitive skills according to their individual psychological features, learning culture and needs. At the same time, the SSH can help student adapt to the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning and can encourage them to take responsibility for the improvement of their learning experience and even make practical proposals to the teachers or the institution. Among our students the teacher role is still central: some students missed the emotional closeness with their tutor, the second group asked for regular formative tests provided by teachers. Perhaps a SSH associated with an

emphasis on in-class, out-of-class and on-line collaborative work could gradually help students develop a long-lasting autonomy.

Overall students were asking for longer SSH where language learning and learning-to-learn would be included, and this shows that they understood the nature of the SSH. Students became more or less able to assess their weaknesses, find suitable resources, control their improvements, adjust their learning plans, willing to actively contribute to the class decision making. They also understood the relevance of planning and controlling in order to identify issues and adjust their learning plans. However, the monitoring phase still poses problems. Students - as well as some teachers - may find the log unnecessary or time consuming, however the effort of reflection makes students aware of their own learning achievements, and in so doing enhance their motivation. As Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explains, “unless a person learns to set goals and to recognize and gauge feedback in such activities, she will not enjoy them” (p.55). At the same time, the log helps students in drawing the next plan or to make adjustments to the overall learning goals.

Finally, the SSH is partially transformative. Students who fully invested in it were able to develop some learning autonomy in language learning. However, to be truly effective and have a long lasting impact on learners study skills, it should be anchored in the language weekly self-study practices.

References

- Ariel, R., Dunlosky, J., & Bailey, H. (2009). Agenda-Based Regulation of study-time allocation: when agendas override item-based monitoring. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 3, 432-447.
- Arnold, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Affect in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barfield, A., & Brown, S.H. (Eds.). (2007). *Reconstructing autonomy in language education. Inquiry and innovation*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Breen, M.P., & Littlejohn, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Classroom decision-making. Negotiation and process syllabuses in practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chan, S. (1999). The Chinese learner – a question of style. *Education + Training*, 6/7, 294-304.
- Chao, R., & Tseng V. (2002). Parenting of Asians. In M. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (2nd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 59–94). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Chirkov, V.I., Ryan, R.M., & Sheldon, K.M. (Eds.). (2011). *Human autonomy in cross-cultural context. Perspectives on the psychology of agency, freedom, and well-being*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Clark, R., & Gieve, S.N. (2006). On the discursive construction of ‘The Chinese learner’. [Electronic version]. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1, 54-73.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Deci, E.L., Eghrari, H., Patrick, B.C., & Leone, D.R. (1994). Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Personality*, 62, 119–142.
- Deci, E.L., & Flaste R. (1985). *Why we do what we do. Understanding self-motivation*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

- Ding, Y. (2007). Text memorization and imitation: The practices of successful Chinese learners of English. *System*, 2, 271-280.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2010). Questionnaires in second language research. Construction, administration, and processing. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dunlosky, J., & Ariel, R. (2011). Self-regulated learning and the allocation of study time. *Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 54, 103-140.
- Gao, X. (2006). Understanding changes in Chinese students' uses of learning strategies in China and Britain: A socio-cultural re-interpretation. *System*, 1, 55-67.
- Gollwitzer, P.M., & Oettingen, G. (2004). Planning promotes goal striving. In K. D. Vohs & R. F. Baumeister (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 162-185). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth M. (2006). Who adapts? Beyond cultural models of 'the' Chinese learner. [Electronic version]. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1, 74-89.
- Heigham, J., & Croker, R.A. (Eds.). (2009). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics. A practical introduction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2006). Changing practices in Chinese cultures of learning. [Electronic version]. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1, 5-20.
- Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Researching intercultural learning. Investigations in language education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan
- Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T., & Johnson Holubec E. (1994). *The nuts and bolts of cooperative learning*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Co.
- Keith, J. (2008). *Quantitative methods in linguistics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Li, G., Chen, W., & Duanmu, J. (2010). Determinants of international students' academic performance: A comparison between Chinese and other international students. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 4, 389-405.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (Eds.). (2012). *Research methods in second language acquisition. A practical guide*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mega, C., Ronconi, L., & De Beni, R. (2014). What makes a good student? How emotions, self-regulated learning and motivation contribute to academic achievement. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1, 121-131.
- Nunan, D. (Ed.). (1992). *Collaborative language learning and teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shi, L. (2006). The successors to Confucianism or a new generation ? A questionnaire study on Chinese students' culture of learning English. [Electronic version]. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 1, 122-147.
- Vansteenkiste, M., Zhou, M., Lens, W., & Soenens, B. (2005). Experience of autonomy and control among Chinese learners: vitalizing or immobilizing? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 3, 468-483.
- Watkins, D.A., & Biggs, J.G. (Eds.). (2001). *Teaching the Chinese learner: Psychological and pedagogical perspectives*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center.
- Watkins, D.A., & Biggs, J.G. (Eds.). (1996). *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center.
- Wieber, F., Sezer, L.A., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2014). Asking 'why' helps action control by goals but not plans. *Motivation and Emotion*, 38, 65-78.

Oxford, R. (Ed.). (1996). Language learning strategies around the world: cross-cultural perspectives. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Zimmerman, B. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. [Electronic version]. *Educational Psychologist*, 1, 3-17.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to our colleagues and students that collaborated to this project and to Peter Waters for his proofreading. This research has been funded by The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, Small Research Grant (2013).



Specifics of Corporate Discourse Role Structure

Vera Kuznetcova, Amur State University of Humanities and Peagogy, Russia
Karina Borovikova, Amur State University of Humanities and Peagogy, Russia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0359

Abstract

The analysis of professional discourse in small groups of managers of various companies shows the corporate discourse role structure and corporate identity are always reproduced in the roles of Corporate Leader and Corporate Subordinate. Corporate Leader is not a leader in its common bureaucratic meaning because he doesn't linguistically rise above subordinates. He is more a coordinator of group actions, he is the person the group needs, but possesses his status in the group until the group wants it. All these differentiate the corporate type of a leader from its bureaucratic version. Corporate Subordinates have nothing in common with those in the authoritarian business system. Non-corporate type subordinates complain of their "excessive freedom", they're uncomfortable if they're imposed too much corporate responsibility.

Corporate Subordinate feels independence and responsibility for the life of the whole company. The leader doesn't control their statements inside and outside the group. The subordinates feel free to exchange their opinions about their boss and are not afraid of "going too far". But they also possess a definite degree of communicative and discursive responsibility, especially while producing public discourse, speaking "in the name of corporation". This is a certain type of discourse which should be produced in compliance with hidden corporate communicative rules that require the presence of definite corporate concepts in linguistic conscience. From the linguistic point of view this mostly means following the Cooperative principle of communication described by P. Grice. In our terms it is following the principle of Corporativity in professional discourse.

Our recent investigation has been devoted to the problems of professional discourse of the corporate type in small groups in British and American cultures. The problem area of the research is related to the cognitive-discursive paradigm of contemporary linguistic studies which investigate the functioning of a language in tight connection with the process of cognition.

The understandings of the term “corporation” in Russian, British and American cultures are not the same. For the English linguistic conscience one of characteristic features of a corporation is the total unification, merging of the members when all act as one individual and at the same time one member acts on behalf of the whole group. A lot of definitions given in dictionaries and encyclopedias confirm that the concept of a corporation in the English linguistic conscience is that of one whole social body (Cf. the etymology of the term going back to the Latin word “corpus” meaning “body”).

It is stated that a special type of relationship among the members of corporations causes them produce a special type of discourse, which is professional discourse based on the principle of corporativity.

The given issue will concern only one side of such kind of discourse, mainly the linguistic features of the main discursive roles – the Corporate Leader and the Corporate Subordinate. The material for the analysis was taken from various transcripts of business conversations represented in handbooks for English-speaking specialists in marketing and management and also from science fiction.

s of professional discourse of the corporate type.

Thus, the analysis of professional discourse in small groups of managers working for various companies shows that Corporate Leader is not a leader in its common bureaucratic meaning because he doesn't demand total obedience from his/her subordinates and doesn't rise above them. On the contrary, they are sometimes less noticeable than their colleagues. Corporate Leader is more a coordinator of the group actions. Among their tasks are pulling people together, checking the progress against the targets and deciding what the next course of their action is. It's very often stressed that Corporate Leader is the person the group needs, but they don't impose their will upon workers, they possess their status in the group until the group wants it to be so. And all these differentiate the corporate type of leaders from their bureaucratic type.

Corporate Subordinates also have nothing in common with those in the authoritarian business system. They don't accept any excessive power of their leader, they possess communicative freedom. The leader doesn't control their statements not only inside but also outside the group. The subordinates feel free to exchange their opinions about their boss and are not afraid of “going too far”. But the Corporate Subordinate also possesses a definite degree of communicative and discursive responsibility, especially if he produces public discourse, speaks “in the name of his corporation”. In this case he produces his discourse according to the hidden, secret corporate rules of communication with the outside environment. Such rules require the presence of definite corporate concepts in his linguistic conscience. From the linguistic point-of-view these requirements mostly mean following the Cooperative principle of communication described by P. Grice. In our terms it is following the principle of Corporativity in professional discourse.

To prove all the above mentioned points let's look into some short examples of professional discourse.

[I – Interviewer, WL – Ward Lincoln]

I Ward, what are the key factors in building good business relationships?

WL I believe that relationships, business or otherwise, are about trust. And, in order to gain trust, you must be honest, you must be transparent, clear. Don't promise what you can't deliver. There is nothing worse in a relationship than being let down. It is also about being clear, being explicit. People present their products in brochures, pamphlets, flyers, e-mail, videos. All of those media, they're all very effective, but it must be clear. The customer must understand very quickly, what you are selling, what price you're selling at. The speed of that information, the speed of the response – it must consistently be fast. The restless customer of the 21st century does not have time on his or her hands, and there are a million other providers, all ready and eager to sell to that customer. In order to continue that relationship, maintaining the relationship, consistently answer their queries, respond quickly in a simple format [1; 157].

The extract given above represents the interview with Ward Lincoln who works as a Business Relations Manager for an international training organization. His statements prove that a Corporate Subordinate possesses enough corporate responsibility to produce public discourse. In this example the professional discourse goes to corporate conceptual values “Trust” and “Truth” (in order to gain trust, you must be honest, you must be transparent, clear. Don't promise what you can't deliver. There is nothing worse in a relationship than being let down). Only the presence of such concepts in the linguistic conscience of professionals allows them to speak in public and represent their corporation. Besides, while dealing with clients, a company's employees should speak in brief, very clearly and answer all the questions asked.

Outside corporations Corporate Leaders and Subordinates behave themselves in the same way, as their plenipotentiaries proving the fact that corporate spirit is beyond leadership. Let's look at another example which is the discourse of an employee outside his corporation:

A I see you're with UGC ...

B That's right.

A Are you on the sales or product development side of things?

B Sales. I'm responsible for our new range of kitchen systems.

A Oh, really? How's the response been to your new publicity campaign?

B Pretty good. It generated a lot of interest and orders are starting to come in.

A Do you do much business outside Europe?

B It's early days but we're beginning to get enquiries from Latin America and Asia.

A We've been working with some very good people in Singapore. Maybe we could help you out there.

B Ah, now that's a market we're definitely interested in [1; 158].

In this case the speaker can say anything about his organization not being afraid of his boss's anger and of going "too far" in statements. But as we see he is speaking in exactly the same way as if he was speaking in his office. The concept "Responsibility" dominates in his conscience (I'm responsible for our new range of kitchen systems), he cares about the image of his company in the eyes of his interlocutor (Pretty good. It generated a lot of interest and orders are starting to come in). He even takes the initiative of building possible business relationships with the other side's company (A – We've been working with some very good people in Singapore. Maybe we could help you out there, B – Ah, now that's a market we're definitely interested in). So, as we see, even speaking with a stranger the Corporate Subordinate tries to contribute to his company's profitability.

There are also some examples of subordinates' statements about their bosses:

'I have no idea of the project team's objectives. No one has ever told me anything. I'm completely in the dark';

'There's not enough preparation and thinking before important decisions are made. When we produced a set of guidelines for customer care, they were criticized by everyone. So my boss and a few of his colleagues got together at the weekend. Hey presto! They produced a completely new set of guidelines. They were no better than the other ones';

'Let's say I have to analyze telephone response times at our subsidiaries. My manager doesn't tell me how I should present the findings. If I do a report, he wants a memo, and if I do a memo, he'll ask for a report. I never know where I am with him';

'She doesn't like delegating work to me. If she does, it's some Mickey Mouse task which a child of five could do. She never gives me anything challenging where I have to use my brain, my analytical skills. Maybe it's because I'm a woman. The men seem to like her';

'Our manager wanted to amend the billing system which head office had agreed to. He had innumerable meetings and consulted everyone. The result? We still haven't got everyone's support yet and the deadline for introducing the system has passed. I wonder what head office will say about that. It's typical of the way people manage around here';

'My boss lets me work on my own initiative too much. I don't meet the other team members enough, so I can't share my ideas with them. I never get any direction';

'I never get enough resources to complete a task. For example, I had to hold meetings with the managers of all the factories and distribution depots. But I wasn't given enough time to do the task and I had no assistant to deal with my workload while I was away from the office';

'My manager never lets me know if I'm doing well. I have no idea what he thinks of me. I don't get any feedback, positive or negative';

'He never encourages me when I do something right. I never feel that I am performing

to a high enough standard' [1; 165].

So, as we see, most of them are negative. Some of them complain of the lack of corporativity in their boss's behavior, but others prove themselves to be subordinates of a non-corporate type because they are uncomfortable when they are given freedom of actions and they always wait for appraisal.

Summing up, we may say that a Corporate Subordinate is a person who feels his/her certain independence and responsibility for his/her decisions and for the life of the whole company. Corporate Subordinate feels comfortable in conditions of equity with the other workers, in proper coordination of their collective actions and clarity of their targets. The subordinates of a non-corporate type complain of their "excessive freedom", they are uncomfortable if they are imposed too much corporate responsibility. They are always waiting for bosses' appraisal showing that it is not necessary for them to think about the company's future.

It should also be pointed out that the corporate principle in professional communication is not the only one – the choice of communicative principle depends on the sphere of communication and very often can be combined with other principles. In some social spheres its functioning is restricted. This takes place, for instance, in medical discourse where narrow specialization and the necessity of obeying one person's directives in many cases take place.

So, the analysis of the role structure of corporate professional discourse has shown that corporate identity is always reproduced in the roles of the Corporate Leader and the Corporate Subordinate. The discursive principle of Corporativity mutes the principle of power – people refuse open indications of power in their speech and do not let others be powerful with them. But that doesn't mean that the principle of power totally disappears in professional communication – it just obtains new forms, probably less open ones.

Referencing:

Cotton, D. Market Leader (D. Cotton, D. Falvey, S. Kent). – London: Longman, 2001.

Grice, H.P. Utterer's meaning and intentions // Studies In The Way Of Words. Ed. H.P. Grice. – Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989. – pp. 86-116.

Interactional Strategies in Topic Development

Karina Borovikova, Amur State University of Humanities and Pedagogy, Russia
Vera Kuznetcova, Amur State University of Humanities and Pedagogy, Russia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning (ACLL 2014)
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0361

Abstract

Theories of interaction argue that people must agree on basic beliefs or break up their relationship. Participation in any contact with others is a commitment. Conversation is a joint production of its participants. One speaker initiates the talk, and the other speaker adds up to it participating in forming the conversational structure.

Since the unity of language, situation and knowledge has been recognized by linguists, modern linguistics focuses mainly on the discourse analysis: that describes how conversation between people is organized; what makes it coherent and understandable; how people introduce and change the topics; how they interrupt, ask questions, give or evade answers and, in general, how the conversation flow is maintained or disrupted.

In order to communicate successfully people should try to solve problems together, that is to cooperate towards mutual communicative ends. However sometimes people do not want to cooperate with their interlocutors in problem solving, in other words they refuse to collaborate in topic development. The paper will focus on major strategies people use to maintain or disrupt a conversation.

As the modern view holds it, language situation and knowledge are inseparable. It has become increasingly clear that coherent view of language, including syntax, must take account of discourse phenomena. Conversation is a specific kind of text composed and interpreted in real time. It is based on a dynamic model of text structure. Dynamic models contrast with synoptic models where text is treated as a finished product, something to be compared with other finished products of the same sort. In conversation the systemic model is modified to allow dynamic representation. Speakers design the talk for their hearers so that the structure of the conversation is not decided all at once. Rather, at various points, participants are faced with sets of alternatives from which they choose. Features of the conversation are selected interactively, through the usage of various interactional strategies [4].

Generally, people entering into conversation with each other tacitly agree to obey the cooperative principle, that is cooperate towards mutual communicative ends. The function of establishing and maintaining social relationships and solidarity is the basic conversational priority. In the 1970s, the philosopher Paul Grice put forward a set of four rules (he called them "maxims") to describe how participants "cooperate" in conversation to achieve smooth and efficient interaction:

- 1) Maxim of Quality: do not say what you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.
- 2) Maxim of Quantity: say neither too little or too much; make your contribution as informative as is required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- 3) Maxim of Relation; what you say should be clearly relevant.

With respect to this maxim, Grice writes, "Though the maxim itself is terse, its formulation conceals a number of problems that exercise me a good deal: questions about what different kinds and focuses of relevance there may be, how these shift in the course of a talk exchange, how to allow for the fact that subjects of conversations are legitimately changed, and so on. I find the treatment of such questions exceedingly difficult, and I hope to revert to them in later work" [3].

- 4) Maxim of Manner: avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity.

Thus, it is assumed that the participants of the conversation will not lie or bluff, will not be brief or over-talkative, will not say completely irrelevant things and try to be as clear as possible. These maxims may be better understood as describing the assumptions listeners normally make about the way speakers will talk, rather than prescriptions for how one ought to talk. These maxims are extremely good to follow to be an efficient and reasonable conversationalist and they apply to both speech and writing.

However, people are not perfect and sometimes they break these rules by accident, through misunderstanding or clumsiness, which can result in conversation going astray. There are also occasions when people deliberately violate these cooperative principles for some reason, usually to express some subtle meaning. For example, we may say untrue things to express irony or sarcasm. We may be too brief, because we want to show that we are angry or want to discourage someone from talking. We can be irrelevant to indicate reluctance to pursue the topic, and we may consciously be obscure to hide some facts.

The name which Grice gives to this kind of meaning, where the hearer can easily infer the unstated meaning of the speaker, is conversational implicature. This deliberate breaking */flouting in Gricean terms/* of the maxims is something which we do regularly in conversation and in writing, and it is clearly an important way in which we can explicate “the meaning between lines” in texts. It accounts for much of what is involved when ordinary people say things like “yes, I know what he said, but I’m not sure that I like what he implied”. Here are Grice's own words:

"He [the speaker] may flout a maxim; that is, he may blatantly fail to fulfill it. On the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfill the maxim and to do so without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not, in view of the blatancy of his performance, trying to mislead, the hearer is faced with a minor problem: How can his saying what he did say be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall Cooperative Principle? This situation is one that characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature; and when a conversational implicature is generated in this way, I shall say that a maxim is being exploited."

The meanings created by the flouting of the maxims are often social, signaling the attitude of the sender to the receiver of the message, and the kind of relationship which exists or is developing between them.

In order to communicate successfully people should try to solve problems together. As well known in cognitive science, problem solving takes place in problem space. The elements of this space consist of states of knowledge about the problem the speakers are faced with. Problem solving is always a matter of search – of starting from some initial position (initial state of knowledge). Search in a problem space is constructive. The elements of the space do not exist for the problem solver unless he generates them, or remembers them for the later retrieval once generated.

Sometimes people do not want to cooperate with their interlocutors in problem solving. In this case the best thing for them to do would be to abstain from talking altogether. But if it is not possible, people can still find a way of disrupting the conversation. Usually they refuse to collaborate with other speakers in the topic development. The main idea of topic is that each discourse fragment has a single referent according to which it is segmented from other discourse fragments. So, topic can be defined as a referent in the world, expressed linguistically by a noun or a noun phrase.

Collaborative interaction is often violated in situations of power relationship, conflict situations, situations of deceiving or persuading the interlocutor. In spoken interaction rules of verbal behavior can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. Thus, the person occupying the dominant position in the party is likely to enjoy superior speaking rules. He makes challenging moves in the conversation. These challenging moves are predominantly directives or accusations even though they may sound as informatives or elicitations. At the other extreme, with no speaking rights, are those who have the status of dependants. In the following example we can see how power is exercised by the dominant person (stepfather) over his dependant (stepson).

“When we two were left alone, he shut the door, and sitting on a chair, and holding me standing before him, looked steadily into my eyes. I felt my own attracted, no less steadily, to his. As I recall my heart beat fast and high.

“David,” he said, making his lips thin, by pressing them together, “if I have an obstinate horse or dog to deal with, what do you think I do?”

“I don’t know.”

“I beat him.”

I had answered in a kind of breathless whisper, but I felt, in my silence, that my breath was shorter now.

“I make him wince, and smart. I say to myself, ‘I’ll conquer that fellow;’ and if it were to cost him all blood he had, I should do it. What is that upon your face?”

“Dirt,” I said.

He knew it was the mark of tears as well as I. But if he had asked the question twenty times, each time with twenty blows, I believe my baby heart would have burst before I would have told him so.

“You have a good deal of intelligence for a little fellow,” he said with a grave smile that belonged to him, “and you understood me very well, I see. Wash that face, sir, and come down with me.” [2].

In the above example the stepfather violates all the maxims of Cooperative principle – he resorts to metaphor (breaking the quality maxim) to express his desire to beat the child (comparing him with an obstinate horse or dog); he is wordy and ambiguous; what he says is not relevant – he is not talking about the interlocutor and his behavior, but focuses on how one should deal with animals. At the same time his behavior can’t be called irrational, he pursues his communicative goals. He (the stepfather) designs his discourse to realize his intention. The person in power involves his interlocutors in the network of control and influence. Thus, both types of discourse (of power and submission) depend on the dominant’s intentions i.e. the topics relevant for a person occupying the dominant position.

Conversation is an unplanned discourse. Usually talk is not thought out prior to its expression. Of course, speakers try to predict what their interlocutors are likely to say. But sometimes they make wrong predictions or their interests do not coincide. All this may lead to a conflict. Interlocutors can battle for control of the topic of conversation. In this case they fight for the floor. There can be two types of floor: a singly developed floor in which one person speaks and the other listen silently, and a collaboratively developed floor in which more than one speaker can be heard. In the example given below Dennis (employee) and Jack (manager) “fight for the floor”.

[D – Dennis; J – Jack]

- D I don’t see why you should be blaming me, Jack. We’re in a competitive business – you know that. I can’t get contracts from you if I don’t look after my clients properly. They expect the best treatment, and if they don’t get it from us, they’ll go somewhere else.
- J I know that. You don’t need to tell me how important service is in our business, all right? Look, all I’m asking you to do, Dennis, is to check with Philip’s department before you commit us to a completion date, OK?
- D But Jack, I can’t be spending every minute of the day on the phone to Philip. My job’s selling systems and software.

- J Yes, and you do it very well...
- D Precisely. I make a lot of money for this firm. Sometimes I wonder if it's worth all the effort. Maybe I should look around a bit, see if one of our competitors might appreciate me more.
- J Don't be ridiculous, Dennis. You know as well as I do we bend over backwards to support you here. You've nothing to complain about at all.
- D I still say we don't have enough technicians. Why don't you hire a few more?
- J They don't come cheap these days, that's one reason. Anyway, I'm not going to add to our wage bill at the moment – I'm sorry.
- D Huh! Well as long as no one interferes with my work, I won't complain, I suppose. All I ask is to be left alone to get on with the job [1].

As seen from the above example the earliest stage of confrontation is marked by the so-called conversational turbulence, i.e. the dispute over what the topic of contentious talk should be.

Summing up, we may say that interactional strategies include knowledge of what makes communication successful. Successful communicationalists somehow know when and where it will be permissible to initiate talk, among whom, and by means of what topics. Some situations and persons will have to be avoided; others, less threatening, must not be pressed too far. The speaker must try to stay away from situations and topics where he is not wanted.

Referencing:

1. Cotton, D. Market Leader (D. Cotton, D. Falvey, S. Kent). – London: Longman, 2001.
2. Dickens, Ch. David Copperfield / Ch. Dickens. – M. : Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1949. – 851 p.
3. Grice, H.P. Studies In The Way Of Words. Ed. H.P. Grice. – Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.
4. Plotnikova, S.N. Cooperation and Conflict: Analysis of Interactional Strategies / S.N. Plotnikova, – Irkutsk: IGLU, 1998. – 44 p.

Language Learning Strategies Used by Saudi Arabian EFL Learners

Hind Aljuaid, Griffith University, Australia

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0366

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the pattern of language learning strategies use among a group of Saudi Arabian English-major university students using Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The study also investigates if there is a significant difference in strategy use due to language proficiency and gender among these students. The results of this study showed that this group of students used learning strategies with high to medium frequency. Memory was the least used learning strategy, and metacognitive was the most highly used strategy. Social, cognitive, and compensation strategies were used to an intermediate extent with no differences between them. Analysis of SILL scores by year showed the freshman had higher metacognitive scores than the other years. The scores on the other sub-scales did not differ significantly by year. Students with lower GPAs had lower strategy use than students with higher GPAs. Similarly, students with lower SILL scores had lower mean strategy scores than students with higher SILL scores. Females used strategies more so than did males. Despite overall group differences in SILL scores according to year, GPA, STEP, or gender, a similar pattern of rank ordering of strategies was observed in almost all sub-groups examined in this study: Metacognitive (1st), then social (2nd), then compensation/cognitive (varied between 3rd and 4th position), with affective/memory being ranked last (varied between 5th and 6th). The exception was freshman, who reported a different pattern of ranking than the students in the other years. The implications of this research will be further discussed in the paper.

1. Introduction

The process of learning has always been perplexing theorists and practitioners of all times, since individuals are envisioned as products of their environments, and their learning is usually represented in the form of imitating experiences to which they are exposed (Taylor, 2003). According to Pritchard (2013), learning tends to occur naturally, and goes unnoticed in many cases. Therefore, in the majority of cases, learners follow a normal pattern of learning and gradually become more skilled and knowledgeable. However, there is also a number of learning theories explicating the internal learning processes and showing through which mechanisms they can be affected for more effective learning and advancement in knowledge.

The concept of learning is quite broad, and it is not limited to the educational domain only; as noted by Pritchard (2013), learning may be defined in a number of ways such as “a change in behaviour as a result of experience or practice”, the process of “acquisition of knowledge”, “knowledge gained through study”, “a process by which behaviour is changed, shaped, or controlled”, and as an “individual process of constructing understanding based on experience from a wide range of sources” (p. 1). A focused study of learning was initiated at the end of the 19th century, resulting in emergence of a number of theories and understandings of learning (Illeris, 2008). However, despite the variety of approaches to studying and explaining learning, the main condition acknowledged by all researchers without exception is the existence of two processes: external interaction process between learners and their social, cultural, and material environments, and the internal psychological process of elaboration and knowledge acquisition (Illeris, 2008).

The learning process is a multi-dimensional, complex endeavour with many essential aspects shaping it and determining its outcomes. As noted by Taylor and MacKenney (2008), the most basic contributors to the learning process are physical aspects such as vision and hearing. The process itself encompasses a number of components such as acquisition of new habits, attitudes, perceptions, preferences, interests, and social skills. The learning process is also accompanied with various biopsychological changes of chemical, electrical, biological, and neurological nature.

As Lee (2010) pointed out, people are not born with an ability to understand everything in the world surrounding them; hence, they have to learn to comprehend their environment. The same occurs with language knowledge – not every person understands every language, and linguistic comprehension is built up during a complex and time-consuming process of language learning. Since the dawn of language learning research, investigators have noticed that some individuals tend to learn some linguistic aspects more quickly and easily, while other struggle with language topics. Hence, the subject of linguistic research has since then become to reach an understanding of how learners achieve a certain level of L2 knowledge, what makes certain learners successful while making others fail, and what features give certain individuals an opportunity to study language better than others (Lee, 2010).

After such questions had been posed, researchers have realized that answering them is possible only by investigating L2 learners' learning strategies (Lee, 2010). According to Oxford and Crookall (1989), learning strategies are steps taken by L2 learners to

assist them in acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information – in the present context, specifically related to SLA. They are also called learning-to-learn, problem-solving, and study skills, and their main aim is to make learning more efficient and effective. The researchers pointed out that language learning strategies (LLSs) are useful in both formal, academic settings and in an informal educational environment in which L2 learners are exposed to the foreign language. LLS research developed gradually from the simple lists of strategies to more sophisticated investigations of strategy employment in various L2 learning settings (Oxford & Crookall, 1989). However, the major portion of LLS research has so far been concerned with studying the classroom settings (Oxford & Crookall, 1989).

Before studying LLS research in detail, one should gain awareness of the elusiveness of the term “learning strategy”; since the 1970s, when active LLS research began, there has been little agreement on what this concept means and how it can be properly defined. According to O’Malley et al. (1985),

“there is no consensus on what constitutes a learning strategy in second language learning or how these differ from other types of learner activities. Learning, teaching, and communication strategies are often interlaced in discussions of language learning and are often applied to the same behaviour. Further, even within the group of activities most often referred to as learning strategies, there is considerable confusion about definition of specific strategies about the hierarchic relationship among strategies” (p. 22).

However, since the 1970s and 1980s, work on researching LLS continued, and after the first broad definition of LLS given by Rubin (1975), numerous researchers such as Ellis (1986; 1994), Tarone (1980), and Oxford (1990) undertook the task of defining LLS (Griffiths, 2004).

The reason for which learning strategies represent the clue to understanding SLA processes and outcomes lies in the fact that learning strategies represent various operations used by learners to make sense of their learning; SLA is accompanied with using several resources students have at their disposal for solving certain tasks, so the choice and proper use of those resources is regarded a learning strategy. It is essential to note that learning strategies are diverse and do not relate only to language learning; Lee (2010) emphasized that they are also exceptionally helpful in studying maths, chemistry, and other subjects. By means of employing learning strategies, learners obtain an ability to respond to a particular learning situation, and to manage their learning process accordingly (Lee, 2010).

The roots of LLS research were identified in the 1960s by Hismanoglu (2000) noting that developments of cognitive psychology laid the basis for attention to LLS. Together with the focus on successful language learners’ strategy use, researchers paid more attention to classification of LLS. One of the pioneering studies in the field was the work of Aaron Carter (1966) titled *The Method of Inference in Foreign Language Study*; it is considered to be the first attempt of researching L2 learner strategies. Later on, LLS research intensified during the 1970s because LLS importance in language learning was fully acknowledged. Researchers became focused on the mechanisms of information processing, strategy selection for

understanding, learning, or remembering information during second or foreign language acquisition (Lee, 2010). LLS quickly acquired research significance after the pioneering works of Naiman et al. (1978), Rubin (1975), and Stern (1975) claiming that certain learners were more successful in SLA though they were exposed to the same teaching methods and studied in an identical learning environment.

The LLS formulation process started in 1978 with the fundamental research of Naiman et al. (1978) stating that effective LLS included active task approaches, realization of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction, management of affective demands, and monitoring of L2 performance. After that research, Rubin (1981) worked more intensely on LLS classification and elicited a list of learning strategies directly affecting SLA: clarification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing and inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, and practice. The researcher also stated that processes with an indirect impact on learning created opportunities for practice and informed production tricks (Oxford, 1994).

Oxford (1994) analyzing Rubin's research on LLS also mentioned that Rubin (1975) formulated the features of good learners as follows:

- They are willing and accurate observers
- They have a strong drive to communicate
- They are often uninhibited
- They are willing to make mistakes and learn from them
- They tend to focus on form by looking for patterns and analyzing
- They take advantage of all practice opportunities
- They monitor their speech and the speech of their interlocutors for mistakes
- They pay particular attention to meaning of produced language.

Further LLS research validated some characteristics found by Rubin (1975), though the aspect of uninhibited learning was not confirmed by empirical research. More than that, the majority of findings of L2 learning research showed that the overwhelming majority of learners are naturally inhibited because of a certain extent of language anxiety to which they are exposed. Therefore, they tend to combat their inhibition by using strategies of positive self-talk, extensive use of practicing in private, and putting themselves into linguistic situations in which their communicative participation is required (Oxford, 1994).

Following the early studies of LLS, more recent LLS research focused on determination of connections between strategy use and language proficiency (examples of such works include Green and Oxford's (1995) study, and the study of Shmais (2003). The findings of these research endeavours have enabled the research community to see that proficient L2 learners used more LLS of higher levels than unsuccessful learners did. Park (1997) investigated the LLS-language proficiency connection and identified the linear relationship between these variables on a sample of Korean university students. A considerable body of research has verified the gender-LLS relationship (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1993) and learners' cultural backgrounds (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Grainger, 1997). Moreover, an empirical investigation of Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006) conducted a study of LLS in the intensive learning program to investigate learning strategies, and showed that L2

learners used metacognitive and social strategies more frequently than any other strategy during their language learning, and controlled their planning, organizing, focusing, and evaluating activities connected with SLA.

While many studies around the world have investigated the use of language learning strategies for improving language skills (Chamot, 1987; Oxford, 1990), most research into language learning strategies involving Saudi Arabian EFL learners compared to other nationalities and ethnic groups remains at the earliest stage of its development. This is not only the researcher's observation (Aljuaid, 2012), but also the conclusion of leading educators in the educational field as well (Syed, 2003; McMullen, 2009). Up to date, there are only three documented large-scale strategy studies that feature Saudi participants. The first one is the groundbreaking study conducted by Al-Otaibi (2004) who examined Saudi EFL students and the ways in which they were using LLSs, but it encompassed only one geographical location inside Saudi Arabia. The subjects for the other two studies were ESL students living and studying in the United States (Al-Wahibee, 2000; Braik, 1986).

Given the shortage of research on Saudi Arabian EFL learners' pattern of language learning strategy use, this research will aim to explore the pattern of language learning strategy use as perceived and reported by a specific group of Saudi Arabian EFL learners. In particular, the research intends to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the general pattern of language learning strategy use among a specific group of Saudi Arabian EFL learners, in terms of their overall strategy use and the six categories of the strategies, as presented in the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning?
2. Is there a significant difference in strategy use due to language proficiency?
3. Is there a significant difference in strategy use due to gender?

1. Methodology

1.1. Participants

Taking the purposes of this research into account, the choice of participants for the study targeted Saudi Arabian English-major EFL learners. The researcher contacted a group of Saudi EFL students at Taif University involved in the EFL studies at present to collect data on their use of LLS. About 400 participants constituted the sample for the study. The participants are majoring in English Language and Literature at Taif University which is a state university in Saudi Arabia. The English Language and Literature Programme, in which the participants are enrolled, consists of four years of formal study at the university. In the first two years, students are required to complete courses to boost their English language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). In the last two year, students are required to take courses related to literature and linguistics to cultivate their literary appreciation and critical-analytical ability and to deepen their knowledge of the various branches of modern linguistic theory.

1.2. Instruments

Two questionnaires were used for data collection. The first one was the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which was devised by Rebecca Oxford (1990) as an instrument for assessing the frequency of use of language learning strategies by students. The SILL is a structured self-report instrument that includes Likert-type scale items ranging from 1 (“Never or almost never true of me”), the lowest degree in the measurement of the variable, to 5 (“Always or almost always true of me”), the highest degree. Oxford (1990, p. 300) has provided criteria for judging the degree of strategy use as follows:

Table 1: Guidelines for Understanding Average Scores on the SILL

High	Always or almost always used	4.5 to 5.0
	Usually used	3.5 to 4.4
Medium	Sometimes used	2.5 to 3.4
Low	Generally not used	1.5 to 2.4
	Never or almost never used	1.0 to 1.4

The version of the SILL used in this study is a 50-item instrument that is divided into two main groups, direct strategies and indirect strategies, which are further subdivided into six groups. The SILL instrument contains 50 short statements each describing the use of one strategy. These statements are further grouped into six categories according to Oxford’s strategy system. The six categories are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. The 50 items are categorized into six parts, each representing a subscale or category. The six categories include memory (items 1 through 9), cognitive (items 10 through 23), and compensation (items 24 through 29), which Oxford (1990) classified as “direct strategies” (p. 37). The other three subcategories that fall under the category of indirect strategies include metacognitive (items 30 through 38), affective (items 39 through 44), and social (items 45 through 50). The SILL was chosen as the main instrument for the present study because of its comprehensiveness (Ellis, 1994), and because of claims that it is valid, reliable, and appears to be lacking in social desirability response bias (Oxford, 1996; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

The second questionnaire used for data collection was a background questionnaire which was used to document information about the participants.

1.3. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Microsoft Windows 20.0 was used to complete the analysis of the collected data, following the instructions in Field (2009). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages, were implemented in order to investigate the demographic data and the use of language learning strategies. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine whether any significant differences existed among respondents in the use of language learning strategies with regard to their English proficiency level or gender. The minimum level of significance predetermined for the tests conducted within the framework of this study was $p < .05$. The results of this analysis will be further discussed in the following section.

2. Results

This section will present the quantitative results of the study, focusing on the values and interpretation of the statistics used to address the research questions and to test the hypotheses. The frequency distributions of the students with respect to age, gender, year, grade point average (GPA), and STEP score are provided. The descriptive statistics for the six SILL sub-scales are then presented and compared. The results of profile-analysis MANOVA are interpreted to answer research question RQ1 and to test null hypothesis H_01 . The results of MANOVA are then interpreted to answer research questions RQ2 and RQ3 and to test the null hypotheses H_02a , H_02b , H_02c and H_03 .

3.1. Demographic and Academic Attributes of Students

Four hundred and fifteen students provided information about their ages, with 48 missing values (Table 2). The age range was from 18 to 35 years. About two-thirds (69.1%) of the sample were between the ages of 20 and 23 years old. The mean age was 21.7 years ($SD = 2.1$).

Table 2
Age Distribution of the Students

Age (years)	Frequency	%
18	1	0.2
19	27	5.8
20	98	21.2
21	117	25.3
22	55	11.9
23	50	10.8
24	35	7.6
25	16	3.5
26	3	0.6
27	8	1.7
28	1	0.2
30	2	0.4
32	1	0.2
35	1	0.2
Missing	48	10.4
Total	463	100.0%

There were 301 males and 136 females in the sample, with 26 missing values (Table 3).

Table 3
Gender Distribution of the Students

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	301	65.0
Female	136	29.4
Missing	26	5.6
Total	463	100.0%

The frequency distribution of the 463 students with respect to their educational years is presented in Table 4, with the data unavailable for 55 participants. There were considerably fewer 1st year students (freshmen) than in the other years. The frequencies in each level ranged from a minimum of 41 (8.9%) for the freshmen to a maximum of 170 (36.7%) for the juniors.

Table 4
Distribution of Students with Respect to Years

Year	Frequency	%
Freshman	41	8.9
Sophomore	111	24.0
Junior	170	36.7
Senior	86	18.6
Missing	55	11.9
Total	463	100.0%

The frequency distribution of grade point average (GPA) scores among the 395 students who provided such data (68 missing) was approximately normal, indicated by the bell-shaped histogram (Figure 1).

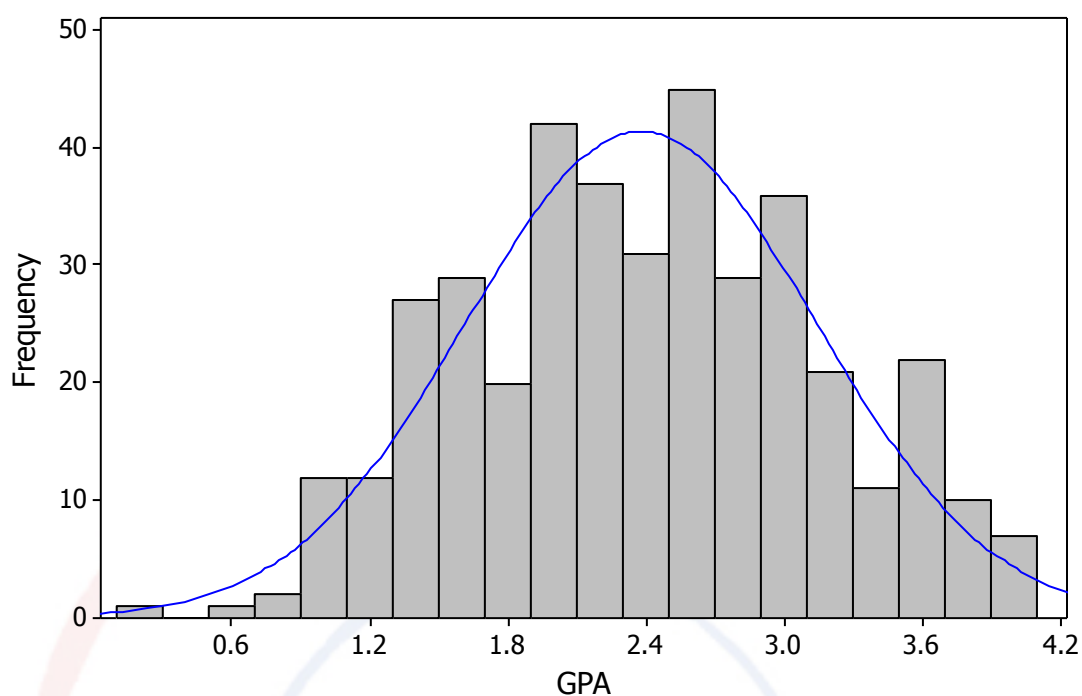


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of GPA scores

The GPA scores included a wide range, from a minimum of .25 to a maximum of 4.00. The mean GPA = 2.38 ($SD = .76$). The 25th percentile = 1.85, the 50th percentile (median) = 2.37, and the 75th percentile = 2.98. In order to provide adequate sample sizes in the cells of the MANOVA factor design matrix, the GPA distribution was classified into two approximately equal-sized ordinal categories, where 1 = less than the median ($n = 197$ students) and 2 = equal to or greater than the median ($n = 198$ students).

The frequency distribution for the 444 students (19 missing) that provided a STEP score is provided in Table 5. The group sizes representing STEP scores were unbalanced, with very few participants identifying their scores as below average (4.5%) or poor (1.75). To conduct the analyses, the STEP scores were dichotomized into two groups. Participants with good to excellent STEP scores ($n = 343$) and students with poor to average scores ($n = 101$).

Table 5
Distribution of STEP Scores

SEB	Frequency	%
Excellent	69	14.9
Very Good	101	21.8
Good	173	37.4
Average	72	15.6
Below Average	21	4.5
Limited or Poor	8	1.7
Missing	19	4.1
Total	463	100%

SILL scores

The internal consistency reliability of the six SILL sub-scale scores ranged from adequate to good, indicated by Cronbach's *alpha* ranging from .629 to .849 (Table 6).

Table 6

Reliability Analysis of the SILL Sub-Scale Scores using Cronbach's alpha

Learning strategy	Sub-scale	Total number of items	Cronbach's <i>alpha</i>
Direct	Memory	9	.686
	Cognitive	14	.849
	Compensation	6	.675
Indirect	Meta-cognitive	9	.810
	Affective	6	.629
	Social	6	.766

3.2. Descriptive Statistics for the SILL Sub-scale Scores

The descriptive statistics for the six SILL sub-scales are presented in Table 7, and the means and 95% confidence intervals are illustrated in an error bar chart (Figure 2). Using the categories suggested by Oxford (1990), the results indicated that the students were, on average, medium strategy users with respect to all strategy types. With respect to the frequency of use of the six learning strategies, the minimum and maximum values in Table 6 indicated that all six learning strategies were used to a more or less extent by students.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for the six SILL Sub-Scales

SILL sub-scale	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation of Mean
MEM	463	1.00	4.75	2.97	.64	Medium

COG	463	1.00	4.75	3.13	.70	Medium
COM	463	1.00	4.75	3.12	.75	Medium
MET	463	1.00	4.75	3.27	.76	Medium
AFF	463	1.00	4.75	3.04	.74	Medium
SOC	463	1.00	4.75	3.21	.85	Medium

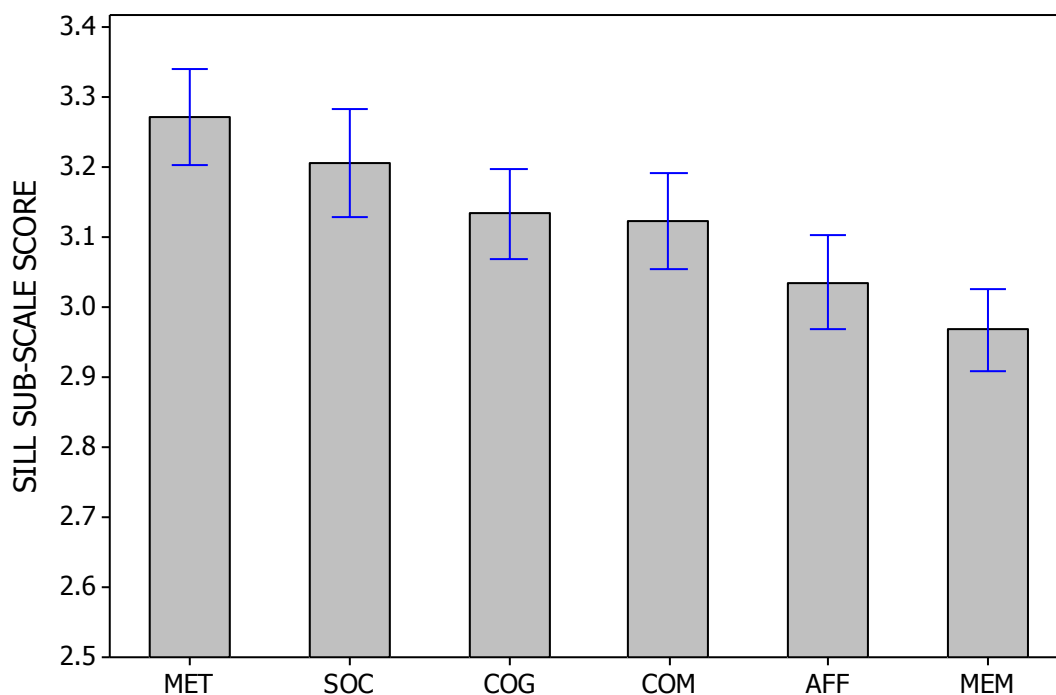


Figure 2. Means \pm 95% Confidence Intervals of the six SILL Sub-Scales

3.3. Comparison of SILL Sub-Scale Scores (RQ1)

A trend was displayed (Figure 4) in which the mean SILL sub-scale scores could be ranked into the following order of learning strategies: 1st = Meta- cognitive (MET); 2nd = Social (SOC); 3rd = Cognitive (COG); 4th = Compensation (COM); 5th = Affective (AFF); and 6th = Memory (MEM). The profile-analysis MANOVA results indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean SILL sub-scale scores at the .05 level, where Wilks' $\lambda = .795$, $F(5,458) = 23.681$, $p < .001$.

Comparison of means with Bonferroni correction (Table 8) indicated that there was no significant difference between the two highest scores of MET and SOC. However, MET scores were significantly higher than the other four SILL scores. The mean scores for SOC, COG, and COM did not differ. The mean AFF score was significantly lower than MET, SOC, and COG, but not COM. AFF and MEM did not differ from one another, but MEM was significantly lower than the mean scores for COG, COM, MET, and SOC.

Table 8

Results of Bonferroni Mean Comparisons of the Six SILL Sub-Scales

PAIRWISE COMPARISON		Mean Difference (I-J)	<i>p</i> value
(I) SUBSCALE	(J) SUBSCALE		
MEM	COG	-.17	< .001*
	COM	-.16	< .001*
	MET	-.30	< .001*
	AFF	-.07	.64
	SOC	-.24	< .001*
COG	MEM	.17	< .001*
	COM	.01	1.00
	MET	-.14	< .001*
	AFF	.10	.009*
	SOC	-.07	.38
COM	MEM	.16	< .001*
	COG	-.01	1.00
	MET	-.15	< .001*
	AFF	.09	.13
	SOC	-.08	.46
MET	MEM	.30	< .001*
	COG	.14	< .001*
	COM	.15	< .001*
	AFF	.24	< .001*
	SOC	.07	.51
AFF	MEM	.07	.64
	COG	-.10	.009*
	COM	-.09	.125
	MET	-.24	< .001*
	SOC	-.17	< .001*

Note: * Significant at $p < .05$

3.4. Analysis of SILL Sub-Scale Scores by Year (RQ2a)

The mean scores according to year are provided in Figure 3. A significant pattern of strategy scores by year of education was found, Wilks' $\lambda = .908$, $F(18, 1129) = 2.172$, $p = .003$. This was further explored using univariate ANOVA with Bonferroni correction to the alpha level, to determine on which SILL subscales differences occurred. Welch's correction to the F statistic was employed on the tests of MEM,

COM, and MET due to violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption. Furthermore, follow-up post hoc analyses were conducted using Dunnett’s T3 test.

A significant difference occurred for the MET scale only, as indicated by a p value < .008 (applying the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests) (Table 9). Post-hoc comparison using Dunnett’s T3 test (Table 10) revealed that the freshman had higher average scores on the MET sub-scale than the sophomores, juniors, or seniors. The sophomores, juniors and seniors did not differ from one another.

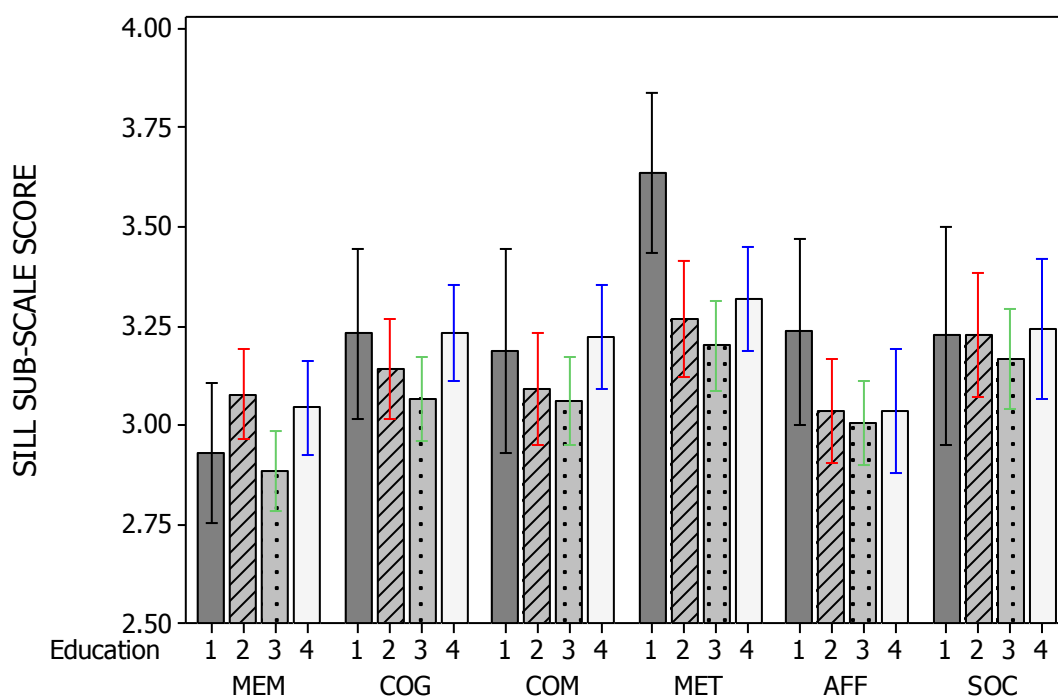


Figure 3. Means ± 95% confidence intervals of the SILL Sub-Scales with Respect to Year of Education

Table 9

Between-Subjects Effects Comparing the Means of the Six SILL Sub-scales with Respect to YEAR

Variable	Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F statistic	p value
MEM	Between Groups	3.484	3	1.161	3.012 ^a	.032
	Within Groups	152.279	404	.377		
	Total	155.763	407			
COG	Between Groups	2.393	3	.798	1.815	.144
	Within Groups	177.504	404	.439		
	Total	179.896	407			
COM	Between Groups	1.794	3	.598	1.442 ^a	.233
	Within Groups	207.288	404	.513		
	Total	209.081	407			
MET	Between Groups	6.646	3	2.215	4.994 ^a	.002 [*]
	Within Groups	212.526	404	.526		
	Total	219.171	407			
AFF	Between Groups	1.871	3	.624	1.248	.292
	Within Groups	201.903	404	.500		
	Total	203.773	407			
SOC	Between Groups	.668	3	.223	.321	.810
	Within Groups	280.120	404	.693		
	Total	280.787	407			

Note: * Significant at $p < .05/6 = .008$ (applying Bonferroni correction for multiple tests) ^a Welch's correction applied.

Table 10

Results of Dunnett's T3 Mean Comparisons of the MET Sub-Scale by YEAR

PAIRWISE COMPARISON		Mean Difference (I-J)	p value
(I) YEAR	(J) YEAR		
1	2	.37	.021 [*]
	3	.45	.002 [*]
	4	.33	.045 [*]
2	1	-.37	.021 [*]
	3	.08	.963
	4	.04	.998
3	1	-.45	.002 [*]

	2	-.08	.963
	4	-.12	.693

Note: * Significant at $p < .05$

The ranking of means according to year revealed a different pattern for freshman compared to the other years (Table 11). All groups ranked MET the highest, and MEM lowest or second lowest. However, AFF was rated second highest by the freshman, but this was the lowest or second lowest ranking for the other three years. SOC was ranked second for the sophomores, juniors, and seniors, but was ranked fourth by the freshmen. The Spearman correlation was not significant between the ranking provided by the freshmen and the sophomores or seniors ($\rho = .371$, $p = .468$), nor was there a significant correlation between the ranking of freshman and juniors ($\rho = .486$, $p = .329$). Therefore, it can be concluded that freshman ranked the learning strategies differently than the students in other years. However, these results should be interpreted with some caution given there were considerably less freshmen students in the sample than in the other years.

In contrast, the rank ordering of sophomores and seniors was identical ($\rho = 1.00$). Furthermore, the correlation between juniors and either sophomores or seniors was statistically significant, $\rho = .886$, $p = .019$.

Table 11

Ranking of SILL Sub-Scales by YEAR

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
MET	1	1	1	1
AFF	2	6	5	6
COG	3	3	4	3
SOC	4	2	2	2
COM	5	4	3	4
MEM	6	5	6	5

3.5. Analysis of SILL Sub-Scale Scores by GPA (RQ2b)

The SILL scores with respect to GPA are provided in Figure 4. On average, students with a lower GPA (< 2.36 ; coded 1) had lower scores on the SILL than did students with higher GPAs (≥ 2.37 ; coded 2). This was confirmed by conducting a one-way MANOVA on the SILL scores by GPA group, Wilks' $\lambda = .967$, $F(6, 388) = 2.181$, $p = .044$.

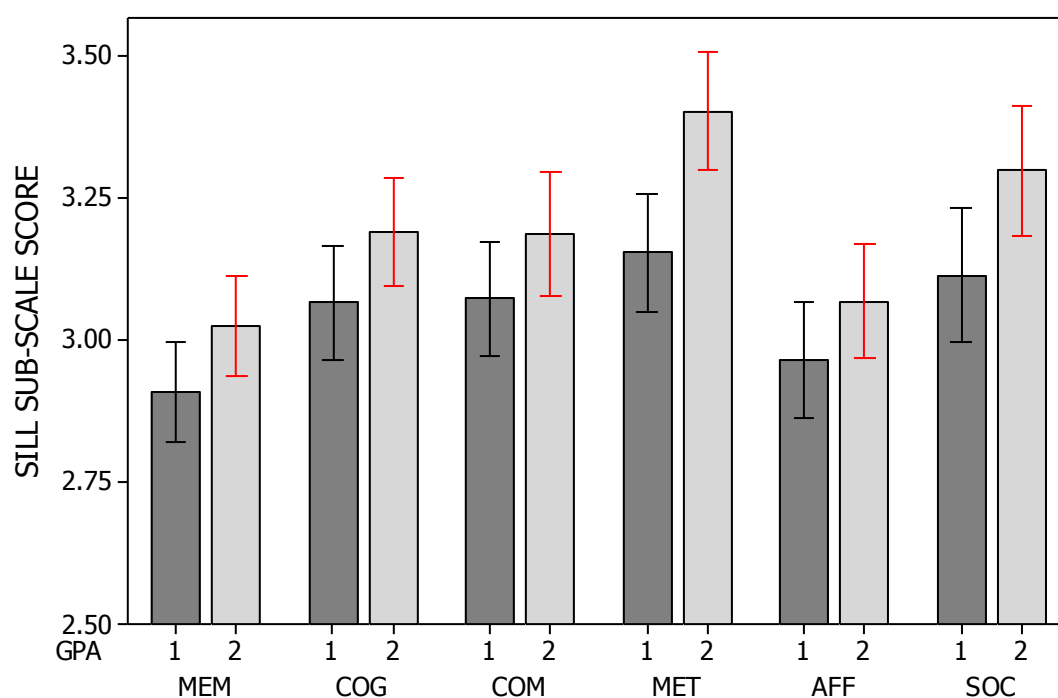


Figure 4. Means \pm 95% Confidence Intervals of the SILL Sub-Scales with Respect to GPA

Nonetheless, both low and high GPA groups showed similar relative rankings of the SILL sub-scales (Table 12). All rankings were in the same ordinal position, except for COM and COG which exchanged third and fourth position. The Spearman correlation between the ranks of the low and high GPA groups was .943, $p = .005$. Thus, both low and high GPA groups used similar relative patterns of learning strategies, but those with a higher GPA used the strategies to a greater extent than those with lower GPAs.

Table 12

Ranking of SILL Sub-Scales by GPA

	Low GPA	High GPA
MET	1	1
SOC	2	2
COM	3	4
COG	4	3
AFF	5	5
MEM	6	6

3.6. Analysis of SILL Sub-Scale Scores by STEP (RQ2c)

On average, individuals with higher STEP scores (Good to Excellent; coded 2) reported higher use of strategies than did individuals with lower STEP scores (Poor to Average; coded 1) (Figure 5). This was confirmed by a one-way MANOVA on the SILL scores by STEP group, Wilks' $\lambda = .966$, $F(6, 437) = 2.537$, $p = .02$.

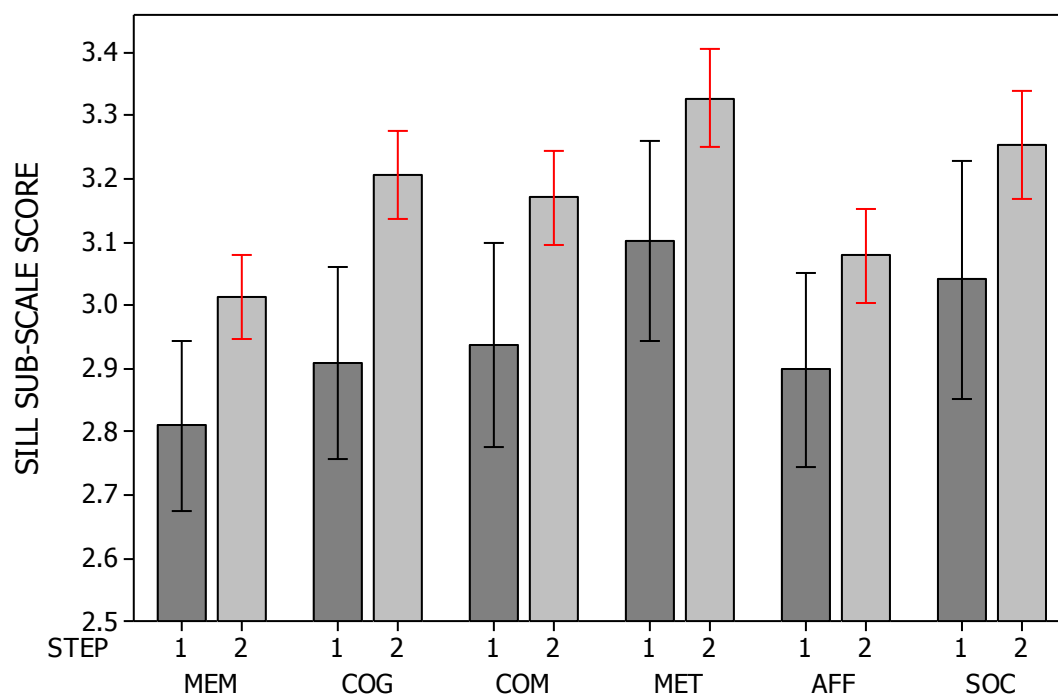


Figure 5. Means \pm 95% Confidence Intervals of the SILL Sub-Scales with Respect to STEP

Despite overall group differences, low and high STEP score groups provided very similar relative rankings of the SILL sub-scales (Table 13). Only COM and COG exchanged positions (third to fourth). The Spearman correlation between the low and high STEP groups was .943, $p = .005$.

Table 13
Ranking of SILL Sub-Scales by STEP

	Low STEP	High STEP
MET	1	1
SOC	2	2
COM	3	4
COG	4	3
AFF	5	5
MEM	6	6

3.7. Analysis of SILL Sub-Scale Scores by GENDER (RQ3)

The SILL scores showed a consistent pattern by gender (Figure 6). Females had consistently higher means on all the subscales than did males, and this was confirmed by the MANOVA, Wilks' $\lambda = .97$, $F(6, 430) = 2.56$, $p = .021$.

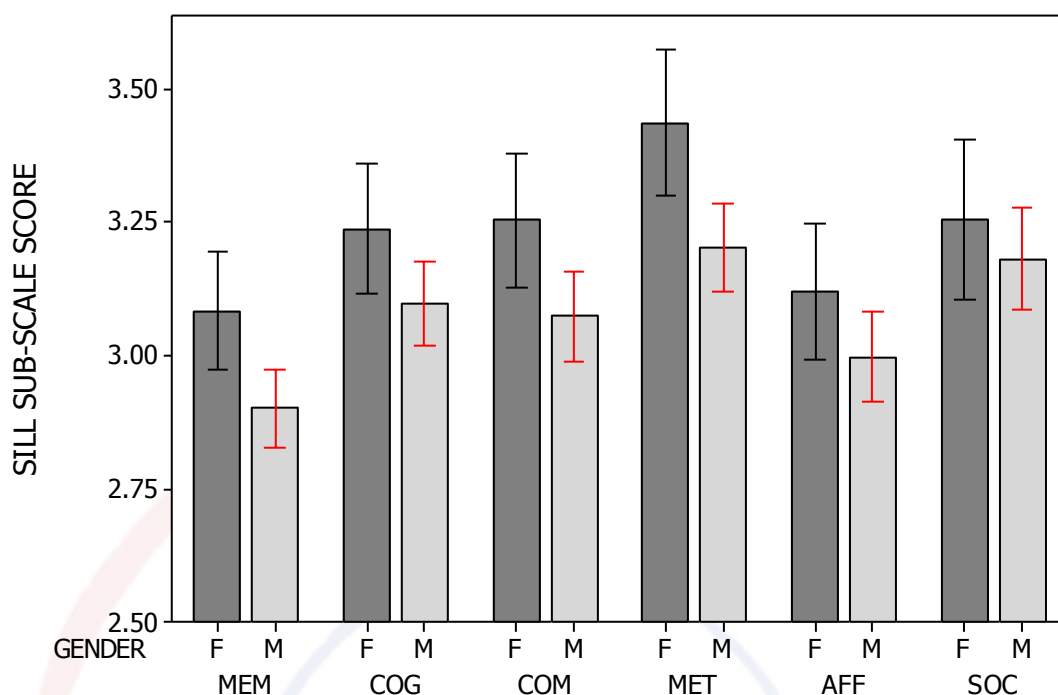


Figure 6. Means ± 95% Confidence Intervals of the SILL Sub-Scales with Respect to Gender

Males and females showed very similar rankings of the SILL sub-scale scores (Table 14) with only a slight variation on the rankings of COG and COM. The Spearman correlation between male and female ranks was .943, $p = .005$.

Table 14
Ranking of SILL Sub-Scales by GENDER

	Male	Female
MET	1	1
SOC	2	2
COG	3	4
COM	4	3
AFF	5	5
MEM	6	6

In summary, the six learning strategies were used by all of the students in the sample to a more or less extent. Memory was the least used learning strategy, and metacognitive was the most highly used strategy. Social, cognitive, and compensation strategies were used to an intermediate extent with no differences between them.

Analysis of SILL scores by year showed the freshman had higher metacognitive scores than the other years. The scores on the other sub-scales did not differ significantly by year. Students with lower GPAs had lower strategy use than students with higher GPAs. Similarly, students with lower SILL scores had lower mean strategy scores than students with higher SILL scores. Females used strategies more so than did males.

Despite overall group differences in SILL scores according to year, GPA, STEP, or gender, a similar pattern of rank ordering of strategies was observed in almost all sub-groups examined in this study: Metacognitive (1st), then social (2nd), then compensation/cognitive (varied between 3rd and 4th position), with affective/memory being ranked last (varied between 5th and 6th). The exception was freshman, who reported a different pattern of ranking than the students in the other years. The implications of this research will be further discussed in the next section.

3. Implications and Recommendations

The present study possesses both theoretical and practical significance because it is one of the initial endeavours to tap the EFL learning process in Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the environment in which English is not spoken on a daily basis, so it is a foreign language in this country, nonetheless being an essential skill for future Saudi employees in the quickly developing economy, and intensifying international business cooperation. Moreover, English is the language of technology, and it is highly necessary for the modern Saudi students to gain proficiency in English to secure a highly paid job, and to become highly valued, demanded, and appreciated employees. Despite the fact that there is an extant body of research on the EFL learning process among Arabic-speaking students, Saudi Arabia is the state that has been mostly neglected by the research so far, and there is little knowledge on the Saudi learners' specific patterns and peculiarities of EFL acquisition.

Taking this evidence into account, one has to note that the present study can be considered one of the pioneering studies aiming to delineate the specific EFL patterns of Saudi learners, and to identify the difference in EFL learning process according to language proficiency and gender of students. It is an initial scholarly effort that cannot be generalized broadly, but it is likely to give at least a preliminary insight into how Saudi students employ various learning strategies, and how the system of EFL studies can be better organized to fit the needs of students in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the use of the SILL inventory is likely to give an in-depth view of the ways in which the studying process is seen by the Saudi students, which may help educators design the EFL learning strategies most convenient and desirable for them.

4. Summary

This paper has attempted to present a research study that investigated what sort of language learning strategies are used by a specific group of EFL Saudi students. It has started with a theoretical framework that has provided the readers with the background information for the research questions. Then it has established a framework for the research so that readers can understand how it is related to other research. After that, the paper has presented the research questions within the context of the study. Then the paper has provided a detailed discussion of the methods, procedures, and instruments that were utilized in the intended research. Finally, the paper has presented the results of this research and possible implications of the study that may affect scholarly research, theory and practice in the field of language learning strategy.

References

- Aljuaid, H. (2012). *Language learning strategies: Perceptions of female Saudi EFL learners*. Paper presented at the Lancaster University Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics and Language Teaching, Lancaster, UK. Retrieved from <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/pgconference/v06/HindAljuaid.pdf>
- Al-Otaibi, G. (2004). *Language learning strategy use among Saudi EFL students and its relationship to language proficiency level, gender, and motivation*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Al-Wahibee, K. (2000). *The relationship between language learning strategies and the English language oral proficiency of Saudi university-level ESL students*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), University of Kansas.
- Bedell, D., & Oxford, R. L. (1996). Cross-cultural comparisons of language strategies in the People's Republic of China and other countries. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 21-34). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii.
- Braik, M. (1986). *Investigation of the successful attributes of English as a second language of Saudi Arabian students studying in the United States of America*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation), Pennsylvania State University.
- Carter, A. (1966). *The "method of inference" in foreign language study*. New York: Research Foundation of the City University of New York.
- Chamot, A. U. (1987). The learning strategies of ESL students. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 71-84). Cambridge, UK: Prentice-Hall.
- Ehrman, M., & Oxford, R. (1989). Adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting. *Modern Language Journal*, 74, 311-317.
- Ellis, R. (1986). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Grainger, P. R. (1997). Language-learning strategies for learners of Japanese: Investigating ethnicity. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30(3), 378-385.
- Green, J. M., & Oxford, R. (1995). A closer look at learning strategies, L2 proficiency and gender. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(2), 261-297.
- Griffiths, C. (2004). Language learning strategies: Theory and research. *Occasional Paper No. 1*. Retrieved from http://www.crie.org.nz/research-papers/c_griffiths_op1.pdf
- Hismanoglu, M. (2000). Language learning strategies in foreign language learning and teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(8). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Hismanoglu-Strategies.html>
- Hong-Nam, K., & Leavell, A. G. (2006). Language learning strategy use of ESL students in an intensive English learning context. *System*, 34, 399-415.
- Illeris, K. (2008). *Contemporary theories of learning: Learning theorists...In their own words*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lee, C. L. (2010). An overview of language learning strategies. *Annual Review of Education, Communication, and Language Sciences*, 7, 132-152.
- McMullen, M. G. (2009). Using language learning strategies to improve the writing skills of Saudi EFL learners: Will it really work? *System*, 37, 418-433.
- Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., & Todesco, A. (1978). *The good language learner*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzanares, G., Kupper, L., & Russo, R. P. (1985). Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning*, 35(1), 21-46.
- Oxford, R. (1993). Research update on L2 listening. *System*, 21, 205-211.
- Oxford, R. (1994). *Language learning strategies: An update*. Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/oxford01.html>
- Oxford, R., & Burry-Stock, J. A. (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the strategy inventory for language learning. *System*, 23(2), 153-175.

- Oxford, R., & Crookall, D. (1989). Research on language learning strategies: Methods, findings, and instructional issues. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(4), 404-419.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York, NY: Newbury House.
- Oxford, R. L. (1996). *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Park, G. P. (1997). Language learning strategies and English proficiency in Korean university. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30(3), 211-221.
- Pritchard, A. (2013). *Ways of learning: Learning theories and learning styles in the classroom* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the “good language learner” can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51.
- Rubin, J. (1981). The study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 117-131.
- Shamis, W. A. (2003). Language learning strategy use in Palestine. *TESL-EJ*, 7(2).
- Stern, H. H. (1975). What can we learn from the good language learner? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31, 304-318.
- Syed, Z. (2003). TESOL in the gulf: The socio-cultural context of English language teaching in the gulf. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(2), 337-341.
- Tarone, E. (1980). Communication strategies, foreigner talk, and repair in interlanguage. *Language Learning*, 30(2), 417-431.
- Taylor, G. R. (2003). *Practical application of social learning theories in educating young African-American males*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Taylor, G. R., & MacKenney, L. (2008). *Improving human learning in the classroom: Theories and teaching practices*. Lanham, MD: R&L Education.

Connecting Japanese nursing students with the Asian community through explicit instruction of pronunciation peculiarities among Asian speakers of English

Eric Fortin, St. Mary's College, Japan

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014

Official Conference Proceedings 2014

0367

Abstract

Japan has been criticized recently for its increasing isolationism, with far fewer university students desiring to study overseas than in the past. At this author's Japanese college, however, sister-college relationships with other institutions around Asia, including South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines, have been expanding. After briefly introducing these relationships, this paper will go on to explore the concept of culture that goes beyond national customs and ways of thinking to include non-national aspects such as age, gender, and occupation, in which professionals such as nurses often share a common philosophy that transcends national borders. The next part of the paper will focus on the use of English as a communicative tool in the various exchange programs that are carried out, either when nursing students from other Asian countries visit Japan or when Japanese students visit those countries. The author will demonstrate the main English pronunciation difficulties that native Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Filipino (Tagalog) speakers have, and show how Japanese students can overcome their speaking inhibitions resulting from their English pronunciation handicaps by learning about the difficulties that their Asian counterparts experience in their study of English due to the specific sound formation characteristics present in their respective languages. It is to be hoped that if Asian instructors of English make their students more aware of pronunciation peculiarities of the various languages in the Asian region, students might be better able to both understand as well as be understood during international student exchange activities.

iafor

The International Academic Forum

www.iafor.org

Japanese isolationism

Although the global flow of international students is expanding, the number of Japanese college students who study abroad has fallen almost 50% in the past 14 years (McNeill, 2011). In 1997 Japan sent more students than any other country in the world to study in the United States, while it ranks sixth today, behind other Asian nations like China and South Korea. On the one hand, the reason why Japanese are staying home more may be due to the fact that Japanese businesses are now able to create the necessary technology to be competitive in the world. The downside of this home-grown technological ability is that Japanese students feel less need to be able to communicate in English. The concept of Willingness to Communicate, which can be roughly defined as the intention to initiate communication (Matsuoka, 2003), has been cited in research to try to explain why the Japanese standard of communicative competence in English is insufficient compared with other EFL speakers.

In order to counter the sharp decline in exposure to non-Japanese, many colleges and universities are being encouraged by the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science and international corporations based in Japan to expand their study abroad and other student exchange programs. At the author's nursing college, sister-college or sister-institution agreements have been established with universities or hospitals in South Korea, Thailand, Laos, and the Philippines, which have enabled our Japanese nursing students to spend a limited amount time in other Asian countries, as well as allowed other Asian nursing students to visit our college. As the exchange coordinator charged with bringing visiting students and our students together at informal parties or other events, the author has observed that it is nearly always the case that the visiting students have initiated communication, and the Japanese students have appeared reluctant to engage in conversation beyond directly answering questions put to them, when those questions are in fact understood.

Recently, in order to facilitate communication between visiting and host students, the author has begun to introduce informal preliminary training segments during regular English classes shortly before our sister-college students are expected to arrive. These training segments, which are still being modified, include three ways designed to encourage greater integration on a personal communicative level, which will hopefully lead to our Japanese students' higher Willingness to Communicate. These three aspects include broadening the concept of culture for our students, introducing pronunciation difficulties that Japanese as well as other Asian EFL speakers have in order to better understand and be understood by the other party, and briefly talking

about the concept of chaos theory and how it can be applied to students' Willingness to Communicate.

Integrating Japanese nursing students with their Asian counterparts

Concept of culture

When the term culture arises, most people immediately think of national culture, or the customs, values, and belief systems that predominate within a country's borders. That definition creates an "Us versus Them" mentality in any country, but in a rather isolated island nation with a long history and traditions like Japan, it is especially prominent. One of the things that the author has attempted to do is to make students aware of other types of culture. The following is a list of some of the other cultures other than the widely-observed national culture.

1. Supranational: Regional area groups of the world that encompass countries sharing a similar philosophy, traditions, and customs (e.g. East Asia, North Africa).
2. Ethnic: Tribal-like groups existing within and/or across national borders, which often differ markedly from other groups within the same country (e.g. Kurds, Roma).
3. Demographic: Groups based on the size of their communities and also based on the degree of economic development and sophistication (e.g. rural mountain, megalopolis).
4. Religion: Groups with a similar spiritual belief system (e.g. Christians, Muslims).
5. Gender: Male and female groups within a community or nation.
6. Age: Groups of people sharing similar ages (e.g. children, elderly).
7. Education: Groups sharing a similar level of educational background and thus often similar political or social views (e.g. high school graduates, college graduates)
8. Occupation: Groups sharing similar employments and thus similar views of nature or society (e.g. fishermen, miners)
9. Historical: Groups living at a certain period of time (e.g. mid-eighteenth century, post-World War II).

The above are of course only a sample of the myriad types of cultures that groups of human beings can be categorized into. The important thing in international student exchanges is to try to find cultural types that the participants in the exchanges feel they can empathize with beyond national cultures. For example, in the author's case, his students are encouraged to notice similarities in occupation (nursing students), age (young adult), education (undergoing college training), gender (mostly female), demographic (urban), and even supranational (East Asian or Asian in general).

Learning peculiarities of other Asian EFL speakers

Another factor that the author has noticed precluding Japanese from initiating conversations in English or actively responding to efforts by their counterparts when initiating conversation is the fear of not being understood when speaking and not understanding with complete confidence when spoken to. Japanese students usually appear to blame their own pronunciations if they are not understood, and blame a deficiency in their own listening abilities if they are unable to understand what is being said. Although a quantitative investigation has yet to be conducted among the author's students, a cursory review based on answers from a number of his students implies that they assume that their Asian counterparts possess an excellent ability in pronouncing English; they feel that it is mostly Japanese who lack correct pronunciation mechanics instruction. However, as the tables below demonstrate, other Asian speakers of English also have pronunciation problems, and it may be just as much the mispronunciations made by these speakers that creates miscommunication among the students. The following tables demonstrate some of the greatest problems that Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Filipino (Tagalog) speakers of English have that can cause miscommunications with other Asian speakers who have a different system of phonetics.

Table 1. Pronunciation peculiarities of Asian EFL speakers (1) - Japanese

English letters	Japanese pron.	Example	English word
l, r	flap r	flap ri-ri	really
th	s, z	sanku, zei	(thank, they)
si	shi	shin	(sin)
ei	e	be-bi	(baby)
ou, ow	o	ro-	low
a (in cat)	short u	katto	cat
v	b, w	bitamin	(vitamin)
v	w	wirusu	(virus)
tu	tsu	tsu-	(two)
zi	ji	jippa-	(zipper)
final r	a (after o, i)	doa	(door)
er	a	dinna-	(dinner)

Also, Japanese tend to add the vowel u or o between consonant clusters and after a final

consonant (except n or s)

Makudonarudo	(McDonald's)
me-ku	(make)
guddo	(good)

It should be noted that the tendency for Japanese to add a vowel at the end of a word can be especially problematic for Thai speakers.

Table 2. Pronunciation peculiarities of Asian EFL speakers (2) - Korean

English letters	Korean pron.	Example	English word
p, t, k, medial	b, d, g	a bodedo	(a potato)
f	p	pex	(fax)
v	b	bija	(visa)
z	j	jezu	(jazz)
ts	ch	shachu	(shirts)
a	e	ket	(cat)
stressed vowel	short vowel	kopi	(coffee)

Also, Koreans tend to add a flat vowel (between u and i) between consonant clusters
 suturesu (stress)

The shortening of stressed vowels is one major problem Koreans have in being understood by Japanese speakers. Another problem for Korean speakers is their pronunciation of f as p, creating confusion for Japanese, who wonder why Koreans want to eat pork with their birthday cake when they're actually asking for a fork.

Table 3. Pronunciation peculiarities of Asian EFL speakers (3) - Thai

English letters	Thai pron.	Example	English word
final d	t	meit	(made)
final f	p	li-p	(leaf)
final g	k	bak	(bag)
final j	t	weit	(wage)

final l	n	bin	(bill)
final r	l	lait	(right)
final s	t	lait	(rice)
final sh	t	put	(push)
final ch	t	wat	(watch)
th (as in thin)	t, s	tin, sin	(thin)
th as in this)	d	dei	(they)
V	p	doup	(dove)
V	w	wet	(vet)
Z	s	laising	(rising)

The many consonantal sounds that are reduced to a faint t sound among Thai speakers at the end of a word is a major problem for Japanese and Korean speakers, who expect a clear pronunciation of the final consonant that often includes an additional vowel sound at the end, especially for Japanese speakers. For example, the word hot would be pronounced with a very faint t sound at the end, sounding more like ho to Korean and especially Japanese speakers, the latter of whom would be expecting to hear the pronunciation hotto in conversation.

Table 4. Pronunciation peculiarities of Asian EFL speakers (4) - Filipino

English letters	Filipino pron.	Example	English word
f	p	Patima	(Fatima)
v	b	lib	(live)
z	s	rais	(rise)
th	t	tin	(thin)
medial d	flap r	terry	(teddy)
e	i	bit	(bet)
o	u	hut (oo as in foot)	(hot)

Although most Filipinos are usually very good English speakers compared with other Asians, the above sound changes can sometimes cause confusion, especially the pronunciation of f as p.

Application of chaos theory to Willingness to Communicate

A detailed discussion of chaos theory, also known as complex systems theory, and its application to language learning (Fortin, 2011) is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief explanation of how the author incorporates it in instilling motivation among his

students is considered appropriate at this time. Chaos theory, contrary to what its name implies, actually seeks to demonstrate the existence of more patterns and less randomness among interactions than is generally believed, provided that all the factors involved in the interactions are considered. There are four main criteria of a chaotic, or complex systems (Gleick 1987):

1. Sensitivity to initial conditions: The important effects of seemingly insignificant factors on the long-term development of events.
2. Attractor states: Temporary loops in which patterns can be temporarily predictable.
3. Recursiveness: The repetitiveness of similar but not exactly identical patterns around attractors (mentioned above).
4. Non-linearity: The dynamic interactions of factors related to an event, including the interactions of those factors with each other.

When applied to Willingness to Communicate of Japanese with their Asian counterparts, the author, who has noticed that one individual students' motivation can vary significantly depending on positive or negative external events that they may have experienced (some of which may appear to have had nothing to do with English), has begun to apply chaos theory to reassure and encourage students to aim for long-term goals despite occasionally feelings of a lack of confidence. The four main criteria of a chaotic system noted above can be applied to language learning as follows:

1. Sensitivity to initial conditions: Students are instructed to be aware of even minute factors that can cause temporary lapses in confidence or motivation, and then try to create environments that could reverse this negative effect.
2. Attractor states: Students are encouraged to remain in positive confidence and motivation loops and seek to break away from negative loops.
3. Recursiveness: Students are made aware of how vicious circles of diminishing confidence and demotivation can form and continue, and how to possibly escape them and hopefully establish virtuous circles.
4. Non-linearity: Students are made aware that all their experiences interact with each other in myriad ways, so that they need not be overly preoccupied if their confidence and motivation varies from time to time.

If students are made aware of the shifts in their English speaking confidence and Willingness to Communicate, as well as in their English language ability in general,

they will hopefully overcome the periodic challenges they face and work toward long-term improvement in their communication abilities.

Conclusion

This paper visited three ways that Japanese nursing students can connect with the Asian community. The first is by expanding the definition of culture in English classes by including non-national cultures such as supranational, occupational, education, gender, and age cultures to encourage Japanese participants in international exchanges to seek out points in common with their counterparts. The second involves making Japanese students aware of the peculiarities of other Asian pronunciations of English in order to facilitate oral communication. Students hopefully become more aware of the possible misunderstandings that their own pronunciation may cause, as well as be more able to decipher other Asian English pronunciations. Japanese students also come to understand that they are not the only Asians struggling with mastering English pronunciation. Finally, by applying elements of chaos theory to help students understand how and why certain aspects of English language learning are more difficult at certain times and in certain environments than at others, students will hopefully aim for long-term improvement while expecting that there will be ups and downs on the road to English language fluency.

References

- Becker, B. P.: Thai for Beginners, 1995.
- Gleick, J.: Chaos: Making a new science: New York: Viking Penguin, 1987.
- Fortin, E.: Using chaos theory as a path to language fluency, The 2011 Pan-SIG Conference Proceedings, 2011.
- Matsuoka, R.: Willingness to Communicate among Japanese college students, 2003.
- McNeill, D.: Global Economy exposes Japan's shortage of English-speaking graduates, The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2011.
- Romero, V. E.: Learn Filipino, 2004.
- Young, J. & Nakajima-Okano, K.: Learn Japanese-New College Text series, 1984.
- Young-mee, C. et al.: Integrated Korean Series, 2000.

***Word Choice, Semantic Prosody, and Collocation Behavior: A Corpus Based
Analysis of the Phraseologies of Clever and Smart***

Omar Abouelazm, Zewail University of Science and Technology, Egypt

The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2014
Official Conference Proceedings 2014
0397



iafor
The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is undoubtedly an important part of any English language-learning curriculum designed for ESL learners. However, before vocabulary instruction can be considered meaningful, the factors underlying what it means to have knowledge of a word must be understood. Zhang (2009) proposed that successful knowledge of a lexical item entails that users fully understand its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic environments. The pragmatic behavior of lexemes is defined by the term semantic prosody (SP), which describes the hidden inkling of certain words to convey positive, negative or neutral connotations. This aspect of lexeme knowledge is particularly important when English teachers are faced with problems in vocabulary stemming from the use of near synonyms, or semantically related words. The problems faced by ESL learners when dealing with near synonyms were highlighted by Martin (1984). His investigation was one of the earliest to report that students tend to use near synonyms interchangeably in incorrect environments. Although he mentioned that language transfer, specifically semantic transfer, explained many of the erroneous uses of vocabulary items, word choice errors related to near synonyms add another dimension to the problem. What made this an even more pressing issue was that this was a problem plaguing advanced learners as well as less proficient ones. Furthermore, while dictionaries can provide using syntactic and semantic information about lexemes, they lack vital information concerning SP (Atkins & Levin, 1995).

Due to this shortcoming, researchers began to investigate SP and other factors that hinder vocabulary learning by students. The advent of this newfound interest in SP resulted in the increase use of corpus analysis to investigate native speaker language and find patterns and rules for authentic language use. This technique provided researchers with a salient way to investigate lexeme phraseologies in order to arrive at conclusions about lexical units semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic relationship with other items they frequently co-occurred with. Using a dedicated website to receive ESL teachers' questions about teaching in Hong Kong, Tsui (2005) found that most questions were asked about giving explanations for near synonyms. One such question asked about the difference of big and large, two semantically related adjectives. Except for large being classified as more formal, the dictionary defined the words exactly the same. However corpus analysis revealed that large most frequently collocated with measurement words while big favored abstract nouns. The misleading dictionary definition reinforces the use of corpus in combating such issues in ESL teaching. Furthermore, the study highlights the lack of awareness teachers have about lexeme phraseology. Zhang (2009) echoed this issue by stating teachers need to be aware of issues related to vocabulary pedagogy. He specifically proposed that teacher have SP awareness since the majority of word choice errors committed by students are related to SP. Ahmadian, Yazdani, and Darabi (2011) supported this claim with the results of their research related to students' awareness of SP. Using a corpus driven SP test, the researcher concluded that ESL student have a lack of SP awareness. Furthermore, they stressed that the learning of a word means nothing with understanding is collocation preferences and functions.

1.1 Research Problem

It can be said that ESL learners rely on native speaker intuition for semantic and pragmatic use of language. However, McGee (2009) highlighted that native speaker intuition is weak as far as collocation behavior and SP are concerned. Furthermore

McGee (2012) redefined the concept of SP with the idea of hidden meanings. This concept stated that not every lexical unit possessed SP, only those with no inherent connotations. That is, the word *danger* cannot be said to have negative SP due to the nature of the semantic meaning to be negative. Although this notion is clear for native speakers, learners of English may face problems due to cross-cultural linguistic differences.

Xiao and McEnery (2006) emphasized the importance of exploring SP and CB on near synonyms in languages other than English in order to gain insights on similarities and differences in comparison to English. Using a corpus analysis of English and Chinese, the researchers investigated the CB and SP of near synonyms *cause* and *consequence*. Results of the subsequent contrastive analysis revealed Chinese exhibited CB and SP as much as English did. Additionally, the researchers discovered neither of the near synonyms in English or Chinese behaved similarly or were interchangeable. The pedagogical implications of these findings provide strong support for the teaching of SP and CB for near synonyms in ESL classrooms.

Given the contextual background and pedagogical implications of SP, CB, and factors have on vocabulary instruction, the present study aims to investigate the use of the semantically related lexemes *smart* and *clever* through a corpus-based analysis. These words are of interests due to the overwhelming observed use of *clever* by ESL Egyptian learners to compliment someone on their intelligence. The researcher, a native speaker of English, proposes that *clever* has a negative SP whereas *smart* shows inclination towards the positive end of the spectrum. The following research question is put forth by the present study: What are the Collocation behaviors and semantic prosodies of the semantically related adjectival lexemes *clever* and *smart*?

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Semantic Transfer

An underlying issue in in vocabulary acquisition is semantic transfer, or use of directly translated lexical items to the L2. In a study by Woodin (2010), membership categorization was used to highlight the issues related to problems with direct translation from L1 to L2. The conversations of tandem language learners participating in an English/Spanish language exchange were recorded and analyzed specifically for discussions surrounding certain nouns. Among other interesting findings, results showed that even though some nouns in English had Spanish equivalents (and vice versa), their connotations and representations differed due to the way each language learner perceived them culturally. Furthermore, only the learners that had been exposed to the target language culture were able to personally relate to the noun in question. These findings suggest that cultural linguistic knowledge is essential for vocabulary understanding. Thus, a working pragmatic knowledge of the target language and its lexical components are important to avoid erroneous use.

A study conducted by Zughoul (1991) demonstrated the problematic semantic transfer in the choice of lexical items by Arabic speakers. Using the compositions of Jordanian EFL learners, the research constructed a learners' corpus and analyzed the errors related to lexical choice. Findings showed that semantic transfer occurred and often times resulted in awkward sentences. An example given was with the use of *Waraq a'nab* (grape leaves) in its direct translation of grape papers. A similar study

was conducted but used the context of beginning Spanish-speaking learners of English in Spain (Llach, 2007). Using a similar methodology of gathering student-writing samples, the researcher conducted error analysis to investigate errors related to lexical choice. Although spelling errors were the most frequent, the findings produced evidence of transfer from L1. An example was the Spanish equivalent of the word plate used to describe one's favorite food as in the sentence my favorite plate is chicken. In this instance, the correct word is dish. This example is particularly of interest to the present study because dish and plate are near synonyms but are not interchangeable in the previous context.

Finally, Jiang (2002, 2009) made the claim that L1 semantic transfer accounts for a large part of erroneous lexical choice when communicating in the L2. This conclusion was drawn after he conducted two separate but identical studies save for the participants' L1 background. Using Chinese L1 and Korean L1 English bilinguals as participants for each respective study, the researcher designed a study that asked participants to provide rating on the semantic relatedness of near synonym pairs in English. The pairs were classified into two categories, same translation pairs and different translation pairs. Same translation pair constituted English words that were near synonyms but had only one equivalent in the foreign language (Chinese or Korean). Results shows that pairs in the same translation group were given high ratings of semantic relatedness since they essentially had one meaning in the minds of the participants. These finding led to a model of vocabulary lexical mapping in which Jiang (2002, 2009) argued L1 lexical information was mapped on the L2 equivalents and thus used interchangeably and incorrectly with near synonyms in the target language.

2.2 Semantic Prosody and Collocation Behavior: Corpus-Based Studies

Corpus analysis has allowed researchers to examine large amounts of native speaker data in order to draw conclusions about language behavior. Atkins and Levin (1995) pointed out a flaw in dictionary definitions by conducting a corpus analysis of the shake verbs. The shake verbs included semantically related lexemes, all with similar semantic meaning to shake. Examples of these in the study were quake, tremble, shiver, and quiver. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE) defined each of the verbs with one or more of its near synonyms, suggesting that they are all interchangeable. However, corpus analysis revealed that the shake verbs were found in vastly different phraseologies and displayed different CB. A similar study conducted by Butler (2008) examined the phraseologies of the semantically related nouns concept, idea, and notion along with their Spanish counterparts. Unlike the analysis conducted by Atkins and Levin (1995) the SP, in addition to the CB and idiomatic uses of the nouns were investigated. After getting similar results from the definitions of the nouns in the LDCE, the researcher investigated the British National Corpus (BNC) to determine the frequencies, adjectival collocates, and SP of each of them. The researcher specifically chose to focus on adjectival collocates in order to determine types of lexemes that modified each of the nouns under scrutiny. With respect to CB, the researcher gathered information regarding collocate frequency, collocate similarity, and grammatical structures each noun was used in. This information was then used to make any inferences to the SP of the nouns. The close corpus analysis revealed that idea, notion, and concept shared similar syntactic environments based on their adjectival collocates, which made them interchangeably in many cases (Butler, 2008). However, Butler concluded that overwhelmingly, the

corpus evidence suggested English conceptualizes each noun in a different sense. These differences centered on the ways speakers evaluated ideas, concepts or notions. Idea was most used to exemplify mental constructs of everyday life and was evaluated positively or negatively. On the other hand, notion was typically evaluated negatively and concept denoted mental constructs belonging to a specialized field.

A further study aimed to explore the use of English words *own* and *possess* to investigate similarities and differences in their use (Nordlund). After highlighting the problems related to the similar dictionary definitions of the words, the BNC was used to search the terms in order to develop an understanding of their uses in context. The search was limited to the simple verbs of *own* and *possess*, excluding any other inflectional forms. Being verbs, the researcher examined the subjects and objects of each term, generalizing rules of use. The results revealed *own* and *possess* occurred mostly with human subjects and inanimate objects. However, *own* was used to reflect legal ownership and control whereas *possess* was used to show that someone had a certain quality.

Chief, principal, primary, major and main came under scrutiny in another study investigating the differences possessed by near synonyms (Liu, 2010). As a preliminary point of departure, the definitions of the adjectives were probed for observable commonalities between the uses of each word. Definitions revealed that the five adjectives were similar in that they added a sense of value and importance to the word they modified. Using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the frequencies and collocates of each adjective were analyzed resulting in the construction of a behavior profile for each. Since the words in adjectives, the analysis focused on the nouns being modified by each term and was able to pinpoint differences in usage. Noun categories were used to determine which of the adjectives preferred certain nouns (abstract, position titles, etc). This analysis led to conclusions about the semantics of each adjective as preferring specific environments.

Corpus based analysis was also the driving force for a study investigating the use of the verbs *provide*, *supply*, and *present* (Clerck & Delorge & Simon-Vandenberg, 2011). Taking a different approach than previous research, the researchers decided to investigate the most frequent structural use of the verbs in order to make claims about their semantic inclinations. Preliminary analysis resulted in the common use of the three verbs with the prepositions *with*, *to*, and *for*. Unlike the findings of Butler (2008), who concluded that *notion*, *idea*, and *concept* were interchangeably in certain situations, Clerck et al (2011) proposed that neither of the terms examined in their study was interchangeably semantically. These findings validate the notion that some near synonyms are not interchangeably under given circumstances.

3. Methodology and Analysis

Using Butler's (2008) methodological approach as a model, the research searched (COCA) for instances of *smart* and *clever*. These search terms were manipulated in order to examine their frequencies and collocates. Since both lexemes are adjectival, the researcher decided to explore the CB of each item in terms of noun and intensifier collocates. This decision was taken in order to determine how the adjectives under scrutiny modify and are modified by words they collocate with. Finally, based on the findings, inferences to each adjectives SP will be made based on the preliminary corpus analysis.

4. Results

To put the results in perspective, clever and smart were first searched in the Longman Online Dictionary of Contemporary English. The purpose of this step is two fold. First, the results of the study will compare findings to the information reported in the dictionary definitions. Second, the dictionary somewhat illustrates what a learner of English might encounter when using the tool for vocabulary learning.

Clever: able to learn and understand things quickly [= intelligent; = smart AmE]
 Smart: intelligent or sensible [= clever; ≠ stupid] Disrespectful: trying to seem clever in a disrespectful way

First, it can be seen that the words intelligent, clever, and smart are used as part of both definitions. Additionally, the definition for smart attempts to expand from providing the typical semantic information to adding a negative usage of smart as trying to seem clever in a disrespectful way. However, judgments about the SP of smart according to this usage cannot be made until a preliminary understanding of the SP of clever is made.

Frequency

Search terms smart and clever were queried in COCA in order to examine their frequencies across the five sub corpora of COCA. The results for this search are displayed in table 1 below.

Table 1: Frequencies in COCA

Lemma	All	Spoken	Fiction	Magazine	Newspaper	Academic
Smart	21674	5096	4765	6256	4193	1364
Clever	5565	739	1933	1468	873	552

No other grammatical variations of the words were searched because the research was interested in investigating their adjectival use. It is clearly evident from table 1 that smart is used more frequently than clever across all of the sub corpora. Additionally, it is used most frequently in the magazine sub corpus of COCA. On the other hand, clever is most frequent in the fiction sub corpus. In fact, although more hits for smart occur in fiction, clever has a greater percentage of use at 34.7% to smart's 21.9%. Although these preliminary findings are interesting, no strong claims can be made towards their CB or proposed SB. However, if it is assumed that fiction as a genre invites more creative use of the language, clever may have inclinations towards being more descriptive, especially for characters in a story.

Collocation Behavior

The search terms smart and clever were queried in COCA with the intention of investigate their collocates. The researcher specified that the program output included words to the first left and first right of the search terms. Since the lexical items under scrutiny are adjectives, running such a search revealed important information about the intensifiers and nouns that collocated with them. This was important because how adjectives are modified in addition to what they modify provided vital information to their semantic constructs. Furthermore, such information may also provide enough insight the use of the lexical items so that strong claim can be made about its SP. Table 2 below displays a representation of the most frequent collocates as evidenced

by COCA. These words are a representation of the collocates that were intensifiers or nouns in the first 30 hits.

Table 2: Representation of Most Frequent Collocates

Clever		Smart	
Noun Collocates	Intensifier Collocates	Noun Collocates	Intensifier Collocates
Way, Ways, Idea, Girl, Marketing, Ideas Boy, Design, Strategy, Twist Fellow, Scheme Politician, Tricks Advertising Devilishly	How, Too, Pretty, Quite, Extremely, bit, Diabolically, Particularly, Fiendishly, Fairly	Guy, Move, Growth Thing, Card Money, Phones Cards, Phone Bombs, Grid Girl, Ed, Ones Choice	Enough, Very, Too Really, Pretty

It can be seen that although smart and clever share a significant number of intensifiers, their commonalties with respect to noun collocation is limited. The only noun the two adjectives modify is girl. However, it is noteworthy to point out that this similarity only surfaces in the construction adjective + noun. Furthermore, in the previously mentioned constructions, both adjectives show a strong preference to be collocated with non-human nouns. Between the adjectives, the only human nouns that occurred in the top 30 hits were girl, boy, guy, and politician.

Upon scrutiny of the intensifiers that collocate with clever, diabolically, fiendishly, and devilishly seem to carry strong weight. All three intensifiers conjure up images of things relate to demonic entities or evilness, which are obviously negative connotations. Even some of its noun collocates, tricks and schemes, have insinuate negative intentions. On a cultural not, politicians, another of clever's noun collocates, is synonymous with liars and manipulators.

Investigating further into CB, figure 1 below displays 10 concordances lines (five with the clever and five with smart), of the ways each adjective interacts with enough. These lines were selected randomly from the first 100 concordance lines in COCA. The grammatical structure of the examples are quite similar, following a be + smart/clever + to + infinitive pattern. This finding helps illustrate the confusion of near synonyms for English teacher and English learners (regardless of level of proficiency).

An interesting point to delve into however is the pervading negative sense both adjectives emanate when coupled with enough. Example one uses smart sarcastically to mock the person who decided to drive through Death Valley (the hottest place in America) without air conditioning. In concordance, example eight uses clever in relation to a person using intelligence to commit a untraceable murder. Moreover, scheme, one of the frequent collocates of clever, is associated with smart in example five. As mentioned earlier, scheme has a negative connotation as a plan devised to deliberately deceive someone.

Figure 1: Concordance Lines of Collocations with Enough

1. One person was smart enough to drive through Death Valley in August with no air
--

- conditioning in the car
2. They are waiting for other countries to buy their debt because even Americans are smart enough to know they are not going to pay off.
 3. I don't mean' cause of all those loving cups he won for his golf and tennis or even him being smart enough to get a scholarship to Princeton College.
 4. He'd been smart enough or conservative enough to anticipate that - so, no tribal tats stamped up the neck, no facial designs or piercings, no four-letter words across his knuckles.
 5. Somebody in the scheme was smart enough to take the battery out of the cell phone.
 6. It's 10 inches across and seven inches tall, not including its pop-up plunger that I wish I'd been clever enough to figure out on my own how to lock down.
 7. But he adds, that " I think the Palestinian people are clever enough to know which way is the better way without knocking on a sensitive issue.
 8. But prosecutor Laura Gunn suspects Cynthia Sommer was clever enough to plan a murder without leaving any direct evidence of her using arsenic to kill her Marine sergeant husband.
 9. She also found an expert who followed him for a day and determined that he was clever enough to communicate his needs differently to different people.
 10. I told him my true intention, not being clever enough to lie.

However, preference for negativity shown by both adjective in the above example does not hold true for other intensifiers. Upon scrutiny of the collocate very, the corpus revealed that smart was used more neutrally (both positive and negatively) while clever continued to be negative. Some examples of these are shown below.

But when placed into a corner people become very clever with the stories that they can concoct to protect themselves.
ell, the defense has been very clever in massaging the evidence to fit their theories

These example show that clever remains to be associated with the negativity of manipulating the truth for benefit. Smart was also used in this way but only if collocated with a word with negative connotations such as in the example The victim's daughter is a very smart, manipulative fourteen-year-old.

The noun collocates of the adjectives were also examined. Since the problem observed by Egyptian students related to the adjective choice with people, the common noun collocate girl was examined in the corpus. Randomly selected lines are displayed in figure 2. From the concordance lines, only example five is overtly negative with the use of tricked, implying a manipulative action was taken. Other than that, the only distinguishing factor is seen in examples one and three, in which smart is followed by more positive adjectives used to describe girl and nice, ambitious, and hard working.

Figure 2

1. She's a smart girl. And a nice girl.
2. You are a very smart girl.
3. She is a smart girl, she is ambitious and she is hard working.
4. A You're a clever girl. Your father will be proud-or would have been
5. she's a very clever girl. I guess I can believe that she tricked you

6.the story of a clever girl who by her skillful telling of stories averts an evil threatening her

Although the inanimate noun collocates were not the focus of the analysis, they still provide important information about the adjectives under scrutiny. For instance, clever collocated with idea, ways, scheme, and trick. All these nouns have the fact that they require human cognition in common. On the other hand, smart was collocated with nouns that related to modern technology such as bombs and phones. Move and investment were also collocates of smart and it could be argued that these nouns require human cognition as well, as in some on making a smart move/investment.

Finally, the corpus was used to understand the ways in which the adjectives were used in the construction noun + be + smart/clever. This search term was used to try and mimic what a student would say in the classroom. An example of this structure would be Egyptians are smart/clever. For clever, only 112 hits were returned and the majority of them were in the fiction sub corpus. Smart occurred a little over double the figure for clever with 257 instances. Table 3 displays the most frequent collocates for the search term used. Using this construction, smart tends to be used more with human nouns. This is similar to clever, although some inanimate objects occurred (idea, book, management).

Table 3: Frequent Collocates for Construction Noun + be + Smart/Clever

CLEVER	SMART
People are clever	People are smart
Mother was clever	Kids are smart
Father was clever	Guy is smart
Management is clever	Guys are smart
Idea is clever	Child is smart
Book is clever	Women are smart
Photographers were clever	Consumers are smart
Peter was clever	Fish are smart

After examining the concordance lines, the present researcher selected a few for further scrutiny based on their novelty. One such case was the use of the phrase father was clever.

Republican would be president-a man who, though a fiscal conservative, was unabashedly pro-choice and pro-women's rights, which put him at odds with many Republicans and the religious right. Never mind. His mandate had come from young // people, Hispanics and African Americans who, finally deciding it was time for their voices to be heard, turned out in record numbers to vote for Edward Carson. Not only did they find him irresistibly charismatic, but they also liked what he said, and how he said it. She had to admit her father was clever as well as smart. Still, he was of a species-the political animal-that she despised.

The above line is from the greater context of a fiction book which used both adjectives to describe father. Characterizing a human as both smart and clever seems to mean that there is a difference in both qualities. The greater contexts shows that the father was a republican that went against his party's platform to appeal to minority

groups. It appears her did so not because he cared about their strife, but because he wanted to win votes for the presidential election. Doing this made him clever and smart. If the proximity rule is applied, since clever is mentioned before smart, it most closely modifies the father's character of going against his party for his own gain while seeming appealing to a group of people. Again, the theme of manipulative appears with the word clever.

With vast number of possibilities with the two adjectives, it is difficult to present all the instances in this section justly. More is discussed in the next section.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research question put forth by the present study asked, what are CB and SP of the semantically related adjective clever and smart? To answer this question, CB of the lexical items appearing at the first left and first right of the adjectives will be discussed first. As previously mentioned, clever and smart shared a significant number of intensifiers as collocates. Corpus revealed that the syntactic structure used for each of these was the same in most cases (enough). This finding is typical of studies that scrutinized semantically related lexical items in corpora (Butler, 2008; Clerck et al, 2011). Furthermore, closely looking at the way the adjectives collocated with enough revealed they both were expressed somewhat negatively. Thus, given this observation, it is possible that clever and smart are interchangeable in the environment *be + smart/clever + enough + to + infinitive*. Although interchangeability was common in some findings (Butler 2008; Liu, 2010) this notion was rejected in others (Danielsson, 2011).

Concerning the noun collocates, results showed that both adjectives preferred inanimate objects. However, in the construct *noun + be + Smart/Crazy*, the noun tended to be human. The in animate nouns modified by clever were nouns that seemed to have the common theme of human cognitive interference. For example, ideas are thought up by humans. Humans find clever ways of doing something. Also, humans devise clever schemes and tricks. The latter two items have a negative connotation, which provides some evidence of clever's seemingly negative SP. Interestingly enough, the following example from COCA uses a negative intensifier alongside a negative noun to truly exemplify clever: *labyrinthine machinations and open mob warfare, as Tom sets thug against thug in a diabolically clever scheme to set things straight.*

Smart, however, was used both negatively and positively. Usually, it was used just to state a fact of something or someone having intelligence. Figure 2 revealed that other positive adjectives followed smart in some cases. These adjectives did not particularly pertain to intelligence, but there were good characteristics to have. Looking back at the definition, the word sensible was used to define smart. The extra adjectives that followed smart in figure 2 could be classified as sensible characteristics to have.

Based on the very surface lever corpus analysis, there is some evidence to support the claim that clever has negative SP. However, if SP is represented as a continuum, it should not appear at the extreme negative end. Smart, on the other hand can be said to have a neutral SP, as the concordance lines reveal it to be seen used negatively and

positively often. Thus, from the preliminary findings, the research proposes the following definitions for EFL language books:

Clever: Able to think quickly and intelligently; using knowledge and intelligence to manipulate situations for ones benefit
 Smart: having or characterized by intelligence.

Thus, the researcher concludes that introducing SP to language learners is important, especially for near synonyms so students can avoid pragmatic failure in the long run. The next section provides activities that can be used in the classroom based on the corpus findings.

5.1 Pedagogy

Teaching vocabulary is important for any ESL classroom. Based on the corpus analysis of clever and smart, the researcher has designed two activities for classroom use. Activity 1 (Appendix A) is designed for beginning learners that have not reached full autonomy and who may find the concordance lines difficult. Activity 1 is inspired by the corpus analysis although it does not use concordance lines or even modified versions of them. Activity 2 (Appendix B) is designed for advanced learners. The activity uses a data driven learning approach to familiarize student with how to use the corpus.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadian, M., Yazdani, H., & Darabi, A. (2011). Assessing English Learners' knowledge of semantic prosody through a corpus driven design of semantic prosody test. *English Language Teaching*, 4, 288-299.
- Atkins, B., & Levin, B. (1995). Building on a corpus: A linguistic and lexicographical look at some near-synonyms*. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 8(2), 85-114.
- Butler, C. (2008). The very idea! a corpus-based comparison of IDEA, CONCEPT, and NOTION and their formal equivalents in Spanish. *Atlantis*, 30(2), 59-77.
- Clerck, B., Delorge, M., & Simon-Vandenberg, A. (2011). Semantic and pragmatic motivations for constructional preferences: a corpus-based study of provide, supply, and present. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 39, 358-391.
- Jiang, N. (2004). Semantic transfer and its implications for vocabulary teaching in a second language. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88(3), 416-432.
- Jiang, Nan. (2002). Form-meaning mapping in vocabulary acquisition in a second language. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 24, 617-637.
- Liu, D. (2010). Is it a chief, main, major, primary, or principal concern? *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 15(1), 56-87.
- Martin, M. (1984). Advanced Vocabulary Teaching: The Problem of Synonyms. *The Modern Language Journal*, 68(2), 130-137.
- McGee, L. (2012). Should we teach semantic prosody awareness? *RELC*, 43, 169-186.
- Tsui, A. (2005). ESL Teachers' questions and corpus evidence. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 10(3), 335-356.
- Xiao, R., & McEnery, T. (2006). Collocation, Semantic Prosody, and Near Synonymy: A Cross-linguistic perspective. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 103-129.
- Zughoul, R. (1991). Lexical choice: towards writing problematic word lists. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 29(1), 1

APPENDIX A

Are you clever or smart?

Brainstorming: Think of movies or stories that have animals in them.

Directions: Look at the list of animals below. What kind of adjective describe the animals?

Fox:

Dog:

Cat:

Turtle:

Ant:

Reading

Directions: Read the passages. Use clues from the stories to define the **BOLDED** words

The Ant and the Grasshopper

In a field one summer's day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An Ant passed by, bearing along with great toil an ear of corn he was taking to the nest.

"Why not come and chat with me," said the Grasshopper, "instead of toiling and moiling in that way?"

"I am helping to lay up food for the winter," said the Ant, "and recommend you to do the same."

"Why bother about winter?" said the Grasshopper; "We have got plenty of food at present." But the Smart Ant went on its way and continued its toil.

When the winter came the Grasshopper had no food and found itself dying of hunger - while it saw the ants distributing every day corn and grain from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew: It is best to prepare for days of need.

The Tortoise and the Hare

There was once a hare that laughed at a tortoise daily. "You move so slowly!" he chuckled. "How long it must take you to get from place to place."

"I move just as fast as I need to," replied the tortoise, sick of the teasing. "I bet I could win in a race against you, if I truly wanted."

The hare laughed again. "You, Tortoise, think you could beat me? We'll just see about that!"

The tortoise and the hare looked for an official to watch and score the race. They found the wise old owl and asked him to watch their race.

"We shall be racing from the top of the big hill to the bottom," said the hare.

"First to the bottom wins!" said the tortoise.

"And shall this be a running race?" asked the owl.

Again, the hare laughed. "No need to put limits on this race," he said. "Regardless of what way Tortoise here uses to get to the bottom of the hill, he still won't be able to beat me."

The owl nodded and looked at the tortoise, who was trying to hide a smile.

The next day, the tortoise and the hare met at the top of the hill. All the animals gathered to watch. It wasn't everyday that they could watch a race between a tortoise and a hare. The owl sat on a branch above the starting line.

“On the count of three, you will begin the race,” he said. “One. Two. Three. Go!”

The hare skipped lazily down the hill. There is no way this tortoise can beat me. No need to get all tired and sweaty, he thought.

However, much to the hare's misfortune, there was a boy who lived near this hill who left his skateboard on the top of the hill everyday before he went to school. The clever tortoise climbed slowly onto the skateboard, and with one gentle push, he began his descent down the hill. The further down the hill he went, the more speed he picked up. By the time the hare noticed the tortoise on the skateboard, it was too late. The tortoise zoomed past the skipping hare to the bottom of the hill.

“Tortoise wins!” shouted the owl as the animal spectators cheered.

“But that's not fair,” the hare protested. “He used a skateboard!”

“Did you not say that you could beat Tortoise regardless of the method he used in the race?” the owl reminded him.

Defeated, the hare hopped away angrily. The animals continued to cheer on the clever tortoise as he began his slow climb up the hill, pushing the skateboard back to its spot on the top of the hill.

APPENDIX 2

Is he clever, or is he smart?

Directions: In groups, search for the terms clever and smart in the corpus.

Write down some sentences you see

What are nouns each word modifies

Do you see any patterns

Based on your group discussions and searches, write a definition for each word. When

everyone has finished, exchange your definition with a different group and compare answers.



©The International Academic Forum 2014
The International Academic Forum (IAFOR)
Sakae 1-16-26-201
Naka Ward, Nagoya, Aichi
Japan 460-0008
www.iafor.org