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The EFL Professional's Written Forum

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Foreword

We are pleased to present another eleven studies in this June Quarterly Issue. Given the large number of submissions we now process, the authors of these papers have often had to wait between one and two years since acceptance to see their papers in print. We hope that, in spite of the wait time, publishing after an increasingly rigorous review has its own rewards: we are now able to accept less than 15% of all submissions and have two senior associate editors, twelve associate editors and more than fifty review editors working as volunteers in our team.

To open this issue, Giao Quynh Tran investigates the pragmatic and discourse transfer of compliment response strategies in the way Vietnamese learners of English communicate with Australians in *Pragmatic And Discourse Transfer Of Combination Of Compliment Response Strategies In Second Language Learning And Usage*. Tran uses a new methodology "the Naturalized Role-play" to investigate this. The study concludes that pragmatic and discourse transfer was "significantly different from the way strategies were combined in English CRs but closely resembled how Vietnamese speakers combined CR strategies." The study also offers a new approach to pragmatic and discourse transfer which could be used for similar studies in other contexts.

u6fang Wan, Rex Tanimoto and Rosalyn Anstine Templeton, in *Creating Constructivist Learning Environment for Japanese EFL Students: A Digital Story Program*, share their experience of an innovative approach to materials creation and EFL study. They assess the effectiveness of a web-based multimedia English program to teach EFL in a Japanese university. Their initial results, which are based on a survey of students' perceptions, are promising, suggesting that the program creates a positive learning environment for their students and warrants further investigation.

In *Research on EFL Writing Strategy Using SRP: An Empirical Study in DUT (Dalian University of Technology)*, Liu Wenyu and Lu Wang focus on the writing strategies of Chinese college EFL writers. The study analyzes the relationship between writing proficiency, writing strategy and writing scores using a Stimulated Recall Protocol (SRP) approach. They find significant differences in strategy use between English major and non-English major writers that should be of use both for EFL teachers, and also for learner training. They conclude that both global and local

writing strategies need to be emphasized in teaching EFL writing, arguing that only when writers handle both types of strategies do they improve their writing proficiency.

Hanmin Tsai, in *Improving an EFL Class: Starting from Classroom Observations*, considers ways of making classroom observation optimally effective. The results indicate that classroom observations are most effective when pre-observation discussions take place between the observer and the observee. Effectiveness is further enhanced when the observer is not overly critical, and when ample opportunities are given to recall their practices and respond to any comments. Constant discussion and negotiation is hence the key to building the mutual respect and trust needed to generate improvement.

In *How Does Context Contribute To EFL Learners' Assessment Of Vocabulary Gain?*, Berrin Uçkun provides a detailed description of the development and trial of three measurement techniques that provide varying degrees of context for the assessment of lexical knowledge. The author highlights the importance not only of language proficiency but also the ability to exploit different kinds of contextual information. While such a detailed study does not lend itself to simple conclusions, there are many interesting issues raised for the discriminate reader. One of these is Uçkun's discussion of what it means to "know" a word.

In *The Application of Learning Portfolio Assessment for Students in the Technological and Vocational Education System*, Ya-huei Wang and Hung-Chang Liao investigate whether students assessed through a portfolio system experience greater satisfaction than those under traditional test assessment. Their results indicate that students' appreciation of instructional objectives, material/method, teacher's qualities, class climate and environment, assessment, is indeed enhanced. This is an important finding given the typically low motivation often observed in technological and vocational streams.

Bexi Perdomo, in *The Effectiveness of Recasts on the Teaching of EFL*, examines the effectiveness of oral recasts in the EFL classroom. Her results provide evidence in support of the effectiveness of recast compared to explicit negative feedback. Perdomo also highlights the need to explore proficiency arguing that the appropriate choice of feedback is partially dependent on students' proficiency.

In *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Writing: A Genre Approach to Teaching Narrative Writing*, Fei-wen Cheng provides interesting evidence in one context suggesting that explicit knowledge of genre, in this case in narrative writing, is more

effective than a process approach. In her Taiwanese study, the results indicated that students' essays exhibited large gains in some specific rhetorical moves, as well as in content development, textual coherence and language usage, confirming the findings of previous studies on advanced L2 learners.

Traditional techniques of vocabulary learning such as rote learning are sometimes considered outdated and inappropriate even for low–level learners. Saeed Mehrpour, in *A Comparison of the Effects of Two Vocabulary Teaching Techniques*, compares the impact of different instructional vocabulary techniques on a low-proficiency group of fifty Iranian learners of English as a foreign language. Mehrpour concludes that rote-memorization of word-lists can work better than sentence-making practice, for Iranian learners of English at low levels of proficiency.

Finally, we offer two articles in support of our commitment to making alternative voices heard in our field. In my editorial opinion piece, I explore this commitment by examining a recent issue of AEJ to determine to what degree our own academic discourse community, in this case the editorial team at AEJ, accepted the first-person voice. The findings suggest that, while the use of the first-person was rather limited, in some cases the review process even encouraged it. A completely different type of alternative authorial voice is evident in Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew's paper, a non-research piece providing an alternative perspective on Singapore's response to its perceived geographical constraints. It examines the state discourses through an examination of the current language textbooks used in its schools, discussing the "key metaphors of statehood" and the promotion of moral values such as peace, cooperation and social harmony in an increasingly globalized, divisive, and unpredictable world.

Roger Nunn
Senior Associate Editor
Asian EFL Journal

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Pragmatic and Discourse Transfer of Combination of Compliment Response Strategies in Second Language Learning and Usage[i]

Giao Quynh Tran
The University of Melbourne, Australia

Bio Data:

Dr Giao Quynh Tran has a PhD in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from the University of Melbourne, Australia. She also has an MA in English and a Graduate Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, USA; a Graduate Diploma in TESOL from University of Canberra, Australia; a BA in English from Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) University, Vietnam (currently: College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, HCMC); and Australian "National Accreditation Authority for Translators & Interpreters" (NAATI) Accreditation for a (Level 3) Professional Interpreter and Translator in English and Vietnamese, both directions. Prior to her studies in the U.S. and Australia, she was an Associate Lecturer and staff member in the Department of English Linguistics and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, HCMC, where she is now acting as PhD research supervisor/advisor. In addition, she is running an interpreting and translating service in Australia. She is the co-author of a book, and the sole author of another book (Tran, 2006a) and 15 journal articles published in the past 6 years. Her research interests include second language acquisition, TESOL, research and teaching methodologies, interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural interaction.

Abstract

When it comes to learning a second language (L2), learners have already possessed and usually bring with them the native speaker's knowledge of their first language(s) and culture. The influence of the first language (L1) and culture on L2 use is described in technical terms as pragmatic and discourse transfer. This investigation is an in-depth study of pragmatic and discourse transfer of combination of compliment response (CR) strategies in the way Vietnamese learners of English communicate with Australians. Results are as yet unknown patterns of transfer. What distinguishes the present study from previous ones of its kind is the application of my new methodology - the Naturalized Role-play (Tran, 2004d, 2006a, 2006b). Moreover, in the history of this field, this study is the first one which investigates Australian English and Vietnamese compliment responses (CRs) as well as CRs by Vietnamese learners of English in cross-cultural interaction with Australians.

Research Aims and Background

Pragmatic and discourse transfer (i.e. the first linguistic and cultural influence on L2 learning and usage) has fascinated researchers because its nature has never been fully

understood. Based on my new methodology - the Naturalized Role-play (Tran, 2004a; 2004d; 2006a; 2006b), the aim of this study is to investigate pragmatic and discourse transfer of how CR strategies are combined in a CR from Vietnamese into English. The study also aims to contribute to the field pioneering research findings about CRs in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics[ii] in comparison with Vietnamese and Australian English CRs.

Knowledge of pragmatic and discourse transfer is significant because, as opposed to children learning their L1, adult L2 learners rarely receive explicit input on the appropriateness and politeness of their L2 language use from adult native speakers (NSs). Witten (2002) argued that L2 pragmatics is acquired in the same way as L1 pragmatics. Accordingly, input on L2 pragmatics is as necessary as that on L1 pragmatics. However, children are usually taught politeness strategies as it has long been realized that they need to be (Gleason, 1980; Gleason et al., 1984) whereas adult L2 learners are not. Because norms of appropriateness and politeness vary across cultures (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Held, 1989; Tran, 2002b), pragmatic and discourse transfer may lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

This study focuses on CRs by the Vietnamese and Australians because there have been no existing pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics studies of native Vietnamese CRs in comparison with native Australian English ones. In English, CRs have been studied by Pomerantz (1978) for American English, Herbert (1986) for American English, South African English and British English, Herbert and Straight (1989) for American English and South African English, Herbert (1991) for American English and Polish, Holmes (1986) for New Zealand English, Chen (1993) for American English and Chinese, Cordella et al. (1995) for Australian English, etc. "However, studies based on non-Western languages are scarce" (Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001, p. 1486). Moreover, none of the existing CR studies so far has focused on Vietnamese CRs, still less a comparison between Vietnamese and Australian English CRs. Therefore, this study was intended to supplement cross-cultural pragmatics research with Vietnamese CRs in comparison with Australian English ones.

Moreover, this investigation examines for the first time pragmatic and discourse transfer in CRs in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics. Pragmatic and discourse transfer in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics was studied in the communicative act[iii] of complaining (Tran, 2002b) but has never been examined in

the communicative act of replying to compliments thus far (except for Tran's study, 2004d; 2006a). On another important note, most previous cross-cultural studies (e.g. Baba, 1999; Jeon, 1996; Liu, 1995; Yu, 1999; Yuan, 1996; etc.) on pragmatic and discourse transfer in CRs were based on American English as the target language. In this study, Australian English was chosen to be the L2, which also added a new feature to the literature on pragmatic and discourse transfer in CRs.

With reference to the literature[iv] on pragmatic and discourse transfer in replying to compliments, previous studies (Baba, 1999; Golembeski and Yuan, 1995; Jeon, 1996; Liu, 1995; Saito and Beecken, 1997; Yu, 1999; Yuan, 1996) yielded conflicting results as to whether or not there is pragmatic and discourse transfer in L2 learners' CRs. Given the contradictory literature on pragmatic and discourse transfer in CRs, this study aims to shed new light on this phenomenon in terms of combination of CR strategies.

Research Questions

This study aims at answering the following research questions:

1) Is there pragmatic and discourse transfer of strategy combination in the communicative act of responding to compliments by Vietnamese speakers of English as a second language at the advanced level of proficiency in cross-cultural interaction with NSs of Australian English?

2) If there is transfer, which strategy combination is transferred?

The first research question is answered through the investigation of the following two assumptions:

- There are significant differences in strategy use[v] (specifically strategy combination) in responding to compliments by Australian NSs and by Vietnamese speakers of English as a second language.
- These differences can be accounted for by the similarities in strategy combination in responding to compliments by Vietnamese speakers of English as a second language and by Vietnamese NSs.

If these two assumptions are confirmed, a positive answer can be offered to the first research question. Because it is impossible to answer the question: "Is there pragmatic and discourse transfer" without knowing "What is transferred?", these questions are considered and answered simultaneously in data analysis.

Methodology

Data collection

Participants

Participants in this study fell into two categories including role-play informants and role-play conductors. All participants gave consent for their data to be used for research purposes by signing in the consent form prior to data collection.

Naturalized Role-play informants

The major source of data for this research project comes from the Naturalized Role-play. There were sixty role-play informants who were Australian English NSs, Vietnamese NSs and Vietnamese speakers of English as an L2 in Australia. All of them were university students, ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-one years. So they showed homogeneity in terms of age, education and profession. Following are details of the role-play informants.

- The English group (E group) included 20 NSs of Australian English in Melbourne, Australia. There were 10 male and 10 female informants in this group. These informants provided the baseline data on CRs in Australian English.
- The Vietnamese group (V group) consisted of 20 NSs of Vietnamese in Ho Chi Minh City and My Tho, Vietnam. 10 of them were men and the other 10 were women. They gave the baseline data on CRs in Vietnamese.
- The group of Vietnamese learners of English (VE group) was composed of 20 Vietnamese international university students in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. The number of men and women in this group was equally 10. They provided the NNS data on CRs in English.

Role-play conductors

There were ten role-play conductors including six Australian English NSs (three men and three women) and four Vietnamese NSs (two men and two women). They role-played with informants of the same gender. Australian English speaking conductors role-played in English with Australian English NSs and with Vietnamese speakers of English in Australia, which means each of them conducted role-plays with two to three E role-play informants and two to three VE role-play informants. Vietnamese speaking role-play conductors role-played in Vietnamese with Vietnamese NSs in

Vietnam, which means each of them conducted role-plays with five V informants.

Instruments

In this study, the Naturalized Role-play[vi] is the main tool of data collection providing the major corpus of data for analysis. The Naturalized Role-play (Tran, 2004a, 2004d, 2006a, 2006b) is a new methodology I created for my doctoral research from which this article stems. This methodology has proven to be an effective means of resolving the lasting controversy that the methodological issue[vii] in this field has engendered.

At the core of the Naturalized Role-play is the idea of eliciting spontaneous data in controlled settings. In the Naturalized Role-play, informants are not aware of the research focus during their role-play performance. They are conscious of being observed and studied in the whole procedure but not in the moments when they provide spontaneous data on a communicative act in focus.

The process of the Naturalized Role-play is demonstrated in the situational description and notes to participants in Appendix A. The description of the Naturalized Role-play situations and the cards given to Vietnamese informants were translated into Vietnamese.

In the present study, each informant participating in the Naturalized Role-play produced four CRs to compliments on skill, possession, appearance and clothing. The total number of CRs collected was eighty CRs in English by Australian English NSs, eighty CRs in Vietnamese by Vietnamese NSs and eighty CRs in English by Vietnamese speakers of English.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the qualitative analysis, CR data was coded according to the strategies selected to reply to compliments. The qualitative analysis was based on the content of CRs. In the quantitative analysis, the frequency of occurrence of CR strategy combination patterns was calculated to show the numeric differences between CR strategy combination in English and in Vietnamese as well as the similarities in CR strategy combination in Vietnamese and in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics.

Findings and discussion

This section presents results of data analysis and answers to the research questions

stated above.

Continua of CR strategies

The qualitative analysis of the semantic formulas and content of the CRs in this investigation resulted in a new framework of CR categories. This framework consists of two continua of CR strategies: the continuum of CR strategies from acceptance to denial strategies and the continuum of avoidance strategies (See Appendix B).

Differences in the combination of CR strategies between the VE and E groups

Detailed analysis of the content of Naturalized Role-play CR data from the VE and E groups yielded some different patterns of strategy combination. The following are the differences in terms of CR strategy combination between the VE and the E groups.

"Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade"

In the VE group, "Disagreement" often occurred with "Compliment Downgrade" as in examples (1) and (2). The frequency of occurrence of this type of strategy combination is relatively high in the VE Naturalized Role-play data. Out of the total of twenty-five "Disagreements" in the VE data, eleven "Disagreements" were used with "Compliment Downgrades".

(1) EFC[viii]2: Very nice car actually.
VEFI[ix]8: Oh I don't think so. Uhm It's very cheap. It's alright but sometimes it has problems.

In example (1), the "Disagreement" ("*I don't think so*") was followed by two "Compliment Downgrades" ("*It's very cheap. It's alright but sometimes it has problems*") which downplayed the object of the compliment.

(2) EMC[x]1: Nice looking car.
VEMI[xi]4: Heh heh. Oh no. It's just a normal car.

In example (2), the "Disagreement Token" ("No") co-occurred with a "Compliment Downgrade" ("*It's just a normal car*") which qualified the compliment assertion.

In English, however, no occurrence of the "Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade" combination was found. "Disagreement" or "Compliment Downgrade" also rarely occurred among the English data. When the strategy of "Compliment Downgrade" occurred as in example (3), it was used with "Appreciation Token".

(3) EMC3: That's a nice suit you're wearing.
EMI[xii]8: Thank you. Not much I think.

"Appreciation Token" and other strategies

The combination of "Appreciation Token" and other strategies exhibited another pattern. In the VE data, "Appreciation Token" occurred less than in the E data (i.e. 19 "Appreciation Tokens" in the VE data versus 49 ones in the E data). When "Appreciation Token" occurred in VE CRs, it was often by itself whereas in E CRs, it was usually used with other strategies such as "Agreement", "Return", "Explanation", etc. Statistical data about the combination of "Appreciation Token" and other strategies supported the above-mentioned difference between the VE and the E groups. In the VE data, only four out of the total number of nineteen "Appreciation Tokens" (i.e. 21.05%) were used with other strategies. In the E data, twenty-eight out of forty-nine "Appreciation Tokens" (i.e. 57.14%) were used with other strategies. The following are some examples.

Appreciation Token in VE data:

(4) EMC1: It's a really nice shirt you're wearing.
VEMI2: Thanks.

OR

(EFC3 was referring to VEFI10's car)

(5) EFC3: It's beautiful.
VEFI10: Thank you.

Appreciation Token and Return in E data:

(6) EFC1: You're looking good.
EFI[xiii]2: Thanks. So are you.

The combination of "Appreciation Token" and "Return" as in example (6) was found mostly in female E CR data.

Appreciation Token and Explanation in E data:

(7) EMC2: I like your tie. It suits you well.
EMI4: Thanks. Mom bought it for me. She likes to buy me nice ties now and again.

In the above example, the "Appreciation Token" was followed by two "Explanations" ("*Mom bought it for me. She likes to buy me nice ties now and again*").

The strategy that was used the most often in combination with "Appreciation Token" in the VE data was "Compliment Downgrade", which was a strategy towards the denial end on the acceptance to denial continuum of CR strategies. Three out of four "Appreciation tokens" that occurred in a strategy combination in the VE data were used with "Compliment Downgrades". Example (8) illustrates this type of strategy combination.

(8) EMC2: I just uhm I just read your article you published last week. I thought it was excellent.
VEMI5: Oh really? Thanks about that but I do think it's just OK.

In this example, after the "(Doubting) Question" ("*Oh really?*"), the appreciation "Thanks about that" was combined with a "Compliment Downgrade" ("*But I do think it's just OK*").

The strategies with which "Appreciation Tokens" were often combined in the E data were "Agreement", which is a strategy towards the acceptance end on the acceptance to denial continuum of CR strategies, "Return" and "Explanation". Specifically, the ratio of occurrence of "Appreciation Tokens" and "Agreements" to the total number of "Appreciation Tokens" in the E data was eight to forty nine. The ratio of occurrence of "Appreciation Tokens" in combination with "Returns" to the total number of "Appreciation Tokens" was also eight to forty nine and that with "Explanation" was six to forty nine. Examples (6) and (7) illustrate the combination of "Appreciation Token" and "Return" as well as the combination of "Appreciation Token" and "Explanation" respectively in the E CRs. Example (9) demonstrates the combination of "Appreciation Token" and "Agreement" in the E data.

(9) EMC3: I like your car. It's very good.
EMI8: Oh yeah, thanks. It's not bad.

In example (9), the "Appreciation Token" ("*Thanks*") was used with the full "Agreement" consisting of the agreement token ("*Yeah*") and the scaled-down agreement ("*It's not bad*").

"Return" by itself or preceded by "Appreciation Token"

Another difference in strategy combination in the VE and the E data is the use of "Return" by itself or with an "Appreciation Token" before it. In the VE data, "Return" occurred only once and it was used in isolation.

(10) EFC2: OK. Oh. That's a very nice dress.
VEFI6: (Laughter). Actually your dress looks much nicer.

In the E data, however, there were ten "Returns" and only two of them occurred by themselves whereas eight of them followed "Appreciation Tokens".

(11) EFC2: You're looking really good.
EFI6: Thanks. You, too.

It was noticeable in examples (10) and (11) that the way the "Return" was formed by the E informant differed from that by the VE informant. While the E informant's "Return" was the paying back of the same compliment to the complimenter, the VE informant's "Return" consisted of a comparison between the complimentee's object

of compliment and that of the complimenter. Such a comparison is often heard in Vietnamese "Returns". It is often made in order to assert a stronger complimentary force in return to the complimenter.

Combination of CR strategies on the acceptance to denial continuum

The important finding about the combination of strategies in the VE and E data is that in the English data, strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum, (e.g. "Return", "Explanation", "Reassignment"), were often used with strategies at the acceptance end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Upgrade", "Agreement", "Appreciation Token") whereas in the data by Vietnamese speakers of English, strategies in the middle of this continuum were often combined with strategies at the denial end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Downgrade", "Disagreement").

Specifically, in English, "Return" was used most often with "Appreciation Token". Eight out of the total number of ten "Returns" in the E data co-occurred with "Appreciation Tokens". When being in a combination in the English CRs, "Explanation" was used the most frequently with "Agreement", "Appreciation Token" and sometimes with "Compliment Upgrade". The use of the "Explanation" strategy occurred fifteen times in the E data and it was in combination with "Agreement" eight times, with "Appreciation Token" six times, and with "Compliment Upgrade" once. Moreover, there were four instances of use of "Reassignment" in the E data. One "Reassignment" was combined with "Agreement" and another with "Appreciation Token".

When occurring in a combination of strategies in CRs by Vietnamese speakers of English, "Explanation" and "Reassignment" were combined the most frequently with "Compliment Downgrade" and "Disagreement". "Return" occurred only once and it was not used in combination with any other strategy. Being used ten times in total, "Explanation" was combined with "Compliment Downgrade" four times, with "Disagreement" twice and by itself three times. In addition, the use of "Reassignment" occurred six times. It co-occurred with "Compliment Downgrade" three times and with "Disagreement" four times.

The following are some examples showing the differences in the combination of CR strategies along the acceptance to denial continuum in the E and the VE data.

An example of the combination of "Explanation" and "Compliment Upgrade" in

English:

(12) EMC2: Hey you've got a nice car.
EMI5: Yeah. Uhm well I just bought this car a few months ago. And yeah I was fortunate to have a car like this.

In (12), the "Explanation" ("*I just bought this car a few months ago*") was combined with a "Compliment Upgrade" ("*I just bought this car a few months ago*") and an "Agreement" which was expressed through "Agreement Tokens" ("*Yeah*", "*Yeah*").

An example of the combination of "Explanation" and "Compliment Downgrade" in the data by Vietnamese speakers of English:

(13) EMC2: You've got a really nice car.
VEMI6: Well uhm just a second hand one. I bought it last week. It's quite cheap, only uhm two thousand Australian dollars.

The "Explanation" ("*I bought it last week*") in (13) was used with "Compliment Downgrades" ("*Just a second hand one*" and "*It's quite cheap, only uhm 2000 Australian dollars*").

An example of the combination of "Reassignment", "Explanation" and "Agreement" in English:

(14) EMC3: I like your suit as well.
EMI7: Yeah. Yeah. It's actually not mine. It's actually my dad's. I haven't had one.

The "Agreement", which was expressed through "Agreement Tokens" ("*Yeah. Yeah*"), preceded the "Reassignment" ("*It's actually not mine. It's actually my dad's*"), which reassigned the credit of the compliment to an absent third person, and a further "Explanation" ("*I haven't had one*").

An example of the combination of "Explanation" and "Disagreement" in the data by Vietnamese speakers of English:

(15) EMC3: That's a nice jumper you're wearing. I like that.
VEMI10: I just bought it in the mall. It's not so nice.

The "Disagreement" ("*It's not so nice*") was used in combination with the "Explanation" ("*I just bought it in the mall*").

So a noticeable difference in the way CR strategies are combined in English and in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics is that strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum are usually combined with those at the acceptance end by English NSs but are often used with those at the denial end by Vietnamese speakers of English.

Similarities in the combination of CR strategies between the VE and V groups

Close analysis of Naturalized Role-play data from the VE and V groups revealed similar patterns of strategy combination that can explain the differences in strategy combination between the VE and the E groups. In that way, the following points of similarity in terms of strategy combination between the VE and V CRs provide evidence of pragmatic and discourse transfer.

"Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade"

As stated above, the combination of "Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade" was often found in the VE data but it was not recorded in the E data. In the V data, this combination was also commonly found as in the following examples.

(16) VMC[xiv]1: Ê có cái áo sơ mi mới phải không? Trời ơi áo này đẹp ghê nghe.
"Hey, got a new shirt? Gosh it looks good".
VMI[xv]1: Có đâu anh ơi. Áo này cũ mặc luôn ấy mà.
"It's not good. It's just an old shirt".

In (16), the "Disagreement" ("*It's not good*") co-occurred with a "Compliment Downgrade" ("*It's just an old shirt*") which downplayed the object of the compliment.

(17) VFC[xvi]2: Chậc chậc. Cái áo của bạn thiệt là hết sẩy.
"Wow. Your dress is really fancy".
VFI[xvii]9: Đâu có. Coi vậy chứ mình hàng dỏm lắm. Giá cũng rẻ rề hà.
"It's not. It looks like that but the material is very bad. The price is also very cheap".

The "Disagreement" ("*It's not*") in (17) co-occurred with two "Compliment Downgrades" ("*It looks like that but the material is very bad. The price is also very cheap*").

(18) VMC1: Ủa mà xe anh đó hả? Trời ơi xe đẹp quá há. Xe xịn ghê đó nhe.
"Oh is it your motorbike? Gosh it's cool. It's very good".
VMI4: Ưm cũng chẳng xịn gì đâu. Cũng bình thường thôi.
"Uhm it's not good. It's just normal".

In (18), the "Disagreement" ("*It's not good*") preceded the "Compliment Downgrade" ("*It's just normal*") which qualified the praise force.

The ratio of occurrence of "Disagreement" with "Compliment Downgrade" to the total number of "Disagreements" in the V data is ten to twenty seven, which is closely similar to this ratio in the VE data (i.e. 11 to 25). The way "Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade" were used in Vietnamese also resembled the way they were used in English by Vietnamese speakers. A comparison of examples (16), (17) & (18) of Vietnamese CRs and the examples (19) & (20) of CRs in English by Vietnamese informants justifies this observation.

(19) EMC1: Oh nice jumper you wear in there. You look stylish today.

VEMI4: Oh no. It's cheap anyway though. Heh heh heh.

or

(20) EFC2: It's a really nice car.

VEFI6: Oh no. It looks like that but actually it has a lot of problems.

The difference between the VE and E data as well as the similarity between the VE and V data concerning the use of "Compliment Downgrade" and "Agreement" combination showed another example of pragmatic and discourse transfer in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics.

"Appreciation Token" and other strategies

Another difference in the co-occurrence of strategies among the VE and E data was that "Appreciation Token" often co-occurred with other strategies (e.g. "Agreement", "Return" and "Explanation") in the E data but often occurred by itself or with "Compliment Downgrade" in the VE data. Pragmatic and discourse transfer can account for that because when "Appreciation Token" occurred among the V data, which was rare (i.e. four "Appreciation Tokens" in total), it was also by itself (one occurrence), with a "Compliment Downgrade", "Disagreement" or "Doubting Question" (one occurrence per each type of combination).

Example of the use of "Appreciation Token" by itself in the V data:

(21) VFC1: A VFI5[xviii]*, hôm bữa VFC1*[xix] *có nghe thầy nói là VFI5 có cái bài đăng trên tờ tạp chí trong khoa đó, kế VFC1 có tìm VFC1 đọc. VFC1 thấy bài đó VFI5 viết hay quá trời. Thấy nể quá!*

"Ah, VFI5, I heard from our lecturer that you had a paper published in the departmental journal. I looked for it to read. I found it so well-written. It's admirable!"

VFI5: Ồ cám ơn VFC1 há.

"Oh thank you".

Example of the use of "Appreciation Token" and "Disagreement" in the V data:

(22) VFC2: Ê kỳ tuần rồi đó mình đọc cái bài báo. Trời ơi mình thấy bài của VFI7 đăng. Bài viết hay dễ dễ sợ luôn.

"Hey last week I read a journal. Gosh I found your article. It's very very good".

VFI7: Hổng có gì. Cám ơn bạn nhiều.

"It's not. Thank you very much".

In Vietnamese, "Appreciation Token" was not combined with the same strategies (e.g. "Agreement", "Return" and "Explanation") as in English. As a result, "Appreciation Token" in VE CRs was not used with such strategies. Since both the VE and the V data showed the combination of "Appreciation Token" and "Compliment Downgrade", such patterns of combination demonstrated pragmatic and

discourse transfer. Moreover, Vietnamese speakers combined "Appreciation Token" with other strategies in their English CRs much less frequently than English NSs did probably because the former rarely used "Appreciation Token" in Vietnamese. That can also be associated with pragmatic and discourse transfer.

"Return" by itself instead of being preceded by "Appreciation Token"

In the V data, there were only three "Returns" in total. "Return" occurred by itself twice and with "Compliment Downgrade" once. That explained why "Return" also occurred by itself and less frequently in the VE data compared to the E data (i.e. one "Return" by itself in the VE data versus ten "Returns" including eight ones in combination with "Appreciation Tokens" in the E data). Therefore, the use of "Return" by the VE group is another example of pragmatic and discourse transfer. "Returns" are similar in the VE and V data both in terms of the occurrence of "Return" by itself and in terms of its content. Examples of the similarity of a "Return" in Vietnamese in the V data to a "Return" in English in the VE data are (10) and (27).

Combination of CR strategies on the acceptance to denial continuum

The most striking finding about the combination of strategies in the VE and V data is that both in the V and the VE data, as opposed to the E data, strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum, (e.g. "Return", "Explanation", "Reassignment"), were often combined with strategies at the denial end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Downgrade", "Disagreement").

Specifically, there were three "Returns" in the V data. "Return" occurred by itself twice and with "Compliment Downgrade" once. Out of twenty-four "Explanations" in the V data, fifteen were by themselves. When it occurred in combination with other strategies, "Explanation" was used the most frequently with "Disagreement" (four times) and less frequently with "Compliment Downgrade" (once). Moreover, among seven instances of use of "Reassignment" in the V data, "Reassignment" was combined the most often with "Disagreement". "Reassignment" co-occurred with "Disagreement" four times and with "Compliment Downgrade" once. So like VE data, V data showed that except when strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum occurred by itself, they were usually in combination with strategies at the denial end of the continuum. The following examples illustrate the similarities in

strategy combination between the VE and V data, which account for the differences in strategy combination between the VE and E data.

As found in the VE data, the same combination of "Explanation" and "Compliment Downgrade" was found in Vietnamese [c.f. example (13) of this combination in the VE data].

(23) VMC2: Hời ơi ngưỡng mộ anh VMI6 lắm nhe. Hôm bữa ơ đọc cái bài viết của anh đăng trên báo của khoa đó. Trời ơi cái bài đó hay ghê vậy đó.
"My goodness I really admire you. Uhm I read your article in the departmental journal the other day. Gosh that paper was really good".

(24) VMI6: Mình nghĩ cũng bình thường thôi. Ơm cái ý đó là xuất phát từ cái hòan cảnh thực tế, mình ghi lên báo. Thế thôi.
"I think it's just normal. Uhm that idea came from reality and I wrote about it in the article. That's it".

In this combination, the "Compliment Downgrade" ("*I think it's just normal*") preceded the "Explanation" ("*That idea came from reality and I wrote about it in the article. That's it*").

Like the VE data, V data also exhibited the pattern of "Explanation" and "Disagreement" combination [c.f. example (15) of this combination in the VE data].

(25) VFC1: Trời ơi mặc áo đầm đẹp quá!
"Gosh what a beautiful dress you're wearing!"
VFI6: Đẹp gì! (Cười[xx]). Mới mua đó (Cười)
"It's not beautiful! (Smile). I just bought it (Smile)".

The "Explanation" ("*I just bought it*") in (25) followed the "Disagreement" ("*It's not beautiful*").

The combination of CR strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum with those at the left end of it in the E data contrasted with the combination of strategies in the middle of the continuum with those at the right end of it in the VE and V data. However, the way strategies were combined in the VE and V data was the same. This exemplified pragmatic and discourse transfer in the way strategies were combined in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics.

Patterns of pragmatic and discourse transfer[xxi]

Evidence of pragmatic and discourse transfer of combination of CR strategies indeed fell into patterns. The Vietnamese-English interlanguage patterns of CR strategy combination differ greatly from the English pattern but resemble the Vietnamese ones. CR strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum, (e.g. "Return",

"Explanation", "Reassignment"), often occur with those at the acceptance end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Upgrade", "Agreement", "Appreciation Token"), in (Australian) English whereas strategies in the middle of the continuum are often combined with those at the denial end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Downgrade", "Disagreement"), in Vietnamese. As a result, Vietnamese speakers of English transferred these Vietnamese patterns of CR strategy combination into their CRs in English.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pragmatic and discourse transfer was evident in the way strategies were combined in VE informants' CRs. It was significantly different from the way strategies were combined in English CRs but closely resembled how Vietnamese speakers combined CR strategies. The CR strategy combinations that were found to be transferred from Vietnamese into Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics included "Disagreement" and "Compliment Downgrade", "Appreciation Token" by itself or with "Compliment Downgrade", "Return" by itself, and strategies in the middle of the acceptance to denial continuum occurring with strategies at the denial end of the continuum, (e.g. "Compliment Downgrade" and "Disagreement"). In addition to the findings herein, further evidence and more patterns of pragmatic and discourse transfer led to my formulation of the CR Continuum Hypothesis and account for cross-cultural differences on the basis of universality (Tran, 2004d, 2006a, 2007a).

This study has yielded original findings about pragmatic and discourse transfer of combination of CR strategies in Vietnamese-English interlanguage pragmatics. These findings contribute to current knowledge of pragmatic and discourse transfer and, accordingly, effective cross-cultural interaction.

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APPENDIX A
Naturalized Role-play

SITUATION 1:

<u>To the role-play informants:</u>

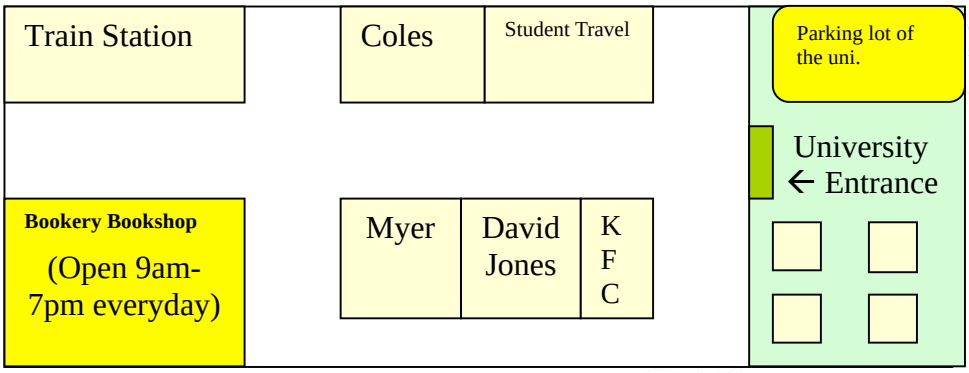
The following situation describes you in a certain familiar role at school or in the society. Please listen to the description of the situation and identify yourself with the character "you" in it. If you have any question, please feel free to ask.

You are one of the best students in your class/office. Your articles have been published in popular journals in your field. There is a newcomer to your class/office. You two know each other's name and have said hello to each other sometimes but have not yet had a chance to talk much.

It is now around 5pm and you are leaving school for home. You are walking in the parking lot towards your new car/motorcycle. That new classmate/colleague approaches you and says some greetings. You two talk while walking together. The

social talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play informants below).

In the card for the role-play informants:
- (When being asked) Please give him/her directions to get to the "Bookery" bookshop.
- (When being asked) Please tell him/her when the bookshop is closed today.
- Please offer him/her a ride to get there.
The directions and the hours can be found in the map below.
Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life.



To the role-play conductors:

It is your task to lead the conversation in a flexible and natural way. Please listen to the description of the situation and identify yourself with the character "you" in it. If you have any question, please feel free to ask.

You are a newcomer to a class/office. One of your new classmates/colleagues is a very good student with articles published in popular journals in your field. You two know each other's name and have said hello to each other sometimes but have not yet had a chance to talk much.

It is now around 5pm and you are leaving school. You want to stop by a bookshop and have heard that there is one named "Bookery" not far from school but you do not know where it is. You are passing by or taking a short cut through the parking lot and see that new classmate/colleague. You approach him/her and say some greetings. You two talk while walking together. The talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play conductors below).

In the card for the role-play conductors:

- Please ask for directions to get to the "Bookery" bookshop.
- Please ask him/her what time the bookshop is closed today.
- Please accept the ride there that he/she offers.
- When it is most natural during the talk, compliment him/her on:
- *his/her article published last week*
- *his/her car*

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life.
It is very important that you compliment naturally and make your compliments a part

of the normal social talk. Do not make it obvious that the compliments are among the tasks listed in the card for you.

SITUATION 2:

To the role-play informants:

About a week after that situation, you were invited to a dinner party of classmates/colleagues at that new classmate/colleague's house. When he/she invited you to come over, he/she gave you a printed map showing where to park your car/motorbike. Today is the day of the party. You dressed up for the event and drove your car/motorbike there. Now you are at his/her doorstep. You two will say some greetings and talk while he/she leads you to the living room. The social talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play informants below).

In the card for the role-play informants:

- (At the door and after some greetings) Please check with him/her whether you have parked your car in the right place.
- (After he/she has put your coat in the hall for you) Please ask if he/she is all right/ feeling better now (because you did not see him/her at the departmental seminar a few days ago and were told that he/she was not well).
Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life.

To the role-play conductors:

About a week after that situation, you invited this new classmate/colleague to a dinner party of classmates/colleagues at your house. Today is the day of the party. Now you are greeting him/her at the door. You two will talk while you lead him/her to the living room. The social talk should include but is not limited to the following points (See the card for role-play conductors below).

In the card for the role-play conductors:

- (When being asked) Please assure him/her that he/she has parked in the right place.
- Please respond to his/her question expressing concern about your health (which is asked because he/she did not see you at the departmental seminar a few days ago and they said you were not feeling well).
- When it is most natural during the talk, compliment him/her on:

- *his/her appearance that day*
- *his/her clothing (e.g. her dress or his tie)*

Please make the conversation as natural as possible. Speak as you would in real life. It is very important that you compliment naturally and make your compliments a part of the normal social talk. Do not make it obvious that the compliments are among the tasks listed in the card for you.

APPENDIX B
CR Continua

This appendix presents the proposed continua together with the definition and illustrative example(s) of each strategy. Examples are printed in italics. They are among the collected data. The underlined words in each example represent the CR strategy that the example illustrates. In the examples, A represents the complimenter and B the complimentee. Moreover, on the acceptance to denial continuum, the strategy "Non-idiomatic Response" was placed in parentheses because it occurred only in NNSs' data, not in data provided by NSs.

THE ACCEPTANCE TO DENIAL CONTINUUM

Compliment Upgrade → Agreement (including Agreement Token) → Appreciation Token → Return → Explanation → Reassignment → (Non-idiomatic Response) → Compliment Downgrade → Disagreement (including Disagreement Token)

• Compliment Upgrade: The complimentee agrees with and increases the complimentary force/praise force/compliment assertion.

A: Nice car!

B: Thanks. <u>Brand new</u>.

• Agreement: The complimentee agrees with the complimentary force/praise force/compliment assertion probably by providing a response which is "semantically fitted to the compliment" (Herbert, 1989, p. 12).

A: Hey you're looking really well today.

B: <u>Yeah</u> I'm happy to say that <u>that's correct</u>. Heh heh heh.

An agreement can be scaled down to mitigate or minimize the force of the compliment.

A: I like your car. It's very good.

B: Oh. <u>Yeah.</u> Thanks. <u>It's not bad.</u>

Agreement Token: The complimentee may agree with the compliment assertion with a simple "Yes" or "Yeah". An agreement token is classified as an agreement whether it occurs in a full agreement (e.g. "Yes, I think so, too") or in isolation (e.g. "Yes" occurring by itself in a CR).

A: It's really stylish.

B: <u>Yeah</u>.

• Appreciation Token: The complimentee recognizes the status of the other speaker's previous utterance as a compliment and shows appreciation for it. The agreement token itself is not "semantically fitted to the specifics of that compliment" (Pomerantz, 1978, p. 83).

A: What a lovely dress!

B: Oh. <u>Thank you.</u> <u>Thank you.</u>

• Return: The complimentee reciprocates the act of complimenting by paying back the compliment to the complimenter.

A: You're looking good.

B: Thanks. <u>So are you.</u>

Or

A: You're looking good today.

B: Thank you very much. Not too bad yourself.

• Explanation/Comment History: The complimentee impersonalizes the complimentary force/ compliment assertion by giving further information, which may frequently be irrelevant, about the object of the compliment.

A: I like your tie. It suits you well.

B: Thanks. Mom bought it for me. She likes to buy me nice ties now and again.

• Reassignment: The complimentee redirects the praise offered by the complimenter to some third person or to something else (referent/credit shift)

A: By the way, I read your article that was published last week.

B: Alright?

A: Very very good.

B: (Laughter)

A: It is.

B: Oh, no. Actually my supervisor helped me a lot. So I couldn't do it by myself. (Laughter).

Or

A: You look good today.

B: Oh, thanks. It must be the jacket.

• Non-idiomatic Response: The complimentee implies or would like to express that he/she does not agree with the compliment assertion. But this is done through the use of non-target-like responses.

A: I like your car. Cute looking car.

B: Uh. That's OK. (Intended meaning: It's just OK. Nothing special)

Or

A: I just read your article uhm published last week. I thought it was really good you know.

B: Oh. That's alright. (Intended meaning: It's just alright. Nothing special)

• Compliment Downgrade: The complimentee qualifies the praise force/compliment assertion, or downplays the object of the compliment.

A: It's a really nice car.

B: Oh no. It looks like that but actually it has a lot of problems.

Or

A: It's a nice car. I really like it.

B: Oh well. It's just a normal and not very reliable car.

• Disagreement: The complimentee directly disagrees with the praise force/ compliment assertion. He/she asserts that the praise within the compliment is overdone or undue.

A: You're looking radiant.

B: Oh. No, I don't think so.

Or

A: Hey, I like your tie. It suits you very well.

B: Really? I don't think so. Hah hah hah.

A: You're a hard man to flatter.

Disagreement Token: The complimentee may disagree with the compliment assertion with a simple "No". A disagreement token is classified as a disagreement whether it occurs in a full disagreement (e.g. "No, I don't think so") or in isolation (e.g. "No" occurring by itself in a CR).

A: Oh you're looking well.

B: Uhm. No.

THE AVOIDANCE CONTINUUM

Expressing Gladness → Follow-up Question → (Doubting) Question → Opting out.

• Expressing Gladness: The complimentee does not address the compliment assertion itself, which makes the response a type of avoidance, but expresses his/her gladness that the complimenter likes the object of the compliment.

A: By the way, I read your article that you published last week. It was very good.

B: Oh, <u>that's good.</u> Thank you.

Or

A: I read that article you published last week. It was very good.

B: Well, <u>great.</u>

• Follow-up Question: The complimentee responds to the compliment with a question which elaborates the compliment assertion. It is equivocal whether this question is meant to fish for more compliments, or to gain specific information about the worthiness of the object being complimented. In the data for this research project, the latter seems to be the case.

A: You know I just I just read your article that you published last week. I thought it was excellent.

B: Thanks a lot. <u>What do you find interesting about it?</u>

• (Doubting) Question: The complimentee responds to the compliment with a question which corresponds to the request for repetition and/or expansion of the compliment assertion. The question is ambiguous in terms of whether the complimentee intends it to provide repetition/expansion of the original assertion or to question the sincerity/motives of the complimenter.

A: (Referring to B's article published last week) Fantastic actually.

B: <u>Really?</u>

In the data for this investigation, questions of this type often occur with an agreement, disagreement, etc., especially in the VE corpus of data. This shows that the VE informants seem to have picked up this expression as a way to introduce the disagreement that follows.

A: You're looking very nice.

B: Oh <u>really</u>? I don't think so.

• Opting out:

Opting out with laughter: The complimentee responds to the compliment with mere laughter.

A: Oh, that's nice. How lovely! It's my favorite color. I wanna buy a blue car one day.

B: <u>Heh heh</u>.

Opting out with filler(s): The complimentee just utters (some) filler(s) in response to the compliment.

A: I was just reading your paper, that paper you submitted to the journal the other day. It was really good.

B: <u>Uhm</u>.

Opting out without anything/No Acknowledgement: The complimentee does not respond to the compliment at all verbally or nonverbally probably because he/she does not hear the other speaker's previous utterance or is occupied with something else.

A: I read your article the other day, too. It was really good.
B: (Silence)

Opting out with topic change: The complimentee provides a response which cannot be understood as being linked to the compliment. He/she does not respond to the compliment itself but changes the topic to something else.

A: I like your lovely dress.
B: I heard that you (were) not well last time. So do you feel well now?

Notes

[i.] This article reports some of the findings in Tran's PhD dissertation (Tran, 2004d, 2006a). For correspondence purposes, contact: giaoquynhtran@yahoo.com
[ii.] For a definition of interlanguage pragmatics, see Tran (2004c).
[iii.] For a definition of communicative acts, see Tran (2003a).
[iv.] For a review of the literature on pragmatic and discourse transfer in general, see Tran (2003b, 2004d, 2006a). For a review of the literature on pragmatic and discourse transfer in CRs, see Tran (2002a, 2004d, 2006a).
[v.] Strategy use in this research project was investigated in terms of strategy selection and strategy combination. However, within the space limit of this article, only findings related to strategy combination are presented. For findings about pragmatic and discourse transfer of strategy selection, see Tran (2004d, 2006a, 2007b).
[vi.] Due to the space limit of this article, it is not possible to describe the Naturalized Role-play in detail here. For the proposal, description and validation of this methodology, interested readers are recommended to see Tran (2004d, 2006a, 2006b).
[vii.] For a review of the controversial methodological issue in pragmatics research, see Tran (2004b).
[viii.] English female conductor
[ix.] English-speaking Vietnamese female informant
[x.] English male conductor
[xi.] English-speaking Vietnamese male informant
[xii.] English male informant
[xiii.] English female informant
[xiv.] Vietnamese male conductor
[xv.] Vietnamese male informant
[xvi.] Vietnamese female conductor
[xvii.] Vietnamese female informant
[xviii.] In Vietnamese, the speaker sometimes addresses the other interlocutors by their names instead of the pronoun "you". Codes were used instead of real names for confidentiality purposes.
[xix.] In Vietnamese, the speaker sometimes refers to himself/herself as his/her name instead of using the pronouns "I" and "me". Codes were used instead of real names for confidentiality purposes.
[xx.] Indicating non-verbal behavior
[xxi.] For more patterns of pragmatic and discourse transfer of strategy selection, see Tran (2004d, 2006a).

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Creating Constructivist Learning Environment for Japanese EFL Students: A Digital Story Program[1]

Guofang Wan
Ohio University, USA

Rex Tanimoto
Osaka Gakuin University, Japan

Rosalyn Anstine Templeton
Marshall University, West Virginia, USA

[1]An earlier version of the paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Montreal, April 2005.

Bio Data

Guofang Wan received her Ph.D. from the Pennsylvania State University. Currently she teaches both graduate and undergraduate majors at Ohio University, USA. She has a long-term passion for exploring effective ways of language instruction, and using technology and storytelling to enhance language instruction in Asian countries. Her book *Media-Savvy Student* was published in 2004.

Rex Tanimoto teaches EFL at Osaka Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan. His interests are creating and producing narrative-based learning activities through digital visual and audio formats and techniques. His latest book, *New Storyteller*, was published by Macmillan Language House, 2006).

Dr. Rosalyn Anstine Templeton is Executive Dean and Professor of Education in the College of Education and Human Services at Marshall University, West Virginia, USA. She is an expert in special education including and teaching ESL students in regular classrooms.

Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness of FM Magic, a web-based multimedia English program that teaches EFL in a Japanese university. It uses the Constructivist Multimedia Learning Environment Survey (CMLES) and a Student Open-ended Questionnaire. Results indicate that FM Magic creates a positive learning environment for these EFL students. It is different from the teacher-centered and grammar-translation approaches of language instruction. The study also suggests some ideas to refine FM Magic and further bring it into closer alignment with the constructivist approach for language instruction.

Key Words: Constructivist multimedia learning environment, Digital stories and language instruction.

Long before there were computers, movies, radios, or even books, there were

storytellers. For generations, stories have been used to entertain, inform or impart morals and social values. As new and emerging technologies provide us with boundless potentials, many stories are told in multimedia format. The Digital Storytelling Association (2002) describes this as "the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling." Digital storytelling uses a computer to create narratives that are personal but meant to reach a broad audience. Such stories may involve a variety of multimedia elements – text with hyperlinks, still images, video clips, music and more – and a choice of delivery methods including the World Wide Web and CD-ROM" (Kahn and Coburn, 1998). Language classroom is the perfect place to rekindle the tradition of storytelling enhanced by digital technology. FM Magic is designed to enliven the classroom environment and make EFL learning interesting, authentic and interactive for students.

Theoretical Perspectives

The pedagogical perspectives that form the theoretical basis of FM Magic include the enhancement of literacy development by stories, constructive approach to education and positive learning environment. We will examine the effectiveness of FM Magic program in light of these theories.

For years, research (Durkin, 1966; Cochran-Smith, 1984; and Teale, 1981) has indicated that reading aloud and storytelling play important roles in children's lives and literacy development. Davis (2004) says good traditional oral tales are highly sophisticated teaching instruments, instructing on many levels at once. Oral stories provide a foundation for literacy. They develop and refine learners' speaking and listening skills. They enrich learners' vocabulary and familiarize them with language patterns and story structures. They motivate reading by making language intimate, joyful and meaningful. They allow listeners to experience intimately the culture and humanity of peoples from all over the world. They stir imagination and strengthen attention and memory.

These statements apply equally well with language learners as explained by Lazar (1993). She says that literature may be more absorbing for students than the pseudo-narratives frequently found in course books; it provides access to cultural background, encourages language acquisition, expands students' language awareness, develops students' interpretative abilities; and it stimulates the imagination of students, develop their critical abilities and increases their emotional awareness. Tsou (2006) and Wan

(2005) both suggest that storytelling is a practical and powerful teaching tool, especially for language learning.

Constructivist approach is another theoretical foundation the Program is built on. It indicates that students learn better if they are actively engaged in making the connections between the material and their personal experiences. A significant number of education researchers point to interactive pedagogies, such as cooperative learning and discovery learning, as the most beneficial in aiding students in constructing understanding (DeVries and Zan, 1996; Fosnot, 1989; Gabler and Schroeder, 2003; Kain, 2003; Noel, 2000; Winitzky and Kauchak, 1997). Krashen's communicative approach to language instruction is also consistent with constructivist theory, in which he suggests that students learn better with comprehensible, authentic and context embedded input. The Program aims to provide students with authentic learning opportunities.

As learning always takes place in an environment, the idea of carefully designing instruction, varying the formats in which information is presented to students, and building interactive simulations lead naturally to the idea of constructing entire learning environments. In the eighteenth century, Rousseau (1762/1933) argues that the most effective and socially appropriate education arose from a student's interaction with the natural environment, and Vygotsky (1978) acknowledges the social nature of learning. Technology enhanced learning environment has the potential of simulating the natural environment, providing meaningful connections with the real world, and social interaction of the learners with the Internet. Results from classroom learning environment studies indicate that students' achievements are likely to improve if attempts are made to make the actual learning environments more congruent with that preferred by students (Fraser and Walberg, 1991). It is essential to see whether the learning environment created by FM Magic program is conducive to language learning for the EFL Japanese students.

Related Studies

Previous studies show that globally there have been increased awareness, efforts, trials and errors among language instructors at all levels on the use of technology and storytelling in their classrooms. Zhao's (2005) says that the application of technologies can be effective in almost all areas of language education.

Kahn and Coburn (1998) describe several cases where Spanish/English teachers and

students communicate, learn and grow by telling personal digital stories. The pride, the emotional release and the satisfaction of having a story well told in a medium once reserved for professionals has an incredibly empowering effect on both its creator and audience. Greene (2000) records the implementation of a CALL (computer assisted language learning) writing course for EFL students at a Japanese technical university, and outlines its theoretical underpinnings and practical limitations, noting that theory and practice often collide. According to Suh (2002), Korean EFL students thought their computer-mediated writing instruction a helpful tool. Banaszewski (2002) reports successfully using Apple's iMovie with his fourth and fifth graders to tell digital stories in the classroom. Students tell stories about special places in their lives with images, voices and writing. MacGregor (2002) explores the use of a computer paint program and indicates that children showed greater creative strength in visuals and created more detailed accompanying stories than traditional paper pencil group, and made more revisions in both their visual and written products. Esteller and Sitzer (2003) report a third-grade class using technology to develop and share e-books they created together in an American International School in Romania. Also the results of Tsou's (2006) study support the significance and education value of a multimedia Storytelling Website on EFL teaching and learning in Taiwan. Green and Youngs (2001) indicates technology-supported independent language learning is as effective as classroom instruction, if not more.

Another area of related studies is the classroom learning environment research, which investigates the relationships between student outcomes and the nature of the classroom environments (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Fraser, 1994). The Constructivist Multimedia Learning Environment Survey (CMLES) are used (Maor and Fraser, 2000; Maor, 2002) in schools in Perth, Australia to assess the learning environment while students interacted with science multimedia programs and on-line interactive multimedia programs. The studies focus on science classrooms and the use of technology. However, few previous studies have been found addressing the impacts of multimedia programs on the learning environment in language classrooms. The authors hope this study will draw language instructors' and researchers' attention to these important aspects of our classroom practice.

Literature on Japanese language instruction and the use of technology reveal that in most traditional Japanese university language classrooms, teachers often convey information and students passively receive it. Students do not express their feelings

and opinions, nor set their own goals (Kohyama, 2001). The educational system is also, with rare exceptions, equated exclusively with high school and university curricula, teacher-centered (Edwards, 2002). Edwards (2004) calls for English and other foreign languages to be taught in Japan with student-centered approach emphasizing creativity and enjoyment beginning with songs, stories, rhymes, games, plays, sister school exchanges and home-stay programs. This would help create a strong, lifelong self-motivating love of English. Edwards' (2002) survey on the state of CALL (computer assisted language learning) in Japan concludes that native speaker teachers (American, Canadian, British, and Australian) use the Internet for a wide variety of personal and work-related purposes (email, research, music, news, etc.) far more than their Japanese colleagues; most school administrators--the key decision-makers in allocating school resources--seem less than enthusiastic about CALL; and cultural, traditional and economic factors are the main barriers for the use of CALL in Japan. Previous studies (Edwards, 2002 and 2004) indicate that teacher-centered approach is used in Japanese language classrooms, and the wide use of CALL is still on the way.

Contexts of the study

FM Magic is the result of collaborations among colleagues from Japan and the USA, who share the belief that the marriage of storytelling with technology will meet the needs of and motivate language learners of the 21st century. Supported by a university initiative to integrate IT in teaching, these professors work together and create FM Magic, a web-based multimedia English program. Although the authors learned English through traditional grammar-translation approach, they want their students to have a different learning experience through the web-based multimedia program. This study is an effort to assess how well the Program achieves this goal.

Designed for high school and university English as a foreign or second language programs, FM Magic appears as a simulated, pre-recorded Internet radio program consisting of theme-based shows. As with broadcast radio shows, it includes songs, news and weather reports, interviews, commercials, narrated stories and commentaries. The content is original, multimedia-enhanced and created by FM Magic's team of educators, artists, musicians, and media specialists. Each theme-based teaching unit features teacher-developed, pre-recorded, illustrated, or animated writings of various genres; a section for students to write, to narrate and showcase

their work; and a Forum for students to exchange ideas using the target language. Appendix 1 shares sample pages of the Program.

The Foreign Language Program at the university under study consists of 400 English majors. FM Magic is introduced to 79 EFL juniors and seniors, taking an advanced writing course. They meet twice a week for 90 minutes each time. Students' previous English writing experiences include a freshman writing course taught by non-native English speaking professors. These instructors usually teach English and culture through textbooks. Students typically learn to write through learning about English sentence structures, vocabulary and grammar. They spend time in class translating English sentences into Japanese, analyzing English grammar, and practicing writing English sentences.

Research Questions

To assess the effectiveness of FM Magic and to seek ideas for its improvement, three questions are asked:

1. What are the students' perceptions of the constructivist multimedia classroom learning environment where FM Magic is implemented?
2. What impact does FM Magic have on the learning of English for these EFL Japanese students?
3. How to refine FM Magic so it will be more conducive to language learning?

Data Collection and Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. The Constructivist Multimedia Learning Environment Survey (CMLES) (Maor, 2002) is adopted and used in this study. It has thirty questions with the first part of the questionnaire measuring students' negotiation, inquiry learning and reflective thinking, and the second part measuring students' reactions to the interactive multimedia program in terms of authenticity, complexity and challenge (Appendix 2, Table 1). At the end of the course, the students are asked to rate the actual demonstration of constructivist characteristics in the classroom on a scale of 1–5 recorded as "Almost Never," "Seldom," "Sometimes," "Often" and "Always." Additionally, the Student Open-ended Questionnaire with ten questions (Appendix 2, Table 2) is used to support and refute the findings of the CMLES.

Data were collected during 2004-2005 academic year. Among the 79 participants,

59 (75 percent) returned their surveys. The answers to the questionnaire are examined for emerging themes, while the results from the CMLES are included for analysis and interpretation. The reliability of the results is ensured by using multiple data sources, both a quantitative method (CMLES) and a qualitative method (the Student Open-ended Questionnaire). The validity and reliability of the CMLES instrument were tested and proved by Maor (1999) with teachers and students (Maor, 2002) in previous studies.

Results

The summary and the Table below show the means and grand mean from the CMLES students' responses.

1. "Learning to Communicate" is rated as 3.9, a little over "Sometimes." Students feel the class sometimes allows them to discuss with each other on how to conduct investigations and exchange ideas.
2. "Learning to Investigate" with a score of 3.5 shows that students, to some extent, find out answers to questions by investigation and solve problems on their own.
3. With a 3.5 average for "Learning to Think," students feel sometimes they have chances to think deeply about their own ideas, new ideas and reflect on learning in the class.
4. The mean score of 3.9 for "Relevance" reflects that students feel above average that the tasks are realistic, representing a wide range of information, and relevant to their lives.
5. Students find the design of the program interesting, fun, and fairly easy to use because they rate this item as 4.1.
6. "Challenge" receives the highest average score, 4.2, on the survey form. This indicates that the program allows and helps students to generate new ideas and questions.
7. "The grand mean of 3.85 shows students feel above average in general about the items listed on the CMLES.

Summary Table: CMLES Students' Responses

Categories	**Mean**
Learning to Communicate	3.9
Learning to Investigate	3.5
Learning to Think	3.5
Relevance	3.9
Ease of Use	4.1
Challenge	4.2
Grand Mean	**3.85**

Besides the above results from the CMLES, several important themes have emerged from the analysis of the Students Open-ended Questionnaire.

1. *New Experience*

FM Magic is reported as a new learning experience for many students. None of the participants have had previous online learning experience. In other classes, they learn grammar through textbooks, and are assigned topics to write about. With this Program, they use computers and drawings to create their own stories. They enjoy the freedom and the use of imagination to write their own stories. Here are some words from the students:

> "Different. With the program I could use a computer and make my own stories. But the other writing classes, I study mostly grammar."
>
> "Different. I can imagine by using drawings."
>
> "Completely different from other classes. Other classes I was told what to write about. Copy what the professor writes on the board. But this class, I have freedom to make my own stories, and learn different sentences."

2. *Motivation for Language Learning:*

Another major implication is students are motivated to learn English by the Program. They enjoy the use of creativity, imagination, and the fun way of using computer to learn English. Students self-report their writing skills have been improved and they want to continue writing stories. Some find it challenging in the beginning but believe it is worth the effort. This is what they tell us,

> "After I made stories using imagination, I feel I accomplished something."
>
> "It's fun using a computer to make stories."

"It's fun. I can make my own story freely using my imagination."

"It's difficult, but worth it."

"I became to want to improve my vocabulary and writing ability."

"Strongly agree that my writing skills have been improved."

"I could also think in English."

"My imagination and creation ability increased over my writing ability."

3. Helpful Writing Models:

Also the stories written by the teacher serve as good examples for students' writing. These examples increase students' confidence of using imagination and creativity by providing ideas and examples, and helpful in many other ways. Students comment,

"Without a sample, it would have been difficult. Thanks the sample, I could have an idea quickly."

"It was helpful. It started me to use my imagination."

"Helpful. I could see the difference between my own story and Mr. D's story."

"Helpful. Your stories make it easy to think from different perspectives."

4. Learning from Peers:

Students agree that reading peers' stories and teacher-provided drawings are helpful to them. They get ideas from peers' stories, see the uniqueness of their work and learn from each other.

"I learned that other students use different ideas and vocabulary."

"I could get good ideas from other student's stories."

"Each student's story shows individuality and they are unique. Even with the same drawings, you can make different expressions."

"Before, I didn't have the chance to see other student's stories. It was helpful. I was impressed that my classmates can make many different stories from the same drawings."

5. Benefits of Multimedia:

Students also appreciate the fact that FM Magic is multimedia and they can read and listen to the materials. They like the idea of "talking" to each other on the Forum.

> "I can not only read but listen to many good stories, pictures beautiful, easy to understand."
> "I see and listen, study with topics and forum."
> "The illustrations are cute, narrator's voice easy to listen to."
> "Fun, like a game, movie pictures, easy."
> "You can enjoy studying English and reading stories."

6. *Suggestions for Improvements:*

Emerged themes also point to areas for improvements. Some students wish the Program had provided more choices of illustrations for them, while others wish to create their own illustrations and had more opportunities to share their stories and receive feedbacks from their peers. Also some wish to learn more about grammar with the Program, and others are frustrated by the technology.

> "… But the pictures are limited. I was afraid everyone would create the same story. I didn't want to make the same story. So it was difficult."
> "It would be good to draw pictures by myself. I like to draw pictures. I like to make stories."
> "I wished I could present the stories in class. I would be more motivated and I like to write better stories."
> "I want to make a group story because it's good for group communications and I can get good ideas from them."
> "If there is a grammar expression in the program, I can learn grammar by writing stories."
> "The computers are slow."

Discussion

Findings from the two instruments used in this study seem to bear interesting similarities and reinforce each other in many ways. Both positive feedback to FM Magic and ideas for improvements appear.

According to the participants of FM Magic, it creates a fairly positive learning environment for these EFL Japanese students. It takes a different approach from the traditional teacher-centered language instruction. It uses communicative approach of language instruction rather than the grammar-translation approach. It motivates and

engages students with authentic activities and publications. Students learn English by using English instead of learning about English through textbooks. They find it refreshing and enjoyable. They respond positively to the improvement of their writing skills as well as other areas in English. This finding reinforces the perspectives that storytelling helps and motivates literacy development among both students of L1 and L2, and student-centered approach and constructivist learning environments are conducive to learning.

FM Magic creates a language learning community among teachers and students on the Internet, because it provides language models with teachers' samples and opportunities for students to create and share their writings on the Internet. Teachers and students can read, listen, and respond to each other's work there, and share opinions on Forum. Thus, it creates a constructive learning mode, in which the role of the teacher becomes providing models and scaffolding activities, monitoring feedback and progress, and assessing students' performance. The students, on the other hand, play an active part and assume more responsibility for their own learning. With each thematic unit, they are exposed to various genres on the same topic through listening, reading, viewing and creating activities. They follow the language models in the Program and compose their own stories. To some extent, students become more autonomous and independent seekers of information and knowledge.

The website of FM Magic is user-friendly and works well most of the time for the students. That is why this item receives a 4.1 average score from the students. They enjoy working with the colors, images and stories. It challenges students in many ways, such as the use of computer, exploration of new ideas and imagination, and the use of English to create their own stories. Again the result from the CMLES agrees with that from the questionnaire survey.

The Student Open-ended Questionnaire shows that although students enjoy reading each other's stories and like the idea of choosing their own topics for writing, they wish there were more opportunities to share and interact with each other. The findings suggest that more interactions and sharing of stories among students are desired for the Program. Although the CMLES shows fairly positive results on this item, the average score of 3.9 could have been closer to 5 meaning "Always." The results from both instruments, in our opinion, reinforce each other and indicate that students would welcome more communications and interactions among peers.

Results from both instruments also indicate that this Program can be improved to

further meet students' need of critical thinking, problem solving and student-centered learning. In their response to open-ended questions, students mention they would like to have more freedom and opportunities to explore their own ideas and creativity in writing stories and making illustrations. They think the provided illustrations are good and helpful, but are limited in numbers and thus limit their creativity in some way. Some wish they had opportunities to write and illustrate their own stories, and to explore more on their own.

The study indicates that students welcome the challenge, enjoy learning with the multimedia story program, and benefit from it tremendously. However, they wish to create and move the Program towards a more constructive, democratic, authentic and open direction. The grand mean, 3.85 from CMLES indicates this. It is a score on the positive side but could be closer to 5 which is more constructivist aligned.

According to this study, FM Magic has succeeded in the first step of getting away from the teacher-centered language instruction. The designers and teachers have made tremendous effort and progress in trying to impact, change and to inspire language teaching and learning. They want to make English learning authentic and interesting for the students. The results show they certainly are on the right track.

However, this is, by no means, to say that FM Magic is perfect, nor is the implementation of it all smooth-sail. Obstacles do exist along the way in terms of professional development for professors on the use of technology, funding, and professors' buy in of the effectiveness of the Program and the constructive approach it embraces, just to name a few. Also the Program itself needs further refinement and improvement to be more effective. More interactions among students, such as editing each other's stories, writing group stories and sharing stories with peers in class will be attempted in the future. The instructors may continue to provide students with sample stories and illustrations, but will make it an option for students to write and illustrate their own stories. FM Magic will provide more opportunities for students to use and explore their own imagination and creativity. Also computer systems and software should be updated frequently to ensure the smooth running and easy use of the Program.

Conclusion

As Socrates notes education is not the filling of a vessel, but a kindling of a flame. FM Magic will become one of the torches that can do this. It creates a fairly positive

learning environment for students to learn English in an informal, stimulating, meaningful and enjoyable way with the help of audio and visual images. It combines the ancient method of storytelling with the use of modern technology and applies them to language instruction. With continued efforts and further improvements, FM Magic is expected to mature into a program that benefits many language learners around the world.

This study itself has several limitations. As the first study on FM Magic, it only looks at student's opinions, leaving teachers' and administrators' and other aspects of the Program for future studies. A comparison of students' perceptions of traditional English courses with FM Magic will provide an interesting reference point. Since it is "a long distance" study enabled by modern technology, only one of the three researchers has had opportunity to observe the classes first hand. However, the Open-ended Questionnaire, which collects rich detailed information from students, seems to have compensated for some of the limitations. The researchers intend to conduct further investigations into the impact of FM Magic on students' achievement using a design of experiment and control groups. Also a general survey of the perceptions of the Program by both non-native and native English speaking professors should yield interesting results.

Since FM Magic can be implemented with as little technology as computers and Internet access, it is accessible to teachers and students with minimum training. Universities or schools with Internet access would be able to make this Program available to its teachers and students. If any readers are interested in the details of integrating and implementing of the Program, please contact us and we would be more than happy to share.

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Appendix 1. Sample Pages

Home Page: FM Magic

Main Page: Show 1 Seize the Day

Main Page: Show 2 Ghosts

Appendix 2: The Instruments

Table 1. Descriptive Information for Each Scale of the CMLES (Maor, 2002)

Scale name	Description	Sample item
Student Negotiation	Extent to which students have opportunities to discuss their questions and their solutions to questions.	In this class, I get the chance to talk to other students.
Inquiry Learning	Extent to which students are encouraged to engage in inquiry learning.	In this class, I find out answers to question by investigation.
Reflective Thinking	Extent to which students have opportunities to reflect on their own learning and thinking.	In this class, I think deeply about how I learn.
Authenticity	Extent to which the information in the program is authentic and representative of real life situations.	Working with this multimedia program, I find that I am presented with realistic tasks.
Ease of Use – complexity	Extent to which the program is complex and represents data in a variety of ways.	Working with this multimedia program, I find it easy to navigate.
Challenge	Extent to which the program challenges and stimulates students to think.	Working with this multimedia program, I find that it makes me think.

Table 2. The Student Open-ended Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about FM Magic

1. Have you had any online learning experience before? If yes, explain.
2. In your opinion, is FM Magic similar or different from your other English courses? In what aspects, are they similar or different?
3. If you like the Program, please specify what you like about it.
4. If you dislike it, please specify what you dislike about it.
5. Are the instructor's sample stories useful? In what ways?
6. How do you like the illustrations provided? Are they helpful or not?
7. Does reading your classmates' stories helpful? If yes, please explain how.
8. How does the Program help you learn English?
9. In your opinion, how can the Program be improved to further assist you in learning English?
10. Free comments.

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Research on EFL Writing Strategy Using SRP: An Empirical Study in DUT

Liu Wenyu & Lu Yang
School of Foreign Languages, Dalian University of Technology, China

Bio Data:

Liu Wenyu is an Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Languages at Dalian University of Technology. He has been teaching since 1993. His research interests are teaching English as a second or foreign language, computer assisted language learning and neurolinguistics. He holds an M.A. in English Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at Dalian Maritime University, China.

Lu Yang received her Master of Arts from Dalian University of Technology. Her research interests are ESL learning strategy and computer assisted language learning. The paper is based on a project sponsored by the Graduate School, Dalian University of Technology.

Abstract

In the past 20 years, research in the field of ESL writing has made great progress. However, research on EFL writing strategies is still a latecomer, especially in China. A review of the previous studies at home shows that most of the research subjects are adults; research on local techniques outnumber those on global strategies and the researchers employed either qualitative or quantitative instrument in the research. Motivated by the limitation of the previous research, the present study focuses on the writing strategies of Chinese college EFL writers. Conducted in Dalian University of Technology, the study aims at analyzing the relations among writing proficiency, writing strategy and writing scores. A combination of quantitative instrument, questionnaire and qualitative instrument known as Stimulated Recall Protocol (SRP) is employed in this study and computer software SPSS 10.0 is used to compile statistics. It is found that there exist significant differences in strategy use between English major and non-English major writers; English major students hold a more positive attitude towards English writing; both English major students and non-English major students cannot handle the strategy of "coherence" well and English major students pay more attention to "global" strategies while non-English major students pay more attention to "local" strategies. Not only are the findings of the present study pedagogically helpful for EFL teachers, but also they reveal the writing habits of Chinese EFL writers with different writing proficiency, which can help them improve their own writing.

Key words: EFL, writing strategy, Stimulated Recall Protocol, writing proficiency

1. Introduction

As ESL teaching develops more and more rapidly, an increasing number of linguists

pay attention to research in the field of ESL writing strategies. They seek to develop an inventory of writing strategies and pedagogically use it as a guide in ESL writing to help students improve their writing abilities.

In the past 20 years, relevant research in this field has been carried out. However, research on EFL writing is still a latecomer in this field. Especially in China, most of the research in English writing focuses on the detailed techniques rather than global strategies owing to the test-oriented education system.

The purpose of the present study is twofold. On the one hand, it compares the writing strategies used by Chinese college EFL learners which will have pedagogical implications in EFL teaching and learning. On the other hand, the reliability and validity of Stimulated Recall Protocol is validated which provides suggestions for further studies.

To achieve these goals, the present study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in writing strategy use among three groups of subjects with different writing proficiency?
2. What are the key strategies differentiating good writers and weak writers?
3. What are the relations between composition score and writing strategies?
4. Is Stimulated Recall Protocol reliable and valid for a Chinese college EFL writing strategy study?

Both qualitative and quantitative instruments are employed to improve the reliability and validity of the study.

2. Methodology

The present study focuses on the writing strategies used by Chinese EFL writers and was conducted at Dalian University of Technology, Peoples' Republic of China. The subjects are 60 EFL learners who are all undergraduates. As an alternative to think-aloud protocol, the present study employs a less intrusive method, Stimulated Recall Protocol, to examine the writing process of the three groups of writers. Besides Stimulated Recall Protocol, the present study also uses a questionnaire as a quantitative instrument. Combining a qualitative instrument with quantitative instrument, the present study elicits more reliable data.

2.1 Questionnaire

The present study employs the revised questionnaire used in Yang Shuxian's (2002) study. The language in the questionnaire is Chinese, which guarantees that the subjects can comprehend the items well and makes sure language comprehension will not be an obstacle for the subjects. The questionnaire contains two sections: basic information and a five-point Likert scale. As for the basic information, except for the grade and gender, a general question on the personal attitude towards English writing is also included. The second section of the questionnaire is divided into 5 parts: pre-drafting strategies (Part A), drafting strategies (Part B), post-drafting strategies (Part C), audience awareness (Part D) and mother tongue avoidance (Part E). There are 5 items in Part A (A1 to A5), 9 items in Part B (B1 to B9), 7 items in Part C (C1 to C7), 2 items in Part D (D1 to D2) and 3 items in Part E (E1 to E3). So in total, there are 26 items in the second section of the questionnaire and the five-point Likert scale is from 1 to 5, in which 1 represents "totally or almost totally unsuitable for me"; 2 represents "suitable for me less than half of the time"; 3 represents "suitable for me about half of the time"; 4 represents "suitable for me more than half of the time"; 5 represents "totally or almost totally suitable for me".

For example:

Standard: 1= totally or almost totally unsuitable for me
2= suitable for me less than half of the time
3= suitable for me about half of the time
4= suitable for me more than half of the time
5= totally or almost totally suitable for me

Pre-drafting Strategies	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Make an outline first	1	2	3	4	5

For each item, the subjects have to choose from number 1 to 5 according to the degree of suitability of their own situation.

2.2 Stimulated Recall Protocol (SRP)

As a qualitative instrument, Stimulated Recall Protocol (SRP) has frequently been used in research in recent years. SRP focuses on the writing process of the subjects and uses "pauses" during the writing process as a "window" to get data of the strategies used by the subjects while they are writing. Compared with the previously and frequently used Think-aloud Protocol, SRP is less intrusive and helps elicit more

reliable data from the subjects. According to Jiménez (2005), SRP has the following advantages:

1. That which is hidden, becomes visible.
2. It provides information on the cognitive processes of language formation.
3. It helps in the fine-tuning of the analysis.
4. Speakers can make corrections to their own narratives.
5. It helps in the interpretation of pauses.
6. It helps interpret message abandonment.
7. It provides unexpected comments.
8. It provides post-recall impressions.

Considering the above reasons, SRP is employed in the present study. Since SRP uses video images instead of audio materials to elicit data, a digital camera, a computer and a tape recorder are needed in the study process. The subjects are asked to come to a room individually and write English articles in a quiet atmosphere. The whole writing process is video-taped and monitored. We focus on "pauses" during the writing process and record the time point and length of the "pauses". Immediately after the subjects finish writing, they are asked to watch the video of their own writing process with us, during which the subjects are asked questions on their "pauses" during the writing process. The questions focus on what the subjects were thinking during the "pauses" and from the answers of the subjects, we can learn what strategies the subjects use during their writing. The process of watching video, asking and answering questions is also audio-recorded to make sure that we can get more exact data afterwards.

The writing topic is an argumentative one. The reason for this choice is that they had been used in previous studies (Sasaki, 2000; Bosher, 1998) and according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), argumentative topics demanded more complex processing and tended to elicit more meaningful information.

The time span from 30 to 60 minutes is chosen for the subjects to write for the following reasons. Firstly, the topic is about the current situation of the job market in China, which is familiar to the college students. So it is a relatively easy topic to write on. Secondly, for most of the Chinese university students, the time spent on writing in most of the English tests should be less then 30 minutes or they cannot finish the tests. So compared to the time limit in their English test, 30 to 60 minutes in the present study is enough for them to finish their writing. Finally, this time span of writing

makes the following video-watching and interview session relatively short. Based on the result of the pilot study, the overall SRP process for one subject is about 2 hours. If the subjects spend more than 60 minutes writing, it will make them too tired to recall their thoughts during the writing.

The tips also made it easier for the subjects to understand the procedure of the whole SRP experiment. The writing instruction and the tips were written in both English and Chinese, which ensured that all the subjects could comprehend the writing topic correctly and fully. All the subjects were given pieces of paper to write on. On the paper, they also have to give their personal information, such as grade and gender. The scripts of the subjects were collected after the SRP process.

Similar to Sasaki's research (2000), before the subjects started to write the title of their essays, they were asked some questions about their writing plan, such as "What are you going to write?", "Do you have an overall writing plan?", "What do you plan to write at the beginning, in the middle and in the end?". When they answered the questions, they were told that the time of this question session would not be included in the 30 to 60 minutes for writing. All the questions were asked in Chinese so that each subject could understand correctly. Then, the subjects began to write their articles. The camera focused on the movement of their writing hands and the content of their writings. We monitored the whole writing process and took down on the SRP Time & Strategy Table the beginning and ending time points of pauses of 3 seconds or longer. For each pause, we designed several strategies according to the items in the questionnaire for the interview part, such as spelling, grammar, correction, planning (for what to write next), reviewing, expressing in a different way (expression), translation, and so on. While the subjects were writing, they were not allowed to use dictionaries. After they finished writing and before watching the video tape, they were also asked several questions, such as "Does the video camera affect your writing?", "Did you write the same content at the beginning, in the middle and in the end according to your original writing plan?" These questions were also asked in Chinese.

In the following interview session, the subjects watched their writing process with us. The subjects watched the tape with their own writings as reference. The reason is that in the pilot study, we learnt that it was easier for the subjects to recall their thoughts with the help of the texts. While watching the videotape, every time the subjects stopped for 3 seconds or longer, we asked them questions "What were you thinking about then?" in Chinese. The subjects answered the questions in either

Chinese or English. If their answers of a certain pause belonged to the strategies in the SRP Time & Strategy Table, we marked a "√" in that pause. If not, we wrote down the strategies they used in the column "others". This process continued until they finished the writing process of the subjects on the videotape. Through the questions on the pauses during the writing process, we got the strategies used by the subjects respectively. The whole process of interview session was audio-taped by MP3 and the audio and video materials were all transferred to the computer for future use.

After the video-watching process, the subjects were asked to fill in the questionnaire. For evaluation, all the writing texts collected were sent to national English examination graders, two EFL professors with more than 15 years' teaching experience.

From the entire SRP session, the following materials or data were obtained:

1. Personal information of the subjects
2. Written texts and drafts (if the subjects made one)
3. Time points and length of the "pauses"
4. Time spent on writing of the subjects
5. Strategies used during the "pauses"
6. Subjects' answers and comments on the whole writing process
7. Data of the questionnaire for SRP session
8. Audio and video materials of SRP process

2.3 Research subjects

We chose the undergraduate students in Dalian University of Technology as subjects. Three groups of subjects were asked to take part in the study. They were junior English majors (Group 1), freshman English majors (Group 2) and sophomore non-English majors (Group3). The reason to choose these three groups of subjects is that the differences of English writing proficiency among the three groups are distinctive. Until the present study, junior English majors and freshman English majors have 2.5 years and 0.5 years of professional English writing training respectively. For the non-English majors, their English proficiency is presumed highest in the sophomore year since they have to pass College English Test Band Four[i] (CET-4) his year. But compared with English majors, their English writing proficiency is still relatively low. So these three groups of subjects form a clear hierarchy of English writing proficiency. It is hypothesized that from top to the bottom, the order of writing proficiency of the

three groups is Group1, Group 2 and Group 3.

The present study includes two sessions: questionnaire and SRP experiment. In the questionnaire session, the software SPSS is employed to analyze the data. For each group, 20 subjects are needed for the scientific and reliable data analysis by SPSS. The total number is 60. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Group Information of Questionnaire Session

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Major	English (junior)	English (freshman)	Architecture	
Male	4	7	15	26
Female	16	13	5	34
Total	20	20	20	60

From Table 1, it is clear that the different classes of majors have different gender distributions. In the first two groups, there are more female subjects than male ones, but in the last group there are more male subjects than female ones. The reason is that for English major classes, there are always more female students than male ones. On the contrary, in non-English major classes, especially science major classes, there are always more male than female students. Since the subjects of the questionnaire session are chosen randomly, the distribution of the gender is in accordance with the major difference.

For the SRP experiment session, the same groups were used. SRP is a way to get qualitative data and it is relatively time-consuming. After referring to the previous relative studies (Sasaki, 2000; Bosher, 1998; Yanga & Shib, 2003), 4 subjects were chosen randomly from each group to take part in SRP experiment. The total number of subjects taking part in the SRP experiment is 12. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Group Information of SRP Experiment

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Major	English (junior)	English (freshman)	Architecture	
Male	2	1	3	6
Female	2	3	1	6
Total	4	4	4	12

In Table 2, it is coincidental that the number of male subjects equals the female ones.

It in turn makes it easier to analyze and compare the qualitative data that was obtained from the SRP session.

3. Data analysis and results

The data and SRP experiment were analyzed in different ways. Since a questionnaire is a quantitative instrument, the data were firstly recorded and then analyzed by the software SPSS 10.0. As for the SRP experiment, the materials were observed and analyzed. However, the results from only subjective observation were far from enough, so some of the data, such as frequency of pauses, pausing length and so on were recorded by Microsoft Office Excel since only simple statistical processing was needed. For strategies used and other relative data, SPSS 10.0 was used for more complex statistical analysis.

3.1 Questionnaire data analysis

60 valid questionnaires were retrieved after the class visit. The subjects taking part in the questionnaires were chosen randomly so the data was reliable and valid. To analyze the data, we at first numbered the questionnaires by groups: majors Group1 (from number 1 to 20), majors Group 2 (from number 21 to 40), and majors Group 3 (from number 41 to 60).

After grouping and numbering all the questionnaires, we used SPSS 10.0 to analyze whether there were significant differences of item choices among the three groups and between English majors and non-English majors. The results would reveal the different strategies used by the subjects in the three groups.

Since the number of subjects in each group was 20, less than 30. Nonparametric Tests in SPSS 10.0 was used to analyze the significance of differences. We used Crosstab Test to compare the three groups of data. Pearson Chi-Square Correlation Coefficient was used to indicate the significance of item choices difference among the three groups.

For the comparison between English majors and non-English majors, another test was used to analyze the data. The total number of subjects in Group 1 and Group 2 is 40, which is larger than the number of the subjects in Group 3. So we first used SPSS 10.0 to select randomly 20 subjects from Group 1 and Group 2. These 20 subjects of English majors form a new group of English majors, Group 4. The 20 subjects in Group 4 were then put together with the 20 subjects in Group 3 for further Crosstab

analysis.

3.2 SRP Experiment data analysis

Four sets of data were obtained from each subject in the SRP experiment, including an SRP Question Sheet, an SRP Time & Strategy Table, a composition, and a questionnaire. The data of each subject were put in a portfolio together and then grouped and numbered. Therefore, the data of the 12 subjects in SRP experiment were categorized respectively to Group 1 (number 1 to 4), Group 2 (number 1 to 4), and Group 3 (number 1 to 4). Then, the four sets of data were analyzed one by one.

The questions on SRP Question Sheet are about the writing plan and the validity of the video-taping method. The aim of the SRP questions is twofold. On the one hand, the questions can check whether the students write consistently and how much planning they do before writing. On the other hand, the questions also investigate whether the video-taping method is intrusive during the writing process of the subjects and is helpful for them to recall their thoughts after the writing. Besides, the main problems in the subjects' writing are also revealed by the questions.

Some of the questions and answers were recorded by SPSS 10.0 and some by Microsoft Excel. The reason is that SPSS is good for statistical analysis but Microsoft Excel can obtain more subjective information. The "yes-or-no" questions are recorded by SPSS:

a. Do you have an overall writing plan?
b. Did the questions have negative influence on your writing?
c. Did the video-taping affect negatively your writing?
d. Do you write according to your writing plan?
e. Is video-watching helpful to recall your thoughts during the writing process?

The "open-ended" question is recorded by Microsoft Excel:

f. What are the main problems in your writing?

For the "yes-or-no" questions, SPSS was used to analyze the frequency of the answers of "yes" and "no". And for the "open-ended" question, the answers were recorded for further analysis.

SRP Time & Strategy Table is used to record the thoughts or strategies used by the subjects during their writing process. For each subject, there is an SRP Time & Strategy Table. For example, Table 3 is the SRP Time & Strategy Table of subject Number 2, Group 1.

Table 3: SRP Time & Strategy Table of subject Number 2, Group 1

TP=Time Point

TS=Time Span

		Strategy							
TS (sec)	TP	S	G	C	P	R	E	T	O
6	01:48-01:54				√				
6	03:55-04:01		√				√		
8	04:24-0432				√				
9	05:00-05:09						√	√	
4	06:10-06:14						√		
10	07:30-07:40				√				
12	08:40-08:52				√				
12	09:50-10:02						√		
13	11:24-11:37				√				
15	11:40-11:55				√				
9	12:02-12:11						√		
15	13:40-13:55				√				
8	14:00-				√				

	14:08								
11	14:36-14:47						√		
11	16:08-16:19				√				
9	16:56-17:05				√				
3	17:17-17:20						√		
9	18:35-18:44				√				
5	19:28-19:33						√		
4	21:20-21:24				√				
5	21:40-21:45				√				
5	22:40-22:45	√							

S=spelling
G=grammar
C=correction
P=planning
R=reviewing
E=expression
T=translation
O=others

TP is the time point in the tape. We identified the TP while monitoring the video camera. TS is the length of each pause in the writing process, and it is calculated by seconds. The strategies are what subject Number 2, Group 1 used during her writing process. She told us the strategies she used in each pause while watching the video tape of her own writing. From the SRP Time & Strategy Table, we got the strategies used by the subjects, pausing length, and frequency of pauses. During the data recording, it was found that more strategies were used by the subjects than those in the SRP Time & Strategy Table, such as transition, borrowing (from the instruction),

using a dictionary, and overall proofreading (after finishing writing). So as a whole, 11 strategies were recorded.

Then, the tape of each subject was studied again to record the time for writing. The time span for writing was then calculated in seconds. After that, for each of the subjects, the following data were recorded by Microsoft Excel for basic statistical analysis: frequency of different strategies used, frequency of pauses, pausing length, and the time span of writing.

After that, the data were analyzed and compared respectively by groups (Group1, Group 2, and Group 3) and gender (male vs. female). In the group analysis, for each group, the following data were first calculated by Microsoft Excel: group frequency of each strategy respectively, group frequency of all the strategies, group frequency of pauses, total pausing length, total writing time span, and proportion of total pausing length to total writing time span.

In gender analysis, similar data were calculated for male and female subjects respectively: frequency of each strategy, total frequency of all the strategies, frequency of pauses, total pausing length, total writing time span, and proportion of total pausing length to total writing time span.

After the basic analysis by Microsoft Excel, the following data were recorded by SPSS 10.0 and each subject was treated as one case: frequency of each writing strategy, frequency of all the writing strategies, frequency of pauses, mean pausing length, writing time span, and the proportion of total pausing length to writing time span. All the data were used in further correlation analysis.

In the SRP experiment, questionnaires were used as a complementary tool to get more data. Similar to the data collection process in the questionnaire section, the data of the 12 copies here were also recorded by SPSS 10.0. Since the size of the sample is too small to do quantitative analysis, the data from the questionnaire here were used as backup information for the subjects in SRP experiment. The research focused on the feelings of the subjects when they filled in the questionnaires immediately after finishing one piece of writing.

3. 3 Composition scores analysis

After all the texts of the writing of the subjects were collected, they were sent to be evaluated by two EFL experts of the Foreign Languages School of Dalian University of Technology who have more than 10 years' experience in the field of EFL teaching.

An ESL Composition Profile (see Appendix A) was used for the evaluation.

The ESL Composition Profile was developed by Hughey (1981). There are 5 components in the profile, and different values are given to the different aspects of ESL writing: content (30), organization (20), vocabulary (20), language use (25) and mechanics (5).

For each aspect, there are 4 levels according to the different writing levels of the ESL students. The criteria of each level are also listed. In the present study, the total scores are needed.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire findings and discussion

SPSS Crosstab Test is used to analyze the significance of differences among the choice of the groups. The items with value of P smaller than 0.05 are discussed.

Table 4: Do you like English writing?

		Group			
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
	Like it	6	7		5
	No special feelings	10	11	12	11
	Dislike it	4	2	7	4
	Dislike it very much			1	
Total		20	20	20	20

Table 4 is the result of the general question “Do you like English writing?” From the table it is clear that a quarter of the subjects in Group 4 like English writing and only 4 subjects do not like it. On the contrary, none of the subjects in Group 3 like English writing and 8 of them dislike it or dislike it very much. The result of the general question shows that most of the English major students like English writing. But for the sophomore non-English major students, the most important thing they are facing is the CET-4. They have to learn how to write in English if they want to pass or get a good result in the test and they drill a lot in exam writing. As a result, English writing has become a hard task for them and they get bored in the learning process. This is the reason why none of the sophomore non-English major students like

English writing.

Table 5: Items with P<0.05

A	totally or almost totally unsuitable
B	suitable in less than half of the time
C	suitable in about half of the time
D	suitable in more than half of the time
E	totally or almost totally suitable

Item	Group	A	B	C	D	E
Planning before writing	1				16	4
	2				16	4
	3		1	6	11	2
	4				16	4
Write a detailed outline	1	1	15	4		
	2	4	11	3		2
	3	5	5	8	1	1
	4	4	16			
Write soon after reading the topic	1	5	7	7	1	
	2	7	10	2	1	
	3		10	6	3	1
	4	6	8	5	1	
Pay attention to coherence	1			7	12	1
	2			5	13	2
	3		4	2	11	3
	4			8	11	1
Translation	1	1	5	10	4	
	2		6	7	7	
	3		7	2	7	4
	4	1	4	9	6	
Delete or add things while writing	1		4	2	12	2
	2		4	6	8	2
	3	2	2	10	6	
	4		5	5	8	2

Table 5 presents the items with P smaller than 0.05. Items involved are “Planning before writing”, “Write a detailed outline”, “Pay attention to coherence”, “Translation”, “Delete or add things while writing”, and “Write soon after reading the topic”. The first three strategies are about planning.

As for the strategy of "planning before writing", the value of P is 1.000 between Group 1 and Group 2. It means that all the subjects in Group1 and Group 2 made the same choice in item "planning before writing". It indicates that planning plays an important role in the writing of English major students, but the value of P between Group 3 and Group 4 is smaller than 0.05. It means that for the non-English major students, they still have not formed the habit of planning every time before writing. Accordingly, planning is a unique strategy that differentiates EFL writers with higher level from those with lower level.

For the strategy of "outlining", the value of P between Group 3 and Group 4 is 0.03, indicating the difference is extremely significant. It is clear from the table that the choices of the subjects in Group 4 center on "unsuitable". On the other hand, about half of the subjects in Group 3 write a detailed outlining at first. This shows that English major students do not always write a detailed outline before writing, while most of the non-English major students use the strategy of detailed outline frequently. The reason is that although English major students have learnt the importance of outlining in their professional English writing training, they do not have to write a detailed outline every time because they are more frequently exposed to an English environment, so they are used to thinking in English. As a result, most of the English major students only brainstorm relative ideas before writing and then select the useful ones quickly. On the contrary, the writing ability of non-English major students is still relatively weak, so they have to write a detailed outline to help them keep in mind what to write and how to organize the ideas. This is the reason why non-English major students use the strategy of detailed outlining more frequently than English major students.

Concerning the strategy of "write soon after reading the topic", the choices of the subjects in Group 2 center on "unsuitable" while those of the subjects in Group 3 center on "suitable". Although the subjects in Group 2 are only freshman English major students, they have already learnt the importance of planning before writing. For those students, planning has become a necessity every time before they want to write English articles. Nonetheless, the subjects in Group 3, sophomore non-English major students, have not realized the importance of planning even though they have been taught by their English teachers. Most of them still cannot get rid of the habit of starting to write immediately after reading the topic without a primary writing plan. From the data, it is concluded that "planning" is one of the key strategies that

differentiate professional writers from unprofessional ones.

As for the strategy of "coherence", it is obvious that about a quarter of the subjects in Group 3 chose "suitable in less than half of the time" while more than half of the subjects in Group 4 chose "suitable in more than half of the time" or "totally or almost totally suitable". Although the choices of the subjects in Group 4 center on "suitable", there are still 8 subjects in this group that chose "suitable in about half of the time". The data indicate that most of the English major students know the importance of coherence in English writing, but some of them are still not sure that they pay attention to coherence in their writing. On the other hand, some of the non-English major students have not yet realized the importance of coherence in English writing. So it is clear that for the EFL learners as a whole, they do not have a strong awareness of coherence strategy.

As for the strategy of "translation", the choices of the subjects in Group 4 center on "unsuitable" while the choices of the subjects in Group 3 center on "suitable". This means that most of the English major students do not use translation in their writing while a large proportion of non-English major students tend to think in Chinese first and then translate their ideas into English during their writing. The difference lies in the degree of translation in writing. For English major students who are more proficient writers, the degree of translating ideas consciously in writing is lower than the less proficient writers, the non-English major students.

For the strategy of "delete or add things while writing", the data show clearly that about three quarters of the subjects in Group 1 use deleting or adding during their writing, while only about a quarter of the subjects in Group 3 chose "suitable in more than half of the time". Half of the subjects in Group 3 chose "suitable in about half of the time," meaning they are not sure whether or not they delete or add things during writing. Another significant difference is that 2 subjects in Group 1 chose "totally or almost totally suitable" while 2 subjects in Group 3 chose "totally or almost totally unsuitable". In the table of Chi-Square Tests, the value of P here is 0.017. It means that the difference between the two groups here is very significant. All the data mentioned above indicate that junior English major students delete or add things frequently during writing, but sophomore non-English major students do not use it frequently. The reason lies in the fact that the writing proficiency of junior English major students is higher. In order to make their writing better, English major students always correct what they have written during the writing process by adding or

deleting things. But for the non-English major students, whose writing proficiency is relatively lower than the English major students, expressing their ideas in English correctly is already challenging, let alone making their expressions better. Consequently, more junior English major students use the strategy of "deleting or adding things during writing" than sophomore non-English major students.

Table 6: Items with P=1.00

Item	Group	A	B	C	D	E
Pay attention to spelling & grammar	1		5	2	11	2
	2		5	2	11	2
	3	1	4	5	9	1
	4		3	3	13	1
Fluent and authentic expression	1		3	9	7	1
	2		3	9	7	1
	3	3	1	10	5	1
	4		3	9	7	1

Table 6 presents the items with the value of P equal to 1.00, which indicates that the choice of the items between Group 1 and Group 2 is exactly the same. Items involved are "pay attention to spelling and grammar" and "fluent and authentic expression" in writing. The data show that although the writing proficiency of English major students is relatively high, they are still EFL learners, and they have problems in spelling and grammar as well. The strategy of paying attention to spelling and grammar is used frequently in their writing.

As for the strategy of fluent and authentic expression, the data indicate that in both Group 1 and Group 2, fewer subjects pay attention to the fluency and authenticity of expression in English writing. It also shows that even for junior English major students who have had 2.5 years of professional English writing training, it is hard for them to maintain fluency and authenticity of expression.

4.2 SRP experiment findings and discussion

12 subjects took part in the SRP experiment: 4 subjects in Group 1 (junior English major students), 4 subjects in Group 2 (freshman English major students), and 4

subjects in Group 3 (sophomore non-English major students). There are three parts of data in the SRP experiment: the SRP Question Sheet, SRP Time & Strategy Table, and composition evaluation. Qualitative data were obtained from the SRP Question Sheet and quantitative data were acquired from the primary analysis of SRP Time & Strategy Table.

4.2.1 SRP Questions findings and discussion

For the data from the SRP Question Sheet and SRP Time & Strategy Table, frequency of different variables (such as strategies and pauses) was analyzed because it is the most obvious and easiest indicator of a descriptive analysis.

The design of the SRP questions followed two rules. On the one hand, the questions can check the consistency of the students' writing and whether and how much planning they do before writing. On the other hand, the questions investigate the validity of the method of video-taping during writing and video-watching after writing. What's more, the questions about the main problems in the subjects' writing are also included in the sheet.

According to the answers of the subjects and the observations of the researcher concerning the consistency of writing, subjects with a clear writing plan always wrote fluently and smoothly, while those with no or an unclear writing plan had to stop many times during the writing, and it was difficult for them to continue and finish the writing as well. From the video-tapes that were observed and analyzed, it is clear that planning does play an important role in EFL English writing.

What is more, almost all subjects in three groups stuck to their writing plan, but from the interview, the researcher was told by some subjects that they changed their ideas more or less during their writing process, especially the subjects in Group 1 and Group 2. The reason lies in the fact that subjects in Group 1 and Group 2 are English major students whose English writing proficiency is relatively higher than the non-English major students. And for these English majors, organizing new ideas during writing will not be so big a problem as it may be for the non-English major students.

As for the validity of the method of video-taping and video-watching, the answers of the subjects show that Stimulated Recall Protocol is much less intrusive compared with Think-Aloud Protocol. However, it still bothers the subjects if they are video-taped while writing, especially when the camera is visible to them. Video-taping the subjects from another room may be a better way.

As for the effectiveness of the video-watching process, all subjects agreed that the video-watching process did help them recall their thoughts during the "pauses". It further proves the validity of SRP. Additionally, all of the subjects recognized that the writing texts of their own and the video-watching process could help them recall more accurate information.

4.2.2 Pauses & Strategies findings and discussion

Strategies and pauses are the center of the entire Stimulated Recall Protocol. The aim of the SRP experiment is to know what the subjects were thinking while they were writing, and what strategies they were using during the "pauses". From the SRP Time & Strategy Table, the researcher got the raw information of each subject and then did a primary analysis using Microsoft Excel. Personal data of "pauses" and strategies used during the pauses were analyzed. There are more strategies in Personal data of Strategy (Appendix B) than in SRP Time & Strategy Table, such as transition, borrowing (from the written instruction, using a dictionary and overall proofreading. The reason is that some of the strategies used by the subjects during their writing are not listed in the SRP Time & Strategy Table designed by the researcher. Take using a dictionary as an example. The writing proficiency of two subjects in Group 3 was so low that they could not finish their writing without the help of dictionary. As a result, the researcher had to allow them to look some of the words up in dictionary. But for other subjects who do not have this kind of problem, using a dictionary is not allowed in order to prevent them from copying sentences directly from the dictionary, which will lower the reliability of the data obtained from the SRP process.

Group data of "pauses" and "strategies" are presented respectively as follows.

Table 7 Group data of "pauses"

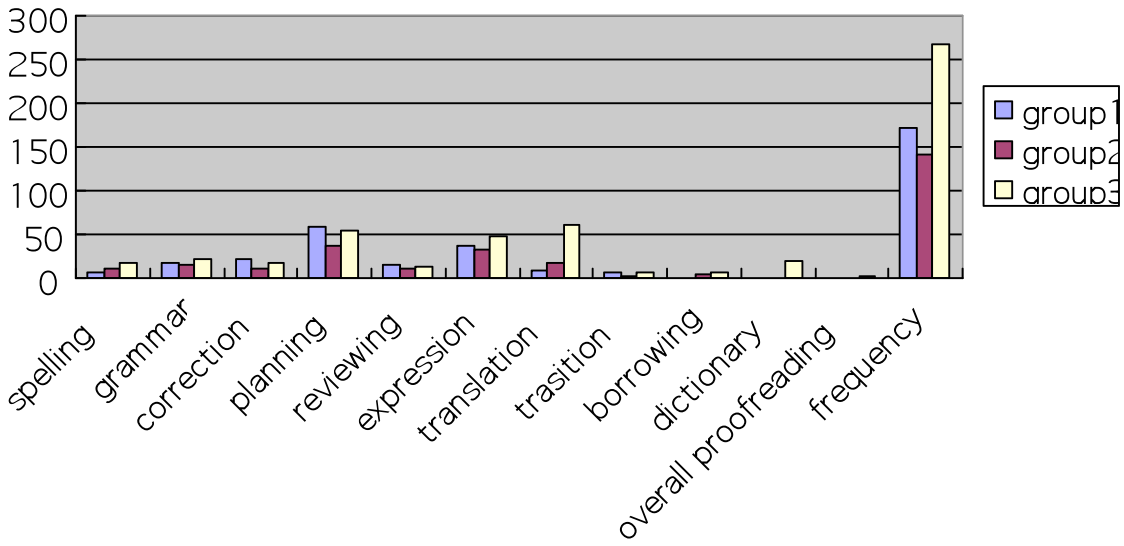
Group	Frequency	Pausing length (sec%	Mean pausing length $ sec%	Writing time span $ sec%	Pausing length / writing time span $ # %
1	134.00	2873.00	21.44	8387.00	34.26
2	116.00	1972.00	17.00	7427.00	26.55
3	171.00	3452.00	20.19	8302.00	41.58

Table 7 is the group information of "pauses". It shows that in the three groups, subjects in Group 3 paused most frequently during writing and the subjects in Group 2 paused least frequently. The total pausing length follows the same order. It indicates that sophomore non-English major students and junior English major students pause more often and longer than the freshman English major students. For the non-English major students, pausing is inevitable because their writing proficiency is relatively lower than other two groups. They have to stop from time to time to organize their ideas or consider the expression of the language. But for the junior English major students, pausing is a period of time when they try to use what they have learnt in the years of professional writing training and write in a better way. So they tend to pause longer than the subjects in other two groups. That explains why the mean pausing length and writing time span of Group 1 are both the longest among the three groups.

As for the proportion of pausing length to writing time span, again Group 3 is the highest and Group 2 is the lowest. It means that although the subjects in Group 1 spent more time in writing, and their mean pausing length is longer than other two groups, their total pausing length is shorter than that of Group 3. On the other hand, the subjects in Group 3 spent less time in writing, but their total pausing length is the longest among the three groups. As a result, the proportion of pausing length to writing time span of Group 3 is higher than the other two groups. The order of the proportion indicates that the subjects in Group 1 wrote more fluently than those of Group 3.

It is also obvious from the table that all the data of Group 2 are the smallest among the three groups. Compared with Group 1 and Group 3, the subjects in Group 2 are freshman English major students. They are EFL writing beginners with half a year of professional writing training, which helps them write more proficiently than sophomore non-English major students in Group 3. As a result, they wrote more naturally, affected less by the "rules" or "skills" in writing, paused less, and often wrote quickly.

Graph 1: Strategy frequency (SRP experiment)



Graph 1 presents the frequency of each strategy and the total number of strategies in each group. From the graph it is clear that for each strategy, the frequency order of the three groups is different. The subjects in Group 1 used most frequently correction, planning and reviewing. The subjects in Group 3 used most frequently grammar, expression, spelling, translation, borrowing (from the instruction), transition, using a dictionary, overall proofreading and the total frequency of strategies is the largest among the three. Group 2 had no preference concerning strategy use.

According to the hypothesis, the subjects in Group 1 are the most proficient writers among the three groups, so they pay more attention to the quality of their writing and try their best to write flawlessly. Therefore, they use more planning, correction and reviewing than the subjects in the other two groups.

As for the subjects in Group 3, their writing proficiency is the lowest among the three groups. As a result, they have to make the effort to make sure that their grammar and expressions are right. Further, it is recognized that spelling, translation and borrowing (from the writing instruction) are the basic strategies in English writing. And to some degree, the frequency of these basic strategies used in EFL writing negatively correlates with the level of writing proficiency according to the result. During the writing process, 2 subjects in Group 3 could not finish writing without using a dictionary. In addition, only the subjects in Group 3 used overall proofreading. It is an unexpected result, because all the English major students have learnt the

importance of proofreading. The reason may be that they did not take the writing in the present study as seriously as did the subjects in Group 3.

The frequency of pauses of Group 3 is the highest among the three groups. Since "pauses" are used in the present study as a "window" to see what strategies the subjects use while writing, and usually subjects use more than one strategy in one pause, the frequency of all the strategies used more or less positively correlates with the frequency of the pauses. This is the reason why the order tendency of the frequency of all strategies used is the same as that of the pauses.

4.2.3 Composition scores findings and discussion

A special program was written in Microsoft Visual Basic (VB) to calculate the Z-score of the 12 subjects taking part in SRP experiment. Two sets of T-scores and Z-scores for each subject are presented in Appendix C. Since 2 experts were involved in the composition evaluation session, there are two sets of T-scores and Z-scores for 12 subjects, so the mean T-score and Z-score of each subject are used in the present study (see Appendix B). Standard Deviation (SD) and mean of each set of T-score are analyzed in the following part.

Table 8: SD and mean of two sets of T-scores
1=scores given by expert NO. 1
2=scores given by expert NO. 2

Standard Deviation (SD)		Mean (M)	
SD 1	SD 2	T-score 1 M	T-score 2 M
12.75	11.92	68.25	69.25

Table 8 presents the standard deviation (SD) and the mean of the two sets of T-scores. It is clear that for the same 12 subjects, the SD of T-score given by expert NO. 1 is 12.75, not largely different from 11.92, the SD of T-score given by expert NO.2. In the mean time, the mean score of the two sets of the T-score is 68.25 and 69.25, only 1 point different from each other. The data shows that there is not a large difference between the two sets of T-scores. The close SD and mean of these two sets of T-scores confirm the reliability and validity of the ESL Composition Profile. The reason is that different EFL experts used the same ESL Composition Profile to

evaluate the compositions of the subjects and the result is almost the same. In addition, the reliability and validity of ESL Composition Profile in turn guarantee the reliability of the scores.

Table 9: Mean T-score and mean Z-score of each group

Group	Group mean T-score	group mean Z-score
1	80.5	0.96
2	66.125	-0.22
3	59.625	-0.74

Table 9 presents the mean T-score and mean Z-score of each group. It is clear from the table that for both the T-score and Z-score, Group 1 is the highest, Group 2 in the middle and Group 3 the lowest. The scores confirm the hypothesis that the writing proficiency of the junior English major students is the highest, freshman English major students in the middle, and sophomore non-English major students the lowest.

4.2.4 Correlation analysis

One of the research questions is to find out the relations among the composition scores and other variables, such as frequency of each writing strategy, frequency of all the writing strategies, frequency of pauses, mean pausing length, writing time span, and the proportion of total pausing length to writing time span. In the present study, correlation analysis was used to get the answer. The variables mentioned above were first recorded by SPSS 10.0 and then analyzed by Bivariate Correlation Tests. The correlation between each 2 variables was analyzed. Since the size of the sample is 12, smaller than 30, Spearman Correlation Coefficient for non-parametric analysis is used to indicate the significance of correlations. The result of the correlation analysis is presented in Appendix H.

From Appendix H, we could see that the correlation of several variables is significant (at the 0.01 level or the 0.05 level). The results are presented in the following table.

Table 10: Significant correlation

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation coefficient
Score	Translation	0.583*
Reviewing	Correction	0.761**
Transition	Expression	0.820**
Mean pausing length	Translation	0.643*
Strategy frequency	Planning	0.582*
	Translation	0.629*
Pause frequency	Planning	0.732**
	Expression	0.669*
	Transition	0.618*
	Strategy frequency	0.935**
Writing time span	Strategy frequency	0.662*
	Pause frequency	0.769**
Pausing length / writing time span	Planning	0.606*
	Strategy frequency	0.651*
	Pause frequency	0.713**
	Mean pausing length	0.685*

**	Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*	Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 10 shows that all the significant correlation is positive correlation. Composition score only positively correlates with the strategy of translation. It indicates that EFL learners (with either high or low writing proficiency) have to use translation in writing if they want to get high scores.

The strategy of reviewing correlates with correction at the 0.01 level. It means that the two strategies are used together most of the time. The reason is simple. Most of the subjects who reviewed their writing would always find some mistakes or inappropriate expressions, so they corrected them after reviewing, which makes these two strategies closely correlate with each other.

Two other closely correlated strategies are transition and expression. During the video-watching process, the researcher found that most of the subjects who paused for better expressions also said that at the same time, they were trying to figure out how to transit to the next part. As a result, the strategy of expression and transition are always used together.

Mean pausing length correlates with the strategy of translation. It means that the longer the mean pausing length is, the more times the strategy of translation is used by the subjects. The reason is not hard to understand. All the subjects are EFL learners and the process of translating their own ideas from Chinese to English needs to be done in pauses. Usually the translation process needs time. As a result, the more they translate, the longer they pause.

The frequency of all the strategies correlates with two other variables: planning and translation. It indicates that planning and translation are the top 2 strategies used most frequently by all the subjects. For all the subjects, the most important strategies they need in EFL writing are planning and translation, which also positively correlates with composition scores. It means that if the subjects want to get higher scores in writing, they have to plan carefully and frequently translate from Chinese to English.

The frequency of pauses correlates with four other variables: planning, expression, transition, and frequency of all the strategies, in which planning and frequency of all the strategies significantly correlate with frequency of pauses at the 0.01 level. Since all the strategies were used in the pauses, the frequency of pauses naturally correlates with the frequency of all the strategies. And as mentioned above, planning is one of the most frequently used strategies used by the subjects, so it in turn correlates with the frequency of the pauses. As for the other two strategies, expression and transition, as analyzed before, these two strategies significantly correlate with each other. Both of them correlate with the frequency which indicates that subjects paused mostly for better expressions and the expressions are always about how to transit.

Both the frequency of all the strategies and pauses positively correlate with writing time span. It means that the more frequently the subjects paused, the more strategies they used, and the longer time they spent in writing. The result is also consistent with the researcher's observation. Subjects who spent longer time in writing always paused more frequently to think and in turn used more strategies.

The last variable to analyze is the proportion of total pausing length to writing time span. It is clear that it positively correlates with planning, frequency of strategies, frequency of pauses and the mean pausing length. It reveals a simple math phenomenon. Pausing length is the result of mean pausing length times the frequency of pauses, so it of course positively correlated with the latter two variables. And as mentioned before, frequency of pauses correlates with frequency of all the strategies, among which planning is one of the most frequently used. As a result, given the same

writing time span, planning, frequency of all the strategies, frequency of pauses and mean pausing length all correlate with pausing length.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1. Research conclusion

Two different types of instruments are employed in the present study, in which a questionnaire is used as a quantitative instrument and Stimulated Recall Protocol as a qualitative instrument. The subjects are Chinese college EFL learners with different levels of writing proficiency. The findings of the present study are summarized as follows:

Firstly, as for writing strategy use, it is also confirmed that there are significant differences in strategy use between English majors and non-English majors. What is more, there are more significant differences between junior English majors and sophomore non-English majors than between freshman English majors and sophomore non-English majors. However for junior and freshman English majors, there is no significant difference in strategy use.

Secondly, English majors hold a more positive attitude towards English writing. Most of the English majors like English writing, while none of the non-English majors like English writing. The reason behind this phenomenon is worth searching for.

Thirdly, both English majors and non-English majors cannot handle the strategy of coherence well. It reveals that in writing, EFL learners still do not pay much attention to coherence, which is extremely important in English writing.

Fourthly, English majors pay attention to more “global” strategies, such as planning, while non-English majors pay attention to more “local” strategies, such as grammar and spelling. It indicates that more proficient writers write more systematically and consider more wholly than the less proficient ones. Both the questionnaire and SRP experiment confirm this result.

Fifthly, quantitative and qualitative instruments should be integrated in research to draw conclusions. In the present study, the result of the correlation tests shows that composition scores correlate positively with only one writing strategy, translation. It is also shown that the composition scores also positively correlate with the writing proficiency of the writers, but the questionnaire shows that the most proficient writers seldom use translation in writing. The two results contradict each other. The reason

lies in the different nature of the quantitative and qualitative instruments. What the subjects choose in the questionnaire may just be what they consider right in theory, but they may not put it into practice in real writing. Therefore, combining the data from the quantitative instrument with the first-hand material from the qualitative instrument is a scientific method for the research.

Finally, the reliability and validity of instruments in the present study are confirmed. SRP is proved to be an effective qualitative instrument in English writing research and the ESL Composition Profile is a classic EFL composition evaluation system.

5.2. Pedagogical implications

As an empirical study, the present study can serve many purposes. The most important purpose, however, is putting the findings of the study into practice of EFL writing and improving the writing proficiency of Chinese college EFL learners. Some suggestions on teaching and learning EFL writing are listed below.

Firstly, it is necessary to change the attitude of non-English majors towards English writing. It is commonly believed that English writing is the most boring course in all EFL courses, especially for non-English majors. The teachers could provide more interesting materials and create an active atmosphere in writing class and change the situation gradually.

Secondly, the importance of coherence should be emphasized. The result of the present study shows that both English majors and non-English majors have not realized the importance of coherence. EFL writing teachers could provide more authentic writing materials to help the students get familiar with the coherent writing pattern of native writers.

Thirdly, the translating ability of the students should be improved. The result of the present study shows that the strategy of translation positively correlates with composition scores, which proves that in a non-English atmosphere, such as in China, it is hardly possible for EFL learners to think in English during writing, even for the most proficient writers. The better they translate their ideas into English, the higher the scores they get. This implies that if EFL learners want to improve their writing proficiency, their translating ability should be improved first. EFL could pay more attention to translation training in class, especially for non-English majors who do not have access to translation classes at present.

Last, both global and local writing strategies should be emphasized in EFL writing

teaching. These two different types of strategies play an equally important role in EFL writing. Only if the writers handle both types of strategies can they improve their writing proficiency.

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Appendix A

ESL Composition Profile

CONTENT

Score	Range	Criteria
	30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable*substantive*thorough development of thesis* relevant to assigned topic
	26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject* adequate range* limited development of thesis* mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
	21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject* little substance* inadequate development of topic
	16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject* non-substantive* not pertinent * OR not enough to evaluate

ORGANIZATION

Score	Range	Criteria
	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression* ideas clearly stated/supported* succinct*well-organized*logical sequencing*cohesive
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy*loosely organized but main ideas stand out*limited support* logical but incomplete sequencing
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent* ideas confused or disconnected* lacks logical sequencing and development
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate* no organization*OR not enough to evaluate

VOCABULARY

Score	Range	Criteria
	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range* effective word/idiom choice and usage* word form mastery * appropriate register
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range* occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage *but meaning not obscured*
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range* frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage* *meaning confused or obscured*
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation* little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form* OR not enough to evaluate

LANGUAGE USE

Score	Range	Criteria
	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions* few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions
	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions* minor problems in complex constructions * several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions *but meaning seldom obscured*
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions* frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions * *meaning confused or obscured*
	10-5	VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules* dominated by errors* does not communicate* OR not enough to evaluate

MECHANICS

Score	Range	Criteria
	5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions* few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
	4	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing *but meaning not obscured*
	3	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing * poor handwriting* *meaning confused or obscured*
	2	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions* dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing* handwriting illegible* OR not enough to evaluate

TOTAL:	

Appendix B

Personal Data of Strategy

F=frequency

Sp=spelling Gr=grammar Cr=correction Pl=planning
Re=reviewing Ex=expression Trsl=Translation Trsi=transition
Bo=borrowing Di=dictionary OP=overall proofreading

Group	Gender	Sp F	Gr F	Cr F	Pl F	Re F	Ex F	Trsl F	Trsi F	Bo F	Di F	OP F	Total F
1	M	2	10	8	7	6	0	4	0	1	0	0	38
1	F	1	1	0	12	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	22
1	F	1	2	11	23	10	22	0	6	0	0	0	75
1	M	3	5	3	16	0	6	4	0	0	0	0	37
2	F	3	3	4	10	4	7	2	1	1	0	0	35
2	M	3	1	0	7	0	6	1	1	1	0	0	20
2	F	3	5	0	13	2	14	10	1	0	0	0	48
2	F	1	6	7	8	4	6	5	0	2	0	0	39
3	M	0	2	1	14	2	11	25	1	0	19	0	75
3	M	7	3	10	11	3	1	17	0	1	0	1	54
3	M	10	14	4	22	4	20	10	4	4	0	0	92
3	F	0	3	3	7	5	15	9	1	2	0	1	46

Appendix C

T-score and Z-score of SRP subjects

1=scores given by expert NO. 1
2=scores given by expert NO. 2
M=mean

Group	Gender	T-score 1	T-score 2	Mean T-score	Z-score 1	Z-score 2	Mean Z-score
1	M	76	82	79	0.61	1.07	0.84
1	F	91	94	92.5	1.78	2.08	1.93
1	F	84	70	77	1.24	0.06	0.65
1	M	68	79	73.5	-0.02	0.82	0.40
2	F	64	70	67	-0.33	0.06	-0.14
2	M	60	62	61	-0.65	-0.61	-0.63
2	F	73	69	71	0.37	-0.02	0.18
2	F	68	63	65.5	-0.02	-0.52	-0.27
3	M	51	53	52	-1.35	-1.36	-1.36
3	M	45	51	48	-1.82	-1.53	-1.68
3	M	67	70	68.5	-0.10	0.06	-0.02
3	F	72	68	70	0.29	-0.10	0.09

Notes:

[i.] The College English Test, better known as CET, is a national English as a Foreign Language test in the People's Republic of China. This test was held twice a year nationally, in June and December respectively. CET consisted of non-English-specialized band 4 and band 6, and English-specialized band 6 and band 8. The test included listening, reading and writing sections. The oral test was optional and required certain points from the written test. A lot of colleges and universities in China requires the CET certificate as a necessity for a bachelor diploma. Employers in China prefer applicants with a CET certificate.

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Improving an EFL Class: Starting from Classroom Observations

Han-Min Tsai
Chungyu Institute of Technology, Taiwan

Bio Data:

Han-Min Tsai is an associate professor at Chungyu Institute of Technology, Taiwan, where he has been teaching English since 1986. He has a doctorate in TEFL from the University of Exeter. His research interests include error analysis, EFL students' writing anxiety and syllabus design.

Abstract

This study was based on the belief that observing existing classroom practices could bring forth insights into improving a language teacher's instruction. The main sources of data collection were videotaped classroom observations, a classroom observation protocol, a post-study open-ended questionnaire to the students and a post-study interview with the teacher. Four stages were involved in this study. Stage 1 dealt with pre-observation discussion and negotiation with the teacher. In stage 2 videotaped classroom observations were conducted four times at a junior high school English class in Taiwan. The videotaped classroom activities and instructions were recorded according to the protocol. Stage 3 involved discussing with the teacher the results obtained from the observations, and seeking options to refine classroom practices. The final stage aimed to implement and evaluate the options taken. The reactions from the teacher and students indicated that the options implemented - preview activities, group discussion and controlled/guided writing practices - made English learning more impressive and effective. Limitations of the present study and suggestions for future studies are also discussed.

Key words: an EFL class, classroom observations, options, preview activities, group discussion, writing practices

1. Introduction

English language teaching (ELT) classroom observations have traditionally been seen as part of teacher evaluation and observers are typically administrators and senior teachers. Feedback from observers, as Sheal (1989) notes, is usually unsystematic, subjective, and impressionist. Also, the relationship between observers and observees can be tense; the observers are evaluative, while the observees tend to be defensive.

Classroom observations under such conditions might not help much in the observees' professional growth and development.

ELT classroom observations nowadays, however, have emphasized the need of holding more developmental than judgemental view in classroom observations, *viz.* the main purpose of observations is not to judge subjectively what is good and bad teaching, but to work with the observee to explore and identify the limitations as well as the positive aspects in a class, thereby promoting the observee's critical thinking and professional growth. Such a view, as Williams (1989, p.85) states in an in-service teacher-training program, helps teachers to "develop their own judgements of what goes on in their own classrooms, sharpen their awareness of what their pupils are doing and the interactions that take place in their classes, and heighten their ability to evaluate their own teaching practices." This implies that observation can serve as an intermediary between a teacher's teaching philosophies and practices. Nunan (1989, p. 76) also holds that since classrooms are "where the action is", spending time looking in classrooms can enrich our understanding of language learning and teaching.

To maximize the effectiveness of observation in an ELT class, however, researchers have pointed out that observation tasks need to be specified and system-based (Wajnryb, 2001; Wallace, 2001), and the focus should be oriented more towards teacher development rather than teacher evaluation (Sheal, 1989). To have a beneficial impact on the way individual teachers teach, Sheal (1989) further claims that practicing teachers need to get involved in the observational research and classroom observers should be trained. This can help establish not only a critical element but a cooperative and interactive relationship between teacher and observer. Wajnryb (2001, p.11) also stresses that practicing teachers should act as co-investigators or co-explorers, from whom "the initiation for action and spirit of enquiry comes from". Under such active engagement, meaningful discussions of language classroom events can occur, and the voice of observees can be heard. This can therefore motivate teachers to appraise their old assumptions in light of new ideas emerging from observations (Wajnryb, 2001) and can make the alternatives sought out more effective in subsequent teaching.

Different tools and techniques have been used to document classroom activities and interactions, of which the most commonly employed include personal recall, documented recall, audio, video, and transcript (discussed in Wallace, 2001, p.63). All of these techniques can be complementary; for example, a lesson or group discussion

can be videotaped and subsequently viewed by the teacher and/or learners. This can then elicit rich recall data and comments about what is going on in the class. Audio or video records can also produce detailed transcripts for data analysis. As for observation schemes, two distinct schemes have been in use: one is based on a preconceived set of categories, the other on open-ended (ethnographic) theory. The first type includes the frequently mentioned Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) which centers on teacher talk and divides classroom language into ten categories, the modified version of FIAC by Moskowitz (1971) in which teacher talk and student talk are categorized in a more balanced and sophisticated way, and the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) which is considered the most sophisticated and consists of two parts. The first part focuses on classroom activities, the second on classroom discourse (For a clearer description of these three instruments, please see Nunan, 1989, p.83-87). The second type (ethnography), on the other hand, questions complete dependence on predetermined categories and tabulated data (Van Lier, 1988, discussed in Nunan, 1989, p.88-89). It advocates that classroom interaction patterns and structures should emerge naturally from the data rather than from a prior selection of categories.

Each of the observational tools and schemes has its own advantages and limitations, and therefore deciding which to adopt, as Nunan (1989) puts it, presupposes our research purpose and characteristics of settings.

2. Research Questions

The purpose of the current study was twofold. First, it attempted to conceptualize through classroom observations the activity structure and instruction patterns of an EFL class in a junior high school in Taiwan and identify the existing problems. Second, it tried to seek out feasible interventions to improve the class and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions taken. The following research questions addressed the aim of this study:

What were the instruction activities and patterns of the class under study?

What interventions could be taken to improve the class?

What were the students' reactions to the interventions taken?

3. Methodology

In methodology this study is classroom-centered action research. This type of research involves small-scale interventions in the functioning of the real world (Cohen and Manion, 1985), and the collaboration of the researcher as well as the teacher (Nunan, 1989). Multiple stages are included, from identifying a certain problem in the practical milieu, planning and taking some actions within the range and influence of the practitioner, reflecting on their effectiveness, and finally making sense of the findings.

3.1 Participants

A class of thirty-five third-grade junior high school students in Taiwan, aged from 15 to 17, was involved in this study. Their English ability ranked middle in the school. The English class primarily consisted of the segments of vocabulary, sentence patterns, reading text, and dialogue text, with five class periods a week and forty-five minutes per period. The teacher had taught English in this school for 17 years. She was also the coordinator of the school's English teaching and learning field when this study was undertaken. We have known each other for several years. She invited me to visit her class after we had some talks about the current status of English teaching in Taiwanese junior high schools. We then had several times of discussion about the way of observation and what to focus on in the process.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection in this study included videotaped classroom observations, the classroom observation protocol (see Appendix A), the post-study interview with the teacher, and the post-study questionnaire (see Table 2 for the items) to the students. We decided to focus the observation on classroom activity and instructional structure because these aspects were what the teacher was concerned about. The observation protocol was partly adapted from the COLT scheme (see Nunan, 1993, p.99). We decided to videotape the class because this would enable us easily to go back to the data we wanted. Also, I was afraid that my presence might have an inhibiting influence on the existing patterns of classroom interaction.

3.3 Procedure and Data Analysis

The present study was conducted in the middle of the first semester in 2005. At first, a classroom observation protocol was designed and several times of discussion were held with the teacher. The research objective and procedure were then explained to the students. After this, four times of classroom activities and instruction were videotaped by a probation teacher. After each video recording, I viewed the video, made notes according to the observation protocol, noted down necessary transcripts to support each theme and gave my comments. The teacher then (usually the next day) read the protocol, recalled her actions and responded to my comments. After we discussed the four videotaped lessons and decided on the alternatives to improve the class, the teacher explained to the class the interventions that would be taken. During the implementation stage, I kept discussing with the teacher to understand her reactions and seek out how the interventions could be modified for the better. Finally, to understand the students' reactions to the interventions taken, the post-study open-ended questionnaire in Chinese was administered to the students.

Data analysis in this paper was primarily qualitative as this was a small-scale study in a particular setting and among a particular group of participants. Besides, the data collected included not only what the researcher observed and described but also what the participants behaved and reacted. Data collected from the post-study interview with the teacher and the post-study questionnaire were first translated into English and then followed the procedure from analysis to interpretation. In the analysis stage, for constructing categories the data were read several times. The categories were then coded and quotes were selected for each category. The interpretation stage attempted to conceptualize the phenomena surfacing and seek out possible causes or solutions. Data from classroom observation protocols also went through similar stages, from identifying the instruction patterns of each teaching segment, selecting content for supporting the patterns, to seeking out possible causes or solutions. Besides, the data were categorized in terms of macro-level and micro-level structure. The former refers to the main tasks undertaken in teaching a lesson. The latter, on the other hand, refers to the procedure in accomplishing each of the four main segments: vocabulary, sentence patterns, dialogue text, and reading text.

4. Results

4.1 Findings from Classroom Observations

Based on the data collected from four videotaped classroom observations, figurative structures for the macro-level and micro-level activities were sorted out. Figure 1 shows that the activities encompassed in the macro-level structure were vocabulary teaching, sentence pattern instruction, dialogue explanation and practice, reading text explanation, practice on workbook exercises, and a simulated test. All of these activities were completed in six class periods. The first three periods were spent on the words, idioms and sentence patterns that would be used in the subsequent dialogue and reading texts. The fourth and fifth periods centered on the dialogue and reading texts. In the process of instruction, both target and native languages were used. About twenty minutes before the end of the third and fifth period was used for discussing the homework exercise on the workbook. The sixth period was spent on doing a simulated test.

Vocabulary teaching → Sentence pattern instruction → Discussion on workbook exercise → Dialogue text teaching → Reading passage explanation → Discussion on workbook exercise → Simulated testing

Figure 1 The Macro Level Activities

Figure 2 shows that four stages were frequently adopted by the teacher to accomplish the segments of vocabulary, sentence patterns, and dialogue and reading texts. During the lead-in stage, the teacher would use flash cards, sample sentences or pictures to demonstrate the meaning or use of new language and introduce the dialogue and reading texts. During the elicitation stage, the teacher would try to examine if the students could use the new language or understand the new texts. She would ask the students to translate the new vocabulary or make sentences by using the

Lead-in → Elicitation → Explanation → Reproduction practice

↑ ↓

---------- Problems detected

Figure 2 The Micro Level Structure

sample sentences given. As for the dialogue and reading texts, she would ask the students to answer a certain questions relating to the texts. After this stage, the teacher would explain in detail each word and sentence pattern, including parts of speech and the key features of the pattern. Grammar translation was employed to explain the dialogue and reading texts. In explanation she often referred to the students' known knowledge and associated new knowledge with life-like situations. For example, in explaining the word *traffic*, the teacher connected what the students had learned and elicited the expressions like *traffic jam, traffic lights, traffic rules, traffic accidents,* and *traffic signs*. Another example is that when dealing with the usage of *fault* and *hurt* and the distinction between "bump + O" and "bump into + O", the teacher referred to a recent accident and elicited the following dialogue:

T: Now let's talk about the recent train accident happening in Taoyuang. Did the train bump or bump into the bus?

(The students looked interested and talked to each other in Chinese about the causes of the accident).

S: The train bumped the bus.

T: Good. How about the people on the bus?

S: Some people are hurt.

T: Good. Was it the bus or train driver's fault?

(The students talked to each other in Chinese again about the causes of the accident).

S_1: Bus driver's fault.

S_2: Train driver's fault.

This dialogue drew many students' interest and enhanced their learning of what was being taught. Reproduction practice, in which competition games were often involved, was finally used to enhance the students' learning. If problems were detected, the teacher would go back to the explanation stage and provide more examples.

The interactions between the teacher and the students were comfortable. During the whole process, the teacher kept smiling, and providing cues and encouragement. The interaction pattern that frequently occurred in the class is as follows. The teacher initiated questions and the students responded. She would first ask the whole class some general questions and then ask individual students for more details. She would

give praise if the question was well responded. Otherwise, she would provide more cues, such as repeating the question or translating the question into Chinese. She knew her students very well and in appropriate situations would introduce a simple game. For example, the game "London Bridge Is Falling Down" was played when the teacher was introducing the word "bridge" and found that many of the students looked tired. The 6-minute game did succeed in refreshing the students.

However, the whole process of instruction was not without its own limitations. For example, about 60% of the time was spent on the instruction of vocabulary, grammar and sentence patterns (see Table 1). Also, the teacher would explain in detail and translate each sentence in the dialogue and reading texts. This made her unable to finish teaching the texts as expected. Additionally, the discourse and practice were mainly restricted to a single sentence, clause or word. The students had few opportunities to apply what had been taught to a text-like situation. Another limitation was that even though the student-teacher interactions were comfortable, the class was mostly teacher-initiated and those responding to the teacher's questions were often restricted to about one-third of the students. It appears difficult to judge whether the other two-thirds could really understand and produce the new language.

Table 1 Time Spent in Each of the Four Main Segments

Segment	Vocabulary	Grammar & patterns	Dialogue text	Reading text
Time spent	70 mins	65 mins	50 mins	40 mins

Note: mins = minutes. The teacher was supposed to finish these four segments in five forty-five minute class periods.

4.2 Interventions Taken to Improve the Class

Having discussed the results of the videotaped observations, we started to seek out alternatives to improve the problems emerging. The following guiding principles were then identified: autonomy, collaboration, and creativity. In terms of autonomy, we meant that the students could be more active and empowered to assume some independent work. As for collaboration, we meant that the students could be grouped to work on different tasks. We hypothesized that through team work, learning would become more impressive and effective as a great deal of discussion and negotiation would be involved in the process. Also, teamwork might encourage silent learners to make contributions to learning tasks. Creativity meant that after the completion of

each of the four macro-level tasks, the students should be provided opportunity to use what they had learned to create a text. This was expected to enhance the students' learning and give them a sense of success. To raise the students' willingness in creativity tasks, sufficient prompts and information would be given. All these principles, in short, aimed to make some change from a teacher-dominated format to one in which the students would take some responsibilities in learning, work collaboratively in groups and produce their own texts.

These principles then led us to modify the instruction procedure as shown in Figure 3. The modified instruction model was partly adapted from Harmer (1985). It requires both the students and teacher to make pre-class efforts. The teacher instruction foci will be selective, mainly based on the problems that the students present after pre-class autonomous study. In the process of instruction, the stages involved are similar to those in Figure 2. However, in the new model the teacher is advised to reduce the amount of time for the explanation stage or go next to the reproduction stage, if the students can perform well in elicitation. Another difference is that teamwork will be a main focus at the reproduction and creativity stages. During the post-instruction stage, exercises on workbook and simulated tests are replaced by creativity tasks. The teacher will go back to the explanation stage if the students can not perform well in reproduction or creativity tasks.

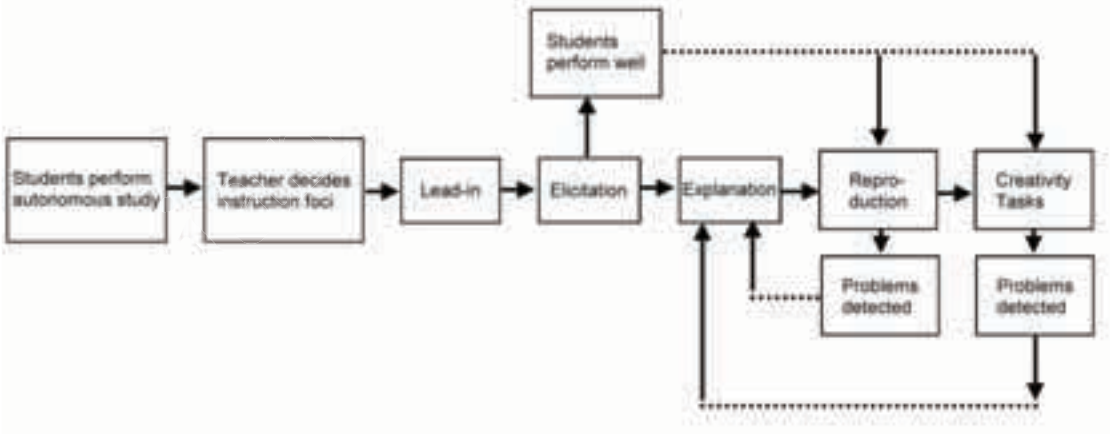

Figure 3 A Modified Instruction Model

On the basis of the modified instruction model, a number of activities were designed. To develop the learners' autonomy and active participation in class, the preview task was conducted prior to teaching each of the four main segments in the macro-level structure. In proceeding with the task, the teacher first defined the content for preview

and made it clear to the students, the students then performed the task after class and filled in a feedback form (see Appendix B), and finally the teacher read the feedback form to decide what to concentrate on when teaching. During the reproduction stage, practice in the textbook was used, but we also designed some activities to associate the practice with the students' life experiences. For example, in the lesson on computers, we provided for group discussion the questions like "What are some of your reasons for using a computer?" and "What are some of the problems in your life that computers can't help you to solve?" As for the creativity stage, two types of writing practice were carried out. The first was controlled writing (see Appendix C), aiming to enhance vocabulary and sentence pattern learning, and the second was guided (see Appendix D), serving to reinforce the comprehension of dialogue and reading texts. Writing instructions and new words were dealt with in Chinese beforehand. Writing practice was first conducted in group discussion so that the low-level students would not be left helpless. After this, the students started to work on the writing task individually and submitted their written work the next day. The interventions spanned twelve class periods and involved two-lesson instruction.

4.3 Students' Reactions to the Interventions Taken

Table 2 summarizes the students' reactions to the interventions implemented. 88.6% of the students responded positively to the preview task in that it made learning more efficient and concentrated. As for filling in the preview feedback form, 85.7% of the students stated that this task helped them define their own problems and facilitated their text comprehension. It also enabled the teacher to locate their real problems, thereby making teaching more effective. The teacher also expressed similar reactions in the post-study interview:

> "Because of the preview activity, the students found that they could follow my teaching more easily. Also, I could locate their real difficulties and focus my teaching on those points that troubled the students. So, such an activity made my teaching and students' learning more efficient."

Table 2

Items	Reactions	Reasons
1. Does the preview activity help you learn English? Why?	Yes: 88.6% (n = 31) No: 11.4% (n = 4)	Easier to follow the class More efficient in learning More concentrated in class Difficulty in grammar and structure
2. Does filling in the preview form help your learning? Why?	Yes: 85.7% (n = 30) No: 11.4% (n = 4)	More efficient in teacher instruction Having a clearer picture of the text Clearly knowing self difficulties
3. Does group discussion help your learning? Why?	Yes: 74.3% (n = 26) No: 25.7% (n = 9)	Easier to understand the text Making learning more interesting and concentrated Building team spirit Team members not likable Feeling embarrassed to ask questions
4. Does the writing practice help you learn the text? Why?	Yes: 77.1% (n = 27) No: 11.4% (n = 4)	Applying what has been learned Making learning more impressive More able to find out self problems during the writing process
5. Other suggestions for improving the class: Providing low-level students with easier tasks Allowing the use of some Chinese in writing practice More time for group discussion before writing Showing well-written work in public		

Note. In the reactions all number may not add up to 35 and the percentage may not add up to 100% due to the fact that some students responded "No ideas".

Despite such advantages, a few students (11.4%) expressed that the preview task did not help their learning. Their difficulty rested on grammar and sentence structure. For example, one of the students wrote this, "I do not have difficulty in new words or idioms because I can look them up in the dictionary. But I am so much troubled by new grammar and sentence structure."

In relation to group discussion, 74.3% of the students reported that this activity helped their learning. The benefits pointed out include the following: group discussion made it easier to understand the content of texts; it made learning more interesting and concentrated; and it helped develop students' team spirit to solve their problems. The

following reactions from the post-study questionnaire evidence such benefits:

> "I enjoyed group discussion because it made learning easier. We could discuss with each other the problems we did not understand. I could quickly get help from my classmates. I felt happy with this way."
> "In group discussion, we exchanged ideas and helped each other to use the words and patterns we had learned. It also gave me a clear picture of the reading text."
> "Group discussion could cultivate our team spirit. In order to get the answers first, we would quickly become concentrated and make a concerted effort to solve problems. I think learning in this method is impressive and effective."

However, 25.7% of the students expressed that they did not like such an activity either because of the team members they worked with or because they felt it embarrassing to ask others questions.

In regard to the writing practice, 77.1% of the students acknowledged the usefulness of encompassing such practice because it helped to apply what had been learned and made learning more impressive. It also helped some students to redefine their own problems. This is evidenced in the following student responses:

> "It's more impressive to learn through writing than through recitation or direct oral practice. Writing practice helped me to apply what I had learned in the text, including vocabulary, spelling, grammar and sentence patterns. Also, after the writing practice, I had a better understanding of the text."

The following observation from the teacher further indicates that such practice could also provide the students with an opportunity for self expression and imagination and give them a sense of success:

> "Most of the writing activities were very interesting to the students. I think they enjoyed the activities very much, especially the ad for an ideal mate which provided them with an opportunity for self-expression and imagination. They also liked the second guided writing, composing a short essay from answering questions. This gave them a sense of satisfaction because they felt able to finish a piece of written work in English."

Put simply, in the current study writing practice based on reading texts created meaningful learning because it not only enhanced the association between new information and existent knowledge but also sustained the students' learning motivation. Nevertheless, 11.4% of the students did not think that writing practice helped their learning because they were either uninterested in English or unable to write in English.

The post-study questionnaire also came up with several suggestions for improving the writing practice (see Item 5, Table 2), including providing low-level students with

easier writing tasks, allowing the use of some Chinese, providing more time for group discussion, and showing well-written work in public. The following responses indicate such needs.

> "The writing practice might be easy to some students, but it is difficult to me. So I hope that easier words, idioms and sentence patterns would be given and the use of certain Chinese be allowed for more difficult and complex expressions."
> "I hope that the well-written works could be shown in the class bulletin board so that we could read them after class. It would be interesting and encouraging if the work I completed could be read by my classmates."

5. Discussion

The results of this study appear to show that the features of a language class can be brought to light and conceptualized through classroom observations. Such understanding and findings can then form the basis for taking appropriate measures to promote the overall effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. Classroom observations in this study did not lean towards the traditional side where the observer sits at the back of the classroom, keeping ticking items on a checklist or writing down something. In this study there were pre- and post-observation discussions to hear the observee's voices. The teacher was an active collaborator, interacting with the researcher in the whole process. Involving such collaboration and dialogue benefits both the observee and the observer. The observee would feel more relaxed and respected, thus avoiding the possibility of changing his/her patterns of instruction. The observer, having listened to the observee's story, can get a better idea about what to focus on, without the burden of observing every aspect.

The current study can also serve to demonstrate the effectiveness of the modified instruction model and the concomitant activities designed. The preview activity, aimed at developing learner responsibility and autonomy, has made learning more concentrated and efficient. This corresponds to Scharle and Szabo's (2000) idea that success in language learning greatly depends on learners having a responsible attitude. Learners' reaction that group discussion built up their team spirit and made their learning more interesting and effective seems to concur with Johnson and Johnson's (1985) finding that group work learning experiences promote higher achievement than competitive and individualistic experiences. In Vygotsky's (1978) cognitive theory, peer cooperation enhances learning because learners are similar to one another in mental and cognitive status and thus can better activate the "zone of proximal development". In addition, encouraging students to cooperate and depend on

each other, as Phillips (1999) concludes, allows students to feel more at ease in learning. The gains of including writing practice in a reading course in the current study appear to be in conformity with Stotsky's (1983) observation that writing helps to apply and enhance what has been learned and deepen students' understanding of reading texts. The studies by Belanger (1987) and Shanahan (1984) also reveal and support similar results.

There are, however, limitations to this modified instruction model. For example, 11.4% of the students said that they were not benefited from the preview task because of difficult grammar and sentences. To solve such problems, it is necessary to provide some prompts beforehand to lower students' anxiety and promote their preview motivation. In addition, 25.7% of the students expressed that they did not like group discussion either because of the team members they worked with or because they felt it uncomfortable to ask others questions. Faced with these problems, the techniques in the literature, such as holding individual talk with those students (Tsui, 2000) and providing them opportunities for classroom success (Oxford, 2000) might help reduce those students' discomfort in group discussion.

As for writing practice, 11.4% of the students reported that such practice did not help their learning. Those students were typically low-level in English ability, so the suggestions from the post-study questionnaire, like providing easier writing tasks and allowing the students to use some Chinese in writing, are likely to promote their writing willingness. Teacher's adjusting "the difficulty level of tasks to the students' abilities and counterbalance demanding tasks with manageable ones", according to Dörnyei (2001, p.90), means providing students with success experiences, which in turn will protect students' self-esteem and increase their self-confidence.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

Classroom observations are of great value to language education because classrooms are where actions take place (Nunan, 1989). By observing and recording the actions, we can have a richer understanding of language learning and teaching and how interaction between the teacher and students as well as among the students themselves goes through a lesson. Such understanding contributes to our professional growth and development and enables us to come up with more effective solutions to improve a class. However, it must be noted that to make classroom observations effective, there must be pre-observation discussions between the observer and the observee. Besides,

the post-observation feedback should not be overtly critical and the observee should be given opportunities to recall their practices and present responses to the observer's comments. Only through constant discussion and negotiation can the tensions between the two parties be reduced and the mutual respect and trust be built up.

Even though English teaching in junior high schools in Taiwan is still mostly exam-driven, we believe that something can always be done to make some change for the better. Examining the existing situations through classroom observations is a feasible means to attain this goal. The current study, however, only spanned a few weeks and examined only the subjects in one class. Future studies can be more longitudinal and focus on more subjects in different classes, for example, one with traditional pedagogy, the other going through classroom observations and innovative activities, to compare learners' learning effectiveness and reactions to class instruction. Also, future research can focus on more specific points, such as how the teacher responds to the questions initiated by students. This would facilitate the teacher's instruction and his/her interaction with students. Moreover, English teachers in a school can work together to form, in the words of Fullan (2000, p.31), a professional community. This can serve as a vehicle for sharing instructional techniques and ideas, thereby promoting professional growth. It can also encourage the teachers to keep examining their givens and looking for alternatives to improve their teaching practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A. The Classroom Observation Protocol

Part A. Classroom Activities
1. Activity type:
2. Participation organization:
3. Student modality:
4. Materials:
5. Time spent:

Part B. Classroom Instruction
1. Patterns emerging:
2. Discourse focus:
3. Problem treatment:

Part C. Feedback
1. Observer's comments:
2. Teacher's recall:

Note. Student modality refers to whether students are involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing, or a combination of these.

Appendix B. The Preview Feedback Form

Dear Students,
The preview task can be helpful to your learning. Please preview the part defined and fill in the following form. This form has to be handed in the next day. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

1. The words and idioms I have learned after this preview:
   Words: _____
   Idioms: _____
2. The words and idioms that still confuse me after this preview:
   Words:_____
   Idioms: _____
3. The sentences that still confuse me after this preview:
   _____
   _____

Appendix C An Example of Controlled Writing Practice
□
Directions: Please fill in the following blanks by using the words or patterns taught. There may be more than one word in some blanks.

Have you ever taken MRT? Do you think it's very convenient _____ the MRT system? Every day thousands of _____ in Taipei are taking it. In some countries like the U.S. and the U.K., MRT systems are also called _____ because many parts of the MRT systems are _____. There are many advantages of taking MRT. First, you don't have to waste a lot of time finding a space to _____ your car, especially in traffic _____. Also, you don't need to worry that your car might be _____ away. In addition, taking MRT is very comfortable because the cars are clean, quiet and _____. Can you imagine riding a motorcycle in a big city like

Taipei in rush hours □時□ □when traffic is _____ and air _____ is serious? It must be very uncomfortable. Because there are so many advantages of MRT, the number of passengers _____ (be) increasing □□ □year by year. They take MRT to go to work, to _____, to _____ and to _____. Life must be _____ without MRT, isn't it?

Appendix D *An Example of Guided Writing Practice*

Directions: Please write a composition about the advantages and disadvantages of computers by using the information provided in the table. You may use the following transition signals (" !) for each point presented: First, First of all, To begin with "□ "□Also, In addition "Besides"□ "; Finally "□ , Above all 6 段交□ "; In conclusion, In short, To sum up "□通□ "; therefore, consequently, as a result "□ ".

□□

The Advantages (好處) of Computers	1. help us to write stories, draw pictures, and solve problems 2. useful software 3. exciting games 4. linked to make communication easy and convenient 5. enjoy wonderful music and movies which we like 6. search the important information □擠擁□we want
The Disadvantage (壞處) of Computers	1. take us too much time 2. cost us a lot of money to buy the software we need 3. get a lot of garbage e-mail we don't want 4. make friends who harm (□□) us

Note. The points in the table were attained through group discussion after the teacher finished the lesson on computers.

□

Please write here:

Computers have the following (□) advantages. …….. …… . …… …… …… …… …… However (□), computers also give us some disadvantages.…… …… …… …… ……

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How Does Context Contribute to EFL Learners' Assessment of Vocabulary Gain

Berrin Uçkun

Gaziantep University, Turkey

Bio Data:

Dr. Berrin Uçkun received her undergraduate degree from the Department of English Language and Literature. Upon winning a Fullbright Scholarship, she continued his Master's studies at the State University of New York in Albany, US, and received her degree in TESL. She presently holds a PhD degree in TEFL. Her research interests are testing and assessment, reading comprehension and motivation in learning a FL.

Abstract

In this article, I describe the development and trial of three measurement techniques each of which will be providing varying degrees of context for the assessment of the subjects' lexical knowledge. These are the word-definition matching task with a complete lack of context; the gap-filling task with reduced context at the sentence level; and the rational cloze which provides discoursal clues extending to the whole of the text. Three language levels were included into the study to establish a range of language ability groups in tertiary education, each of which would be given these three assessment types at their own level of language difficulty. The scores were compared within groups and across groups to provide empirical evidence to the hypotheses introduced by the study. The researcher investigated how much of context was conducive to success in vocabulary tests at different stages of linguistic ability. Item/global comparisons yielded information on the discrimination power of each test format for each language ability level. The data were also submitted to a Principal Components analysis to see whether each assessment task had a separate construct underlying it. The results showed that the number and the magnitude of the factors that emerged from the analysis was determined by the language proficiency of the group and their ability to exploit the contextual information in the linguistic environment of the word.

Key words: vocabulary assessment; contextualized words; matching; cloze test; sentence-level gap filling

1. Introduction

Scholars in the field of testing argue that assessing vocabulary is necessary in the sense that words are the basic building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and whole texts are formed (Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2000). Vocabulary is regarded as a priority area in language teaching, especially with recent communicative language teaching techniques and comprehension-based teaching methodologies which promote the monitoring of learners' progress in vocabulary learning and assessment of how adequate their vocabulary knowledge is in meeting their communication needs.

In vocabulary testing literature, considerable effort has been employed related to the use of receptive vocabulary tests (also known as vocabulary size tests) assessing the breadth of a learner's word knowledge (Nation 1990; Goulden, Nation and Read 1990). Measurements of vocabulary size have been shown to correlate positively with proficiency levels in reading (Qian, 1999; Anderson and Freebody, 1981; Laufer, 1997), writing (Engber, 1995) and general language proficiency (Meara and Jones, 1988). Other studies have investigated the use of production tests which assess the learners' depth of vocabulary knowledge. (Waring, 1999; Meara and Fitzpatrick, 2000; Verhallen and Schoonen, 1993; Wesche and Paribakht, 1996; Henriksen, 1999; McNeil, 1996, Nation; 2001, Laufer & Nation; 1995; Qian & Schedl, 2004). For many purposes, it is essential to know how well words are known, not just how many words are known (see Meara, 1999 for a discussion on what it means to know a word). Nation (1990) listed eight kinds of native-speaker word knowledge: knowledge of a word's meaning, spoken form, written form, grammatical patterns, collocations, frequency, associations, and stylistic restrictions (e.g., levels of formality). A third area of concern has been how to measure the receptive and productive dimensions of vocabulary knowledge at the same time. Laufer and Nation (2001) and Laufer and Nation (1999) have carried out such studies and concluded that measures of subjects' productive ability are reliable complements to receptive measures of vocabulary size and strength.

To show that vocabulary knowledge is a separate component of language ability, which in turn has its own subknowledges, involves the kind of research called construct validation of tests. Bachman and Palmer (1996) identify two approaches to

construct definition: syllabus-based and theory based. A syllabus-based definition is appropriate when vocabulary assessment takes place within a course of study. Within this framework, the lexical items and the vocabulary skills to be assessed are specified in accordance with the learning objectives of the course. For research purposes, the definition of construct needs to be based on theory. When we try to define what any particular vocabulary test is measuring, we investigate into matters of what we mean by a "word", what it means to "know" a word, how words are influenced by context, and such. A brief discussion on construct and contextualization in vocabulary assessment will bring to attention other dimensions of assessment in vocabulary assessment.

Construct and Context-related Issues in Vocabulary Assessment

Carrell (1987) defines construct as a particular set of mental tasks that an individual is required to perform on a given test. For any language assessment purposes, one has to recognize two major factors that influence test scores: the knowledge or ability represented by the construct and the testing task. In construct validation, these are generally referred to as trait and method, respectively (Bachman, 1990). Vocabulary knowledge has been defined differently by different researchers. It has often been viewed as the sum of interrelated "subknowledges" as the knowledge of spoken and written form, morphological knowledge, knowledge of word meaning, collocational and grammatical knowledge, connotative and associational knowledge, and the knowledge of social and other factors that restrain the use of a word (Qian, 1999; Richards, 1976;Nation, 1990). Meara (1999) and Nation (2001) have suggested adding yet another dimension to the existing ones - automaticity of access, (i.e. the speed at which one can perform some kind of operation on a word). Another researcher, Henriksen (1999) perceives lexical knowledge as a continuum of three levels: partial to precise knowledge, shallow to deep knowledge, and receptive to productive knowledge.

All of the studies above handle vocabulary knowledge as the knowledge of discrete word items independent of context, which Chapelle (1998) refers as the "trait" view. On the contrary, Read (2000) and Read and Chapelle (2001) argue that the lexical skill should incorporate communicative competence in addition to the knowledge of discrete items. As such, a vocabulary test should be defined in relation to a particular context typical of the test taker's needs, which in turn will lead them to develop

effective communicative strategies. Traditional vocabulary testing has been dominated by trait definitions, operationalized in discrete, selective and context-independent tests. For concerns that purely relate to the learner's acquisition of specific, preselected vocabulary items covered in the language program, it might sound reasonable to assume that test items should contain a single target word without the risk of turning the task into one of reading comprehension. However, the long-term benefits of any vocabulary learning should be to give the learners the incentive to "develop effective communication strategies" (Read and Chapelle, 2001, p. 23).

Read (2000) develops an extensive discussion on matters that relate to the use of context by L1 and L2 learners in making inferences about unknown words in texts. Among the valuable observations and evaluations he has made of the research results on this topic, the ones that directly relate to L2 vocabulary acquisition are as follows:

a) level of proficiency in the language will determine the reader's ability to make use of existing contextual clues;
b) the presence of context, at whatever length or degree, does not necessarily make it easier for readers to understand the meaning of unknown lexis;
c) partial knowledge of the learner and failure to confirm preliminary guesses against the developing context will lead to wrong guesses;
d) successful lexical inferencing does not necessarily produce successful retention of the meaning of that word.

The same author has proposed three dimensions in relation to vocabulary assessment to account for a wide variety of testing procedures. These are discreet to embedded, selective to comprehensive, and context-independent to context-dependent (2000, p. 9).

Context related studies since the 1940s have set out to identify and classify the contextual clues that can assist both first and second language readers in inferring the meanings of unknown words. Learners were found to be operating at four linguistic levels: syntactic (the structure of the sentence in which the words occurred), semantic (meaning found in the immediate and wider context of the word), lexical (the form of the word) and stylistics (the exact usage of the word in the given context) (Van Parreren and Schouten-Van Parreren, 1981). For both reduced context and extended context, what is tested is the ability to use contextual clues to determine which particular word fits a blank. On a syntactic level, the learner needs to identify the part of speech of the target word and search for grammatical clues in the clause and

sentence the word occurs in. At the discoursal level, the learner can search for expressions of language functions such as definition, comparison and contrast, cause-effect, question-answer, and main idea-details (see also Kitao and Kitao, 1996).

Context studies have mostly employed the Cloze procedure. Some of these researchers (Chihara, Oller, Weaver and Chavez-Oller, 1977) have demonstrated that discourse structure of the text made a significant contribution to performance in the Cloze test while others (Alderson, 1979; Porter, 1976) have produced evidence for the argument that it would be sufficient to refer only to the immediate linguistic context of the Cloze blank for its successful completion. According to Bachman's (1985) classification, clues could lie at any of these four levels of context: a. within the clause in which the blank occurs, b. within the sentence, c. beyond the sentence, and d. beyond the text. Bachman suggests that in any fixed-ratio Cloze test, the proportion of items requiring lexical and other linguistic competence would be about the same in each category. Jonz (1990) made a small modification in the first level of Bachman's classification. The within-the-clause category was split into two categories of clause-level syntactic clues and clause-level lexical clues. Among Jonz' categories, the ones which strongly involved vocabulary knowledge were clause-level lexis (33.0%) and beyond the text (8.9%), where blanks had to be filled with content words for which there were few or no clues in the text.

If we consider the implications of Bachman's classification and Jonz' research results, it would be possible to argue that in a fixed-ratio Cloze test, almost half (42%) of the blanks would explicitly call for lexical knowledge. A very important outcome of this argument would be that if, in any assessment, test-takers are given a discoursal (extended) context which extends beyond the borders of a single sentence, this could mean giving them the advantage of using additional sources of clues, which according to Jonz' study (1990) is no less than a 32% increase (beyond the sentence and beyond the text) in one's chances of identifying a certain vocabulary item correctly. Chapelle and Abraham (1990), however, examined scores on four different types of Cloze test and concluded that the fixed-ratio Cloze had the strongest correlation with the writing test and relatively weak relationships with the reading and vocabulary test. The Cloze in Jonz' study (1976) had a low correlation of 0.54 with the vocabulary subtest in the examination as compared to that of 0.61 with the reading subtest and 0.70 with the composition.

Alderson (1979) observed that fixed-ratio Cloze procedures produced different tests

resulting in different degrees of success depending on whether one chooses the eighth rather than the sixth word. From this he concludes that maybe "the principle of randomness needs to be abandoned in favor of the rational selection of deletions" (p. 226). Read (2000) calls for attention to the need for research that investigates the rational Cloze to assess the learners' ability to supply missing content words on the basis of contextual clues. Despite the fact that there is a shift away from decontextualized discrete-point tests, there is still a lack of research evidence that investigates the role of context in vocabulary assessment. Examining the issue from another perspective, Kanatlar (1995) looked for the difference between intermediate and elementary level students' use of contextual clues in vocabulary learning and found that the latter group used contextual clues more frequently than the prior one. Subjects in Utar's study (2005) benefited from a reading passage which accompanied the two vocabulary assessment tasks of multiple-choice and Matching as they scored significantly higher than subjects who were deprived of this discoursal context.

Campbell and Fiske (1959) developed a methodology known as multitrait multimethod (MTMM) construct validation, which provides a way of evaluating separately the contributions of traits and methods to test scores. Few studies (Hale et al., 1989; Corrigan and Upshur, 1982; Arnaud, 1989) have attempted to demonstrate that vocabulary knowledge is a distinct trait by employing the MTMM methodology but they failed to produce evidence for the construct validity of their vocabulary tests. Such results illustrate the difficulty of isolating particular elements of the language for assessment purposes.

In language testing, the intended effects and consequences of testing on its users (i.e. washback) should also be seen as an integral part of test design and its evaluation (Read and Chapelle, 2001). Hence, the actual consequences of implementing a test for a particular purpose should later be evaluated in relation to its intended effects. In our classroom progress and achievement tests, the intended effect is to encourage the students to study and revise the vocabulary items presented in each unit of their course textbook. Assessing vocabulary knowledge integratively in a discourse context will encourage more contextualized study of vocabulary by learners who will take such tests.

2. The present study

The findings of relevant studies previously discussed point to the necessity of carrying

out research to investigate the effects of varying the amount of context surrounding the target words. None of the published studies, to the author's knowledge, has involved a rational Cloze designed just to measure vocabulary. Such a design would aim to assess the learners' ability to supply the missing content words on the basis of contextual clues provided through an extended (i.e. discoursal) context, as operationalized through the rational-deletion Cloze test. The author also aimed to assess the same set of vocabulary items under reduced context and zero context conditions, which are in turn operationalized through a sentence-level Gap-filling task and Matching of target words with their dictionary meanings, respectively. The comparison of data from these three tasks could yield valuable information about how much context will lead to greater success and how much will turn the task into one of grammar and reading comprehension. Subjects are expected to be operating on the given context at the syntactic and semantic level. When no context is given, the subject will be functioning mainly at the lexical level.

The present study was specifically designed to answer the following questions:

1) Will increasing the amount of context surrounding the target words from no context to reduced context to extended context produce significantly different scores for the same set of vocabulary items on related measures of Matching, sentence-level Gap-filling and rational-deletion Cloze test?

2) Will Intermediate, Upper-intermediate and Advanced language ability groups all have developed the linguistic and semantic skills which will enable them to process contextual information provided in assessment measures of Gap-filling and Cloze?

3) Will the same vocabulary items have different discriminatory powers under different contextual environments?

4) Will scores on three different measures of vocabulary knowledge, such as rational Cloze, sentence-level Gap-filling, and Matching, correlate with one another if they are in fact measuring different underlying traits relating to context?

5) Will the ability that each measurement task is designed to measure statistically prove to be a distinct construct?

The following hypotheses were proposed within the framework of these questions:

Hypothesis 1 - For the same set of preselected vocabulary items, there will be a significant difference in subjects' mean scores obtained from three different

measurement techniques of Matching, Gap-filling and Cloze for each of the language proficiency groups.

Hypothesis 2 - Subjects in all language ability groups will get higher scores in proportion to the amount of context provided in the three assessment measures.

Hypothesis 3 – All three measures will allow for mean item/total correlation indices higher than the minimum acceptable of .30 for all language ability groups.

Hypothesis 4 – There will be no significant correlations between subjects' scores across different measurement tools but there will be a significant relationship between scores on the same measurement tool.

Hypothesis 5 - Principal components analysis of the data obtained from the three measures will load on more than one major factor giving evidence to the fact that they are in essence measuring more than a single ability.

The present study aims to validate and/or contribute to the scarce amount of research carried out on the effects of context in vocabulary assessment The scope of this study is then drawn as the comparison of three testing techniques of Matching, Gap-filling and rational-deletion Cloze as assessment measures of vocabulary attainment for three different language ability groups. Based on Messick's (1989) suggestion that a demonstration of the validity of a test should include both logical argumentation and empirical evidence, the author of this study constructed the three measurement tools through meticulous work, administered them to 189 learners of English, and explored the results through item analysis, factor analysis, item/total comparisons of each item and test type, as well as comparison of the subjects' performances on all test types and texts through correlating their scores. Alderson and Banerjee (2001), in their extensive review article, state that much research has been carried out on large-scale international tests while the more localized tests of the achievement type are neglected. Thus, "the language testing and more general educational communities lack empirical evidence" (p. 221) relating to the value of their assessment instruments.

3. Methodology

Subjects

The subjects of the study consisted of students that represented three language ability groups: two of these groups were subjects enrolled in a one-year preparatory English program during the academic year of 2005-2006 at the School of Foreign Languages at Gaziantep University, Turkey. As a result of the placement test administered at the beginning of the academic year, subjects were placed into their proper track as Group A (consisting of the prospective students of the Engineering Faculty and those of the Department of English Language and Literature), Group B (only the students of the seven departments of the Engineering Faculty), and Group C (a heterogeneous language ability group not included in the study). The medium of education for the English Literature department and all the departments of the Engineering Faculty is English. The third group of the study, freshman Literature students, had the greatest exposure to English since some of them had already completed the intensive English program or otherwise had been exempt from it. This third group of students had already undertaken two courses - ELL 107 Reading I (3-0) and ELL Reading II (3-0) – which primarily aimed for advanced vocabulary development and reading skills. All the subjects are assumed to be instrumentally motivated for learning English because they acquire it for academic and career purposes. Groups B subjects had 25 hours of learning a week whereas Group A students had 20 hours. Literature students took department courses of 18 credit hours a week. The Literature students are called "Advanced group" in this study by the virtue of having been exposed to language skills and practice for a longer period of time, while Group A is comparatively the "Upper-intermediate" group and Group B is the "Intermediate" group.

A total of 189 students participated in the main study. Almost all the students from Groups A and B, and the Literature group took part in the study with the exception of daily absentees. The tests were given to Groups A and B as a quiz during their class hour by their own instructors. Literature students were informed that the tests were a part of a research study and received them in their class hour under the supervision of the researcher. At the time of the study, the subjects had advanced into the middle of the second semester in their academic programs. The prep school students had taken a track-passing examination in the meanwhile and were reassigned to their appropriate levels based on their achievements.

Materials and Measurement Tools

Data for this descriptive study were collected through three measurement tasks – rational Cloze, Gap-filling and Matching – to meet the requirements of three context types – extended (discoursal) context, reduced context, and zero context, respectively. One important decision in the design of a selective vocabulary test is how to choose the target words. Usually the test writer must use his judgment in choosing the lexical items with a view to the learning objectives of the assessment. For a classroom progress test, the teachers normally make a selection from the list of words recently studied. In achievement and proficiency tests where vocabulary is to be tested in context, the starting point for selection is likely to be a particular text which contains the kind of lexical items that are required for testing purposes. This study followed the same method in specifying the text and target vocabulary items while constructing the measurement tools described below.

The Rational Deletion Cloze Test: The authors' search for texts that would serve as rational deletion Cloze passages began with identifying short reading passages in an EFL reading textbook (Öndeş, 2004) that naturally contained vocabulary items within the range of the subjects' lexical knowledge. These words had to be either explicitly or, as with the Literature group, implicitly taught as part of the language learning programs. Thus, it was necessary to get teachers' opinions on which words to select for the assessment purpose. Classroom teachers had a choice of over 20 reading passages at the proper linguistic level of their students and were asked to mark in each text the words that could be considered as learnt by their students. The several passages that were marked with at least 10 familiar items of different parts of speech were later subjected to a program designed by Paul Nation and programmed by Alex Heatley (2002).

Nation's RANGE and FREQUENCY program used in this study contained three base lists containing the most frequent 1000, 2000, and 3000 words of the English language respectively. Baseword 3 included words not in the first 2000 words of English but which are frequent in upper secondary school and university texts from a wide range of subjects. The sources of these lists are A General Service List of English Words by Michael West (Longman, London 1953) for the first 2000 words, and The Academic Word List by Coxhead (1998, 2000) containing 570 word families.

RANGE provides a table which shows how much coverage of a text each of the three base lists provides. The program can be used with up to ten word lists; however, only three word base lists were accessible to the researchers. Words in the above-3000 level belong to any of the lower frequency word base lists above the first three thousand most frequent word lists.

Table 1 RANGE information on the six passages employed in the study

Level	Text	%for Frequency Word List			
		1000	2000	3000	above 3000
Intermediate	Darwin	75.5 (4)*	12.9 (5)	2.2 (1)	9.4 (0)
	Bigger may not be better	65.8 (2)	14.5 (5)	5.9 (4)	13.8 (1)
Upper-intermed.	English language	72.9 (2)	6.5 (1)	12.1 (3)	8.4 (3)
	Katherine Mansfield	68.1 (1)	4.8 (0)	6.0 (2)	12.1 (6)
Advanced	Theseus	71.2 (0)	4.9 (0)	1.6 (0)	22.3 (10)
	British Prisons	57.7 (0)	9.8 (1)	7.3 (2)	25.2 (7)

!, 3+ $'0 - (4-%#$3*#05)2'+ 1#11'11'& . '0 (0'/3', %5* '4*

Of the several passages initially deemed proper by teachers' judgments, some were eliminated because they contained a high percentage of high frequency words in the 1000 or 2000 word lists, thus under-representing the group's vocabulary attainment. The vocabulary frequency profile of the reading texts and the pilot data allowed the researcher and teachers to reach a compromise on two texts for each level. The vocabulary items and distractors that would be assessed through the Cloze procedure were also the ones to be assessed with the Matching and Gap-filling measures. Table (1) gives information on the vocabulary frequency profile of the six texts used for the assessment of three language groups. It was equally important to decide from which frequency level the target vocabulary items would be selected. The distribution of these words to frequency levels are shown in Table 1.

Matching Test: The basic Matching task, as practiced in this study, requires learners to match the target words and their synonym or dictionary definitions. Therefore, it is a recognition rather than a recall task, focusing on the word meanings covered in students' course books. The target items determined for the two Cloze passages were grouped under two sections with ten target and three distractor items under each column and definitions to match them with. Despite the economy and low guessing factor involved in the practice of Matching tests (Brown & Hudson, 2002), presenting

words in isolation with only one single meaning may seem quite unrealistic; however, recognizing the sense meaning of a word form is accepted as a major component of vocabulary knowledge (Read, 2000).

Gap-filling Test: Gap-filling measures present the testees with a number of unconnected sentences with a blank in each. The testees choose from among a list of words that are given (usually more words than the blanks) the word that best fits each blank. The target vocabulary words that were identified in the manner described above were put into a box at the bottom of a set of sentences which would provide the correct syntactic and semantic context for them. These sentences were mainly chosen from the illustrative statements provided in various dictionaries (The New Merriam-Webster; Longman Contemporary English, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English). The target items for the two different sections were grouped separately with three distractors to each set to make a total of 13 items for one section and 26 items for total of the test. Each statement had a blank of fixed length and was marked as right, wrong or missing. The following examples taken from the Advanced group test paper will illustrate how target words of each text were assessed with three test types to help understand the relatedness of the three instruments.

Text 1: British Prisons

*(Cloze) In England the first use of prisons was to house vagrants and other.....**(idle)** persons. Later, minor offenders and debtors were imprisoned – major offenders, on the other hand, were .....(**executed**)..*
(Gap-filling)
*1. The whole team stood _____**(idle)**_____, waiting for the trainer to come.*
*2. Thousands have been _____**(executed)**_____ without any trial or legal process.*
(Matching)
1. not doing anything; jobless ***(idle)***
2. be killed as punishment for a crime ***(executed)***

The three test types described above are chosen specifically because they establish a good range on the context dimension of vocabulary assessment, moving from the context-independent Matching to the context-dependent rational deletion Cloze with the Gap-filling test taking its place somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in order to predetermine any possible flaws in the testing

instruments. During the pilot study, the vocabulary tests designed for the freshman Literature department students (Advanced group) were applied to second year students in the program. For the Intermediate group, of the three groups existing in the program, one was used to administer the pilot study while the remaining two groups provided data for the main study. For the Upper Intermediate group, since there was only one group to collect data from, freshman Literature students took the pilot study tests and the main study was administered to the target group.

As a result of the pilot data, the tools for the Intermediate and Upper Intermediate groups were corrected for words which showed no variance. The number of vocabulary items was reduced to 18 for the Upper Intermediate group. Four texts were piloted for the Advanced group before deciding on the best two as it was more difficult to estimate their vocabulary store. The Cronbach alpha reliability values for the Intermediate group were .65, .62, and .78 for the total scores on three test types, respectively. Alpha reliability values for the Upper Intermediate group was .80, .75, and .48, respectively. For the Advanced group, the alpha reliability values were .60, .64, and .58 for each test respectively. There was no attempt to improve these reliability values because the main purpose was to keep the target words fixed while experimenting with the context dimension of the measures. An alpha reliability coefficient of .50 was considered a satisfactory cut-off point for inclusion of the measurement tools in the main study. The reason this coefficient value is lower than the desired levels is various: firstly, subjects taking the test at each level were quite a homogeneous group in terms of their level of vocabulary attainment. Secondly, all the items that constituted these tests were believed to be either explicitly or implicitly taught within the related programs and therefore were not expected to discriminate too strongly. Thirdly, the study could have benefited from an increase in the number of its subjects and target vocabulary items but the circumstance for the piloting and the main study were stretched to the limits.

4. Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics for all test types and language level groups

As can be seen in Tables 2-4, the data for the three test types of Matching, Gap-filling and Cloze tests were analyzed separately for the three language groups to investigate whether the total mean values for all test types differed significantly from one another. Since each language ability group was tested with different vocabulary items of different difficulty levels, comparisons were not made among the language groups but within the groups to see the differences in their performance on measures with varying context.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for the Advanced Group

	Matching			Gap-filling			Cloze		
	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total
N	–	–	13	–	–	15	–	–	14
K	10	10	20	10	10	20	10	10	20
M	5,00	6,92	11,92	4,73	5,73	10,47	2,14	3,71	5,86
SD	3,10	2,43	4,80	2,12	2,43	4,16	2,11	2,58	4,31
Range	9	7	15	8	8	15	7	9	16
α	0,79	0,56	0,79	0,65	0,61	0,76	0,73	0,75	0,83
SEM	0,86	0,67	1,33	0,55	0,63	1,07	0,56	0,69	5,00

Text 1: Theseus Text 2: British Prisons

A one-way ANOVA showed that for the Advanced group (Table 2), the total means for the three different tests differed significantly from each other, F (2, 137.767) = 7.066, p<.002. A post-hoc Scheffé test showed that the Cloze mean (5.86) differed significantly from the means of Gap-filling (10.47) and Matching (11.92)(p<.028 and p<.004, respectively); however, the means of the latter two did not differ significantly (p<.960). The standard deviations showed quite a variety ranging between 2.11 and 3.10. The reliability coefficient value for the Cloze (.83) was quite higher than those of Matching (.79) and Gap-filling (.76).

Table 3 illustrates the values for the Upper-intermediate group. One-way ANOVA and Scheffé tests did not point to any significant difference among the three test types, F (2,3.385)= .117, p<.890. On the average, Gap-filling test yielded the highest mean score (10.41) with the greatest distribution of scores (4.71) and highest reliability (.89), which recommends this measure as the most reliable measurement of vocabulary for this language group. The Cloze test has yielded a rather low reliability coefficient of .69 compared to that of .80 and .89 of the other measures.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Upper-intermediate Group

	Matching			Gap-filling			Cloze		
	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total
N	–	–	13	–	–	12	–	–	13
K	9	9	18	9	9	18	9	9	18
M	5,15	4,92	10,15	4,83	5,58	10,41	5,38	4,15	9,69
SD	2,61	1,55	3,48	2,62	2,46	4,71	1,66	2,41	3,71
Range	8	5	12	8	7	14	6	7	10
α	0,85	0,55	0,80	0,76	0,85	0,89	0,75	.75	0,69
SEM	0,72	0,43	0,96	0,75	0,71	1,36	0,46	0,66	0,86

Text 1: English Language Text 2: Katherine Mansfield

Low values in the standard deviation scores for Matching Text 2 and Cloze Text 1 seem to make it difficult to make a rational interpretation of the group's performance on these two text and test types. Another interesting observation was made of the high standard deviation values for Cloze Text 2 and Matching Text 1. When taken altogether, the answer could lie in the difficulty level of the target items (i.e. their word frequency levels) and the text they are embedded in (Table 1). The more difficult Text 1 appears to have a wide range of score distributions for the Gap-filling and Cloze tests, accompanied by high reliability values, but a low range, reliability and distribution values for Matching, which points to the homogeneous performance of the subjects.

For the Intermediate group (Table 4), one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference among the total means of the three test types, $F (2, 415.427) = 31.186$, $p<.001$. Identical to the Advanced group, Scheffé test showed that Cloze mean (6.59) differed significantly from the means of Gap-filling (12.59) and Matching (12.23) ($p<.001$ and $p<.001$, respectively) but the difference between the latter two was not of any significance ($p=.914$). The alpha reliability value for Gap-filling (.78) was considerably higher than that of Matching (.62) and Cloze (.60). Judging by the standard deviations of the three tests at this linguistic ability level, it is possible to infer that Matching scores distinguish more strongly (4.22) among the subjects because of the lack of context; and as context is added through Gap-filling, the differences among the subjects diminishes relatively (3.97) because subjects begin to make use of contextual clues. Standard deviations for the Cloze test lower once again because subjects are equally incapable of making use of extended context and discoursal clues at this level.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for the Intermediate Group

	Matching			Gap-filling			Cloze		
	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Text 1	Text 2	Total
N	–	–	35	–	–	37	–	–	37
K	10	10	20	10	10	20	10	10	20
M	4,69	7,45	12,23	5,35	7,24	12,59	2,86	3,75	6,59
SD	2,59	1,95	4,22	2,16	2,30	3,97	1,65	1,82	2,59
Range	9	7	16	9	9	14	6	8	14
α	0,77	0,55	0,62	0,68	0,75	0,78	0,63	0,06	0,60
SEM	0,43	0,32	0,71	0,35	0,37	0,65	0,27	0,30	0,43

Text 1: Darwin Text 2: Bigger May Not Be Better

The significance of these data as regards Hypothesis 1 is that for all language ability groups there is no significance difference between subjects' scores on Matching and Gap-filling, meaning that subjects are able to handle vocabulary with reduced or zero context when they are tested on their recall of known items. Cloze scores, on the other hand, differed significantly from the other scores for the Intermediate and Advanced groups but not for the Upper-intermediate group. The Upper-intermediate group was able to process all types of context with items they had learnt explicitly, while the Advanced group had only implicitly learned the tested items and thus functioned differently with varying degrees of context. Standard deviations, however, tended to change with test types enabling one test type to distinguish more strongly than the others.

Descriptive data provided here does not bear evidence to hypothesis 2 which states that subjects' scores will increase in due proportion to the context provided by the measurement tools. For all language ability groups, mean scores for Matching did not increase with the additional context of Gap-filling but remained the same; mean scores for the extended context of the Cloze dropped significantly for Intermediate and Advanced groups, and remained the same for the Upper-intermediate group. Extended context does not appear to be resulting in higher scores for any of the ability groups.

Inter-total item correlations

It is important to determine inter-total correlation values as it is an important aspect of the reliability of test items. An examination of the item-total correlations (R_{it}) will give us an idea of the quality of the items constituting the test. When a number of items address the same underlying construct, then these items are expected to relate to the construct in the same way. The authors wished to examine item/global comparisons in order to see if the discrimination quality of the items changed when they appeared in different contextual surroundings. Following the examples of previous researchers (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Nation, 1990) the assumption is made that each item is independent although the items appear in sets of ten (thirteen with the distractors). Ebel (1979, p. 267) developed a useful guideline for determining the value of individual items when considering item-total correlation statistics: .40 and higher are good items; .30 to .39 are reasonably good items possibly subject to improvement; .20 to .29 are marginal items in need of improvement; and below .19 are poor items which need to be revised or eliminated. When we apply Ebel's criteria to the inter-item correlation indices in Table 5, the following information emerge.

For the Intermediate group, the mean item-total correlation values for the three test types were .449, .412 and .035 for the Darwin text, and .241, .352, and .111 for the Bigger May Not be Better text. For Matching, 55% of the items were good items with an item-total correlation indices of above .30 (.303 - .769) and 30 % of the items were poor items. For the Gap-filling items, 65% of the items had above .30 indices (.325 - .681) and two items had zero values. Looking at the Cloze test values was quite a disappointment. Only 25% of the items had indices over .30 (.360 - .734) and 55% of the items had indices zero or below. For the Intermediate subjects, Cloze test did not appear to be an efficient testing tool when compared with the Matching and Gap-filling assessment techniques. The mean discrimination indices point to Gap-filling as the most reliable measure of the three.

When examining the Upper-intermediate group, the discriminating values across three test types and two texts were not found to be significantly different (p=.213, p=186). Mean discriminating values were above .30 for all cases. This points to a great uniformity in subjects' performance across items. For the Matching test, 69% of the items had discrimination indices above .30 (.338 - .903) and one item had minus

value. The indices were extremely high for the English text. For the Gap-filling test, 78% of the discrimination values were above .30 (.309 - .866) while one item had minus value. The Cloze test items also discriminated quite successfully since 67% of the indices were above .30 (.321 - .908); three items had either zero or minus values. In general, items in the Gap-filling test correlated best with the total of the test with the Cloze items being next best. These values more or less agree with the Cronbach reliability values.

When the mean discrimination indices were compared for the Advanced group, the differences did not appear to be significant (p=.310 and p=.445). Items in the Theseus text appeared to be more difficult for these subjects than items in British Prisons text, as seen in the differences of their means (see Table 2). This explains the high discriminating value means of the first text (.507, .333, .410) compared to the low indices of the second text (.271, .276, .422). Among the three test types, the Cloze test had highest average discriminating index. For the Matching task, 72 % of the items had discrimination indices above .30 (.300 - .878) and two items had minus values. For the Gap-filling task, 47% of the items had indices above .30 (.352 - .683).

Table 5 Discrimination index (R_{it}) means for all tests and language level groups

Text type	Test type	Number of items	Discrimination index M	sd	F-test	sd
Intermediate						
Darwin	Matching	10	0,449	0,285	8,46	p=.001
	Gap-filling	10	0,412	0,143		
	Cloze	10	0,035	0,29		
Bigger may not be bigger	Matching	10	0,241	0,137	1,87	p=.174
	Gap-filling	10	0,352	0,24		
	Cloze	10	0,111	0,392		
Upper-intermediate						
English	Matching	9	0,561	0,306	1,649	p=.213
	Gap-filling	9	0,573	0,327		
	Cloze	9	0,349	0,244		
Katherine Mansfield	Matching	9	0,302	0,216	1,816	p=.186
	Gap-filling	9	0,477	0,215		
	Cloze	9	0,502	0,232		
Advanced						
Theseus	Matching	10	0,507	0,219	1,23	p=.310
	Gap-filling	10	0,333	0,25		
	Cloze	10	0,41	0,251		
British Prisons	Matching	10	0,271	0,115	,84	p=.445
	Gap-filling	10	0,276	0,111		
	Cloze	10	0,422	0,054		

Cloze items yielded very high discrimination values: 80 % of the items were reasonably good (.306 - .711) and two items were poor. All the items in the extended context environment of the Cloze test yielded high inter-item correlations, which recommends this test type as the most discriminating measure for the more proficient subjects. Although subjects had higher score means for Gap-filling there is a randomness in their test performance over the whole of the test.

Only Gap-filling seems to be supporting Hypothesis 3 in producing item/total correlations above .30 for all cases, while the Cloze test failed to discriminate possibly because it is too difficult a task at all levels of learning. A richer and longer context could be perceived as functioning in two opposing ways: it could be considered a hindrance in the sense of requiring understanding of a greater number of words in the text before deciding on how to fill in a specific gap, otherwise helpful in the sense of providing many more clues to the meaning sense required by the gap. The student with a larger store of vocabulary may be better able to use context to his/her advantage. At the next level, subjects seemed capable of illustrating their knowledge of vocabulary irrespective of the test type but with some inconsistencies between Matching scores (.561 vs. .302) and Cloze scores (.349 vs. .502). For the Advanced group, the strongest discrimination was achieved through the Cloze test.

Correlating Measurement Tools

An examination of the patterns of correlations among test scores obtained from the various measurement tools will allow us to give further support to the construct validity of these tools. A correlation coefficient value will tell us to what extent variations in one measure are in agreement with variations in another. However, we must remember that our use and interpretation of correlation coefficients must be guided by the construct we have put down for the study. Our hypotheses about which measures should highly correlate with each other will be determined by the theory behind our construct. Our assumption is that there will be no significant correlations between different measures since subjects are expected to function differently under different contextual conditions; and yet, subjects are expected to function similarly when vocabulary items are assessed through the same contextual environment. In this study, confirmatory mode is used in order to identify the abilities and traits that influence performance on our measures. For all language ability groups, correlations

are processed separately both for combined texts (K=18 or K=20) and separate texts (K=9 or K=10) so that one configuration does not confound results for the other.

For the Advanced group, Matching, Gap-filling and Cloze scores for combined texts (K=20) did not correlate significantly, a fact which could support the multidimensional aspect of the vocabulary knowledge. As further evidence to this argument, Cloze tests for two texts correlated with each other moderately at .686 (p=.001) and Gap-filling tests correlated with each other moderately at .663 (p<.01), which could be interpreted as indicative of a common construct or a common mental ability that is required of the test-takers. Matching scores did not correlate with each other. This result could be explained by the difficulty of the vocabulary items in Text 1 as against the ease of the items in Text2. Without context, subjects scored higher for the easier items and lower for the more difficult items with no correlation between the two. Easier items in British Prisons also gave rise to a negative relationship between Gap-filling and Cloze (-.555, p<.05). For the Advanced group, the evidence suggests that these tests are multidimensional and as such are measuring three separate psychometric constructs with regard to context. The provision of context allowed the scores on two measures to correlate with each other because both tests entailed the use of contextual clues surrounding the blanks.

For the Upper-intermediate group, Matching scores on one text correlated strongly with Cloze scores on the other text at .741 (p<.01). An unusual correlation was observed here. As will be remembered, scores from these tests yielded comparatively high standard deviation values (2.60 and 2.40 respectively), very high discrimination indices (.561 and .502 respectively) and will later be seen to load strongly on the same factor (.934 and .915 respectively). The sources of this pattern could lie in the interaction of item, text and task difficulty, as will be discussed later in the paper. Gap-filling tests correlated strongly with each other at .719 (p<.001) but not with the other two test types, which once again implies a separate construct.

For the Intermediate group, as it was for the Advanced, none of the test types correlated with each other for combined texts (K=20). Taken separately, Matching tests correlated moderately with each other at .631 (p<.01) and Gap-filling tests correlated moderately with each other at .579 (p<.01). Cloze tests did not correlate with each other at any significance.

As regards hypothesis 3, the assumptions of the researchers were confirmed by the results of the Intermediate and Advanced groups, where no significant correlation was observed among the three test types but moderate to strong relations were found between scores for the same test type. In other words, Matching tests and Gap-filling tests correlated in their separate categories for the Intermediate group, and Gap-filling and Cloze tests correlated in their categories for the Advanced group, and Gap-filling tests correlated with each other for the Upper-intermediate group.

Factor Analysis

In the context of construct validation, test scores are considered as observed variables while the hypothetical variables are what we wish to interpret as constructs, test methods, and other influences on test-taker's performance on language tests (Bachman, 1990). These hypothetical variables (i.e. communalities) that underlie the observed correlations are called "factors". Factor analytic procedure produces factor "loadings" that indicate the degree of relationship between observed scores and the various factors that emerge from the analysis. The underlying construct that the three measuring instruments aim to tap into is the usefulness of context in retrieving the form, and syntactic and semantic functioning of the target vocabulary items. The second underlying hypothesis is that higher language ability groups will be more sensitive to or perceptive of contextual clues. Since this study is experimenting with three types of context for three language ability groups, it is the expectation of its author to obtain loadings on more than one major factor for the different sections. The results support the element of context as an important factor for all groups.

When the scores from all the sections were submitted to a Principal Components analysis, three factors emerged for the Intermediate group, representing 29.73%, 26.68% and 20.09% of the variance respectively; three factors emerged for the Upper-intermediate group representing 29.43%, 28.50% and 25.78% of the variance respectively; and two factors emerged for the Advanced group, representing 42.40% and 26.86% of the variance respectively. This is in agreement with the constructs assumed to be underlying each task: first, the Matching task is a relatively discreet construct requiring no other skill than to display receptive knowledge of the given meaning sense of the target words; second, the Gap-filling task is presumably requiring the subject to make use of the syntactic and semantic clues existing in the

sentence-level environment of the target word; and third, the Cloze task probably requires some degree of reading ability and advanced discoursal knowledge in addition to simple vocabulary knowledge in order to make use of inter-sentential clues to the meaning of the target words. Language difficulty was not taken as a major factor in this study because the frequency levels of the target words and the target texts were carefully chosen to match the ability level of the groups and their syllabus. And yet, of the two sets of items and texts presented to the same language group, one appeared to be slightly more difficult than the other for all three groups. Although unintentionally so, language difficulty might have become a factor after all, and this question needs to be resolved by further research.

Based on the present data, three different interpretations will be proposed here separately for each language group. A study of Table 6 will verify the fact that for the Intermediate subjects data load strongly on three factors, each factor representing one of the three context conditions as Matching (.892 and .891), Gap-filling (.881 and .873) and Cloze (.781 and .749). This could mean that the three tasks of Matching, Gap-filling and Cloze required a mental or linguistic ability which distinguished the subjects on the basis of whether they each had this required ability or not. And according to the research questions and hypotheses of this study, this key trait is the ability to make use of context provided in the assessment. Identifying the meaning of an item is one ability and processing it under semantic, syntactic and discoursal constraints is another.

For the Upper-intermediate group three factors emerged; Gap-filling task for both texts loaded strongly on Factor 2 (.889 and .942); the second and third factors are a little difficult to interpret. Performance on different texts and tasks seemed to load on the same factor; that is, Matching (Text 1) with Cloze (Text 2) loaded on Factor 1 (.934 and .915 respectively), and Matching (Text 2) with Cloze (Text 1) loaded on Factor 2 (.889 and .942 respectively). Several interpretations could result from the attempt to explain this incongruity. One reason could be the difficulty level of the target items as they differed from one text to the other. As the mean discrimination indices have already shown us, Matching task for Text 1 discriminated well (.561) between the better and poorer subjects whereas the same task for Text 2 failed to discriminate with the same success (.302) because neither the good nor the poor

subject could score any higher due to the difficulty of the low frequency target words. A second reason could be the difficulty of the measurement task. For Matching, even the better learners found it difficult to identify the low frequency words through short dictionary definitions, but the same learners outperformed the poorer learners in the Cloze task because they could take advantage of the contextual clues to word meanings in the longer discourse. The general conclusion to be reached from all this is that Upper-intermediate subjects hold a middle ground in terms of their vocabulary achievement because when faced with a more difficult set of vocabulary items or a more difficult task which requires more than just discreet vocabulary knowledge, they do not perform much better than the Intermediate or as good as the Advanced group. Relating these two interpretations to the key trait being researched, one could argue that with high frequency words the better Upper-intermediate subjects can do well without too much context, but with target words of low frequency the same subjects need to use extended context and only the more proficient subjects are equipped with this ability.

The data for the Advanced group loaded on two factors, with all the Matching and Gap-filling scores loading on Factor 1 (.857, -.808, .691 and -.663 respectively) and Cloze scores loading on Factor 2 (.917 and .752). At an advanced stage of language development the distinction between zero context and reduced context seems to have disappeared for the receptive retrieval of known vocabulary. The subjects at this stage have perhaps reached a certain linguistic and/or lexical threshold and thus employ the underlying mental processes with equal success. In other words, placing target words in their proper linguistic and semantic context at the sentence level may not be more challenging (or more distinguishing) than matching the items with their dictionary definitions. However, the ability to fill in rationally deleted gaps with the target words may, even at this relatively advanced stage, requires a different mental ability which only the better students have acquired. Unlike the Upper-intermediate group, the difference in the difficulty parameters of the two texts did not lead to incoherent results for the Advanced group learner. The more difficult the text with lower frequency words, the higher were the discrimination values. Hence, extended context requiring discoursal knowledge was probably calling for a separate ability which went beyond the demands of merely syntactic and lexical knowledge.

Table 6: Principal component analysis of separate sections

Level	test type (text)	Loading on factor	Loading on Factor 1	Factor loading after varimax rotation Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Intermediate	match(tx1)	0,806	0,888	0,892	-0,044	-0,092
	match(tx2)	0,794	0,854	0,891	0,032	0,015
	gapfill(tx1)	0,863	0,198	0,253	0,881	-0,148
	gapfill(tx2)	0,826	-0,332	-0,246	0,873	0,054
	cloze(tx1)	0,676	-0,024	0,148	-0,21	0,781
	cloze(tx2)	0,625	-0,405	-0,222	0,12	0,749
Upper-intermediate	match(tx1)	0,861	0,752	0,934	-0,111	0,028
	match(tx2)	0,776	0,376	0,128	0,064	0,871
	gapfill(tx1)	0,902	-0,780	-0,180	0,889	-0,280
	gapfill(tx2)	0,929	-0,596	-0,086	0,942	0,182
	cloze(tx1)	0,671	0,286	-0,017	-0,045	0,817
	cloze(tx2)	0,886	0,735	0,915	-0,131	0,082
Advanced	match(tx1)	0,740	0,818	0,857	0,036	–
	match(tx2)	0,907	-0,798	-0,808	-0,114	–
	gapfill(tx1)	0,493	-0,766	0,691	-0,127	–
	gapfill(tx2)	0,736	0,65	-0,663	-0,418	–
	cloze(tx1)	0,614	0,605	-0,256	0,917	–
	cloze(tx2)	0,666	0,074	0,418	0,752	–

5. Conclusion

The research data described and analyzed in this paper has tried to develop a discussion on contextual influences on vocabulary assessment. As the learners' language proficiency grows, they are expected to be able to exploit contextual information to recognize the specific meaning of a learnt word or infer the sense of an unfamiliar lexical item when they encounter them in use. Three measurement tools were developed with the purpose of allowing students to work on vocabulary items under three different contextual environments of zero context (Matching), reduced context (Gap-filling) and extended context (rational Cloze). The study aimed to look into the question of how much context is necessary and conducive to success when assessing the lexical knowledge of learners, and to what extent lexical knowledge as distinct from other forms of language knowledge accounts for the learners' success (or otherwise) in performing the task.

The article has described the construction of three different test types and has provided initial evidence that they each measure a different construct as validated by the factor analysis and correlation procedures applied to the data. Research results for the Intermediate and Advanced groups are especially supportive of the hypotheses Advanced by the researcher. The Upper-intermediate group yielded correlation results which were inconsistent and a little difficult to interpret. This could be explained by a lack of sincerity or serious effort on the part of the subjects, or the difficulty level of the texts and target words or their combined effect on subjects' performance. Correlation coefficients did not point to a strong relationship between scores obtained separately from three measurement tools with the exception of the Intermediate group. However, strong to moderate relations were observed between two versions of the Gap-filling test for all language groups, which point to a unidimensionality in the ability being measured by a single test type. Cloze test scores and Matching scores correlated well within themselves for the Advanced and Intermediate groups.

Item analysis has shown that for the majority of the cases mean scores from the three measures differed significantly from each other, especially when Cloze means were compared with means of Matching and Gap-filling. An investigation into the discrimination indices of the items in each test group and language ability level gave rise to the conclusion that for the lower language ability groups, the rational Cloze format was not a very good discriminator of subjects' lexical ability, whereas for the more Advanced levels it functioned as a strong discriminator. An important observation made from the present data was that discriminatory power of a measurement appeared to interact strongly with the lexical frequency content of the text and the task being employed. When the text and the task consisted of low frequency items, the rational Cloze item discrimination indices for the high language ability group seemed to benefit from this challenge but Upper-intermediate and Intermediate subjects were under-discriminated when items did not match their lexical knowledge. In general, all subjects regardless of their language abilities benefited from the reduced context environment at the sentential level, but the expectations of a greater success with the extended discoursal context at higher language ability levels was not supported by this study. Other abilities of reading comprehension and discoursal knowledge seem to bear the load of the work when dealing with the Cloze. It requires more than the mere knowledge of the sense meaning of an item or the

ability to process it according to the contextual requirements and constraints of a sentence.

It is possible to argue based on the results of this study that it is one thing to match vocabulary items with their dictionary definitions and yet another skill to determine which words can fill in a certain blank based on the structural context surrounding the blank. The preference of using one assessment tool over the other should be based on the test user's ultimate aim and the language level of the testees. If the aim is to obtain a test with a higher reliability and discrimination power to use with a group of intermediate to higher language ability groups, the choice of gap-filling could be better. With lower language ability groups using the rational cloze to assess the knowledge of content words runs the risk of assessing abilities other than the recognition of word meanings and is definitely measuring a different trait.

Although the findings of this study are far from being conclusive, it is hoped to pave the way for other studies to investigate the impact of context in assessing receptive vocabulary knowledge of foreign language learners in the schooling context. Measures other than the ones used in this study could be investigated for their contextual contribution. It would also be useful to carry out retrospective interviews with subjects after the administration of the tests to find out what kinds of contextual clues they actually attend to and what patterns of behavior they follow in making lexical decisions.

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The Application of Learning Portfolio Assessment for Students in the Technological and Vocational Education System

Ya-huei Wang
Chung-Shan Medical University, Taiwan

Hung-Chang Liao
Chung-Shan Medical University, Taiwan

Bio Data

Ya-huei Wang is an Assistant Professor at Chung-Shan Medical University. She obtained her Ph.D. in education from National Changhwa University of Education, Taiwan. Her current research interests include applying effective motivational strategies to English language instruction, language learning strategies, and gender education.

Hung-Chang Liao is an Associate Professor at Chung-Shan Medical University. He got his Ph.D. in National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan. His current research interests include social science education, research method for social science, experimental design, and statistic analysis.

Abstract

The study intends to offer an alternative assessment method—learning portfolio assessment—for writing classes to enable students in the technological and vocational education system to complete English writing courses with comfort, ease, and confidence. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether students under portfolio assessment experience greater satisfaction in writing class than those under traditional test assessment. After developing a writing portfolio assessment framework, an instructional procedure, and a writing scoring rubric for the writing class, the researchers used a student satisfaction questionnaire and interviews to elicit whether portfolio assessment offers an effective and continuous measure of students' learning outcome and progress in the writing course. The results show that students under portfolio assessment experience greater satisfaction in writing class than those under traditional test assessment in terms of instructional objective, instructional material/method, teacher's qualities, class climate/environment, assessment, and overall satisfaction. In addition, being active participants in their learning process, students are offered a chance to reflect upon their development, growth, and progress over time.

Key Words: Portfolio Assessment, student satisfaction, scoring rubric, technological and vocational education

Introduction

There are two education systems in Taiwan—the general education system and the technological and vocational education system. In the last two decades, the technological and vocational education system has played an important role in educating students in becoming professionals and contributing to Taiwanese economic and industrial development. As the global economy progresses, it is essential that students in the technological and vocational education systems acquire English communication skills to meet the needs of entering the World Trade Organization. Hence the Taiwan Ministry of Education has declared that a project for enhancing students' English proficiency should be implemented (Huang, 2002). In English learning environments in Taiwan, technological and vocational education students do not have much chance to use English, not to mention to speak or communicate with teachers, classmates, or even native English speakers (Cifuentes & Shih, 2001). Nevertheless, the entrance examination mechanism, as well as Taiwanese culture, places great emphasis on learning achievement, and students with superior learning achievement do not choose a technological and vocational education system but instead choose a general education system to continue their higher education (Su, 2005). Most of the students choosing to enter the technological and vocational education system are those not performing well in learning achievement, including English performance (Lin, 1996; Oh, 1997).

Besides the English knowledge background, there is a big difference in the English curricula, textbooks, exposure, and instructional time between the students in the technological and vocational education system and the students in the general education system (Chen, 1986; Huang, 2004; Su, 1997; Su, 2005). The reason for these differences lies in the different educational goals between the two education systems. The goal of technological and vocational education is to develop students' professional skills—either basic or advanced skills—in order to let students enter the blue collar job market after graduation, while the goal of the general education system is to develop students' academic knowledge or an aptitude for management or independent research in order to enter high-level administration or research positions in the white-collar job market after graduation (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2004). Because technological and vocational education is career-oriented, with the goal of

training professionals to meet the demands of national economic growth, industrial changes, and technological advancement, this education system has focused on courses teaching professional knowledge and specialized skills. As a result, English courses have been ignored and downplayed. Also, these initial differences lead to consequent different learning outcomes between the students in the technological and vocational education system and students in the general education system (Huang, 2004).

For the above reasons, research has shown that the students in the technological and vocational education system have low self-confidence and motivation in learning. In extreme cases, students may feel that they are inferior to those students in general high schools and universities, and many experience low self-esteem and test anxiety (Huang, 2004; Su, 1997; Su, 2005; Wu, 2001). To make matters worse, many lose interest and motivation in English learning or even give up. The only motivation for these students to attend English courses can be to avoid failing the courses. The paper intends to offer an alternative assessment method—learning portfolio assessment—of writing classes to enable students in the technological and vocational education system to complete English writing courses with comfort, ease, and confidence. After developing a writing portfolio assessment framework, an instructional procedure, and a writing scoring rubric for the writing class, the researchers attempt to investigate whether the students under the portfolio assessment experience greater satisfaction in the writing class than those under the traditional test assessment. Traditional product-oriented assessments cannot give a complete picture of students' growth, nor can they validly evaluate students' performance, and instead frustrate these students. In order to meet individual students' needs, reflect individual students' effort, and perceive their progress in the English writing course, the researchers use the ongoing writing portfolio to evaluate students' growth. Under the portfolio assessment, students' longitudinal process performance can be evaluated (Morton, 1991; Options, 1993). Hence, assessment would be more individual and holistic.

Portfolio and Portfolio Assessment on English Writing

Research has shown that the English proficiency abilities of students in the technological and vocational education system fall significantly behind those of the

students in the general education system (Lin, 1996; Ou, 1997). In addition, the lower English proficiency abilities frustrate these students and let them lose their motivation to learn English. The core problem of English teaching in technological and vocational education lies in the inadequacy of English class time, the students' background knowledge, and their motivation to learn English (Hung, 1994; Lin, 1996; Ou, 1997; Yang, 1994). Having realized that students in technological and vocational education do not perform well in their learning achievement and therefore possess low confidence and motivation in learning, in order to let the students go through English courses with comfort, ease, and confidence, the authors propose a learning portfolio assessment for these students, offering teachers a number of ways to evaluate students' learning, including learning process and learning outcomes (Gottlieb, 1995). Hence, the learning portfolio serves not only as a guide for students in making choices, in demonstrating how they can reason, create, and reflect upon discussion issues, but also it offers teachers a useful device to assess students' achievement, effort, and improvement.

Learning portfolios are collections of relevant works reflecting students' individual efforts, development, and progress over a period of time. The aim of learning portfolios is to provide students, teachers, parents, and administrators with an overview of students' growth over time, including students' abilities, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Flippo, 1997; Hamm & Adams, 1991; Mathews, 1990; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991). In addition, at the end of a semester or a unit of instruction, portfolios can be submitted for a summative evaluation, as it is useful for teachers to review the contents as a whole.

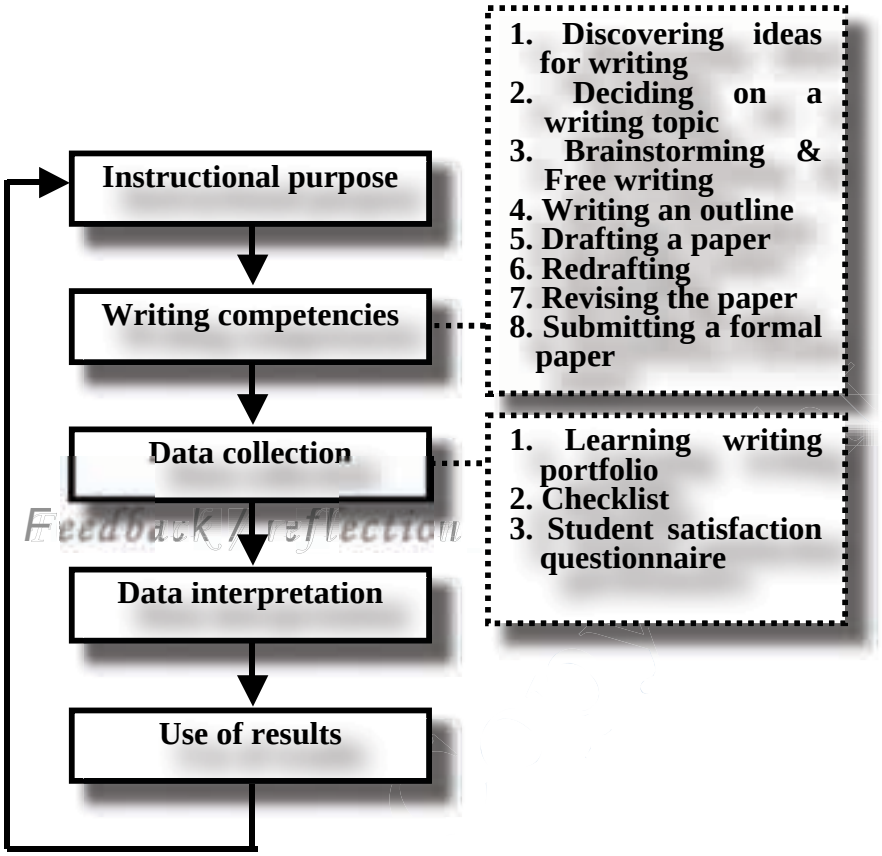
Based on Barrett's definition, a portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' works exhibiting these students' effort, progress, and achievement in one or more areas (Barrett, 2001). According to Simon and Forgette-Giroux (1994), a portfolio is defined as a cumulative and continuous collection of entries selected and reflected on by students in order to assess their competency development. Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) gave an extensive definition of portfolio. They define a portfolio as a purposeful collection of students' work, not only exhibiting students' effort, progress, and achievement, but also demonstrating students' participation in selecting contents and selecting the criteria for assessment.

One advantage of portfolio assessment is that it leaves students a chance to reflect upon their development, growth, and progress over time. Also, it offers teachers a chance to think about their students' problems thoroughly (Nolet, 1992). Resisting standardization, simplification, and formalization, portfolio assessment reflects the "strength, needs, and individuality" of each unique student (Steward, 1993, p. 522).

To sum up, portfolio assessment can arouse students' learning motivation and facilitate students' learning process (Paulson, et al., 1991; Nolet, 1992; Cole, Struyk, Kinder, Sheehan, & Kish, 1997). Compared to conventional test assessments, portfolio assessment offers a more accurate reflection of students' learning (Dutt-Doner & Gilman, 1998; Steward, 1993). In addition, the application of portfolio assessment enhances students' skills in organization and development, as well as interpersonal communication. Being independent learners, students can take responsibility for their own learning (Ballard, 1992). Furthermore, portfolio assessment helps students build up their self-confidence and facilitate their engagement in the learning process (Wolf, 1993).

Method

In order to explore the effects of portfolio assessment on technological and vocational students' writing class, two classes totaling 88 students were selected as the experimental group and the control group. By flipping a coin, the class 1A, with 45 students, was chosen as the experimental group, while the class 1B, with 43 students, was chosen as the control group. The control group received the traditional test assessment, while the experimental group received the portfolio assessment. The experiment was implemented for eight weeks, two hours a week, in 2006. In the beginning, the students in the experimental group were told about the portfolio assessment. They had to keep all their writing assignments in their writing portfolio for ongoing review and revision afterwards, including draft, summary writing, and so forth. Figure 1 shows the framework of the writing portfolio assessment.



Figures 1. The framework of writing portfolio assessment

Due to the lack of guidance to assess writing portfolios, the writing scoring rubric was developed after a series of panel discussions, which were designed to reflect the objectives of the writing course for students in the technological and vocational education system. The rubric consists of focus, content, organization, spelling and grammar, and word usage sections. Each section was measured on a scale of 1-10 and could be considered separately. The writing scoring rubric is shown in Appendix A.

In this eight-week English writing class, students went through the following stages: discovering ideas for writing; deciding on a writing topic; brainstorming and free writing; writing an outline; drafting, redrafting, revising; and finally submitting a formal paper. In the stage of discovering ideas for writing, students were taught to be familiar with a variety of prewriting techniques and strategies to stimulate their creative thinking. They were also encouraged to explore various ways to express their

ideas. In the topic-deciding stage, after doing research in the library or on the Internet, students decided on a topic in which they were interested. In the brainstorming and free writing stage, students found inspiration and wrote freely. In this stage, students were told not to care too much about their spelling, grammar, and punctuation problems.

After completing the brainstorming and free writing process, students collected ideas and information related to the writing topic. In the stage of writing an outline, students organized the information they had gathered and put it in order. By collating notes related to similar concepts, students arranged major ideas and supporting details. In the drafting stage, students began to write a rough draft and to see whether the topic they chose was suitable for developing writing. In the redrafting stage, students were required to continue to draft and redraft their papers. They could give drafts to their friends, peers, classmates, or teachers, asking for comments and suggestions for improving them. Furthermore, during this process, students were to always keep in mind whether the use of language, the organization of writing, and the expression of ideas could be comprehended by the reader.

In the paper-revising stage, students were required to keep rereading their paper to see whether there was any change needed to improve it. The redrafting and revising stages could last for six or seven weeks, as students redrafted and revised their paper as many times as they wished to "polish" it (Winterowd & Murray, 1985). In addition, they were also encouraged to stand back and look at it from the reader's point of view to see whether it was necessary to add some details to help readers understand the paper. The checklist in Table 1 proposed by Winterowd and Murray (1985) was used during the redrafting and revision process.

Table 1. Checklist for Redrafting and Revising (Winterowd & Murray, 1985, p. 20)

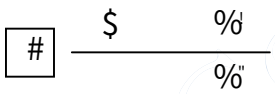
1	Are ideas expressed in a clear and interesting way?
2	Are new details, examples, illustrations, or information added to fill in information gaps?
3	Are unnecessary details omitted or left out?
4	Is the content organized clearly?
5	Does each paragraph include a main idea with supporting sentences to develop this idea?
6	Are a variety of sentence patterns and lengths used?
7	Are sentences clear and complete?
8	Are transitional words and phrases used to link sentences and ideas?
9	Are there any better word choices, such as concrete nouns, descriptive adjectives, and active verbs?
10	Does the chosen writing style reflect the writer's intended ideas?
11	Does the writing form a circle by showing a relationship between the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the writing?
12	Is the writing satisfying?

In the final stage, submitting the formal paper, students handed in their writing portfolio. This included the final paper and all the notes, outlines, drafts and revised papers leading to the final paper.

After developing a writing portfolio assessment framework, an instructional procedure, and a writing scoring rubric for the writing class, in order to explore the effects of the portfolio assessment on technological and vocational students' English writing and to determine whether the students under the portfolio assessment experienced greater satisfaction than those under the traditional test assessment, the researchers used a student satisfaction questionnaire revised from Wang's questionnaire (2006) to measure students' satisfaction in the writing course. Students' evaluation of the coursework is important for teachers, as students' satisfaction with the course indicates students' willingness to recommend this course to others (Chadwick & Wick, 1987).

The student satisfaction questionnaire was made up of 34 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was written in simple English so that students would be able to respond easily. It was reviewed by three experienced English teachers. According to the feedback of the teachers, a little modification was made to make the statements clearer. Also, in order to establish the validity of the questions on the questionnaire, the questionnaire was first read by 58 students studying in the vocational and technological institutes to ensure that the respondents could understand the questions without ambiguity. In addition, while administering the survey, the presence of a researcher in the classroom offered additional interpretation assistance to the students.

The questionnaire is given in Appendix B. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the internal consistency reliability. Figure 2 shows the experimental design of the study.



#	is the random assignment & random distribution
$	is the portfolio assessment
%'	Is the result of satisfaction questionnaire in the experimental group
%''	is the result of satisfaction questionnaire in the control group

Figure 2. The experimental design of the study

In order to triangulate the quantitative data, student interviews were also adopted to elicit the students' opinions and reflection upon the English writing class in which portfolio assessment was used. All the interviews were tape-recorded and conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The responses from the randomly selected interviewees were transcribed, analyzed, and synthesized. In order to encourage honest responses and protect the students' identities, pseudonyms were used for the interviewees. In order to generate convincing interpretations, the interviews were fully transcribed and translated by the researchers. The translated data was further examined by a bilingual teacher.

Results

This study used Cronbach's Alpha to test the internal reliability of each category of the questionnaire. Generally speaking, a minimally acceptable level of reliability is 0.7, and 0.8 or greater is preferable (Churchill, 1979). That is, the nearer the result is to 0.8, the more internally reliable is the scale. The reliability coefficients for the categories in the student satisfaction questionnaire are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability coefficients/Cronbach's Alpha for the categories in the student satisfaction questionnaire

Category	Control Group	Experimental Group
Instructional Objective	0.7473	0.8454
Instructional Material/Method	0.8310	0.8591
Teacher's Qualities	0.9017	0.7991
Class Climate	0.8335	0.9076
Assessment	0.8934	0.8500
Overall	0.9413	0.9356

In addition, after t-tests, the results of both groups' overall satisfaction are illustrated in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, regarding students' instructional objective, the mean of the control group is 10.07, while the mean of the experimental group is 11.83, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between these two groups in terms of instructional objective. As for instructional material/method, the mean of the control group is 51.86, while the mean of the experimental group is 56.70, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between these two groups in terms of instructional material/method. As for teacher's qualities, the mean of the control group is 17.91, while the mean of the experimental group is 20.81, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates

that there is a significant difference between these two groups in terms of teacher's qualities. As for the class climate, the mean of the control group is 27.64, while the mean of the experimental group is 32.00, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference in class climate between these two groups. As for assessment, the mean of the control group is 13.38, while the mean of the experimental group is 15.76, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference in assessment in these two groups. As for overall student satisfaction, the mean of the control group is 117.73, while the mean of the experimental group is 137.11, higher than its counterpart. The p-value is less than 0.01, which is smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference in student satisfaction in these two groups.

Table 3. Independent t-test result of the student satisfaction questionnaire

Test	Group	Mean	S.D.	t	p-value
Instructional Objective	Control	10.07	1.72	-5.023	0.00**
	Experiment	11.83	1.56		
Instructional Material/Method	Control	51.86	6.50	-3.699	0.00**
	Experiment	56.70	5.72		
Teacher's Qualities	Control	17.91	3.49	-.4.491	0.00**
	Experiment	20.81	2.46		
Class Climate/ Environment	Control	27.64	4.19	-4.728	0.00**
	Experiment	32.00	4.45		
Assessment	Control	13.38	3.00	-3.805	0.00**
	Experiment	15.76	2.88		
Overall	Control	117.73	15.99	-.6.108	0.00**
	Experiment	137.11	13.60		

Experimental group: N=43; control group: N=45
S.D.=Standard Deviation

**p-value□0.01

Based on the t-test results for the student satisfaction questionnaire shown in Table 3, the students under the portfolio assessment experience greater satisfaction in the writing class than those under the traditional test assessment. The results of the interviews also demonstrate that the portfolio assessment has a positive effect on the students' English learning process. The students like being actively involved in the English learning process. Some interview excerpts are as follows:

*With the assistance of my learning portfolio, I begin to pay attention to

my learning progress and monitor my learning process.

* Before, I used to sit quietly and passively received teachers' instruction. Teachers controlled the whole learning process. But in this class, I can control my learning pace and get involved in my own learning process.

* My learning portfolio helps me understand my problems in writing. I enjoy discussing with the teacher the writing problems shown in my learning portfolio. It helps me understand myself and my learning process.

In addition, the students feel that the writing portfolio serves as a good example to enable them to understand their grammar and writing problems.

* I like to talk with my teacher about my writing portfolio. The portfolio offers some assistance to let me realize my grammar and writing problems, for it can offer some good examples to let the teacher illustrate my problems.

* I know there is something wrong with my English grammar. Before, I did not dare ask teachers about my grammar problems. I was afraid my teachers or classmates would criticize my poor English. With the assistance of a writing portfolio, it would be easy for me to understand my grammar problems.

From the above interviews, it can be seen that the portfolio assessment has a positive effect on these students' English learning outcome. The students like being actively involved in the English writing process, and with the assistance of a personal portfolio, they can realize and further address their writing problems.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether portfolio assessment has potential positive effects on the English writing class of vocational and technological education. The study revealed that the students undergoing the portfolio assessment experienced greater satisfaction in the instructional objective, instructional material/method, teacher's qualities, class climate, and assessment. The findings of the data analysis are described as follows.

1. The students showed positive responses to instructional objectives based on the portfolio assessment.

Based on the results of the students' responses to the instructional objective dimension, the students reflected that the course's objectives corresponded with their personal learning objectives. Furthermore, the course was perceived to enhance their critical ability. Because the portfolio assessment can help students identify and address their learning objectives, after recognizing their learning objectives and processes, students can seek to employ learning strategies to reach their goals (Donato & McCormick, 1994). Under this kind assessment, the teacher, serving as a facilitator, would guide the students in their learning (Genesee & Upshur, 1996).

2. The students were satisfied with the instructional material/instructional method based on the portfolio assessment.

The students demonstrated positive responses to the instructional material and method because writing portfolios can serve as a means by which instruction and assessment can be woven together. (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997; Paris & Ayres, 1994; Sullivan, 1995). Moreover, they can offer teachers a chance to reflect on their students' problems thoroughly (Nolet, 1992). That is, teachers can use portfolio assessment to collect students' data systematically in order to adjust their teaching strategies or class instructions. With the assistance of students' portfolio, teachers can plan, organize, evaluate, and revise instruction all the time to facilitate students' learning process (Gillespie, Ford, Gillespie, & Leavell, 1996; Poteet, Choate, & Stewart, 1993).

3. The students exhibited positive responses to the teacher's qualities under the portfolio assessment.

The students had positive responses to the teacher's qualities. In order to derive a reliable assessment, teachers have to get involved in the portfolio assessment. That is, teachers have to try their best to communicate with the students to identify each individual student's differences and learning process in order to guide the student appropriately (Murphy, 1992). In addition, in the learning process, teachers should help students identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing and offer them assistance during the writing process (Cambourne, 1988; Murphy, 1992).

4. The students had positive responses to the class climate under the portfolio assessment.

The students exhibited positive responses to the class climate because the class was safe and comfortable, and students were respected there; they were allowed to work at

their own pace and freely expressed their opinions. Unlike conventional assessments, which foster a competitive climate in class, the portfolio process helps students develop their confidence and better relationships with the teacher (Dutt-Doner, 1998). In conventional assessments, students are defined according to their test scores. Hence, being slow learners, students in the technological and vocational education system have been labeled as low achievers and hence experience test anxiety (Huang, 2004; Su, 1997; Su, 2005; Wu, 2001). When students are labeled low achievers or slow learners, they are likely to lose their confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to learn English (Perrone, 1991). However, the application of the portfolio assessment provides them with relief from test anxiety and enables them to have a chance to learn at their own pace (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997; Paris & Ayres, 1994; Sullivan, 1995).

5. The students expressed positive responses to the assessment results based on the portfolio assessment.

The students stated that the assessment procedures were fair and reasonable. In addition, they discussed their performance with their instructor. As traditional assessment methods cannot function well in facilitating technological and vocational education students' English learning process, portfolio assessment, through a comprehensive understanding of each individual student's need and competency, aims at viewing students' progress in a formative sense as well as a summative sense. Hence, it offers a complex but comprehensive view of students' performance in a context in which students are participants rather than objects during the assessment process. In this formative assessment, instead of being passive learners, students become active learners (Valeri-Gold, Olson, & Deming, 1992). They are given a chance to reflect upon their development, growth, and progress over time.

Overall, in traditional test assessments, teachers focus on students' deficits and later, based on the results of tests, revise and remediate their instruction (Gomez, Graue, & Bloch, 1991). Unlike the traditional test assessments, the portfolio assessment emphasizes what students can do, rather than what they lack. It invites students to think about their own learning development and further to discuss their views with their teachers (Farr, 1990). Therefore, it promotes students' self-reflection and inspires students to foster their creativity. Students are empowered to engage in their learning process.

Instead of criticizing or finding errors, a well-developed student portfolio assessment focuses on what students can do to participate in an ongoing modified instruction in which assessment takes place all the time (Valencia, 1990). Moreover, it fosters students' involvement in class and interaction with their peers and teachers. Under this form of assessment, instead of being passive learners, students become active participants in their learning process. Hence, with the assistance of portfolio assessment, they can develop their academic basic skills, learning-to-learn skills, critical thinking ability, and problem-solving abilities (Hayes, 1997).

Conclusion and Implications

The study intended to investigate whether students under portfolio assessment experienced greater satisfaction in the writing class than those under traditional test assessment. As students in the technological and vocational education system possessed low motivation and low confidence in learning English and the traditional test grading system could not really reflect students' learning outcome, the researchers proposed the learning portfolio assessment for the writing class. The results reveal that the students under the learning portfolio assessment experienced greater satisfaction in the writing class than those under the traditional test assessment. In addition, the teacher can make good use of portfolios to empower students to take responsibility for their learning process. Hence, the portfolio assessment helps the teacher guide the whole writing class toward learner-centered instruction rather than teacher-centered instruction. Furthermore, the portfolio assessment helps students become much more reflective about their studies.

Because students in the technological and vocational education system experience test anxiety and do not perform well in their learning achievement, the learning portfolio offers teachers a chance to realize each individual student's need and difference. After reviewing each student's personal and academic background, teachers can identify each student's strengths and weaknesses in order to develop optimal learning procedures for each student. Hence, the portfolio assessment gives students a chance to complete English learning with comfort, ease, and confidence, as it offers teachers many different ways to evaluate students' learning, including learning process and learning outcomes (Gottlieb, 1995). In addition, the learning portfolio assessment also offers students a chance to reflect upon their development,

growth, and progress over time (Nolet, 1992).

Some pedagogical implications for implementing the portfolio assessment are as follows.

1. Teachers should make good use of portfolios in order to enable students to take responsibility for and get involved in their English-learning process. They should nurture and embrace students' differences, creating an atmosphere of trust where students of different backgrounds and opinions feel comfortable in discussing controversial issues and choices. That is, teachers should foster the value of discussion and encourage all students to reflect on issues from multiple perspectives.

2. While implementing portfolio assessment, teachers should bear in mind that they should give up some aspects of the professional authority associated with their positions, such as dominating the discussion and the class, and give their students more power over their learning process, in order to reduce the power differential between themselves and their students. They should guide the entire English class toward learner-centered instruction rather than teacher-centered instruction. By monitoring and helping students set goals for themselves, teachers attempt to help students become active participants in their whole learning process.

3. Teachers should use portfolio assessment to meet each individual student's differences and needs. Teachers should spend more time analyzing students' individual needs and learning outcomes during the students' learning process. In addition, teachers should constantly bear in mind monitoring and modifying their instruction so that it makes sense to their students. Hence, before applying the portfolio assessment, teachers should review each student's personal and academic background, such as their personality style, learning style, cognitive style, previous performance, and so forth, to further assess their strengths and weaknesses in order to develop optimal learning procedure for them.

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Appendix A: Writing Scoring Rubric

Score	Criteria
10-9	Focus—Specifically addressing the writing task Content—Using specific appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas Organization—Being specifically well-organized and well-developed Spelling & Grammar—Spelling and grammar are perfect or nearly perfect Word Usage—Using specific appropriate words
8-7	Focus—Addressing most of the writing task Content—Using appropriate details to support topics or illustrate ideas Organization—Being generally well-organized and well-developed Spelling & Grammar—Spelling and grammar are almost accurate. Word Usage—Using appropriate words
6-5	Focus—Addressing the writing task adequately but sometimes straying from the task Content—Using some details to support topics or illustrate ideas Organization—Mostly well-organized and well-developed Spelling & Grammar—Spelling and grammar are fair with some minor errors Word Usage—Using adequate but sometimes inappropriate words
4-3	Focus—Inadequately addressing the writing task Content—Using inappropriate or insufficient details to support topics or illustrate ideas Organization—Being inappropriately well-organized and well-developed Spelling & Grammar—Spelling and grammar are inappropriate with obvious errors Word Usage—Using noticeably inappropriate words
2-1	Focus—Having problems with focus or failing to address the writing task Content—Using few or no details or irrelevant details to support topics or illustrate ideas Organization—Being seriously disorganized or underdeveloped Spelling & Grammar—Spelling and grammar are poor with frequent errors Word Usage—Containing severe writing errors

Appendix B: Student Satisfaction Questionnaire

This student satisfaction questionnaire is designed for research purposes only and is done on an anonymous basis. All the information will be kept confidential. Please answer the following statements in terms of the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. There is no right or wrong answer to each statement. Please check the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in the box at the end of each statement, indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

		1	2	3	4	5
A.	Instructional Objective					
1	I think the course content is based on past knowledge and experience.	□	□	□	□	□
2	I think the course can enhance my critical ability.	□	□	□	□	□
3	I think the course's objectives correspond with my personal learning objectives.	□	□	□	□	□
B.	Instructional material/Instructional method					
1	The students know exactly what has to be done in the class.	□	□	□	□	□
2	Course requirements are clear and reasonable.	□	□	□	□	□
3	New and different ways of teaching are used in this class.	□	□	□	□	□
4	I think the instruction material is pre-outlined.	□	□	□	□	□
5	I think the course material corresponds with the subject's and the units' objectives.	□	□	□	□	□
6	Adequate and additional academic aid is available for students.	□	□	□	□	□
7	The teacher is usually available after class	□	□	□	□	□
8	The quality of instruction I receive is excellent.	□	□	□	□	□
9	Students know exactly what has to be done in this class.	□	□	□	□	□
10	There are opportunities for students to express opinions in this class.	□	□	□	□	□

11	The instructor presents clear and relevant examples in class.	□	□	□	□	□
12	The instructor thinks up innovative activities for students to do.	□	□	□	□	□
13	The instructor uses a teaching style which varies methods of instruction.	□	□	□	□	□
14	The teacher provides timely feedback about students' progress in the class.	□	□	□	□	□
C.	Teacher's Qualities					
1	The teacher considers students' feelings.	□	□	□	□	□
2	I think the teacher gives enough care and concern for his/her students.	□	□	□	□	□
3	The instructor is sympathetic toward and considerate of students.	□	□	□	□	□
4	I think the instructor gives students immediate responses and feedback.	□	□	□	□	□
5	I think the instructor is enthusiastic about teaching.	□	□	□	□	□
D.	Class Climate					
1	The class is safe and comfortable for all students	□	□	□	□	□
2	All students in the class are treated equally and fairly by other students.	□	□	□	□	□
3	In this class, students are treated with respect.	□	□	□	□	□
4	Freedom of expression is protected in this class.	□	□	□	□	□
5	There is a commitment of harmony in this class.	□	□	□	□	□
6	Students are allowed to work at their own pace.	□	□	□	□	□
7	Students feel at ease in conversations with the instructor	□	□	□	□	□
8	Students are satisfied with what has been done in this class.	□	□	□	□	□
E.	Assessment					
1	At the beginning of the semester, students are aware of the assessment methods.	□	□	□	□	□
2	The assessment procedures are fair.	□	□	□	□	□
3	I can discuss my grades or assignments with my instructor	□	□	□	□	□
4	The assessment procedures are reasonable.	□	□	□	□	□

Thanks for Sharing Your Views

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Effectiveness of Recasts in the Teaching of EFL

Bexi Perdomo
Universidad de Los Andes (ULA), Venezuela

Bio Data:

Bexi Perdomo has been lecturer and workshops facilitator in national and international scientific meetings and has published articles on EFL and technology in education. She has been responsible for several sponsored research projects. She has been qualified for Venezuela's national program of enhancement for researchers of social sciences and humanities since 2006.

Abstract

The present study assessed the effectiveness of oral recasts in an EFL classroom. Thirty-eight college students and a female teacher participated in the study in a western state in Venezuela. Students were expected to learn the right use of the auxiliary verb 'to have', and the use of past participles in the present perfect tense. They were divided into two groups. Each group was randomly assigned to one of two conditions: 1) recast or 2) explicit negative feedback. Positive feedback was provided for both groups. Pictures were used to elicit conversation and an oral test was performed to collect the data. Results supported the claim of the effectiveness of recast compared to explicit negative feedback. Based upon the results, the use of recast in college EFL classes is recommended.

Keywords: error correction, negative feedback, recasts, EFL

Introduction

The kind and amount of feedback the students should receive still remain an interesting research question because of the pedagogical implications of the issue on FL learning and teaching. However, there are not enough empirical data to support possible answers to that question, even though it is a relevant issue related to language teaching and learning practices. Most of the research on feedback has dealt with the role of negative feedback in foreign and second language acquisition. Among the studies that have addressed this issue, are those that have only described the kind of feedback that occurs between NS and NNS (e.g., Oliver, 1995). In second or foreign language contexts, authors have mostly described the kind of feedback that takes place in a second language classroom and the uptake of each one of them (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Recently, some studies have addressed the issue within experimental designs in foreign or second language settings (e.g. DeKeyser, 1993; Long, Inagaky & Ortega, 1998; Perdomo & Rodríguez, 2002), and some other have started questioning about the cognitive processes related to feedback noticing (Nabei and Swain, 2002).

Negative feedback in classroom interaction can be classified into different types including recast (Oliver, 1995). Among these types of feedback, recast seems to be the most effective implicit negative feedback (Ayoun, 2001; Long, Inagaky & Ortega, 1998). Recast "involves the reformulation of all parts of student's utterance, minus the error" (Lyster & Ranta 1997, p. 46). Long, Inagaki & Ortega (1998) refer to it as corrective recast and define it as responses which, although communicatively oriented and focused on meaning rather than form, incidentally reformulates all or part of the learner's utterance, providing information that was missing or ill-produced. Other names for recast are repetition with change, repetition with change and emphasis; paraphrase (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) and pedagogic corrective feedback (Llinares, 2005).

Studying and analyzing the kind, amount and effect of feedback that students receive during the process of language learning contribute to create an appropriate environment for language learning, especially in EFL contexts in which classrooms are the main sources for language learning and the teacher is (in some cases) are the only source learners expect to communicate with, and therefore, teachers are bound to correspond to the learners expectations in terms of questioning and feedback (Farooq, 2007). In this sense, as well as the language teaching methodology to be used, teachers must decide about the emphasis of the oral activities (i.e., choosing between

form and content) and hence, the kind of feedback to be given.

In Venezuela, where it is common to observe that students still depend on language classes and the classroom is still the main environment in which they interact in English, very few studies have been conducted on the issue of feedback and oral production. For these reasons, this study was designed with the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of recast in an oral EFL context in a western college in Venezuela.

Literature Review

Nicholas, Lightbow and Spada (2001) made a documental review of the main studies in which recast was investigated. After that review, they concluded that recast is quite effective when students relate it to form and not to meaning. In relation to non-documental studies, Ayoun (2001) investigated the effectiveness of recast against metalinguistic information. His study was conducted with 145-second language students. These subjects were included in one of the conditions: Implicit, explicit and pre-emptive. He found that the hypothesis claiming that recast was superior to other feedback types was partially supported.

Other researchers, (Long, Inagaky & Ortega, 1998) conducted a two-experiment study to assess the utility of models and recasts in L2 Japanese and Spanish. Subjects in experiment one were 24 young adult learners of Japanese as a second language. They were 13 males and 11 females. Twenty of the subjects reported having studied Japanese in high school between one and four years. Half of the participants had visited Japan for short periods. Target Structures to be learned in this experiment were adjective ordering and locative construction. The researchers used a pretest, posttest, and a control group design. The results provided some evidence that adults are able to learn from explicit negative feedback, and that recasts can be more effective than preemptive positive feedback (models) at least for short-term improvement in an unknown L2 structure.

Experiment number two in the aforementioned study was conducted with 30 young adults learning Spanish. They were given a Latin American music cassette and extra credit to participate in the study. Direct object topicalization and adverb placement were the target structures. As in the previous one, this study used a pretest, a posttest, and a control group design. The target structures were presented in two conditions: model and recast. Treatments and structures were crossed and counterbalanced. Both,

treatments and testing were performed individually. The findings for the adverb placement indicated that groups in model and recast conditions outperformed those in control group, and participants under the recast condition did better than those in model. No learning occurred in any group regarding object topicalization. The authors concluded from both experiments that implicit negative feedback facilitates L2 structures acquisition.

Also Rodríguez and Perdomo (2002) investigated the effect of negative feedback on oral production of college students. In the study, recast was the main implicit negative feedback used by the instructor. The study was conducted with intact classes of marketing majoring students enrolled in the second semester of English as a foreign language in a western college in Venezuela. Participants' oral performance from the previous semester was used as a covariate to investigate a possible attribute by treatment interaction (ATI). The analysis revealed a statistically significant previous oral performance by treatment interaction. Those students with previous oral performance over 14 seemed to benefit more from implicit negative feedback. However, explicit negative feedback appeared to be more effective for those subjects with previous performance below that score. Inspection of the regression lines for the treatment groups indicated that incidental error correction was superior to explicit correction.

In a different context, Tsybina, Girolametto, Weitzman and Greenberg (2006) examined linguistic recasts provided by 16 early childhood educators to preschool children learning English as a second language. They divided children in two groups according to their expressive language skills: lower and higher. In this study recast seemed to be less effective for lower expressive language skills. However, the researchers suggested increasing the amount of simpler recast in classroom interactions in preschool contexts. Even when the subjects in this study were children, results seem consistent with those on behalf of recast for more proficient students like Rodríguez and Perdomo's (2002).

Research on the role of recast in FL learning has gone beyond describing types of feedback during interaction and the effectiveness of recast compared to other kinds of feedback. It has also focused on the cognitive processes that occur during classroom interactions. In this sense, Nabeu and Swain (2002) presented a case study on a 19 years old Japanese college girl learning EFL. They examined how recasts were provided and the relationship between the student's awareness of recast feedback and

her L2 learning. They concluded, based upon the results, that recasting is a complex verbal behaviour influenced by the teaching environment, the interaction context, and the learner's cognitive orientation. They also highlight that recasts are influenced not only by its linguistic elements, but also by paralinguistic elements, as well as by the learner's autonomous use of the learning opportunities provided by the feedback. These results indicate that recast remain as a controversial issue in FL and SL teaching. Hence, the need for more research on recast and the elements involved in the interaction that can affect its effectiveness is evident.

Method

Design

The present study was conceived as an experimental research. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (recast – explicit negative feedback). A pretest and posttest with control group design was used. The pretest was used as a covariate in the analysis of the data.

Subjects

Participants were 38 college students in a western state in Venezuela. The students were enrolled in the second semester of English as a foreign language. They constituted an intact class attending 60-minute sessions twice a week with the same female teacher; hence no teacher effect was expected.

Materials and Procedures

The experiment was conducted during the study of Unit 2 of the official program and lasted three weeks. The grammatical structures they were expected to acquire were: 1) the right use of the auxiliary verb TO HAVE for present perfect tense, and 2) the use of past participles of regular and irregular verbs in present perfect tense.

The content was studied using pictures to elicit conversation. The procedure was as follows:

The teacher asked a question based on the picture. Then, the student was expected to answer the question using the right form of the auxiliary verb and the verbs in past participle. The teacher provided positive feedback under both conditions and the appropriate negative feedback for each one according to the condition.

The short dialogues had a similar structure for subjects in both conditions:

1. Initial question (by the teacher)

2. Students' answer.
3. Positive or negative feedback.

The following example illustrates a dialogue in class in which positive feedback was provided:

- Teacher: (after showing a picture containing a man who had fallen down on the floor) "what has happened?"
- Student: "The man has fallen down."
- Teacher: "That's right."

The next is an example illustrating a dialogue in which explicit negative feedback was provided:

- Teacher: (after showing a picture of a man who had blown a candle) "what has happened?"
- Student: "the man *have* blown the candle."
- Teacher: "That's incorrect. You should say: The man *has* blown the candle."

The forthcoming dialogue exemplifies a case in which recast as negative feedback was supplied:

- Teacher: (after showing a picture containing a boy who had fallen down from a bike) "what has happened?"
- Student: "The boy has *fell* from the bicycle"
- Teacher: "Ah, the boy has *fallen* from the bicycle."
- Student: "Yes, the boy *has fallen* from the bicycle."

After the classes were carried out, the data were collected through an oral interview comprising some short dialogues similar to the ones practiced in class. To elicit conversation the teacher brought 15 pictures. The students were asked 10 questions about five of those pictures chosen at random. The answers were evaluated giving one mark (1) to each, the right use of the auxiliary form, and the right use of the past participle of the verbs to form the present perfect. Hence, the maximum possible score would be 20.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and groups' numbers for previous and current oral performance are presented in Table 1. As it can be observed, control group outperformed the recast group in the pre-test, but these results were different for the

post-test.

Table 1. Means and Standard deviations for both groups in Previous and Current Performance

Condition	Proficiency					
	Previous (pre-test)			Current (post-test)		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	N
Control	12,05	3,94	19	12.32	2.87	19
Recast	10,65	3,60	20	15.45	3.89	20
Overall	11,33	3,79	39	13.92	3.74	39

The data were submitted to an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), using the General Lineal Model (GLM) (Table 2). A pretest was used as a covariate with Type I error rate set at $p<.05$. The error variance of the cued-recall data was equally distributed across the groups, according to the test of homogeneity of variance which did not reach statistical significance, $F (2, 37) = .566$, $p <.723$. In other words, both groups were homogeneous and could easily be statistically compared.

Table 2. Summary of the ANOVA

	Sums of Squares	***df***	**Mean Squared**	***F***	***P***	η^2
Pretest	33.461	1	33.461	3.067	.067	.092
Treatment	122.434	1	122.434	13.03	.001	.271
Treat x Pretest	46.148	1	46.148	4.913	.033	.123
Error	328.727	35	9.392			

A statistically significant difference was found for treatment $F (2, 37) = 13.03$, $p <.001$. These results seem to support the effectiveness recast as negative feedback in comparison to explicit negative feedback. However, a significant difference was also found for the interaction between treatment and pretest, $p < .033$. This interaction means that students who showed better performance on the pretest were more benefited by the recast condition. In other words, recast seems to benefit more those students with more previous knowledge of the language.

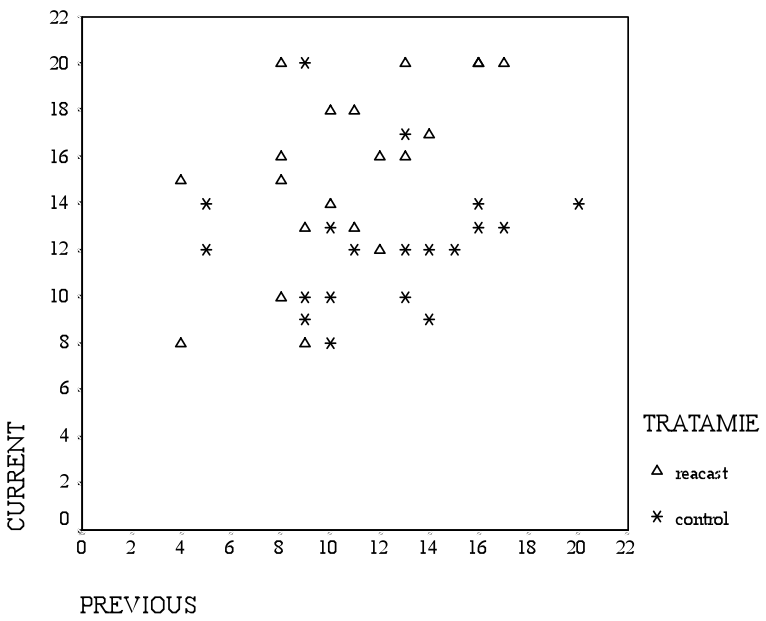

Figure 1. Distribution of scores by group.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the scores under both conditions. As it can be observed, better scores for the post-test were distributed among students under recast conditions in general, while most of the students in the control group obtained similar scores on both tests. Almost all the students under recast condition increased their scores after treatment, indicating that recast benefits students' students learning of some grammatical structures. Besides, students in the control group with high scores in the pretest, got lower scores in the post-test, indicating that explicit negative feedback can also affect students' performance.

Discussion

This study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of recast in an oral EFL context in a western college in Venezuela. In this study, students were expected to acquire two grammatical structures: 1) the right use of the auxiliary verb TO HAVE for present perfect tense, and 2) the use of past participles of regular and irregular verbs in present perfect tense. Results in general show recast as an effective negative feedback when learning those structures.

According to the results, students in the recast condition did better than the control group, even thought they have been outperformed by controls in the pre-test. On the other hand, control group did not show differences between the pre-test and the post-

test. The results indicate that students perform better when they receive recast as negative feedback. In other words, recast has an effect on students' permormance. However, that difference tends to be higher for more proficient students.

The results of the present study are consistent with those reported by Nicholas, Lightbow ans Spada (2001) in which recast happened to be more effective than explicit negative feedback. They also seem to be consistent with the studies of Ayoun (2001) and Long, Inagaky, and Ortega (1998) who compared recast to other kinds of feedback. The findings of the present research also match with the results of Lightbow and Spada (1990) who although did not study recast separately suggested that recast might be beneficial in a foreign language setting. As it can be observed, although few studies have tested recast within experimental designs to provide empirical evidence of its effectiveness, in most of them, recast seems to be more effective than other kinds of negative feedback and preemptive feedback. However, its short and long-term effectiveness has scarcely been investigated; hence, more research in needed on this issue.

Results in the current study indicated a statistically significant interaction between previous knowledge and treatment, indicating that recast tends to benefit more proficient students. These results are consistent with Rodríguez and Perdomo's (2002) findings who found implicit negative feedback as more effective for highly proficient students. In the present research, students with higher scores for previous knowledge (indicated here by the pretest) also did better under recast condition (a type of implicit negative feedback). These findings together suggest the use of recast with more proficient students. Results in both studies let the author to believe that more advanced students are able to focus on form rather than just on meaning, condition in favor of the effectiveness of recast according to Long, Inagaki & Ortega (1998). In this sense, it is recommended to consider Marcosim's (2003) claim that teachers must take into account their students' level of L2 proficiency when making decisions about feedback.

It is possible to think that the results of this research could have been influenced by the kind of interaction in class. In this sense, this study seems to support Lyster's (1998) claim that the type of interaction between teachers and students would determine if students notice recasts or not. As Lyster (1998) states, when the teacher does not give students the opportunity to reformulate the utterance, the attention is given to content rather than form. In the case of the current study, the kind of

interaction let the students identify recast as negative feedback and hence take the advantage of it. Therefore, if teachers decide to include recast as feedback in oral activities, they must set a proper interaction environment to enhance its effectiveness. However, there are not empirical studies that directly assess this issue, for which more research is also needed on the kind of classroom interaction required to increase recasts effectiveness.

Conclusion

The issue of negative feedback is highly important in language teaching. Some studies have shown that implicit negative feedback can affect students' attempts to communicate which is reflected in their oral production and recommended the use of implicit negative feedback (Rodríguez and Perdomo, 2002). Among all the choices of implicit negative feedback recast is seen in literature as one of the best, especially for those students with higher level of proficiency. However, several aspects of the effectiveness of recast still need to be studied. For example, short and long term effectiveness for grammatical structures learning, the kind of interaction in the classroom enhancing recast effectiveness, the relation between students' learning styles and recast noticing, and the relation between students' anxiety in oral activities and recast noticing, among other.

Pedagogical implications

As teachers are expected to seek the best methods and techniques to help students to learn, one important issue to consider is the kind of feedback students should receive in oral activities. Giving students the appropriate kind of feedback would improve conditions for FL learning. However, as it has been observed in this research and in previous ones (e.g., Rodríguez and Perdomo, 2002), students' proficiency in the language affects recasts effectiveness. In this sense it is recommended for teachers to explore their students' proficiency in the language before deciding the kind of feedback to provide. Hence, it would be useful to make some tests at the beginning of the courses, in order to determine students' proficiency, because the use of recast is somehow determined by students' proficiency.

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Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Writing: A Genre Approach to Teaching Narrative Writing

Fei-Wen Cheng
National Chiayi University, Taiwan

Bio Data:
Fei-Wen Cheng is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at National Chiayi University in Taiwan, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in English composition. Her research interests lie in the area of academic writing, genre theory, and critical pedagogies.

Abstract
Second language (L2) writers often have an incomplete control of English and rely on teachers to help them develop the linguistic resources necessary for them to express themselves effectively. Genre-based pedagogies were developed to address the language needs by offering students explicit and systematic explanations of the way language functions in social context. One of these approaches, drawing on Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) functional grammar, identifies the discourse and grammatical structures typical in different social activities and links these linguistic choices with the social purposes and situations that the texts participate in. However, few studies have investigated the effects of genre-based pedagogy on L2 students' writing development. The present study addressed the need by evaluating the functional approach to genre in an EFL composition course in Taiwan as college freshmen learned how to write a narrative text. Results indicated that students' essays exhibited large pre- to posttest gains in specific rhetorical moves (i.e. character's problem illustration and struggle identification), in content development, in textual coherence and in language usage. These results confirmed the findings of previous studies on advanced L2 learners that explicit knowledge of genre sharpens students' awareness regarding the content, organization and language use to generate the target genre.

Key words: genre, narrative, genre pedagogy, Systemic functional linguistics

Introduction

As a paradigm shift has taken place in approaches to teaching L2 writing over the last 15 years, genre-based instruction has emerged as the most strongly advocated alternative to the widely-used process approach (Atkinson, 2003; Hyland, 2002, 2003, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002, 2003; Paltridge, 2001; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000; Cheng, 2006). A major flaw of implementing the process approach in L2 writing classroom is its overemphasis on general principles of thinking and composing with

minimal attention to the language and rhetorical patterns L2 students require to express themselves effectively. Students are generally expected to discover the language they need in the process of writing itself. This is a challenging task for L2 writers, who may not have extensive exposure to the target language. A genre-based approach to L2 writing is proposed to address the language needs of L2 learners by offering students discourse knowledge on the way the target language functions in social context.

Nevertheless, the efficacy of genre-based teaching and learning has caused great controversy between genre proponents (Hyon, 1996 & 2002; Paltridge, 2001; Carter, Ferzli, & Wiebe, 2004; Hyland, 2004). What's at issue is that few empirical studies have been undertaken to illustrate whether a genre approach to L2 writing can achieve its potential (Cheng, 2006; Tardy, 2006). Further research is necessary to understand to what extent genre instruction benefit L2 writers. As Freedman stated (1993), "It should not be the task of the skeptics to argue against a pedagogic strategy but rather the work of the proponents to bring forward convincing research and theoretical evidence --- preferably before its wholesale introduction" (p.279). As such, the purpose of the present study is to examine the effect of explicit instruction of one type of school genre, narrative, on English freshmen in EFL context. Before reporting this empirical study, I first discussed studies on genre-based instruction in L2 context and briefly introduced the theoretical frameworks, Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory and narrative genre.

Genre-based instruction in L2 context

The existing research on genre-based L2 literacy acquisition has indicated mixed results. Henry & Roseberry (1998) examined the effect of explicit genre instruction on first-year management students' acquisition of tourist information genre. The instruction was primarily based on analysis of genre moves by reading a variety of text models. The results indicated that the treatment group did show significant improvement in motivation and texture (cohesion and coherence) scores and their gain scores were significantly higher than the control group. Interestingly, students who have received explicit instruction on genre moves showed no significant improvements in this variable in their pre-/post-tests, although they did make certain progress. Furthermore, they also failed to gain significantly higher gain scores in the move variable than the control group who were asked to read the model texts in the

absence of any explicit explanation. However, their research indicated that exposure to model texts in the absence of explicit instruction did not help students acquire genre knowledge since there were no differences in the pre-/post-tests move scores among the control group. It is still unknown why explicit instruction on genre moves failed to yield any significant progress in move scores for the experimental group.

Hyon's study (2002) assessed the effects of an EAP genre-based reading course on building genre knowledge and developing L2 reading ability. The instructional focus was primarily a text-based analysis of rhetorical moves, language style and discourse purpose. Based on post-instructional naming tasks and interviews, the findings indicated that the course facilitated a better understanding of texts' rhetorical elements but failed to provide all skills essential for effective L2 reading, such as reading strategies and vocabulary knowledge. In a follow-up study on the long-term effects of this course, Hyon (2001) found out that one year later after the course, the L2 graduate and undergraduate students were able to recognize specific genre features taught in the course. Yet, some participants over-generalized and misapplied some prototypical genre features. Hyon's studies showed that genre instruction can help L2 students acquire L2 reading-related abilities to a certain extent and may need to incorporate other complementary instruction to be an effective approach to L2 reading training.

The above studies indicated that explicit instruction may have positive effects on L2 literacy acquisition but these studies have also highlighted several limitations of genre-based pedagogy. Since these limitations may derive from varying approaches to genre instruction, Pang's study (2002) further clarifies how different approaches to genre instruction led to distinct effects for college students of varying writing proficiencies. Pang compared two different approaches to genre instruction: textual-analysis (focus on schematic structure and lexical and grammatical analysis) and contextual-awareness (types of publication, communicative purpose, writer and reader's role) approaches. The participants under the instruction of both approaches employed the same composing strategies and produced similar quality of written texts. However, the contextual awareness group had better understanding of the discourse function while the textual analysis group performed better on the mechanistic elements associated with the target genre, such as the use of mood and person, obligatory moves and features, and format. Pang indicated that textual analysis approach worked better with students with low or high pre-test scores while

contextual awareness approach helped some participants with low or medium pre-test scores. Different from the findings of Henry & Roseberry's research (1998), Pang's study indicated that genre instruction did enhance students' employment of move structure.

As shown above, the inconclusive results of the existing research to affirm the efficacy of genre instruction led to the need for more studies. In particular, most studies centered on advanced learners in the EAP/ ESP contexts but neglect to examine the effect of the instruction in elementary genres. As Widdowson (1993) cautions, instruction in specialized genres may not provide novice L2 learners with transferable language knowledge. After all, there is no way to predict the wide range of possible genres students may need to participate in their academic and professional settings (Flowerdew, 1993). To further clarify the efficacy of genre instruction and learning, the present study has adapted SFL theory to teach novice L2 writers one type of school genre, narrative, and examined its effects on these learners. As a theoretical framework in designing the instructional content, SFL theory is briefly introduced in the following section.

SFL genre theory

A SFL approach to genre developed by linguistics and practitioners in Australia mainly draws on the linguistic theory of Michael Halliday (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). With its focus on the core educational genres and its clearly articulated social function as well as discourse and grammatical features for each genre, SFL approach is taken as the pedagogical framework for this study. This theory addresses the relationship between language and its social functions and sets out to show how language is a system from which users make choices to express meanings. It advances that the context of situation of a language event on how we use language is further divided into: field (topic or focus of the activity), tenor (the relationship between the writer and reader or the speaker and hearer), and mode (expectations for how particular text types should be organized). These three components are realized through elements in the lexico-grammatical system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Martin, 1984). That is, the way people make meaning by choosing linguistic choices varies according to the field, tenor, and mode variables that constitute the context of situation. The lexico-grammar is seen as construing three kinds of meanings, corresponding to field, tenor, and mode: with the

field of discourse realized in ideational resources, the tenor of discourse realized in interpersonal resources, and the mode of discourse realized in textual resources. According to Eggins (1994), it is the lexico-grammar level that is particularly important in understanding how the different contexts of situation are realized in lexical and grammatical choices.

SFL pedagogy is grounded in the belief that learning to write should be based on explicit awareness of language (Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996). As an attempt to provide a framework that will help explain genre use at all educational levels, SFL researchers characterize genres in terms of broad rhetorical patterns such as *narratives*, *recounts*, *arguments*, and *expositions*. In addition to specifying key genres that students are often asked to write, SFL researchers have also identified the purposes for communicating in each genre and the typical stages and linguistic features of these texts that can express these purposes. Furthermore, they employ analytical tools and frames from systemic functional linguistics to identify the discourse and grammatical structures needed to produce genres. By describing the typical features of valued genres, teachers can provide students with clear options for writing, both within and beyond the sentences, to help them create texts appropriate to readers (Hyland, 2004; Lin, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2004). As such, SFL's descriptions of narrative genre will serve as the instructional focus for the present study.

Narrative genre

Narrative writing is chosen as a pedagogical genre in freshmen composition course since it acts as a fundamental genre for several advanced academic and ESP genre, such as literary response essay, news report, feature report or film review. Based upon the SFL theory, the instruction of narrative writing should focus on the social purpose realized through rhetorical moves, textual structure and language. The social purpose of narrative genre is to entertain, amuse or reflect an experience. This can be achieved by introducing the reader to a possible world in which individual characters experience a problem of some kind which they have to face and overcome (Macken & Slade, 1993; Macken-Horarik, 2002). The schematic structure of a prototypical narrative to realize the discourse purpose is represented as follows: Abstract, Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution and Coda. Abstract indicates what the story is about. Orientation provides relevant background information about the characters' situation. Complication introduces one or more problems for characters to

resolve, involving Problem and Struggle episodes. Evaluation highlights the significance of the events for characters and resolution to resolve these issues. Coda brings readers back to the present situation.

In addition to the rhetorical moves as shown above, teachers can further point out the grammatical and rhetorical features of narrative. Along the tenor dimension, writers are expected to explore the subjective world of the fictionalized characters in order to manage the reader's responses: their needs, motives, emotional response. Overt expressions of the writer's personal feelings and attitudes should be avoided in a narrative genre. Several linguistic resources can be utilized: "reporting and quoting the speech of imagined characters", "revealing their thinking in mental processes", "commenting on events", "creating a sense of the characters' responses and motives", using imagery and metaphor, rhetorical questions, repetition and exclamatives in building suspense (Macken & Slade, 1993, p.217). Along the field dimension, writers are expected to sequence events properly and exploit these events appropriately. Language features in this dimension include specific, individualized characters, inclusion of relevant physical circumstances to build up the material reality of the possible world, and discriminating word choices (particularly of the thinking and doing processes). The choice of written mode requires writers to create a context-independent text in order to help the readers to reconstruct the context for the events of the narrative. Controlling this aspect of language means varying the sentence structure in terms of the use of first position in the clause, and using explicit conjunctions and various cohesive devices. By describing the typical features of a genre, teachers can provide students with clear options for writing, both within and beyond the sentences, to help them create texts that seem well-formed and appropriate to readers (Hyland, 2004; Schleppegrell, 2004).

The above descriptions of the discourse/language features in a narrative genre were adapted into instructional focus and activities presented in the following section and served as the scoring rubrics in the assessment schemes (See Appendix A).

Method

Participants

The participants were 26 English major freshmen in the Freshmen composition course taught by the researcher at a lower rank national university in Taiwan. This is the first text type taught in this composition class at the beginning of their first college year.

Prior to this pedagogical intervention, the majority of the participants had no formal and systematic instruction in English writing as indicated in their responses to a pre-intervention survey on their previous English writing experience and instruction. Before entering university, all the participants had received compulsory English language education for at least six years and had practiced English paragraph writing at senior high school in preparation for the English writing test in the College Entrance Exam. At college level, English-major freshmen are also required to take other English language courses, such as grammar, reading and speaking. Novice writers were selected since the purpose of the present study is to examine the effect of genre-based instruction on less proficient L2 writers, who had received little attention in previous studies of genre-based instruction.

Writing task

All participants were required to write a narrative paragraph of about 250-300 words in response to an English prompt. Students were provided with several topics, each of which stated a hypothetical situation with various topics, audience, and purpose specification and prompted them to tell a personal experience (See Appendix B, for example)

Instructional focus

Narrative writing is considered more familiar to freshmen novice writers and is sequenced as the first genre taught at this writing class. The total instructional cycle for this genre lasted for four sessions, each of two class hours. The present approach resembled the Australian systemic functional genre application in its emphasis on the relationship between context and language use and its use of explicit discussion, modeling and analysis of genres (Flowerdew, 1993; Hyon, 2002). What follows is a lesson plan to help students develop a narrative text through a sequence of activities that move students through three different stages. Stage one of this approach focuses on understanding the contextual variables associated with narrative writing: writer's role and communicative intent, reader's role and intent, channel of message, and social activity. The goal of this stage is for students to understand that writers do not just respond to a topic or an assignment but take several contextual variables into consideration while generating their ideas. This contextual awareness is considered essential for students to understand how the writing context shapes how a wrier

interprets task demands and influences what a writer writes.

Activity 1.1

Students were first introduced to the genre "narrative" by considering several general questions such as "Under what condition do we need to tell a story?" "What's the purpose of doing this?" "How do we tell a story?" and based on their own personal learning experience in their L1 writing, they were required to give specific and concrete examples in support of their answers. Then, several featured questions that focused students' attention on contextual variables in writing are given in the form of prompt as listed below.

- What is the social activity the text participates in?
- Where can you find the text?
- What purpose does it serve?
- Who is the writer? What are the writer's qualifications for writing the text?
- What's the writer's purpose?
- Who are the readers? What are their concerns? What is their purpose?

Students were asked to respond to the questions as reading a narrative text while inferring the process that experienced writers engage in to produce argumentation. They are encouraged to consider these questions throughout the whole learning process and in their composing process.

Activity 1.2

Students studied three texts of similar genres (drawn from different publications): a modern short story, a recount and a news report. For each text, students hypothesized about the publications in which the three texts are located and deduce which types of publication the source is. They also inferred the writer roles and purposes, and the target readers, their gender, age, education, interests, and reader purposes. Students then discussed the contextual differences among the three texts. Inferring contextual components from the text is essential to contextual awareness building (Pang, 2002). By comparing three similar but distinct genres, students learned how contexts affect writer's rhetorical considerations and subsequent writing strategies.

The main goal of stage two was to introduce the schematic moves realizing the situational context and the functions of each move. Students rearranged moves appearing as sentences in a story. They mapped some of the sentences onto the moves

that are typical of stories: Abstract, Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution and Coda. They were then asked to identify the features and functions of each move, and to explore its relationship to the discourse purpose. More examples of modern short stories were provided for students to discuss which move structure was essential and which was not.

Finally, stage three focused students on analyzing lexical-grammatical features associated with English narrative writing. Such analyses intended to help students understand how the situational context (field, tenor, mode) was constructed through linguistic features. These features included types of verbs (e.g., action, thinking, saying, being, having), use of appraisal terms, syntactic features (e.g., expanded noun phrases, various conjunctive structures), thematic choices, and cohesive ties. Learners were asked to identify how these different grammatical features realize the schematic move and the genre. For example, they were taught to analyze how to use expanded noun phrases to present a character or how to use various conjunctive structures functional in the Complication move.

In addition to these in-class activities, students analyzed instances of narrative genres on their own. For homework, they were asked to find an example of narrative genre and to describe evidence of some of the features discussed in class. Several process-based practices were also integrated into this genre-based instruction. For example, students worked on their first draft after stage one and their second draft after stage two. That is, students were asked to apply what they have learned to their own texts step by step in terms of their own goals as writers. Also, students received oral and written feedback from their peers and teachers on their multiple drafts.

Assessment scheme

Appendix A shows the assessment schemes used to score the pre- and post-test essays. It is composed of three dimensions: content, organization and language use. The content dimension was defined as the degree to which the writer's elaboration of each rhetorical move, use of sensory details, inclusion of vivid, interesting orientation and notable turning points. The organization dimension was grounded on SFL theory and was divided into the inclusion of obligatory moves, optional moves, flexibility in move sequences, the use of thematic choices and cohesive ties. Language use dimension was defined as the range of verbs, appraisal expression, syntactic diversity and use of specific vocabulary appropriate to the experience being told. These criteria

are significant in the realization of both textual and contextual meanings, as underpinned in the SFL theory. After all, the judgment whether a genre has been mastered has to be grounded on the discoursal and linguistic realizations in the text of a target genre. The scores in the rating were derived impressionistically along a scale of "not evident", "minimum evidence of mastery", "some evidence of mastery," "adequate evidence of mastery," "outstanding evidence of mastery," and "strong evidence of mastery," ranging from 0 to 5.

Data analysis

The pre-/post-test essays were written in response to the same topic. All texts were double rated by the researcher to check intra-rater reliability. Thirty percent of the data were randomly selected and coded by an experienced native-Taiwanese EFL writing instructor to ensure inter-rater reliability. On the analysis of various features, the intra-rater correlation coefficient ranged from 0.89 to 0.98 and the inter-rater reliability ranged from 0.82 to 0.93. Paired-samples *t*-tests were undertaken to examine each feature listed in content, organization and language use components in the pre-/post-test essays.

Results

The relative effectiveness of the implemented approach is reported here, though no hard and fast conclusion regarding genre acquisition can be drawn because of the limited sample size, the particular genre used, and the special environment in which the research was conducted. As shown in Table 1, the paired-samples *t*-test indicated that students made statistically significant progress in most features examined, as evident in the difference between the scores in the pre- & post-test essays, except the incorporation of obligatory and optional moves and flexibility in move sequence. It appears that improvement in the quality of written texts correlates highly with enhancement in participants' awareness of discourse and language features in the taught genre.

Table 1
Means & standard deviations for functional elements at pretest and posttest essays

	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain scores	
	Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD
Content						
Amount of elaboration	1.81	.57	3.73	.96	1.92	.98
Sensory details	1.50	.86	3.69	.88	2.19	1.13
Orientation	1.46	.81	3.38	.85	1.92	.93
Turning points	1.23	.95	3.54	.90	2.31	1.56
Organization						
Obligatory moves	3.93	1.43	4.69	.47	0.76*	1.56
Optional moves	1.04	1.22	1.50	.65	.46**	1.30
Flexibility	.15	.54	.73	1.37	.58***	1.07
Thematic progression	1.65	.80	3.35	.75	1.69	1.19
Cohesion/cohesiveness	2.12	.52	3.42	.86	1.31	.97
Language features						
Action verbs	1.81	.75	3.69	.79	1.88	1.03
Appraisal expression	1.46	.58	3.62	.94	2.15	1.05
Syntactic diversity	1.96	.53	3.69	.79	1.73	.78
Precise vocabulary	1.54	.76	3.46	.95	1.92	1.13

N = 26, * p = .021, ** p = .083, *** p = .011

Content

Regarding the amount of elaboration in each rhetorical move (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, coda), scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 10.04, p =.000. Also, writers in the posttest essays employed more concrete, specific sensory details as indicated in the posttest scores were significantly higher than the pretest scores, t (25) = 9.88, p =.000. In the incorporation of vivid, interesting orientation, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 10.49, p =.000. Furthermore, in the use of notable turning points, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 10.16, p =.000. Participants were better able to generate richer elaborations for each rhetorical move and use concrete and specific details to attract readers. Their genre knowledge helps them to make decisions about what topic would be more interesting or which episode to include.

Organization

Regarding the inclusion of an obligatory move (orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution), scores for the posttest essays were not significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 4.41, p =.000. Most of the students were able to include all the obligatory moves in their narrative paragraphs, except that 20

percent of the participants (five out of 26) interpreted narrative writing as another story genre "recount". In recount writing, there are no problem and struggle moves but only "record of sequential events". The missing moves in students' first drafts are usually problem and struggle moves (Complicating action). Regarding the incorporation of optional moves, there was no statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, t (25) = 1.81, p =.083. Likewise, regarding the flexibility in move sequence, scores for the posttest essays were not significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 2.76, p =.011. However, in terms of the thematic progression, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 7.24, p =.000. Also, scores in the use of temporal connectives and other cohesive ties for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 6.88, p =.000.

Language features

Overall, participants improved their use of various language features assessed in the present study. With respect to the range of action verbs, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 9.31, p =.000. For the range of appraisal expression, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 10.49, p =.000. In terms of syntactic diversity, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 11.35, p =.000. Also, in the use of specific vocabulary appropriate to the experience being told, scores for the posttest essays were significantly higher than scores for the pretest essays, t (25) = 8.69, p =.000. The findings indicated that this pedagogical intervention has enhanced their awareness of language usage in terms of several important linguistic features specific to narrative writing.

Two examples

The quantitative and qualitative analyses and results are illustrated next through two sets of pre- and posttest essays selected (See Table 2) as being representative of the group's pre- and posttest levels of achievement. These examples, showing gains of 1-3 points on various features in Content, Organization and Language, clarify and illustrate the average gain from 1.30 in the pretest to 2.19 in the posttest with respect to considered features (Table 1). The essays were written by two students who were

average writers described by the instructor/researcher based on the textual quality of their pretest drafts. These examples illustrate in what ways the majority of the students improved their writing. To facilitate discussion, sections of the written texts were bracketed and labeled as Abstract, Orientation, Complicating action (Problem/ Struggle), Evaluation, Resolution and Coda (See Appendix C).

Table 2
Scores on pretest/posttest by Student A & B

	Student A		Student B	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Content				
Amount of elaboration	2	4	2	3
Sensory details	1	4	1	4
Orientation	1	3	1	4
Turning points	2	3	1	4
Organization				
Obligatory moves	4	5	4	4
Optional moves	1	1	1	1
Flexibility	0	0	0	0
Thematic progression	3	4	1	3
Cohesion/cohesiveness	2	4	2	3
Language features				
Action verbs	3	4	1	3
Appraisal expression	2	4	1	3
Syntactic diversity	3	4	2	3
Precise vocabulary	2	4	2	3

Pretests

Student A received scores ranging from 1 to 2 for the features on Content component because there was little effort to elaborate the physical details of her experience, to differentiate the subjective world of the characters and to build suspense or atmosphere via dialogue, questions and exclamations. Although the writer did describe some mental processes “nervous”, “glad”, “delighted”, all of her feelings and thinking were presented in a descriptive instead of a more concrete way. As such, this narrative contributes to the impression of a very “slapdash” story. The reader is left with many unanswered questions: for example, why is this “one of the most impressive experiences?” Why did the writer “make up her mind to save the dog’s life?”

The essay received 4 points on the inclusion of obligatory moves since the writer failed to draw clear lines between move boundary. The treatment of the activity sequence is believable and coherent so that it is possible to understand what goes on

and to follow the sequence of events. However, the writer has been content to write a narrative event and sequence with little evidence of interest in the interpersonal world of the characters or its meaning for the reader, as discussed in the above paragraph. The evaluation move leaves the narrative rather flat due to the absence of any significant evaluative meanings, as noted by the writer at the end of the story "I think it is the most loving experience that I have ever had." So the readers came to the end of the story with a "why" response. The text incorporated 1 optional move (Abstract) but lacks flexibility in move sequence. In terms of themes, the writer used varied and interesting sentence beginnings. The thematic choices signaled a change in the rhetorical move and helped push the narrative forward.

The essay is only moderately well handled in terms of language use. The writer has attempted to employ a range of action verbs and was able to integrate a range of clause types in her text, for example, "Although knowing that I would be late to school if I took it to the hospital, I made up my mind to save its life"; "About five minutes later, an ambulance coming, the nurse took it to the hospital, telling me that everything would be fine and did not be so nervous." Yet, the text has few appraisal expressions except "the most impressive experience happened" and "the most loving experience that I have ever had." Also, much of the word usage was not appropriate to the experience being told, for example, "…but the *hurter* was not a person…" and "…*appealed to* others for not to *clash or tread* on the dog anymore."

Text B breaks out of the traditional narrative mode and is characteristic of what Gee (1989) calls essayist discourse, associated with expository prose in its lack of any emotive, performative content. Without any dramatic and expressive devices to create a dramatic performance, it is impossible for readers to be caught up in the story. As such, the text scored 2 in terms of the elaboration of each rhetorical move, indicating that the writer understands what to be included in each move without providing sufficient details to engage readers. More information about the participants, processes and circumstances needs to be supplied in the text. Similar to the pretest essay by student A, the subjectivity of the characters is left undeveloped. Student B needs to make more use of devices like imagery, exclamatives, more descriptions of the characters' responses and motives or connecting on events for the purpose of building suspense, atmosphere and characterization. Consequently, the text failed to give concrete sensory details and create vivid orientation and notable turning points. In terms of these features, the text scored only 1 point, indicating minimal evidence of

mastery.

In terms of organization, the essay received 4 points in the inclusion of obligatory moves because it incorporated all the obligatory moves but the change of the narrative stage is not evident. It incorporated one optional move (abstract) and all the moves were sequenced without any flexibility. The use of narrative theme choices fails to effectively signal changes in the temporal sequence of events. Also, the variety of sentence beginnings could be diversified. Logical relations between events or sentences are moderately established. Her use of cohesive ties assists the readers to recover referents, although some explicit connections are needed to mark the logical relations between sentences. For example, student B wrote, "She told me all about this situation. I worried about Annie very much."

On language use, text B receives 2 points in syntactic diversity and the use of vocabulary appropriate to the experience being told. However, it scored only 1 point for the range of action verbs and appraisal expression, indicating the writer showed minimal control of action verbs (for example, repetitive use of "eat"), and made little attempt to evaluate the events except "difficult", "healthiest" and " not a good way". Her control of the sentence is rather uneasy throughout the whole text with several choppy sentences; for example, "I believe everyone had heard about anorexia. For time goes by, she ate less and less."

Posttests

On the posttest essay, student A began to experiment with the subjectivity of the characters, making use of devices like interior dialogue (for example, "If I took this dog to a hospital, I would be late for school. Even worse, that day was our final exam"), imagery ("I was a killer!") and exclamatives ("How terrible it is! I don't want to get involved in their incident!") in building atmosphere, suspense and character. The physical events are also specified - usually in the thinking and doing processes. Instead of simply telling "I flagged a taxi and took the dog to animal hospital immediately," the writer further elaborated with "By the time I arrived at hospital, owing to the fact that I feared the dog might die, I was sweating, crying and pale with fear." As such, the text scored 4 for its rich elaboration of each rhetorical move and generation of concrete, specific sensory details while it scored 3 for an even and appropriate orientation and 3 points for a moderately effective suspense.

In terms of organization, the text improved by generating a more discriminating

move boundary (5 points), more diversified thematic choices (4 points) and better established logical relations between events and sentences with appropriate use of conjunctions and varying cohesive ties (4 points). Overall, the text does hang together very well.

The text was well handled in terms of language features, scoring 4 for all rubrics, although some grammatical errors should be avoided. The writer made more discriminating and evocative word choices (for example, "several thought flashing through my mind" instead of "I think"; "whispering in a low voice" instead of "speaking quietly"). The use of action verbs, appraisal, sentence diversity or vocabulary was appropriate to the experience being told and subsequently contributed to the overall development of the narrative.

On the posttest essay, student B switched the topic to a personal experience, contending that the present story was easier to project the suspense. This text scored 3 by generating an adequate elaboration of each rhetorical move, while scoring 4 with regards to its strong evidence of mastery in providing sensory details, orientation and building suspense. Most entertaining part of this story came from its employment of interior dialogue (for example, "What? It's the railroad ring! God! How can I do?" I thought), exclamatives ("Am I still alive? Am I out of hell?"), descriptions of sounds ("Dung-dung! Dung-dung! Something is ringing."), and imagery ("angry-looking clouds", "She is like a living Jesus"). The major weakness in terms of content was its lack of any significant evaluation. As noted in Macken & Slade (1993), the events of any narrative are given their significance through evaluation.

In terms of organization, the writer of text B made little progress on the use of obligatory moves and optional moves but developed diversified thematic choices and established better temporal and logical relations between events. The themes for each new narrative stage moderately heralded a change in the temporal setting to push the event forward (Problem: "Suddenly"; Struggle: "Although I still can think but my body is freezing,…"; Resolution: "After arriving the safe road,…"; Coda: "now,…", but not in the Orientation move).

With respect to language, the writer of text B made notable progress from 1 or 2 points in the pretest essay to 3 points in posttest essay. The writer was able to integrate and embed a range of clause types within sentences and employed specific vocabulary to describe her experience (for example, "accelerator", "crash", "burst into tears"), although some of her expressions were not native-like and there were several

grammatical errors.

Discussion

The results in the previous section suggested that a genre approach to teaching writing can produce some positive results. For these students explicit teaching of genre elements improved the quality of their narrative paragraphs in a relatively short period of time - four weeks. Prior to instruction, a large number of the participants (except five students) were quite familiar with the structural elements of a narrative as indicated in their pretest essays, although most of them failed to succeed in using language to achieve the purpose of each rhetorical move. In the pretest, participants wrote a skeletal narrative in the absence of any attempt to elaborate the physical details of their story, the subjective world of the characters and the atmospheric feelings of the text. Explicit instruction on how to use language to realize each move appears to help enhance participants' awareness and develop each rhetorical move. Students are better capable of presenting more sensory and performative details, building more effective suspense and atmosphere and adding richer exploration of the story characters. In line with Pang's (2002) study, explicit instruction contributes to the content development and linguistic expressions of students' text in the target genre.

However, similar to Henry and Roseberry's (1998) findings, explicit instruction on genre moves failed to produce any significant progress in move scores from pretest to posttest, although they did make certain progress. Narrative genre is one of the elementary genres that students have acquired through their L1 literacy context. Participants in the present study are capable of transferring their L1 literacy knowledge to L2 composition. Their major difficulty in composing an English narrative is their lack of linguistic knowledge to realize the discourse function of each rhetorical move. This finding has implication for pedagogical priority in designing the classroom activity as teaching fundamental genres to L2 novice writers.

Moreover, explicit instruction on generic structures did not significantly lead students to use the rhetorical move in a flexible way. This does not imply that students necessarily learned rote procedures rather than principles as contended by several New Rhetoric approach researchers. One possible explanation for this failure is that the model essays selected for in-class readings followed the fixed sequence of genre patterns so that novice writers may not be offered ways to diversify their organization patterns. The second explanation is that flexibility to use these structures may come at

the later stage of acquisition as these writers placed more emphasis on determining appropriate language to realize the rhetorical moves. Another explanation is that the assigned topics required students to describe their own personal experience, which may in consequence urge them to report their story in a chronological order.

Conclusions

Researchers have advocated that teaching/learning needs to be put into a more focal position in the ESP/EAP genre-based approach (Hyon, 2002; Cheng, 2006), given our relatively less developed understanding of the efficacy of this approach. The present study adds to our knowledge about what L2 students in EFL context learn in the genre-based pedagogical context. The findings also help us to clarify this approach to L2 literacy learning and teaching and measure its effect for EFL novice college writers.

There are several implications for teaching to be drawn from the mixed results of this study. Due to students' previous acquisition of narrative genre moves in their L1 literacy context, the instructional focus can be placed less on the introduction of move structures but more on the realization of the functions of each move by providing discourse and language features to achieve the intended goals. For example, comparing the effects of varying organization patterns of obligatory moves to achieve a certain purpose can facilitate students' understanding of potential ways to achieve discourse goal and such awareness may lead to subsequent transference of their knowledge to their texts. Furthermore, although the present study did not analyze the ways students employ each rhetorical move in great details, the participants appeared to be less capable of representing evaluation move even after the intervention. As Cortazzi & Jin (2000) noted, one Chinese discourse principle rests on the belief that the primary evaluation in a narrative does not need to be explicitly mentioned because it is the reader's responsibility to decode the evaluative intention of the storyteller. This pinpoints the need for the EFL teachers to place emphasis on how the evaluation is used in an English narrative. For instance, more practice on specifying the language features of evaluative expression and its functions in narrative genre can facilitate students' acquisition of the evaluation move and enhance their ability to use it more effectively.

One major shortcoming of the present study is the lack of a control group to detect specifically in what ways and to what extent genre approach benefits these novice

writers. Replication of the present study is needed with quasi-experimental method to directly address this issue. In addition, more research is required to further explore learner dynamics as receiving genre instruction and to understand the complexities of genre-based learning. One area of study as suggested by Cheng (2006) is to examine how learners of various proficiency levels interact with a genre approach. Although participants in the study were all categorized as novice L2 writers due to their freshmen status, their L1 writing ability and English proficiency may vary. It would be useful to gather more information from them, possibly through case studies or interviews, to find out how this approach benefits them and what other skills they require to improve their L2 writing.

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Appendix A

Assessment schemes

5 = outstanding evidence of mastery
4 = strong evidence of mastery
3 = adequate evidence of mastery
2 = some evidence of mastery
1 = minimum evidence of mastery
0 = not evidence

Content	
	Rich elaboration of each rhetorical move [Orientation/Problem/Struggle/ Resolution]
	Even and appropriate elaboration
	Concrete, specific sensory details --- thinking and feelings of characters --- interior dialogue --- dialogue --- visual details of scenes --- descriptions of sounds, smells, specific actions --- descriptions of appearance
	Vivid, interesting, creative orientation
	Notable turning points
Organization	
	Inclusion of obligatory moves [Orientation/Problem/Struggle/Evaluation/Resolution] 5 = Inclusion of all moves and easy to draw the lines between moves 4 = Inclusion of all moves and some move boundaries are blurring 3 = missing 1 move 2 = missing 2 moves 1 = missing 3 moves
0 1 2	Incorporation of optional moves [Abstract] [Coda]
0 2 4	Flexibility in move sequence
	Choice of theme in a specific move Orientation: Circumstances of time and place (Theme or Rheme) Complication: Circumstances of Time (Marked: temporal sequence) Contrast conjunction (Crisis point) Interpersonal theme (Comment Adjunct: Evaluation in the events of complication) Resolution: Consequence conjunction
	Cohesiveness [lexical repetition (semantic relations), reference, conjunctions]
Language use	
	A range of **action** verbs
	A range of appraisal expression (Adj, N, V, sentence pattern)
	Syntactic diversity
	Use of specific vocabulary appropriate to the experience being told

Appendix B

1. You are invited to write in "the most…" column for a local English newspaper, Taiwan news. The editor asked you compose a short prose about a personal experience that you might characterize as the most amusing, sad, terrifying, satisfying, stupid, rewarding, self-centered, generous, stingy, loving, thoughtful,

cruel, regrettable, educational, corrupting, sinful, virtuous, or disgusting thing you have done or witnessed. Keep in mind that you are writing about a single event or a portion of that event. Your prose should be limited 250-300 words.

2. A TV program is planning a new series on "first-timer experience", calling for any personal experience on the first time you did something, such as the first time you dated, kissed romantically, spoke formally in public, entered a new school, worked for pay, rode a bike/motorcycle, danced, met a celebrity, or played a game. You will need to present your experience within 250-300 words, which if accepted, will be adapted into a mini-drama series.

Appendix C

Student A (pretest)

[Once, that was a rainy day. On my way to o to school, one of the most impressive experience happened. ***Abstract***] [When I was walking across the street, a loud sound drew everyone's attention-a traffic accident happened, ***Orientation***] [but the hunter was not a person, instead, it was a dog. That pitiful dog was lying in the middle of the street, but no one else wanted to help it, because it was a stag dog. Although knowing that I would be late to school if I took it to the hospital, ***Problem***] [I still made up my mind to save its life. Hence, I call 119 immediately, and appealed to others for not to clash or tread on the dog anymore. About five minutes later, an ambulance coming, the nurse took it to the hospital, telling me that everything would be fine and did not be so nervous. Not going to the hospital with the dog, I was still glad that I could protect the dog from dying. Then, almost two weeks later, the hospital called to me, saying that the dog had already recovered its health, and asked me whether I wanted to see it or adopt it. Therefore, I went to the hospital and saw it. At that time, it was full of energy. When I approached to it, it also came to me, shaking its tail, licking my hand as if it recognized I was the person who saved its life. I was deeply delighted to see it keep its health and also have a strong desire to adopt it. Unfortunately, my home was too small to have a dog. ***Struggle***] [Thus, now it lives in an animal protection association and I would go to see it and play with it every week, ***Resolution***] [and I think it is the most loving experience that I have ever had. ***Evaluation***]

Student A (posttest)

["There is nothing happier than helping others" is saying that I am totally convinced because of my personal experience. ***Abstract***] [That was a rainy day. On my way to school, I walking across the street, a traffic accident happened. When the dog, which had yellow fur and looked very dirty as well as hungry, wanted to walk across the street, a car came all of the sudden and didn't notice there was a dog on the street. ***Orientation***] [A crashing sound drew everyone's attention, but the driver fled immediately, leaving that pitiful dog lying in the middle of the street. To my surprise, no one else wanted to lend a hand to this dog, because it looked extremely disgusting and horrible. Worst of all, I heard some pedestrians whispering in low voice "How a terrible scene it is! Don't look at that anymore." "I don't want to involve in this event! Just go away quickly!" At that time, I had a strong desire to help that dog, bur there were several thoughts flashing through my mind. ***Problem***] [If I took this dog to a hospital, I would be late to school, even worse, that day was our final exam! "As a senior in senior high school, it was hard to make it up if I failed anyone of my exams." "Maybe I couldn't graduate from school smoothly", I told myself at that time. On the

other hand, if I didn't took this dog to the hospital, I would go to school on time and take the exam, but maybe I still can't concentrate on my exam. I would unceasingly recall the scene that the dog lying in the middle of the street and shedding blood. I am also conscience-stricken, because I was an indirect killer to kill that dog. The sound "I was a killer" might resound in my mind at any time, any minute, or even, any second. That is, I would like be subjected to my conscience's blame. I was hesitating which choice I should make. I told myself "it is a life-and-death emergency, so I can't waste time on making a decision." After few seconds' thought, I made up my mind to save its life. Hence, I flagged a taxi and took the dog to animal hospital immediately. By the time I arrived at hospital, owing to the fact that I feared the dog might be die, I was sweating, crying and pale with fear. Then the nurse came to its aid and doctor operated for it. After few minutes' waiting, the nurse told me that the dog's breath was stable and everything would be fine. Also, she wanted me didn't be so nervous and to write down my telephone number. That was because when the dog turned healthier, they would call me. ***Struggle***] [Almost two weeks later, the animal hospital's nurse called me, saying that the dog has already recovered its health, and asked me whether I wanted to see it and adopt it. Therefore, I went to the hospital and saw the dog. At that time, it was not dirty anymore, instead, its yellow fur was clean and shiny; It did not breathe feebly, instead, it was full of energy and vitality. When I approached it, it also came to me, shaking its tail, licking my hand as if it recognized I had saved its life. I fed it, played with it and also gave it a name called Magic. Whenever I threw a ball, Magic would run and find the ball back. Whenever I stroked its fur, it would lick my hands and my cheeks as if I was its mother. ***Resolution***] [I had a powerful desire to adopt it, so I ask my mom whether we could adopt it or not. Unfortunately, my mom told me that our home was too small to keep a pet. ***Problem***] [I hearing that, my heart was broken in several pieces instantly. From that day on, I cried my heart out several days. Whenever I saw a dog on the street, I reminded Magic and my heart couldn't help but feeling a hearty sorrow just like a lump in my throat. ***Struggle***] [Now, it lives in an Animal Protection Association, which has people to take care of it and also offers big playground to let it run, play or make friends with other dogs. Although it can't live in my home, I still would go to see it and play with it every weekend. ***Resolution***] [After this loving experience, I strongly feel that helping others is the happiest thing in the world. Because of helping Magic, I felt delighted all day long even though I missed the first class of final exam. Therefore, I made up my mind that I would spare no effort to help others for good. ***Evaluation***]

Student B (pretest)

[I believe everyone had heard about anorexia. ***Abstract***] [This situation happens to my good friend Annie. Every time we have dinner together, she always keeps saying "she is fat" and "she wants to slim down." Although I try to persuade her again and again not to do this, she still insists her decision. ***Orientation***] [For time goes by, she ate less and less. She changed her habit from eating three meals to half meal. She loves drinking pearl milk, therefore she drank a cup of pearl milk and water every day. Besides pearl milk and water, she touched nothing, ate nothing, and drank nothing. At first I did not know this problem, but there is one time I got a call from Annie's mother. She told me all about this situation. ***Problem***] [I worried about Annie very much. I tried any way to push her eating something, but she still refused my suggestions. At the worst time, I suddenly remembered I have a good friend named Ashley who is a nutritionist. I told Ashley about Annie's problem. She promised me she will help me to solve Annie's situation. After three mouths, Annie is a changed

person because of Ashley's advices. Ashley and Annie had classes five days a week. She put any information about diet, healthy and life. ***Struggle***] [As a result, Annie accepted Ashley's classes and she started to eat. ***Resolution***] [I know every woman wants to have a fit body, because you can wear beautiful clothes. Being fit is not so difficult, all that you have to do is keep doing some sports, eating the healthiest food. Never going on diet, you know, this is not a good way to have a healthy body. ***Evaluation***]

Student B (posttest)

["Brad Pitt! Gosh! Brad Pitt is in my arms! What should I do? Maybe…" "Wake up! Wake up! It's five to eight." My classmate shouted. "Don't go Brad! No… Why are you here, Brad is gone because you're yelling." I said in anger. "Ok, it's three to eight." She said. "Really, damn it." At the last few minutes, you can see a girl running around the house, trying to get ready to school. "I am going! Oh! The weather…" Opening the door, the frequent thunder roared again and again; Shocking lightning accompanied with pouring rain. There are even all full of angry-looking clouds in the sky. I did not know how could I control my motorcycle, I just keep turning the accelerator on. There was nothing in my head, all I know was "Go!". The rain pelted down, I released my-all-energy to challenge the falling speed of the rain. When I was going through the railroad on my way to school, I was turning on my right direction light first, and then turning right immediately. ***Orientation***] [Suddenly, there was a woman riding her motorcycle who was going straight to me, hitting my scooter without stay unexpectedly. With this surprising crash, I fell from my scooter among the railroad. "Ouch! What happened?" I said. "Dung-dung! Dung-dung!" something was ringing. "What's that? Dung-dung! Dung-dung! Dung-dung! What? It's the railroad ring! God! How can I do? I thought. Although I still can think but my body freezing, the shark's deadly jaw might attack on me. ***Problem***] [When I closed my eyes, gave up struggling, there came a girl riding her pink bicycle seeing me stuck in the railroad. She jumped from her bicycle, saved me out of the active-eating-machine without any delay. For me, she is like a living female Jesus, sacrificing her life for all the people in the world. ***Struggle***] [After arriving at the "safe" road, the train was passing the railroad. The girl and I breathed in deeply. "Am I still alive? Am I out of the bell?" I shouted. "Yes, you are still alive." the girl said. All the things temporary finished, I burst into tears. "It's all right! You are safe now! You are safe now!" She gave me a great big hug and said. ***Resolution***] [Now, five years passed, I still can't ride even a bicycle. ***Coda***]

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A Comparison of the Effects of two Vocabulary Teaching Techniques

Saeed Mehrpour
Shiraz University, Iran

Bio Data:

Saeed Mehrpour is an assistant professor of TEFL at the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of Shiraz University, Iran. He teaches specialized courses such as language teaching methodology, linguistics, language testing, research methods, phonology, and sociolinguistics to both BA and MA students of English as a Foriegn Language. He is interested in and conducts research in areas such as reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis.

Abstract

The present study was conducted to compare the impacts of two vocabulary teaching techniques (a contextualizing technique and a decontextualizing technique) on vocabulary learning of a low proficiency group of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language (N=50), who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. In the experimental group, the students were taught to learn new English words by memorizing word lists associated with their Persian meanings (a decontextualizing technique) and having a lot of inside-and-outside-of-the-class practice. In the control group, the students were taught to learn the new English words by just making either spoken or written sentences using them (a contextualizing technique). The data were collected using two types of tests: a rote memorization test and a sentence-making test, which were administered to both groups. The results of the study revealed that the students receiving treatment in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group quite significantly on a vocabulary memorization test. The experimental group also had a better performance on a sentence-making test than the control group though the difference was not statistically significant. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that rote memorization of word-lists can work better than sentence-making practice, especially for Iranian learners of English at low levels of proficiency.

Key words: Contextualizing, decontextualizing, rote memorization, sentence-making

Introduction

Learning a second or foreign language mainly involves learning the sound system, grammar, and vocabulary of that language. Vocabulary learning by far plays a very crucial role in learning another language. Seal, (1990, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 1991, p. 269) states that "To the non-language specialist, the common sense view of how languages are learned is that you substitute the words in your first language for the

corresponding words in the second language. Words are perceived as the building blocks upon which a knowledge of the second language can be built."

Considering the crucial role attributed to vocabulary learning in second or foreign language learning, one can implicitly understand the importance of vocabulary teaching as well. In the past, vocabulary teaching and learning were often given little priority in second language programs, but recently there has been a renewed interest in the nature of vocabulary and its role in learning and teaching (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Anumber of research studies have dealt with lexical problems, namely, problems which language learners face in vocabulary learning. The research findings have revealed that lexical problems frequently interfere with communication. As a matter of fact, communication breaks down when people do not use the right words (Allen, 1983).

It is also generally accepted that second or foreign language learners who possess good word power or knowledge of vocabulary are usually more successful language learners. Simply put, people with large vocabularies are more proficient readers than those with limited vocabularies. In fact, there is usually a positive correlation between one's knowledge of vocabulary and his/her level of language proficiency (Luppescu & Day, 1993).

Broadly speaking, there are three approaches to vocabulary teaching/learning: incidental, or indirect learning (i.e., learning vocabulary as a by-product of doing other things such as reading or listening), explicit or direct instruction (i.e., diagnosing the words learners need to know, presenting such words to the learners and elaborating on their word knowledge) and independent strategy development (i.e., practicing guessing the meaning of the words from context and training learners to use dictionaries) (Hunt & Beglar 2000, cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). In connection with the first two approaches to vocabulary teaching/learning, a number of techniques can be employed. One can make use of decontextualizing techniques such as memorizing word lists or using flashcards. And while adopting the indirect approach, one can utilize contextulizing techniques such as reading and listening practice and speaking and writing practice (Oxford & Crookall, 1990).

In regard to the first two approaches to vocabulary teaching/learning, there is a problem which has remained unsolved to date. The problem is whether the direct approach (using decontextualizing techniques) is superior to the indirect approach

(using contextualizing techniques) or not. In fact, there are a number of studies which have addressed the issue, but most of such studies have come up with mixed results. As a matter of fact, there is no consensus of opinions on the superiority of one approach over the other. Nation (1994) argues for a systematic rather than an incidental approach to the teaching of vocabulary and argues that such a factor is an essential part of a language course. He points out the limitations of incidental learning and the fact that L2 learners are often unable to benefit from incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading because of limitations in their vocabulary knowledge. Read (2004) also contends that although learners certainly acquire word knowledge incidentally while engaged in various language learning activities, more direct and systematic study of vocabulary is required.

Literature Review

As mentioned above, a number of research studies have dealt with the effect(s) of the direct and indirect approaches of vocabulary teaching/learning on learning vocabulary, in general, and on learning English vocabulary as a foreign or second language in particular. What follows is a brief review of the related literature on the topic in question.

In a study, Laufer and Shmueli (1997) examined the relationship between memorization of new words (short-term and long-term) and teaching techniques involving different modes of vocabulary presentation and different language of vocabulary glossing. The four modes were: (1) words presented in isolation, (2) in 'minimal context', that is, in one meaningful sentence, (3) in text-context, and (4) in 'elaborated' text context, namely, in the original text supplemented by clarifying phrases and sentences. In each mode of presentation, half (ten) of the words were translated into learners' L1 and half were explained in English. An additional group of learners served as a control group. They were asked to learn the words for a quiz by themselves. All subjects were tested on the short-term and long-term retention of the target words. Retention scores were compared by mode of presentation, language of glossing and the interaction between the two. The results of the study revealed that words glossed in L1 were always better retained than those glossed in L2. As for context effect, words presented in lists and sentences were remembered better than those presented in text and elaborated text. The control group received the lowest scores. The results underscored the importance of attending to newly learnt

vocabulary and relating it to the first language. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that mental elaboration which is claimed to affect retention may not necessarily take place when words are encountered in texts. On the other hand, bilingual lists may be conducive to such elaboration.

Ih another study, Qian (1996) compared the learning of second language words in lists and in contexts. He employed 63 Chinese university learners of English learning a set of 15 English target words. The No-Context group produced significantly better scores on an immediate recall test than the Context group did; and this difference was also observed on post-test administered one week and three weeks later. The findings of his study suggest that decontextualised L2 vocabulary learning with feedback is more effective for these particular students than contextualized vocabulary learning without feedback. He also provided a comprehensive review of research that compares the learning of L2 words in lists and in contexts. Based on the results of this review he argues that most of these data are equivocal, in that it fails to show significant effects for one method over the other. He also challenges the assumption that contextualized vocabulary learning always leads to superior retention.

nI still another research project carried out by Lawson & Hogben (1996) the behavior of university students with experience in Italian (N = 15) attempting to learn the meanings of new Italian words was observed using a think aloud procedure. The great majority of the procedures used involved some form of repetition of the new words and their meanings - mostly a simple reading of the dictionary-like entries provided, or repetitions of the word-meaning complexes. Relatively little use of the physical or grammatical features of words, or elaborative acquisition procedures was evidenced. This lack of acquisition between use of context and recall of word meaning is contrasted with the stress placed on context by many researchers. Even when the subjects did use the cues in the sentences to generate possible meanings for the target words, it did not help them establish representations for the meanings of the words.

In a further experiment, Prince (1996) explored the role of context versus translation as a function of proficiency. In this study a recall experiment was performed to determine the relative advantages and disadvantages of context learning and translation learning as a function of learner proficiency (N = 48 English as a foreign language students). The results revealed a superiority of translation learning in terms of quantity, but an inability of weaker learners to transfer their knowledge into

second-language contexts.

Khuwaileh (1995) also investigated the effect of contextualization on vocabulary at the intermediate level of English for academic purposes in an experiment with Jordanian university students (N = 40). Two lists were created, each containing 20 new words. List 1 was presented with English meaning and discussed in Arabic; the words of list 2 were embedded in a text for silent reading with vocabulary questions. After 14 weeks, the subjects were tested on list 1 and a second text containing the words of list 2 in the same meanings as in the first text. The number of correct responses to each list was tabulated and it was revealed that the average correct was 9.3 for list 1 and 14.04 for list 2, showing a clear advantage of contextualization for comprehension, learning and-or recall.

With respect to the use of word lists as a technique for learning vocabularies, Ianacone (1993) argues that vocabulary lists are isolated and isolating. They are artificially constructed lists which lack context and are not capable of inspiring motivation to learn. Based on his teaching experience and the specific approach which he adopted, he suggests that words should be learned in a context in which students are actively engaged in guessing word meanings as they appear in natural contexts. He finally states that this approach allows students to build their own vocabulary lists and forces them to assume responsibility for their own learning.

Although it is generally believed that most words are learned from context and it is a very useful and productive way to learn words, the usefulness of this method of vocabulary learning for all learners at different levels of proficiency is open to question. Waring (1995, p. 2), for instance, argues that, "Beginners need a basic vocabulary before they can even start to learn from context as they have insufficient knowledge and the text is too dense with unknown and partly known words." In fact, they do not also possess enough knowledge of grammar and consequently can not make use of grammatical contextual clues to guess meaning from the context. He finally recommends that guessing from context be left to a later stage when the learner has enough knowledge base from which to work.

The gist of the forgoing points is that with respect to beginning learners we should start from an emphasis on direct learning and move on to strategies which are more based on incidental learning such as guessing meaning from context. As an alternative vocabulary learning strategy for students at low levels of proficiency learning from word lists is highly recommended. "Learning from word lists, as stated by Waring

(1995, p. 2), is a conscious intentional strategy whereas learning from context is usually incidental to the task at hand, and seeks to aid learners in deepening their knowledge of already known words." Meara (1995, cited in Critchley 1998) also claims that presenting vocabulary in list form is an efficient study method in which students can learn large numbers of words in a short time. Hulstijn (2001) also maintains that if learners are supposed to have access to a rich L2 lexicon that is the foundation of fluent communicative ability, it is necessary to include procedures such as regular rehearsal of words, rote learning, and training in automatic word recognition as one component of vocabulary learning, especially for beginning and intermediate-level learners.

Synthesizing the research findings presented in this section, one can come to the point that, in general, the majority of the research findings [e.g., Laufer and Shmueli (1997), Qian (1996), and prince (1996)] provide support for the superiority of decontextualizing vocabulary learning techniques (e.g., using bilingual word lists) over contextualized techniques (e.g., learning words in context). Only in one study, (Khuwaileh, 1995), the results supported the use of contextualizing techniques for vocabulary learning. As far as the ideas of the authorities on the subject of vocabulary learning are concerned, a synthesis of the views presented in this section also lends support for the appropriateness of using decontextualizing techniques of vocabulary learning/teaching rather than contextualized techniques [e.g., Waring (1995), Critchley (1998), and Hulstijn (2001)], especially for beginners. Ianacone (1993) is an exception in this regard because, as stated above, he argues that vocabulary lists, as a decontextualizing technique, are isolated and isolating, they are artificially constructed and lack context and, as a result, are not capable of inspiring motivation to learn. Having a look at the syntheses of the research findings and ideas, one can conclude that there is still a sort of discrepancy involved. And, as the results of Qian's (1996) comprehensive review of research comparing the learning of L2 words in lists and in contexts, in general, fails to show significant effects for one method over the other, one can come to an understanding of the necessity of further research in this area.

Statement of the problem

The present study intended to touch upon a relevant aspect of the two major approaches of vocabulary learning/teaching. It investigated the effect(s) of two

vocabulary teaching/learning techniques, that is, rote memorization of word lists (a decontextualizing technique) and sentence-making practice (a contextualizing technique) on learning English vocabulary as a foreign language.

Based on the points mentioned in the above paragraph, one can state the following research question: Is sentence-making practice (as a contextualizing technique) superior to rote memorization of word lists (as a decontextualizing technique)?

Objectives and significance of the study

Compared to grammar and pronunciation, vocabulary (usually viewed as a third language subskill) has attracted little investigation in second language research (Meara, 1982; Gitsaki, 1992; Prince, 1996). A reason which has been stated for this lack of research interest is that, unlike grammar and pronunciation, vocabulary is not clearly defined by rules and is therefore not easily operationalized for research purposes.

Moreover, for a relatively long period of time vocabulary was viewed as a language subskill that develops in parallel with a major language skill, such as reading and writing (Taylor, 1997). Krashen (1987) also claimed that vocabulary is something learners pick up while improving their reading skills. All that the teachers need to do is provide enough comprehensible input to the learners and "vocabulary acquisition will in fact take care of itself" (Krashen, 1987, p. 81).

All the above-noted points reveals the fact that vocabulary acquisition is in desperate need of investigation in both second and foreign language learning situations. As stated earlier, there are two general approaches to vocabulary teaching/learning (direct and indirect) with their respective techniques. In the direct approach to vocabulary teaching/learning decontextualizing techniques such as word lists, and flash cards are employed. And in indirect approach, contextualizing techniques like listening and reading practice and speaking and writing practice are utilized. A review of the related literature revealed the fact that there is no consensus of opinions on the superiority of direct approach to vocabulary teaching/learning over the indirect approach or vice versa.

The present study holds significance in that it has tried to shed more light on this issue by focusing on two techniques which are widely used in direct and indirect

approaches to vocabulary teaching/learning. The purpose of this study is to investigate the superiority of sentence-making practice, i.e., a type of speaking and writing practice on vocabulary items (a contextualizing technique) over rote memorization of word lists (a decontextualizing technique) or vice versa and their effect(s) on learning English vocabulary as a foreign language in a situation like Iran.

Method

Participants

The researcher, who was a teacher of the Iran Language Institute (the ILI), employed fifty male level 2 students (within the age bracket 15-30) attending the Iran Language Institute classes. These students belonged to two classes which were randomly chosen from among 11 level 2 classes and the two classes were treated as intact groups. The classes met for two hours a day, two days a week. The reason for the selection of these students was that they are considered beginners at the ILI teaching system and vocabulary items are presented to them in their textbooks through paired associates, that is, word lists in English along with their translations in Persian.

Procedures

One of the classes (N = 24) served as the control group in which students worked on the vocabulary items through sentence-making practice both in written and spoken form (a contextualizing technique). It should be mentioned that this method of vocabulary teaching/learning is the common method of vocabulary teaching/learning in almost all levels at the ILI. The other class (N = 26) served as the treatment group in which students tried to learn the words through rote memorization of word lists. The students did not have any sentence-making practice in this class. However, they had a lot of practice on the memorized words once every two sessions. In fact, in these sessions the researcher asked the students the meaning of the words appearing in the word lists both in English and in Persian. The type of questions asked had the following general formats: “What does ‘.....’ mean in Persian?”, “What does ‘.....’ mean in English?”, “What is a synonym for ‘.....’ in English?”, and “What is an antonym for ‘.....’ in English?” The reason behind choosing these types of questions was that they provided the students with different ways of associating words

with their corresponding meanings. The word lists were also recycled so that the students would have practice over the words previously learned and would receive a lot of feedback on their learning of the words. Simply put, the students were asked the meaning of the words which appeared in word lists belonging to previous units as they proceeded to other units in the book.

It should be noted that the students, both in the treatment group and the control group, had access to word lists and the only difference was that in the treatment group they had a lot of structured practice on mastering word meanings through rote memorization.

Materials

In order to conduct this study a vocabulary test was constructed based on the vocabulary items presented to students in the first ten units of the book. The test was administered to the participants both as a pretest, to see if they were homogeneous enough to start the study, and as a post test, to measure the difference between the achievements of the two groups with respect to the type of vocabulary teaching/learning technique employed in each group. The reliability of the test was estimated using KR-21 method of estimating reliability after it was administered as a pretest to both groups. The index obtained for reliability was 0.84 which revealed that the test was a reliable measure. It should be reiterated that the KR-21 method of estimating reliability is, in fact, the application of a formula for determining the internal-consistency reliability (homogeneity) of a data collection instrument (e.g., a multiple-choice test) from a single administration (Riazi, 1999).

The validity of the test was also taken care of based on a number of considerations. Since, as mentioned above, the test was constructed based on the first ten units of the book and the researcher had done his best to include a representative sample of vocabulary items of each of these ten units in it, it enjoyed a high level of content validity. To have a numerical index of validity, the researcher assigned a general proficiency score to each participant at the end of the study and correlated these scores with their scores on the post test. This type of validity is, in fact, a type of criterion-related validity where the researcher's subjective judgments of the students' overall proficiency is employed as a criterion (Farhadi, *et al.*, 1994). The coefficient of correlation obtained through this method was 0.81 which again supported the

validity of the test to a great extent. The reason behind using this method of estimating validity was that since the participants were beginners, the constructed test could not be correlated with any standardized test of proficiency.

In order to see if the two types of vocabulary teaching/learning techniques used in each group would have any immediate effects on the students' learning vocabulary, the researcher constructed another test of vocabulary which was specific in its type. The test was composed of two parts. In part one, which itself had three sub-parts, the participants were asked to provide the meaning of some vocabulary items either in Persian or English.

In sub-part one, they were given 20 Persian words for which they were asked to provide the English meanings. In sub-part two, they were given 20 English words for which they were required to provide the Persian meanings, and in sub-part three, they were given 20 English vocabulary items for which they were asked to provide English synonyms and antonyms (10 items each).

In part two, the students were asked to make appropriate sentences using 20 words provided to them. This second test was also administered to both groups of participants in session nine, that is, three sessions before the mid-term exam. The reason why it was administered before the mid-term exam was that all participants, regardless of their respective groups, were believed to memorize word lists for the exam and if the test had been administered after the mid-term exam, it could have come up with mixed results. This second test was also constructed carefully such that a representative sample of vocabulary items extracted from the first ten units (half of the content of the textbook usually covered before the mid-term exam) were included in it. This being so, the content validity of this test was also guaranteed to some extent.

The reliability of the rote memorization test was calculated using KR-21 formula. The obtained index was 0.91 which is indicative of a high level of reliability. The reliability of the sentence-making test was also computed through the same formula and the obtained index was 0.74 which is an acceptable index of reliability. The validity indexes of the two tests were also calculated through correlational procedures using proficiency scores assigned to the participants and their scores on the two tests. The validity index of the rote memorization test was 0.77 and that of sentence-making practice test was 0.73 which are regarded as acceptable validity indexes.

It should also be stated that all the three tests, namely, the first test (used as both pre- and post-test) and the second test were administered to the participants of both

groups as surprise tests, that is, unexpectedly so that the results obtained would not be distorted with any possible external factors such as the participants' test-wiseness and the researcher's bias.

Data collection and analysis

In order to begin the study and in order to make sure that the two groups were homogeneous enough to start the study, the researcher administered the pre-test to both control and treatment groups unexpectedly in the second session. The descriptive statistics of the pre-test appears in the following table.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the pre-test

NO	Min	Max	Mean	SD
47	7	37	22.24	7.33

An independent t-test was then run to see if the two groups performed significantly different on the pre-test or not. It should be reminded that a t-test is a statistical test which is employed to make sure whether significant (non-chance) differences can be found between two means or not (Riazi, 1999). The results obtained from this statistical analysis revealed that the two groups did not differ significantly in their performance on the pre-test at 0.05 level of significance. Table 2 displays this finding.

Table 2: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups on the pre-test

Variable	No. of Cases	Mean	SD	S.E. of Mean	df	2-tail Sig.
Group 1	22	23.77	8.40	1.791	47	0.191
Group 2	25	21.84	6.21	1.195		

$p < 0.05$

The second test, namely, the test which directly tapped the ability of the participants with respect to the type of vocabulary learning/teaching techniques used in each group was also administered to the participants. The following tables present the descriptive statistics of the two parts of the test which in fact functioned as two separate tests.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the rote memorization test

No	Min	MAX	Mean	SD
47	16	58	35.87	12.35

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the sentence-making test

No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
47	4	18	11.70	3.50

As it was explained in the procedures section above, as far as the rote-memorization test was concerned, the subjects were expected to produce, in writing, the meaning of the words which they had memorized. The words appeared in a list, some in Persian and some in English and the subjects were asked to provide their memorized meanings in English and Persian, respectively. For instance, "What does *create* mean in Persian?" or "What does *vazidan* (a Persian word transcribed in English) mean in English?". Of course, in order to make the words appear in a list, a very easy format such as *create* = ……, and *vazidan* = ……. was used.

With respect to the sentence-making test, it should be noted that the sentences made by the participants in the sentence-making test were scored by two independent raters, the researcher and one of his colleagues. It was merely done so that the results of the study would be kept safe from the researcher's possible bias. The scores assigned to the participants, of whom each had two scores, where then correlated to find the degree of correlation (i.e., inter-rater reliability) between them. The coefficient of correlation obtained was 0.94 which revealed that the two raters had almost similarly scored the sentences made by the participants.

In order to see if the two groups performed statistically different on the two tests, the raw scores obtained from the administration of the test were subjected to two separate independent t-tests at 0.05 level of significance. The tables below show the results of these two t-tests.

Table 5: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups on the rote memorization test

Variable	No. of Cases	Mean	SD	S. E. of Mean	Df	2-tail Sig.
Exp.	23	39.95	12.84	2.677	45	0.025*
Cont.	24	31.96	10.71	2.186		

p <0.05*

Table 6: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups on the sentence-making test

Variable	No. of Cases	Mean	SD	S. E. of Mean	Df	2-tail sig.
Exp.	23	11.74	3.48	.726	45	0.94
Cont.	24	11.67	3.60	.734		

p < 0.05

As it can be seen from Table 5, the experimental group had performed significantly better than the control group on the rote memorization test. Table 6 also shows that the experimental group performed better than the control group on the sentence-making test (the mean of the experimental group was 11.74 while that of control group was 11.67). But the difference is quite marginal and it can not be claimed that it is statistically significant.

The post-test was finally administered to both experimental and control group at the end of the study. The descriptive statistics of this test are summarized in the following table.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of the post-test

No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
48	7	40	32.05	7.33

In order to see whether the treatment given to the experimental group had caused any significant change in this group and to see if the participants in this group had performed significantly different on the post-test, another independent t-test was run. The results obtained from this statistical test is presented in table 8 below.

Table 8: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups on the post-test

Variable	No. of Cases	Mean	SD	S. E. of Mean	Df	2-tail Sig.
Exp.	22	33.32	6.53	1.392	46	0.272
Cont.	26	30.96	7.91	1.552		

$p < 0.05$

The above table indicates that the experimental group had outperformed the control group on the post-test too, but the difference is not statistically significant enough. A comparison of the t-test tables may make one wonder why the number of participants, i.e., the number of cases as indicated in these tables, differs from one administration to another. The reason, as stated earlier, is that all the three tests were administered quite unexpectedly to the participants as surprise tests and in each administration a few of them were absent, which is quite natural and normal.

Results and discussion

With respect to the results obtained from the analysis of data pertaining to the pre- and post-test, one can conclude that although the difference between the means of the treatment group and the control group was not statistically significant, the treatment given to the treatment group had affected this group to some extent.

The interesting findings of this study can mainly be attributed to the results of the administration of the second test which was composed of two tests: rote memorization test and sentence-making test. As stated above, the experimental group had outperformed the control group quite significantly on the rote memorization test. There is, in fact, a mean difference of eight points between the means of the two groups. It reveals that the treatment given had affected the experimental group so that the participants in this group could easily recall the meanings of the words.

The results obtained from the administration of the sentence-making test are also quite noticeable. As noted above and shown in table 6, the experimental group had a better performance on this test as compared to the control group, though the difference was marginal. The significance of this finding doubles when one pays attention to the fact that the students in the control group had a lot of sentence-making

practice both in written and spoken form in class while the students in the experimental group did not have any such practice. This finding might imply that good recall of the meaning of vocabulary items might have helped students in the experimental group to make appropriate sentences and that the students in the control group did not perform as well as they were expected to on this test simply because they could not recall the meanings of the words which is a basic requirement for making sentences using such words. Another reason which can be claimed regarding the low performance of subjects in the control group, and which is, in fact, the more plausible reason is that these students usually copy sentences from dictionaries when they are assigned to make sentences based on vocabulary items. Such being the case, they do not actually make sentences to have real practice in sentence-making. In cases when they make sentences of their own in the spoken form, due to the over-crowdedness of the ILI classes and the shortage of time, the teachers can not attend to every student individually and the mistakes made by students usually go unnoticed. Even when the students receive feedback from the teachers and their mistakes are corrected, they do not pay enough attention to the correct form of sentences.

The results of this study are in line with that of Qian (1996) who suggests that for some language learners decontextualized L2 vocabulary learning with feedback is more effective than contextualized vocabulary learning without feedback. He also challenges the assumption that contextualized vocabulary learning always leads to better retention and recall. The findings of the research project undertaken by Laufer and Shmueli (1997), based on which words glossed in L1 were shown to be always better retained than those glossed in L2 also lend support to the findings of the present study. The results of this study can further be supported by Waring (1995) who has questioned the appropriateness of contextualized methods of vocabulary learning for all learners. He contends that beginners require a body of basic vocabulary items before they can start learning from context since they do not have enough knowledge of the words and the text is too difficult for them. Further support for the findings of the present study is furnished by Nation (1994) and Hulstijn (2001) who believe that direct approaches of vocabulary learning are more useful, especially for beginning and intermediate learners.

The appropriateness of the use of word lists, as employed in the experimental group of this study, is also recommended by Meara (1995, reported in Critchley, 1998) who maintains that presenting vocabulary items in list form is an efficient study method in

which students can learn very many words in a short time.

The results of this study, though limited in scope, suggest that presenting vocabulary items in word lists rather than in context is better for beginning learners. Consequently, attempts should be made to provide beginners with English textbooks in which English words associated with their Persian meaning are presented.

Conclusion

Since a good knowledge of vocabulary has a great effect on the learners' improvement of other aspects of language such as reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking, and writing, especially at beginning levels, due attention should be paid to choosing and implementing appropriate vocabulary teaching/learning techniques in language classes. Based on the results obtained from this study, one can conclude that rote memorization of word lists as a decontextualizing or direct technique of vocabulary teaching/learning is better than sentence-making practice as a contextualizing or indirect technique, particularly for learners at the beginning levels of language instruction.

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ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
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Do Academic Reviewers Readily Accept a First-Person Voice?

Roger Nunn
Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Bio Data:

Dr. Roger Nunn has worked in language teaching in seven different countries for over 30 years. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Communication Department of the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi, and Senior Associate Editor of the *Asian EFL Journal*.

Abstract
The international EFL teaching community has a variety of communication needs including the need to share unique experience with fellow professionals internationally. This paper will examine the last (March 2008) quarterly issue of AEJ to examine the extent to which our editorial process allows a first-person voice in accepted papers. This is intended to shed light indirectly on the way academic discourse communities may contribute towards suppressing unique individual and cultural voices.

> *Authors are encouraged to conform with international standards of drafting, but every effort will be made to respect original personal and cultural voices and different rhetorical styles. (Asian EFL Journal (AEJ) Submission Guidelines)*

In this paper, I will attempt to defamiliarize the nature of writing for academic journals. Applied linguistics is a very broad area, and ELT in particular is an international practice which encompasses a culturally-diverse international community and a very broad range of individuals who engage in it. While we might all have become familiar with practices that allow us to participate as members of academic discourse communities, I will be asking whether we might sometimes be in danger of creating faceless, impersonal communities that suppress valuable, original voices.

Within academic discourse communities, what constitutes competent practice is always to some extent negotiable. As Eckert and Wenger (2005, p. 583) suggest, "What counts as competence and by whom is something that the community negotiates over time; indeed, it is this negotiation that defines the community." We might add that the lack or even the suppression of such dynamic negotiation would

lead to a very static, rigid definition of competence which would run counter to many academics' view of academic inquiry.

In Nunn and Adamson (2007) voice was broadly defined as the means by which authors express their identity as scholars. In this paper, I will focus on just one much narrower aspect of 'voice': the use of first-person pronouns in relation to transitivity, community-pressure and genre. After briefly examining the way two expert philosophers use the first-person, I will contrast two brief examples from AEJ reviews, before analyzing the use of the first-person in one complete quarterly issue of AEJ. (March 2008 - see appendix.) My analysis will focus on the use of the first-person in both single- and joint-authored papers.

‘Successful’ and ‘Unsuccessful’ Academic Voices

Experts Have a Voice

A good example of the extent to which a first-person voice can be intimately integrated into theoretical thought processes appears in the preface to Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (p. 4). I am citing a philosophical text on logic because I believe it can help challenge the notion that logical argumentation needs to adopt an impersonal voice. In this example, Wittgenstein appears to use the first person to commit himself totally and personally to the truth value of the ideas expressed, labelling them “unassailable and definitive”.

> [T]he ‘truth’ of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. ***I therefore believe myself*** to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems.

However, the use of the modals “seems to be” and “believe myself to have found”, and “on all essential points”, linked to the more vulnerable first-person (I therefore believe myself) considerably weakens his profession of absolute confidence. The whole statement can then be read as an interesting paradox between an immodest desire to make a very strong claim and a paradoxical desire to evaluate his own personal commitment to the ‘unassailable’ truth of his statement rather more modestly. Wittgenstein (p. 4) goes on to confirm the possibility of being mistaken in his personal belief in a conditional clause.

> And ***if I am not mistaken in this belief,*** then the second thing on which the value of this work consists is that it shows ***how little is achieved when these problems are solved***.

It is also interesting to note that what can, even temporarily, be believed with a high

level of personal commitment, is then almost dismissed by Wittgenstein as insignificant. I believe that this kind of code switching between a first-person (If I am not mistaken) and impersonal passives (how little is achieved, these problems are solved) is part of what Wittgenstein might call the 'game' of engaging in academic discourse and code-switching is an important skill in this language game.

Similarly, in his introduction to the same work (p.xxv) Russell uses the first-person freely to take up a very personal, but no less reasonable, position towards logical and theoretical investigation:

> ***As one of long experience*** of the difficulties of logic and the deceptiveness of theories which seem irrefutable, ***I find myself unable to be sure*** of the rightness of a theory, merely on the ground that ***I cannot see*** any point on which it is wrong.

In addition to their intrinsic interest, these examples also illustrate my view that experts not only have a personal voice, but are also aware of the need to admit the inevitability of their own personal intrusion into their argumentation. This supports rather than detracts from their logic as academic rigour is combined with a transparent personal voice that admits without any linguistic disguise that theoretical argumentation in ***my*** text is still ***my*** argumentation.

AEJ Examples

In our initial study on academic voice, (Nunn and Adamson, 2007), we discussed several successful and unsuccessful examples within the review system of AEJ. I will use two of these here as background to this current study. In the first extract from a published PhD thesis, similar to the Wittgenstein examples already cited, there is code-switching between formal academic style, "PhD theses are not created in isolation", and the first-person voice of the author, "thanks to myself". This extract was taken from the acknowledgement section of a successful PhD thesis published in our thesis section and is cited here because it directly addresses the notion of the author's voice. More first-person uses are presented in Nunn and Adamson (2007) from other parts of the thesis.

> **Review Sample 1** 'Successful' example (Reinders, 2006, in Nunn and Adamson, 2007, pp. 221-222)
> Acknowledgements can be a bit boring. Mostly it's the usual suspects: family, friends, children, one's pet goldfish. ***I have yet to come across one that says 'Thanks to MYSELF for being such a great person and hard worker'.*** Probably that is because PhD theses are not created in isolation. And even if one did do all the work by yourself, somewhere, somehow, the thing needs to relate

> to someone to have any value at all. My list of acknowledgements could be as long as this thesis. I would have never had the qualifications to embark on a PhD study, nor been at this particular University, and certainly not been able to complete my thesis, without the help of many good souls.

> **Review Sample 2** 'Unsuccessful' Example (From Nunn and Adamson, 2007, pp. 221-222 – anonymous sample)
> Whenever I asked them to say something about one topic, they, for the most part, would say, "How should I say it? What should I say?" and they would ask these questions in their native Thai. I was determined to improve my students' speaking ability and tried various techniques in order to do so. But the results were not ideal. At that time I thought maybe the teaching materials were not relevant to them, thus they did not want to say anything or could only say a little.

This sample is an extract from a paper that received mixed reviews and was eventually rejected, although not for its first-person voice. Two review comments are cited below. The contradiction between them helps to explain why the first-person voice is significant:

- Review 1 comments: *Well written paper. It is very easy to follow the author's argument and s/he uses a very personal tone. (Major revisions requested based on methodological grounds.)*
- Review 2 comments: *The style of writing is not appropriate for an academic article. (Rejection was recommended based on language.)*

The second review comment indicates how a personal voice can at least contribute to the rejection of a paper. Examples like this one led to the conclusion that this aspect of academic writing in the journal needed more detailed attention given the journal's policy of attempting to encourage alternative cultural and academic voices

Transitivity, Community-Pressure and Genre

Carter (1995, pp. 52-59) argues that 'genre' is a controversial topic, in particular in pedagogical contexts. "Holding up certain genres as models to a whole class is seen as rigid and deterministic" (p. 57) and therefore counters pedagogical goals of most writing courses. "A major concern is that genre-based writing practices can be inherently conservative and are designed to produce unreflective writers who will be able to do no more than sustain the genres…" (p. 55) This view is linked to what Carter calls "narrow vocationalism" and to a traditional transmission style of teaching. (See Nunn and Adamson, 2007 for a fuller discussion.) Texts then tend to be used as models that merely reproduce the structures in place and which lack the dynamism

that is a characteristic of high-quality writing. Here I should point out that Wennerstrom (2003, p. 34) has also cited Carter (1996) to support a very different view that genre education and knowledge empowers "through learning to control and adapt a variety of conventional formats for written communication and on understanding the social contexts in which these conventions exist."

Thompson (2004, p. 230) appears to suggest that the interpersonal function is de-emphasized in at least the more formal varieties of academic discourse. "One reason why nominalization is in harmony with the ideology of science, and of academic, formal writing in general, is that it makes it easy for processes to be **objectified** – to be expressed without the human doer." Suggesting that processes are 'objectified' is not the same as claiming 'objectivity'. Indeed, there might even be an implication that it is only the expression of the process that is 'objectified'. The question then is to determine whether this is just a linguistic ploy related to genre to disguise potentially subjective intrusions or whether the discourse can actually be characterized as 'objective'.

There is support for acknowledging subjectivity in Holstein & Gubrium (2000) who see enormous benefit in spoken/written accounts of both those researched and the researchers themselves who tell stories as a means to 'construct the self'. This is not an objective process but, rather, one in which subjectivity is viewed as a valid process. Contributing to journals can be seen as a process of 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Flowerdew, 2000, p.129) given that no contributor is guaranteed inclusion through a peer review process. However, unless they receive editorial support, subjective accounts may be more than usually peripheral within at least the more formal academic communities.

Generic Conventions and Bio Data

In AEJ all papers are preceded by bio data. An interesting point about bio data is that authors often send it in the first-person, but it is edited and published in the third person. This seems to be common practice and is certainly AEJ policy and one that I supervise and practise myself. This practice is of interest to this argument, because it is a genre-related practice that does not stand up to scrutiny. Authors write their own bio data, but it is presented as if someone else wrote it. The practice arguably gives more formal status to the author, but is also used to promote the journal. A refereed journal is apparently highlighting the achievements of its authors, but these are

subjectively selected by the authors themselves. We would not, for example, state that author X previously submitted three papers to the journal which were rejected, and one that was rejected on screening and was therefore not considered suitable to be reviewed at all. We never state that a paper has been through two sets of major revisions: a fact that must have an impact on authorship after four reviewers have had some impact both on the contents and on the writing style. Most authors do not take us up on our offer to disagree with review comments (with their reasons), possibly assuming that if the reviewer wants the change, they would be wiser to make it whether they agree or not in order to get published. Some, but not all of these practices are there to protect an author's privacy.

Transitivity as a System of Choices

From a systemic perspective, authors have choices and the choice they make is partly about how to represent their voice whether the paper is describing a teaching approach, reporting a research process, rationalizing experience, expressing a theoretical position, summarizing the literature on a specialized topic, or, as is often the case, a combination of some or even all of these.

Many of the papers in the data for this paper report a research *process* of some kind. Referring to the way processes are represented in relation to transitivity, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 290) demonstrate that “either the process is represented as self-engendering, in which case there is no separate Agent, or it is represented as engendered from outside, in which case there is another participant functioning as agent.” This argument suggests that choices are not limited to a single choice, but may be “represented either way” (p. 299).

As this article is about first-person usage, a simple example might help to illustrate this distinction. If I am washing dishes it is difficult to describe even a trivial incident neutrally. To state that “the glass broke” or even “slipped out of my hand" may imply that it is a normal part of the tedious process of washing up for glasses to break. “I broke the glass” adds the agent, the glass is now the 'goal' of the verb and the agent might even be represented as responsible (“I broke that glass, it didn’t break itself”). Even the intransitive “the glass fell” is a choice from an ergative/ non-ergative system. Competent users of language therefore have to be able to make choices not just between transitive and an intransitive, but also between agentive and non-agentive uses of verbs, only some of which may be used transitively.

Grammatical 'transitivity' in its narrowest sense is defined in terms of whether the verb has or can or cannot have an object as 'goal', but transitivity in a systemic sense is much more than this. The examples in the previous paragraph indicate that this grammatical view only represents a limited range within a more complex system. To accommodate such common uses, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) include the notion of 'ergativity' within the global transitivity system. "The glass dropped" is non-ergative, represented as self-engendered", whereas "I dropped the glass" is an ergative use with some notion of agentive cause built into the representation. Such ergative/non ergative pairs are available very extensively in common English verbs. Halliday and Matthiessen estimate that 60% of English verbs, including those used most commonly in general English (and this point is important to this discussion), may be used in either an ergative or non-ergative way. For example, "I drove the car away"/ "The car drove away" opposes the agent to "the medium through which the process is actualized" (p. 284).

For Halliday and Matthiessen " 'happening' means that the actualization of the process is represented as being self-engendered. Something just happens as part of a process. On the other hand " 'doing' is represented as being caused by a participant that is external to the combination of Process and Medium. This external cause is the agent" (p. 285). Some of the many examples of common verbs that have ergative/non ergative pairs available as choices in English are listed by Thompson (p.136) as follows: altered/ closed/ darkened/ deflated/ defrosted /drove/ melted/ narrowed/ ripened/ slowed down/ rang. Thompson opposes, for example, "they rang the bell" with "the bell rang". Common depersonalized examples from academic discourse can include: "this data suggests", "these studies investigate", "these results illustrate…" which have become conventional regardless as to whether they legitimately attribute agency to some kind of process rather than the agents of that process.

Impersonal Voice

As Hyland (2002, p. 351) points out, "style guides and textbooks commonly portray scholarly writing as a kind of impersonal, faceless discourse, and EAP teachers direct students to remove themselves from their text." Hyland (2002, p. 357) argues that "effective academic writing depends on appropriate language choices." He maintains (p. 355) that "an explicit writer presence is often an effective rhetorical option." This view matches my own understanding of systemic competence. A systemic view

implies that competence is related to the knowledge of, and ability to use, the available linguistic choices appropriately within the context. Hyland claims that "self-mention" is not automatically inappropriate in academic discourse.

The following statement occurs in the submission guidelines of the Asian EFL Journal: "Authors are encouraged to conform with international standards of drafting, but every effort will be made to respect original personal and cultural voices and different rhetorical styles." By examining the use of the first-person pronoun, a further aim of this paper is to critically evaluate this claim in the light of the evidence available in one full issue.

Hyland's suggests (2002, p. 352) that "most obviously, … a writer's identity is created and revealed through, the use or absence of the *I* pronoun." This paper will examine the use of first person subject pronouns in one full issue of the Asian EFL Journal (March 2008) in order to evaluate this claim.

Data Analysis: Agentive Use of the First Person in the March 2008 Issue

In the following section, I have recorded the use of the agentive first person for the March 2008 issue of the Asian EFL Journal. Only first-person subject pronouns in the authors' own text are counted. Pronouns in citations, in appendices or in recorded data of informants' discourse are excluded as they are not representative of the authors' own voice. In table 1 below, I have recorded the use of the first-person in the joint authored papers. Two things are noticeable from this table. Firstly, the number of first person subject pronouns is relatively low (slightly less than 1 in every 4 pages.) Secondly, there is a noticeable difference between the two sets of authors who use them very rarely (3 in 49 pages) and those who use them more frequently (20 in 38 pages.)

Table 1. Number of First Person Subject Pronouns in Joint Authored Papers

	Pages	No. (excluding in-text citations or data samples)
Kyoung Rang Lee and Rebecca Oxford *Understanding EFL Learners' Strategy Use and Strategy Awareness*	7-32 (25)	12 X we
Souvannasy Bouangeune, Masashi Sakigawa and Yukiko Hirakawa *Determinants and Issues in Student Achievement in English at Lao Secondary Education Level*	48-64 (26)	2 X we
Junko Otoshi and Neil Heffernan *Factors Predicting Effective Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms*	65-78 (13)	8 X we
Jeng-yih Tim Hsu and Chu-yao Chiu *Lexical Collocations and their Relation to Speaking Proficiency*	181-204 (23)	1 X we
Total	87	23

Table two below records the number of first-person pronouns used in single-authored papers. Here the average number of first-person singular subject pronouns is approximately 1 in every 3.5 pages. Rather like in the joint-authored papers, there is an easy division to make in terms of frequency with one difference: there is no singular first-person pronoun in 50% of the papers. In addition to the 4 authors who never use 'I' at all, 1 author almost never uses it (twice in 20 pages). 3 authors use it more frequently, the most frequent being 31 in a total of 31 pages in Chi Yen Chiu. This case will be examined below in some detail as this represents almost 60% of the total uses of 'I' in the 189 pages of single authored papers. The second most frequent usage is 9 in 15 pages by Nikolova (2008). This latter instance is interesting, but not surprising because this paper was included as an "alternative voice" paper (Nunn and Adamson, 2007) and would otherwise have been rejected as too personal.

There are also some single-authored papers in which the first-person plural subject pronoun 'we' is used. This occurs both for some authors who never use the first-person singular 'I' and also by some who do. When first-person singular and plural subject pronouns are considered together, the frequency (slightly less than 1 every 4 pages) is very similar to the joint-authored papers in which 'I' is not an option.

Table 2. Number of First Person Pronouns in Single-Authored Papers

	Pages	No.
Mohammad Rahimi *Using Dictation to Improve Language Proficiency*	33-47 (24)	0 X I 3 X We
Chi Yen Chiu The Discourse of an English Teacher in a Cyber Writing Course: *Roles and Autonomy*	79-110 (31)	31 X I 3 X We
Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa *Mentoring beginning EFL teachers at tertiary level in Vietnam*	111-132 (21)	0 X I 0 X We
Zhu Xinhua *Is Syntactic Maturity a Reliable Measurement to Investigate the Relationship between English Speaking and Writing?*	133-153 (20)	2 X I 0 X We
Mahmood Rouhani *Another look at the C Test: A Validation Study with Iranian EFL Learners?*	154-180 (26)	0 4 X We
Lu-Fang Lin *The Study of English Learners' Synthesizing Process While Reading*	205-227 (22)	0 X I 0 X We
Nilton Hitotuzi. *An Economical Approach towards Interaction in the L2 Classroom: A Task-based Learning Experiment*	228-258 (30)	12 X I 0 X We
Daniela Nikolova *English-teaching in Elementary Schools in Japan: A Review of a Current Government Survey*	259-274 (15)	9 X I 6 X We
Total	189	54 X I 16 X We Total: 70

Purposes and Functions of 'We'

Joint-authored examples

An analysis of the examples of 'we' in the joint-authored papers allows a further classification into 'we' used to represent authorial agency and a more inclusive use of 'we'.

Table 3. Classification of First-Person Pronoun 'We' in Joint Authored Papers

	No.	Inclusive 'We' Discourse community	'We' – the authors as agent
Kyoung Rang Lee and Rebecca Oxford *Understanding EFL Learners' Strategy Use and Strategy Awareness*	12 X we	3	9
Souvannasy Bouangeune, Masashi Sakigawa and Yukiko Hirakawa.. *Determinants and Issues in Student*	2 X we		2

Achievement in English at Lao Secondary Education Level			
Junko Otoshi and Neil Heffernan *Factors Predicting Effective Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms*	8 X we	5	3
Jeng-yih Tim Hsu and Chu-yao Chiu *Lexical Collocations and their Relation to Speaking Proficiency*	1 X we		1
Total	23	8	15

Qualitative Analysis and Discussion

In Lee and Oxford (2008), the 12 instances of 'we' can be divided into 9 with specific reference to the authors' own agency. The 3 non-specific uses of 'we' appear to refer to a collective community of practitioners as in sample 1 below:

> Sample 1
> Though many researchers believe that learner awareness is a necessary feature of strategy use (e.g., Carrell, 1989; Cohen, 1995), **we** still can see situations like Baker and Brown (1984) pointed out: when a reader did not describe how to use a particular strategy but did in fact use it. (Lee and Oxford, p. 10)

This can be compared to examples like sample 2 below in which 'we' only refers to the authors (Lee and Oxford, p.13).

> Sample 2
> We wanted to ensure that the translation used in this study was as faithful as possible to the English version.

In sample 3 below (Lee and Oxford, p. 14), the four instances of 'we' indicate the authors' clear recognition of their own agency and the need to explain their own position unequivocally on a relatively controversial issue: the relative importance of self-rated versus externally evaluated proficiency levels of students.

> Sample 3
> **We** felt it was very important to obtain students' metacognitive self-assessment of proficiency vis-à-vis their peers because **we** agree with motivational theorists like Harter (1986). They believe that "humans have complex perceptions of themselves and their competences. . . All of these self-perceptions have motivational properties, with competence on a task more directly influenced by task-limited self-perceptions than global self-esteem" (Pressley et al., 1989, p. 307). **We** consider that this self-perception on his/her own English proficiency will play a very important role in actual performances. In addition, one of the most important themes of this study is awareness of one's own strategy use; therefore, **we** considered self-rated English proficiency to be more relevant to our study than standardized test scores.

In such examples we can start to observe some important aspects of agency. When an impersonal form is used to disguise agency, I would argue that the authors are doing one of two things. Either they are doing this because the agent is less important than the process or they are doing it to follow a genre-related convention to disguise a subjective judgment in more objective-like language.

> **We** felt it was very important to obtain students' metacognitive self-assessment of proficiency vis-à-vis their peers because **we** agree with motivational theorists like Harter (1986)." (Extracted from Sample 3**.)**

This sentence could have been depersonalized as follows:

> **It was** very important to obtain students' metacognitive self-assessment of proficiency vis-à-vis their peers because as motivational theorists like Harter **have pointed out** (1986)."… (Redrafted from sample 3 extract.)

My own feeling is that it is to the authors' credit, and in the interests of academic transparency that they did not choose this path. I do not believe that this is an entirely subjective judgment, because it is supported by data analysis which is difficult to counter.

In sample 4 below (Lee and Oxford, p.23), the uses of impersonal and more subjective language are juxtaposed. The more scientific measurement is followed by clear subjective agency.

> Sample 4
> In sum, gender, though reaching statistical significance on some interaction effects, had effect sizes that were negligible. **We** think that it is still good for learners because **we** cannot change nor manipulate gender. The smaller the effect size of gender, the more possible it is for teachers or learners to improve learning.

Again my view is that the choice of the first person agent instead of an impersonal form, such as a passive voice – "…gender cannot be changed or manipulated", is fully appropriate as it makes no attempt to disguise a well-supported interpretation as a logical necessity.

In sample 5 below (Lee and Oxford, p.24), the first person used with **speculate** provides yet another example of the transparent use of agency by the authors which is more persuasive to me as a critical reader than any attempt to disguise this agency could have been. Am I convinced by this argument because it is expressed as a

modest claim or because it corresponds to my own view of Japanese university entrance exams?

> Sample 5
> Since 1969, Korean students have taken multiple-choice entrance examinations, equivalent to the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* in the U.S., and **we speculate** that such examinations might promote compensatory strategies for guessing the right choice from the context, even if the details are not fully understood.

In the final sample (Lee and Oxford, p. 28), agency is again undisguised even when used for the impersonal application of a statistical procedure such as factor analysis.

> Sample 6
>
> For the current Korean translation of Version 7.0, we conducted a new exploratory factor analysis to determine whether the underlying factor structure was similar to that found for the *SILL* in earlier studies. We found that the factor structure was very close to the *SILL* factors reported elsewhere.

It can of course be argued with some logical support that my interpretation is invalid because the agency is obvious in an academic article that carries the authors' name. (See for example, Rodman (1981, p.2), who states, "the counter-argument that the truncated passive obscures the identity of the agent is not valid in this case, it seems to me, for the agent is fully recoverable from the context.") This counter argument could easily use sample 6 to suggest that the first person is inappropriate here with some justification. I have little to counter this counter argument, but do not agree with it. My tentative counter-counter-argument is that any conventional use of a genre-related practice such as the conventional disguise of agency in academic texts needs to be scrutinized in a study of voice. I would like to determine whether depersonalized discourse is appropriately expressing a fully self-engendered process that would lead to the same conclusion whoever instigated it, or is inappropriately disguising personal agency. Is it not better to err on the side of transparent agency rather than the reverse?

In response to a request for feedback on my analysis, one author, when asked whether use of the first person was a conscious and deliberate choice, stated unequivocally:

> It was a deliberate choice. I personally dislike obfuscation, opaqueness, passivity, and general stuffiness in writing about research. I don't see why transparency and agency are not the norm. (Oxford: e-mail feedback)

In some cases, the use of 'we' is slightly more ambivalent. Otoshi and Heffernan (2008) appear to use first person ‘we’ inclusively to present themselves as members of the ‘community’ of language teachers, establishing a kind of solidarity with their audience, as seen in sample 7 below (p.75). However, this does not exclude a parallel interpretation that 'we' also specifically refers to the authors who are attempting to improve their own practice. This example serves to indicate that my quantitative classification has its limitations and requires qualitative interpretation which is more subjective:

> Sample 7
> Based on the results of this study, **we** can draw some conclusions about recommendations on how to best prepare **our** learners for oral presentations. As teachers, **we** can prepare our learners to be aware of the above criteria (Table 1 and Table 2) and the effect they have on the efficacy of oral presentations in EFL classrooms.

First-person plural 'we' in single authored papers

As we might expect, the 16 occurrences of 'we' in single-authored papers are classified as inclusive uses. Nonetheless, some of the examples indicate some interesting differences with the joint-authored papers, as the single author has another first person option that the joint authors do not have. In sample 8 below, the use of the inclusive, community-oriented 'we' is juxtaposed with a personal authorial voice 'me' and with his student's voice.

> Sample 8
> As we can see, this counseling role not only empowered Jing to recognize her communicative needs but also helped me to interpret what she wished to gain from this class. (Chi Yen Chiu, 2008, p.101)

This example illustrates how an author can make full use of the systemic options of voice to good effect in the context of one particular study. This is not to suggest that all competent academic writers will select the same options. In sample 9 below different options were selected. The inclusive 'community' first person 'we' is juxtaposed with impersonal passive constructions. A statistical study into the 'C-test' is arguably more scientific. I interpret the author's choices here to mean that some interpretations "can be legitimately made" as part of a more objective research process while others cannot. This contrasts with the topic of the study from which sample 8 is drawn, which is a qualitative study of learner autonomy.

Sample 9

The primary concern for any test is that the interpretations and the uses **we** make from the test scores are valid. The evidence that **we** collect in support of the validity of a particular test can be of three general types: content relevance, criterion relatedness, and meaningfulness of construct (Bachman 1990). These categories **have been separately discussed** below with regard to the data presented in this study and **the interpretations that can be legitimately made** on their basis. (Rouhani, 2008, p. 162)

Rouhani (2008) never chooses 'I', but uses 'we' four times. Nonetheless, as a journal editor, while the authorial comment on interpretation is welcome, I would still maintain that it is the author who is ultimately responsible for these interpretations. Reviewers had to agree to the author's claim about the legitimacy of the interpretations.

To terminate this discussion on the use of 'we' in one complete journal issue, it is interesting to turn to the paper that uses the first-person singular and plural pronouns the second most frequently (Nikolova, 2008). The author uses the first-person 'I' 5 times in the 151-word abstract (p. 259), but still uses the option of a plural voice in support of her (single-authored) recommendations in the conclusion section: "We may enumerate our recommendations…" (p. 272).

First-person 'I' in single-authored papers

Given the relatively small number of first person pronouns in single-authored papers, the following example from Chi Yen Chiu (2008, p. 87) is interesting as it illustrates the deliberate avoidance of the first person. The author refers to himself in the third person.

Sample 10

After a few e-mail exchanges with EFI coordinators, **the investigator** became a volunteer teacher for a cyber course of grammar and writing from February 12, 2001 to September 27, 2002. **His contact** with course participants was made possible by the coordinators who sent **him** the names and e-mail addresses of English learners from the basic to intermediate level. Since the EFI coordinators did not establish any requirements on how the course should be structured, **the investigator** was free to manage **his own** class.

Still more interesting is the fact that, in a 31-page paper, Chi Yen Chiu (2008, p. 93) then code switches on page 16, using the first person for the first time in section (4.2.1.), a section discussing the discourse of teaching roles.

> Sample 11
> By using imperatives, I directed the learner in exactly what to do and showed her the focus of each task.

This is then followed by 30 more similar uses of 'I' in the second half of the paper. These 30 uses in just one section of the paper (in addition to 9 uses of 'me' and 10 uses of 'my', excluding first-person uses in the e-mail data samples used in the paper) warrant further inquiry as they represent more than half the total uses of 'I' in the 290-page issue within the space of just 13 pages.

My interpretation of this usage is simple. The first person is appropriate in this section because the role of the author as a counsellor and interactant with individual students is being reported and this represents a more personal relationship. This can also be seen as an intentional change of ‘positioning’ towards the audience by the author (Ribiero in de Fina et al., 2006). Ribeiro, who is referring to spoken discourse, identifies three categories within such changes: ‘footing’, ‘positioning’ and finally ‘identity’ (footing being micro shifts in language such as the pronoun uses identified here). It would be worth exploring parallels in further studies between spoken and written modes.

The 'teacher as investigator' is not now being discussed as a theoretical construct in the third person. Instead the first-person thought processes of the teacher are being described.

> Sample 12
> **Mick** sent his essay 3 two weeks later than the due date (see E-mail 103). He apologized for the delay because he had been very busy at that time. Mick’s delay was unusual because he often turned in his written assignments sooner than **I** expected. However, if **I** had had institutional power to enforce the due date, “being busy” would not have become a justifiable reason for **Mick** to miss it. (Chi Yen Chiu, 2008, (p. 96)

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the first person is then dropped again at the end of section 4. Section 5 discusses the more general implications and conclusions of the paper. For me, this does not represent inconsistency on the part of the author. It is more an example of code switching or rather 'voice switching' in different parts of the paper which are written for different purposes, possibly in relation to 'positioning'.

Having completed and written up the analysis above, I decided to compare the final published draft to the originally submitted draft of this same paper to check whether

there was any difference caused by review. I should clarify at this stage that I had not been involved in the details of the review, which had been supervised by an associate editor. This led to potentially the most interesting finding in this particular case. In draft one, there is no example of 'I' even in section 4. All first-person uses in the published draft were written in the third-person in the original. For example, "I consulted my co-worker" in the final draft appears as "the teacher consulted his co-worker". Further investigation reveals that these changes were done at the request of a reviewer who asked for more clarity about 'the teacher' as investigator. The identity of 'the teacher' (who is in fact the author) was disguised in the original manuscript. These comments amount to a desire for a more transparent voice.

Conclusions

As this is an on-going project, I will only suggest some interim conclusions of this part of the study at this stage. Firstly, in such a diverse field as applied linguistics, it is difficult to establish what would represent 'suppression' quantitatively. The overall number of first-person uses appears to be low, but it would be wrong to attempt to suggest an ideal number. This paper has only discussed relative frequency in very basic terms within one issue and has attempted to establish some criteria for qualitative evaluation of appropriate uses of the first-person. I have argued that first-person uses are potentially legitimate choices available within the transitivity system and the analysis of examples allows me to suggest that expert users often make full use of all available options by code switching. Transparency (analyzed in relation to disguised agency but also admitting the legitimate use of impersonal language for self-engendered processes) is one criteria I have used to evaluate uses of the first-person.

What has not been considered in this paper is the strength of the agency – for example the difference between reporting that one collected data as in “I collected 30 scripts for analysis” and one’s analysis of an argument “I believe that Halliday’s analysis is useful for...” – where the latter would carry a stronger authorial presence than the former. An analysis of the processes would reveal this. It would be interesting to research further into writers who tend to depersonalize more to see whether they depersonalize their opinions or their research procedures the most.

While examples have been found of individual reviewers suppressing the author's first person voice, these cases are relatively rare and do not in themselves lead to

rejection of papers. Some authors choose not to emphasize their own voice, but those who do use it tend to code-switch depending on the context and the topic or subtopic in different sections of a paper. The first-person can be used for a variety of purposes at different stages of the discourse, one of which is transparency. The author who used the first person the most did not do so in the original draft. The author chose to make this voice change in response to a review comment: "Especially, the researcher(s)'s (the author(s)'s) roles should be clearly explained." This comment did not specifically mention the first person, but using the first-person does clarify the author's ethnographic role as the teacher and investigator.

The five samples from accepted papers cited here indicate that the first person pronouns are being used in a “scholarly” way. They are either discussing research procedures or their conclusions based on data. This might be taken to indicate that this use of the first person is not received with as much ‘hostility’ from reviewers as examples that are more ‘personal’ in nature. For example, in the rejected article cited above, the writer was reflecting on personal practice in the classroom rather than on the research s/he was reporting on.

Any competitive selection process within an academic discourse community suppresses some voices. The question is then who is behind this process as reviewing is not a scientific self-engendered process. AEJ currently rejects more than 80% of all submissions. However, the current evidence suggests that AEJ does allow and sometimes even encourages first-person voices. Within the one AEJ quarterly issue analyzed in this paper, if success is measured in the ability to survive a rigorous review system, no clear pattern emerges as some successful authors use the first-person relatively frequently and other successful authors hardly use it at all. This aspect of the findings need not worry an international journal that values diversity, but it is clear that more attention needs to be given to promoting a greater range of diverse voices without compromising editorial standards.

One means of doing this is to actively encourage qualitative-based (case) studies involving participant observation within a community. This will inevitably lead to the researcher considering his/her own variables as something important to be accounted for in writing up the paper. We might therefore expect a growing number of studies from researchers who have been trained to view the first person as a relevant and natural expression of how the researcher sees the researched world in which we participate.

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Appendix

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Competition or Cooperation; War or Peace? Language and Education in Singapore

Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Bio Data:

Dr. Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew is Associate Professor/English Language and Literature, at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. She teaches language methodology, literacy studies, and sociolinguistics. She has published in many journals including *World Englishes, Linguistics and Education*, and the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*; and has been invited keynote &/or plenary for many conferences in linguistics, woman studies, comparative religion both locally and abroad. She is also the project advisor for the series of the textbook for primary schools in Singapore entitled "In-step". She served four years on the Ministry of Education (Singapore) Speak good English Committee, which aims to improve the standard of English in Singapore.

Abstract

This paper examines Singapore's response to its perceived geographical constraints by an analysis of the state discourses of its key leaders and through an examination of the current language textbooks used in its schools. It discusses the key metaphors of statehood, that is, war, sports and the marketplace and juxtaposes these with the predominant aim of the language syllabus which is to promote cooperative living and social harmony. It examines the paradoxes apparent in such a comparison and discusses the implications in the promotion of moral values such as peace, cooperation and social harmony in an increasingly globalized, divisive, and unpredictable world

Keywords: Singapore, language, education, cooperation, competition, discourse, metaphor

Introduction

On attaining independence from Britain in 1959, an independent Singapore faced the usual constellation of problems that often confront small developing island countries. These included a growing population, scarcity of jobs, multiracial tensions, and lack of national resources. As a small island its capacity to overcome these predicaments appeared to be limited, taking into consideration the lack of a critical mass necessary

to initiate and sustain the processes of technological development. Nevertheless, by all conventional social and economic indicators, Singapore leaped from the Third World into the First World within a few decades. It is now a prosperous cosmopolitan city-state of 4 million citizens and expatriates and is an economic powerhouse in East Asia. It has been transformed from a slum and poverty-ridden Third World Nation into an "air-conditioned nation" within the first world almost miraculously. This unusual phenomenon makes an interesting and worthwhile study.

It should be noted from the onset that Singapore's success has been largely credited to the heavy-handed but effective rule of Prime Ministers Lee Kuan Yew (1959-1991), Goh Chok Tong (1991-2004) and Lee Hsien Loong (from August 2004 to current). Currently both previous Prime Ministers remain members of the cabinet of Lee Hsien Loong, and are given the titles of Minister Mentor and Senior Minister respectively.[i] Hence, there is much continuity in social, economic and educational policies. Under their leadership, the Singapore government has launched a consistent and focused program to build a highly cohesive nation with a unique identity, one that would be essentially supported by economic success. Such goals ostensibly need to be premised on the existence of continued peace and stability within the society. Indeed, economic and social progress in any state has never come without a fair measure of peace. Yet despite the government's intrinsic reliance and insistence on the importance of social harmony, peaceful living, and social stability as a foundation to build a sustainable economic program, it has often, paradoxically, used language that nurtures belligerent and warlike attitudes and actions.

This paradox will be the focus of this paper. The language used by the government is the focus of our study because the People's Action Party (PAP) has ruled Singapore since its independence, and state power is overwhelmingly in its hands. What adds to this impressive record is that PAP is freely elected, and while opposition parties are legal, they are inconsequential. A civil society, comprising trade unions, free churches, liberal professions and autonomous universities, all non-governmental organizations, is generally weak. The language of the PAP can, therefore, be surmised to be the language of the nation.

In this paper, I shall examine Singapore's response to its perceived geographical constraints by analyzing the state discourses of PAP's key leaders, especially that of Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong since their political and social ideas remains largely the basis of governance; as well as reviewing the language textbooks used in

its schools. The analysis of the speeches given by key politicians will show that the favorite metaphors of the island republic are centered on war, sports and the marketplace. On the other hand, the review of Singapore's language textbooks will reveal an attempt to teach social harmony and cooperative living. A discussion of this seeming paradox and its implication for the promotion of a culture of values such as peace, cooperation and social harmony in an increasingly globalized and divisive world.

Metaphors of statehood

Language is not a neutral medium for expressing our thoughts or referring to what goes on in the world. Instead, it simultaneously constructs an interpretation of the world and refers to it. Indeed, it confers a reality and is a good index of both the individual's and a society's values and assumptions, in short, their ideology. One way in which ideology may be extracted in its essence is to examine the way metaphors are used (Clinton and Lakoff, 1995). This is because we use metaphors to conceptualize the world and to a great extent, we shape our attitudes and our lives by our preferred metaphors. When we signify things through one metaphor rather than another, we are constructing our reality in one way rather than the other (Goatly, 1997). Like that of an individual, the identity of a state is shaped around certain constructs through the help of preferred metaphors. In Singapore, metaphors relating to statehood have become institutionalized through habitual use, so much so that they have become "invisible". Three metaphors, predominant in state discourse, have been chosen for our discussion – the metaphors of war, sports and the marketplace.

The metaphors of war

Speeches by Singapore's key leaders are replete with metaphors of "survival". One of these is the metaphor of war, which often contains images related to the idea of a nation under siege. The entailments of this metaphor include a crisis mentality, the need for a disciplined citizenry and the continual concern with survival. Speeches by Singapore's key leaders regularly refer to "problems", "danger", "competitiveness", and "the race to succeed". Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (PM Goh) outlined his role and that of the Senior Minister in his rather typical fashion:

> I think Mr. Lee is like the leader of a revolutionary force; so he himself is a strategist, a propagandist, a commando, a fighter but that is the way he is. Whereas I am more like a commander-in-chief of a conventional army in peace time. [ii]

As then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew (SM Lee) remarked, small states are perpetually "in danger" and "there is always a fear that small states will become satellites of larger ones, or will be absorbed by them."[iii] This is reiterated by PM Goh's claim that "threats are everywhere and factors lurk constantly to derail the country's path to future growth." [iv] On other occasions, the metaphor of siege becomes more material, in line with daily eating and living, important concerns for the largely Chinese population of the island:

> But whether it (Singapore) will continue to be viable as a city-state is another matter. It depends on the kind of world we live in, whether it is safe enough for small little countries or whether we will be eaten up. [v]

The urge to survive requires a military arm. On its separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore began to place an emphasis on the formation of its own armed forces. Conscription was introduced for all male citizens and a sizeable portion of the budget allocated to its maintenance. The island is now small but armed and strong. As its chief architect, SM Lee, proclaims:

> Supposing I have been a different person and when people throw darts at me, I smile at them. Then they will take an arrow and put arsenic on the tip and strike me, and I smile back? You think today's Singapore would have come about? How do you think today's Singapore came about? Because everybody knows if I say that we are going in a certain direction and that we're going to achieve this objective, if you get out to block me, I will take a bulldozer, and clear the obstruction.[vi]

PM Goh is fond of using militaristic images to drive home the crucial need to survive in a competitive business environment. The execution of economic policies are referred to in terms of a military strategy. In a memorable speech to university students entitled, "The Gordian Knot: is there an upper limit to our prosperity", he referred to economic stagnation as a "martial enemy", a central metaphoric concept that was extended through the use of other metaphors such as "pincer strategy", "battle", "trap", "defeat", "beat", "combat ration", "hemorrhage", "bleeding", "parachutes failing to open" and "the need for modern ships and survival in rough waters."[vii]

On his daily rounds to support home-grown business corporations, such as Creative

Technology, which has gained an international reputation, PM Goh remarked: "Marketing is warfare and our strategy should be to capitalize on the winning battle rather than trying to open beachheads all over the battlefront with our limited resources."[viii] For PM Goh, "beachheads" referred to other kinds of venture capital, which Creative Technology was not, since it was already listed on the Stock Exchange.

Finally, on the need for political renewal, the member of Parliament for the West Coast, S. Iswaran warns the public with a typical metaphor - that leadership renewal cannot be taken for granted: "You can wait for cruising to hit crisis mode but it might be too late. Recruitment in good corporations is an ongoing exercise."[ix]

The metaphor of sports

Our next metaphor is from the world of sports. The main imagery here is that of a race, probably because races are often exciting events. One can measure who's ahead and who's behind and one can make predictions and bet on the results. A race is simple - there is an unambiguous winner and when it's over, it's over. There is a reward, a trophy at the end of it all. Some entailments of the metaphor are: Singapore as a world player, a healthy, a vigorous and competitive nation, local and internationally hired star players, the spirit of teamwork and the use of scoring to show the nation's standing. In his New Year 2000 message, PM Goh drew upon sports metaphors to express his vision for the new millennium:

> Competing with developed economies in knowledge sector is a difficult ball game altogether. We are taking part in the Olympics instead of the Southeast Asian Games.1

On several occasions, on the subject of a "new economy", then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, talks of a "rapidly changing game that needs new skills to play." [xi]

In The Next Lap, a book that spells out the government's long-term plans to make Singapore a nation of distinction in the next century, PM Goh called on the citizens as "family members, comprising good sons and daughters" to "run the next lap together":

> Singapore can only do well if her good sons and daughters are prepared to dedicate themselves to help others. I shall rally them to serve the country. For if they do not come forward, what future will we have? I therefore call

on my fellow citizens to join me, to run the next lap together.[xii]

Competition is also seen as a means to an end. In the context of Singapore's nationhood, only two end scenarios are possible: success or failure. The objective is to win and winning is equated with success. Not to come in first is to lose and there is widespread belief that Singapore will suffer if it fails to be No: 1.[xiv]

Another related image is that of "Singapore as a world player." PM Goh's speeches are typically headlined as "Get ready for super league contest" with a corresponding sub-headline as "No choice but to compete with world class players if we want higher living standard."[xv] He often refers to competition in the international market place as something "like playing football in the semipro league" and states that Singapore wishes to be in the "top league" and to compete with "the first division".[xvi] The inability to win the race means failure. In the words of Senior Minister Lee: "If it doesn't work, we will fall like a pack of cards. It is as sad as that."[xvii]

However, a web of rewards and punishments is woven around every aspect of life in Singapore in order to avoid failure. In the event of failure one is denied opportunities. Often history is invoked to remind the citizenry of the price of failure. The past is taken to signal backwardness and retrogression and there is constantly a fear of "returning back to the starter's gun."[xviii]

Ranking is one of the favorite past-time of a "sporting" nation. To whet the citizenry's appetite for competition, there are periodic news reports of Singapore's standing in the world. An article that appeared in the 7th May 2001 issue of the Straits Times is an example. It reported the findings of a survey which showed that the republic had been ranked third amongst some 4000 firms in 59 countries surveyed in the 22nd annual Global Competitiveness Report put up by the World Economic Forum and Harvard University.[xix] The report also noted that Singapore's score of 1.63 in the Economic Creativity Index (ECI) puts it ahead of countries like Germany and Japan.xx Such reports are given great publicity as ranking of all kinds of performance is viewed as a basic assessment tool both in the private and public spheres. Achievements in the economic arena are publicized frequently. Some recent headlines include, "Singapore No 2 on US hi-tech funds list",[xxi] the "Singapore way of staying ahead"[xxii] and "Singapore remains the second most competitive economy."[xxiii]

The Singapore story of nationhood is at once simple and complicated. Economic success and nationhood has become one and the same thing. Singapore has succeeded

because it has created a rugged competitive spirit that is hungry for success, distributed trophies as a reward, instituted penalties for failure, hired star players, institutionalized a parent-coach, and emphasized the spirit of teamwork in a systematic and hierarchical social order. As a recurring headline puts it "It's Team Singapore against the Rest of the World."[xxiv] It is a cry that continues to be echoed: "there must be no let up - the going will be tougher now than before because we have reached the high GDP per capita level of over $3,000.[xxv]

The metaphor of the market and its impact on education

Past decades have seen increasing attempts in various parts of the world to restructure and deregulate state schooling. Central to these are initiatives to dismantle centralized educational bureaucracies and create in their place devolved systems of education entailing significant degrees of institutional autonomy. Such policies often introduce a "market" element into the provision of educational services even though educational institutions have continued to be paid largely out of taxes. Market metaphors in important speeches of Singapore's leaders reveal that they, too, adhere to theses policies- that to survive and prosper, Singapore institutions, including education, must make themselves relevant to the world, producing goods and services which are in demand by the international community.

The metaphor of the marketplace is evident in the use of words, such as "competition", "choice", "adversity", "accountability" and "consumer responsiveness", which have crept into the discourse of education in the last decade, In Singapore, marketization came in the 1990's with schools being given more autonomy, e.g., for the first time, government school principals were allowed to appoint staff, devise school curricula and choose textbooks, as a means of making each school more "distinctive". At the National Day Rally of 1992, PM Goh reiterated that competition among schools was a good thing because it would provide parents and students with a wider range of "choice". It would also improve "accountability" by forcing schools to improve their programmes (Goh, 1993, p. 31). "Products" of these schools would become the leaders of tomorrow. Subsequently, in the hunt for new members of parliament, PM Goh announced that:

> The new candidates CEP (current estimated potential) should be based on High IQ and EQ, an understanding of economic imperatives, the ability to sell and get the ground to buy into policies.[xxvi]

In a commentary on political renewal on the same occasion, a newspaper editorial bemoans, without any apparent tongue-in- cheek, the lack of a "product champion for Singapore Incorporated."[xxvii] The real aim of education according to Viswa Sadasivan, Chairman of the Feedback Unit on Political Matters, is for the citizenry to go into "productionist roles" and when they grow up, they should "Go global, mint money and attract foreign investment."[xxviii]

Since then, the market metaphor has become widespread especially where the education "industry" is concerned. Education is now expected to service the national and international market economy. In his speech at the 1998 World Economic Forum, Rear-Admiral Teo Chee Hean (Radm Teo), Minister for Education and 2nd Minister for Defence spoke of the necessity to "exploit talents" for "the creation of wealth". Quoting from the World Bank, he reminded his audience that "human capital accounted for an average 64% of the productive wealth of a country - substantially more than the physical capital and natural resources combined." Knowledge is to be regarded as an investment which "pays off" for individuals in a job, for industry in a trained labor force, and for the nation in economic growth.[xxix] In another talk on education and the "new economy", Rear Adm. Teo welcomed suggestions to organize "corporate internship" and "overseas attachment". He indicated his desire to see more "interdisciplinary projects", to learn "problem solving", "communication skills" and "how to work in teams."[xxx]

Currently, there is a nation-wide drive to introduce the competitive edge of commercialism into education. This is perceived as a good way of insuring the relevancy of the education system to the job market. After all, a commercial firm which failed to satisfy its customers would lose them to its competitors. By putting the competitive pressure on the state educational organization, there would hopefully be increased efficiency, more choice and diversity, improved standards and quality, accountability and responsiveness.

Streaming and ranking are also important "tools" in a "talent search".xxxi Radm Teo's speech during the fiscal year 2001 Supply Debate shows a facile use of business terminology such as "customisation", "wastage" and "partnership":

> As a system, streaming is better than requiring every student to fit into only one prescribed programme of study. Indeed, the more customised education becomes, the more streams will emerge. Through streaming and giving those who need it, a lighter curriculum or more time, we have reduced educational wastage …The facilitation of partnership between

> schools, parent and the wider community is essential in helping children grow.[xxxii]

On the issue of ranking, the Minister of Education often speaks from the viewpoint of a manager focussed on achieving results:

This (ranking) is something which is useful as a management tool for the school themselves, and for the education system as a whole. People need to know how they are performing, where they stand, otherwise it is very difficult to make improvements. One very useful aspect of ranking is the value-added component, which tracks how much a student has improved since he joined that school. It has forced schools to give much more emphasis in trying to do their best for even weaker students to make sure everyone improves.[xxxiii]

Similarly, a typical dialogue between a Parliamentary Secretary and school principal might include the following references to the market metaphor. In this particular case, the Parliamentary Secretary commented that a certain school had "slipped in the annual ranking of schools and become second-rate." In the subsequent interview with the press, the aforesaid principal reassured the public: "We are here to do our job and that means being accountable to our pupils…adding value to every subject and instilling a sense of pride in the students."[xxxiv]

Schools are now encouraged to partner with private companies and are increasingly conscious of seeing themselves as "brands", and an increasing number are undertaking marketing and promotional activities "to woo pupils", something which they have never used to do.[xxxv] Several schools have used promotional strategies, such as advertising on the Internet, distributing brochures and making promotional visits overseas. The following headlines from the leading English daily, the Straits Times, show how schools have courted the media to create a "brand" for themselves:

RI sets up X Labs on nascent technologies (Straits Times, 23. 4. 2000:34)[xxxvi]

Silicon Valley spotlight for Chinese High boys (Straits Times, 2. 5. 2000: 37)

Crescent Girls moves at Web Speed (Straits Times, 3. 5. 2000:10)

River Valley aims for the Sciences (Straits Times, 14. 2. 2000: 58)

Every staff counts in Xinmin (Straits Times, 1.2. 2000: 35)

RICE staple IT diet for Rosyth School (Straits Times, 26. 2.2000: 48)[xxxvii]

Outram Secondary's link up with IBM (Straits Times, 23.3.2000:43)

In newspapers, one also finds articles for the general public entitled "How to Market Your School" with subheadings such as "Smash Your Opponent", "Act like a Salesman", "Be like Robinson's" (a successful departmental store in Singapore).[xxxviii] In the past decade, therefore, education has been increasingly perceived as a marketable commodity in Singapore, with pupils as "clients", teachers as "workers", and accountability measured in terms of the ranking of schools.

Language education in Singapore

While the metaphors of statehood have underscored the importance of preparing students to survive (especially in times of crisis), to find gainful employment and contribute to economic prosperity, the Ministry of Education in Singapore, similar to many other Ministries in the world, has always affirmed that the mission of the school is "to engage a child's curiosity so that he or she develops a love for learning."[xxxix] Indeed, according to PM Goh:

> Fundamentally, education is about nurturing the whole person, his moral, cognitive, physical, social and aesthetic development.[xl]

Similarly, Rear Admiral Teo, Minister of Education, has asserted that the objective of education is "to develop in them (the students) the desired values and instincts that will make them responsible citizens.[xli] As a result, the education curriculum places a strong emphasis on the learning of social and moral values. Its overall goal is education for social harmony and cooperative living. It stresses Asian values e.g. hard work, thrift, honesty; self-discipline, family stability, respect and courtesy towards

elders.

Approved by the Ministry of Education for use in both primary and secondary schools, textbooks issued under the new Singapore English language syllabus 2001are illustrative. A review of these texts, currently used by all students in Singapore, indicates that they contribute to education for social harmony and cooperative living by promoting the acquisition of moral values and collaboration skills. Highlights of the review follow with examples selected from the various textbooks. For ease of reference I shall refer to them through their codes i.e., PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4 (for primary language textbooks) and ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4 (for secondary language textbooks).[xlii]

I chose to review the textbooks used in the language curriculum since language learning (English and the mother tongue) has been a significant and important component of the school curriculum since 1988 and takes up more than a third of curriculum time in the primary schools and a quarter of the curriculum time in the secondary schools. Moreover, of all subjects taught in the educational system, language teaching can be said to stand out because the subject-matter content of language classes is not fixed – any subject can be the medium through which language is learned. Because of this rather unique feature, the language classroom becomes an important arena for communicating and conveying values, attitudes, and standards in an indirect and very effective fashion and, therefore, holds immense promise for socializing students for cooperation and social harmony (Jacobs and Cates, 1999). The review is also based on the premise that textbooks are not neutral. Rather, they are often radically selective. As a result, they, too, provide ideological spectacles through which we see the world and so can influence the way learners come to perceive and interact with their social context.

Moral values

Moral values are taught through themes which organize the content of the language texts. There are approximately twelve themes for each year of language teaching and each theme usually takes up about fifteen hours of instructional time. “Respect for Animals”, “Courtesy and Kindness”, “People of other Cultures” and “Religious Festivals” are examples. Values are usually illustrated through stories with a moral. In PT2 and PT4, for example, fables and fairy tales teach kindness, generosity and loyalty. Stories and poems in secondary textbooks, i.e. ST1, ST3 and ST4, enable the authors to focus on the importance of compassion, tolerance, and sympathy.

Comprehension questions based on individual readings may also be used to highlight what is salient, such as the ill effects of greed, jealousy and ruthless ambition (ST3).

The family as a theme for teaching values predominates in both sets of textbooks. The model of the state, after all, is said to be the "happy family", and there is a widespread belief that no efforts should be spared to preserve the family unit and to keep it strong, cohesive and supportive of its members (CDIS, 1985). Therefore on both levels, the texts (PT1, PT2, ST3, ST4) include legends and allegories involving the extended family so as to teach values of respect and gratitude to people in authority as well as the aged. PT3's unit on "Animal Families" begins: "Animal families are just like our families. There is always someone who takes care of the children…" (1B pp. 20-28). Language learning activities included in PT 1 ask students to write about "How my grandmother takes care of me" (2A, 54-55) or to write a "Thank you note to mothers" (2a p. 70-1), thus stressing the importance of caring.

According to the Constitution of the State Advisory Council on the Aged (1988), "Filial piety is the cornerstone of the family. It is also the foundation on which a nation is built." The textbooks reflect this view, and filial piety is cultivated by a careful inclusion of the contributions of the aged to the society. Reading passages, such as "The Story of the Magic Pot" (PT2, 2A, 42-3), gives dominant roles to the aged. Grandparents play the role of storytellers. In PT2 (2A, 44-45), for instance, the grandfather tells the story of the mean old ogre. In addition, the aged are able to tell their stories of how Singapore was like in the past (usually much poorer and less orderly), how they always helped their parents and their siblings, and how people (including themselves) worked and played. PT2 also contains listening, writing, and speaking activities which have students imagine what it was like in their grandfather's time (2A p. 85). As noted above, the figures of grandparents are used to teach caring, obedience, respect and other values which promotes unity in the family and society. Thus, through the promotion of these Asian family values, cohesiveness and support among family members is encouraged, and social harmony can be maintained.

Stories of Singapore (especially its history, and some of its folktales) provide the thematic context for promoting loyalty to and pride in one's country. These are carefully included in all of the primary and secondary textbooks, e.g. "How did Singapore get its name?" (PT3), encouraging students to help their country (PT 2). Additionally, included in the secondary textbooks are stories on nationhood which

emphasize Singapore's past history as a colonized and occupied area. Thus, the textbooks complement the daily ritual in schools where students are required to stand before the national flag and repeat the following words: "We the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language, or religion, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve happiness, prosperity, and progress for our nation." Implicit in the pledge "we….one united people", which is informed by a sense of carefully nurtured loyalty, is a promise to work in social harmony.

Collaboration and negotiation skills

The 2001 language syllabus is based on communicative and functional methodological approaches which promote cooperation and collaboration in learning. According to this methodology, fluency in language use is emphasized over accuracy, and the communicative function of language over form. Therefore, drama, role-play, story telling, the reciting of poetry, songs, and games are classroom activities used to provide opportunities for students to express themselves (cf. Freire, 1972, p.29). Such language activities necessarily involve negotiation, collaboration and cooperation. They emphasize the importance of group work and encourage students to work together to achieve common goals (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The methodology is reflected in the textbooks. On the secondary level, collaboration and negotiation skills are developed through the inclusion of tasks and mini-projects, which require students to work together while developing competency in English. For instance, ST2 has designed all of its language learning exercises through projects which require collaborative work. Two popular examples are "Reader's Theatre" and "Choral Reading". The former requires students to work together to write and act out a play and the latter that they select pieces of poetry and team together to present them. Another textbook, ST3, directly teaches the values of group work by asking students to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative sharing[xliii] The four primary textbooks also provide ample opportunities for group work. PT3, for example, includes 'information gap' activities. These are structured so that one partner assigned to a task has a piece of the information needed by the other to complete it. That is, one student must share this information with "his friend" in order for the task-at-hand to be completed. They must cooperate. Moreover, the textbooks generate a sense of partnership and common endeavor by using pronouns such as "We", "our team",

"our group"," our country". The teaching of 'process writing' i.e. writing taken through the stages of drafting, conferencing, revising and editing, is also advocated in the 2001 language syllabus. Students are encouraged to work in pairs to share their drafts with one another in order to obtain feedback in the various stages of the process - to negotiate and to collaborate.

Besides promoting the development and use of collaborative skills, these group activities also have the potential to lead to the formation of friendships across racial, ethnic, social and economic lines. Students can learn to appreciate the common humanity that the peoples of different nationalities, religions, socioeconomic classes, cultures and even sexes share. Thus as Jacobs (2002) has noted, cooperative learning can be an effective tool for preventing violence and, it may be inferred, for promoting social harmony.

Competition or Cooperation?

To summarize, Singapore's language curriculum uses a set of textbooks designed to promote cooperative living and social harmony by incorporating values education and the teaching of collaborative skills with language learning (Ministry of Education, 2004). However, textbook itineraries often differ from real-life practices. In the case of Singapore's language curriculum, the metaphors that dominate the state discourse are sometimes obstacles to the achievement of these curricular goals. While cooperation is openly valued in the educational system and the language classrooms, competition communicated through the metaphors of sports, war and the market appear to be the preferred ideology.

As a result, while the textbooks promote collaboration and negotiation skills, these are not working as well as they should be in the classroom. A preoccupation with the concept of schools as markets has inevitably encouraged the ranking of schools according to performance so as to encourage pupils to compete and excel (Aware, 2001). All secondary schools and Junior Colleges have been publicly ranked on an annual basis since 1992 and the results have been published in local newspapers.xliv The ranking exerts considerable pressure among principals to compete with each other in such areas as student recruitment and in developing strategies that ensure success in the examination.[xlv] This means that inevitably, for Singaporeans, what is really important is the marks in the examination (Lee, 1999, p. 227). In fact, there is a nation-wide obsession with excelling in examinations,[xlvi] which, then, become the

training ground for competition, perseverance and endurance, all characteristics indirectly promoted by the sports metaphor of statehood (Khong, 2004).

Consequently, students often tend to concentrate exclusively on what they perceive to be strategies that lead to better marks in the examination, and collaborative activities suggested by the syllabus, which do not maximize their chances to achieve, are ignored. Moreover, to ensure that students have ample time for examination preparation, teachers attempt to complete the syllabus several months before the date of the examinations. To do this effectively, they prepare structured questions (rather than stories, poetry and reader's theatre) that require short responses from students. Once the teacher feels that the majority has understood the content, he/she will assign textbook-based or teacher-designed exercises followed by school-designed worksheets which students complete on their own. Tan's (2001) research found that experienced teachers strongly endorsed such learning activities, which require memorization, rather than methods advocated by the communicative and functional syllabuses. Student-directed small group discussions and other teaching strategies that empower learners and encourage collaborative learning are rarely used since teachers prefer recitation and seatwork to student-directed small group activities (Tan, p. 2001).

Similarly, while the textbook emphasizes values which promote social harmony and cooperative living, school children are metaphorically and subconsciously urged through the discourses of its key leaders to remember the "struggles" of nationhood – that is, the "turbulent" history of how one "progresses" from a dependent colony to becoming a tough, competitive and hungry nation. While familial themes in language textbooks aim to have students learn "filial piety", the aging are often referred to as a "dark clouds" in the media.xlvii Old age is seen as a barrier to winning the race. Apparently, there is some conflict between the promotion of a harmonious and cooperative society and the need to develop qualities deemed essential for competition in a "big bad world".

Conclusion

Our choice of language and its metaphors reveal our innermost thoughts and plan our actions. While the 2001 language syllabus aims to develop moral values such as peace and cooperation, and skills for social harmony and cooperative living, the state ideology communicated through its favorite metaphors does appear to present an obstacle to those aims. As long as competition, as promoted through the metaphors of

war, sport and the marketplace, is prized above cooperation, then educational aims that would contribute to a more cooperative and peaceful culture will be subordinated.

This mismatch between educational policy and practice, so apparent in Singapore, is not unusual or atypical. Like the world at large, while there are ample and idealistic intentions and policies engineered for social progress, in reality it is immensely difficult to effect real change because other factors need to be considered and vested interests are in place. Old world values such as competition, nationalism and authoritarianism are still dominant over those of cooperation, globalism and collaboration. It is obvious that while technological advances have been breathtaking, the development of social values have lagged behind, leaving a world precariously threatened by a political, racial and social divide and teetering on the edge of political apathy, nuclear holocaust, environmental destruction, and social distrust. A secular culture has developed in the powerful areas of the world (of which Singapore is part) that is extremely materialistic in its outlook, one in which personal satisfaction and gain appears to become the main arbiters of social values and behavior.

National institutions and government, in an increasingly interdependent world, are less and less able to address key problems, many of which have acquired an important international dimension. The increasing internationalization of the economy has led to an erosion of world governments' capacity to do the things they used to do effectively. If the Singapore story has something to teach us, it is that the present moment calls for a statecraft that breaks with the past and which takes an unprecedented step towards an integrated earth. If the world is indeed one system, world order must ultimately be a "positive sum" game: in the long run, we all either "win" or "lose" together. Unfortunately, until now we have been unable to see the world as "one country" and so Singapore, as with many other well-meaning and ambitious states, while fully aware of the benefits of peaceful living, as evident in the promotion of cooperation and social harmony in school textbooks, has had no recourse but to make war, sports and the market their key metaphors. Like other countries that strive to survive in an increasingly interdependent world, it must be able to compete.

How are we to change the pattern of alienation, hierarchy and conflict, offshoots of competition, into patterns of harmony, collaboration, and cooperation so that a divisive world can move from an era of danger, anxiety and war into an age of collective security and peaceful cooperation? Language learning certainly has an important role to play since language is the medium through which the values and

skills, key to the inculcation of moral values such as peace and cooperation are communicated. Moreover, it is an important subject in all educational systems. However, most of the time, in Singapore, as in many other nations, there are more complex factors at work that are capping its potential. Often the social context, within which language teaching must operate, is at odds with its more idealistic aspirations. Tragically, education has also become too important a field not to be colonized by powerful state interests, communicated, in part, through its metaphors. This issue will need to be addressed by language practitioners as they plan syllabuses and teach in their classrooms.

Appendix

Textbooks reviewed**:**

Secondary (for ages 13-16)
ST1 Colin Davis and Faridah Tup, *English Expressions*, (Singapore: Oxford, 2000)
ST2 Mervyn Evan Blake et. al., *Eureka. Interactive English for Secondary Levels*, (Singapore: Singapore National Printers, 2001).
ST3 Heather Jones and Robyn Mann *Step Ahead*, (Singapore: Pan Pacific, 2001)
ST4 Peggie Chan, Nellie Kwa and Simone Khoo-Wang, *Odyssey*, (Singapore: Longman, 2001)

Primary (for ages 7-12)
PT1 Chew Phyllis, *In Step. A Course for Primary School*, (Singapore: Pan Pacific Publications, 2001)
PT2 Ang Judy and Smith, Anne. *My Pals are Here*, English Primary 1 and 2. (Singapore: MPH, 2001)
PT3 Vijayan Shakuntala and Wong Maeli, *Treks. Setting Off*, (Singapore: EPB, 2001)
PT4 Wong, Ruth. W. L., *Let's Celebrate*, (Singapore: Longman, 2001).

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Notes

[i] See http://www.cabinet.gov.sg/CabinetAppointments/index.htm 11 September 2007
[ii.] *Straits Times*, 14. 3. 1996.
[iii.] *Sunday Times*, 8.12. 1996.
[iv.] *Straits Times*, 1. 2. 1996.
[v.] *Business Times*, 16. 8 1995
[vi.] *New Paper*, 2.2.1995.

[vii.] Speech of PM Goh, addressed to students at the National University of Singapore at a meeting organized by the university=s Democratic Socialist Club on 1.8.1985. Quoted in Ong, Siow Heng and Govindasamy-Ong, Nirmala. *Metaphors and Public Communication. Selected Speeches of Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong.* Singapore: Graham Brash, 1996): 128-130.
[viii.] *Straits Times*, 28. 4. 1999 "Singapore must capitalise on the winning battle."
[ix.] *Straits Times*, 4. 9. 1966, 61
[x.] *Straits Times*, 1.1. 2000
[xi.] *Business Times*, 20. 9. 1999, 4. This particular quote is taken from his speech given at the 15th anniversary of the Singapore Exchange.
[xii] Government of Singapore, *Singapore. The Next Lap.* Singapore: Government of Singapore, 1991.
[xiii.] *Straits Times*, 24. 2. 1991
[xiv.] *Ibid.*
[xv.] *Straits Times*, 17.8 1992.
[xvi.] *Straits Times*, 17. 2. 1992
[xvii.] *Straits Times*, 6. 12. 1996.
[xviii.] "Why better, best are just not good enough for Singapore" *Straits Times*, 5.5. 1991.
[xix.] See "Eyeball Focus", *Project Eyeball*, 7 May 2001 This is a Singapore newspaper, which has since folded.
[xx.] Taking top place was the US with an index of 2.02 followed by Finland with a score of 1.73. *Ibid*.
[xxi.] *Business Times* 22.5.2000, 13. This article tells how Singapore was the second country, after Great Britain, in attracting the highest amount of US high-tech fund investments.
[xxii.] *Straits Times*, 1. 5. 2000, 37
[xxiii.] *Business Times*, 19.4.2000, 2. This was a huge write-up on how Singapore achieved the position of second place (after the United States), as the "second most competitive economy in the world."
[xxiv.] *Straits Times*, 17. 2. 1992.
[xxv.] *Sunday Times*, 8. 12. 1996.
[xxvi.] *Straits Times*, 4. 9. 1999, 66. "Everything to live for, nothing to die for" "IQ" refers to Intelligence Quotient while "EQ" refers to Emotional Quotient.
[xxvii.] *Straits Times*, 4. 9. 1966, 61.
[xxviii.] *Straits Times*, 4. 9. 1999, 66.
[xxix.]. *Straits Times*, 4.7.1998, 58 "8 Core Skills for the New Economy"
[xxx.] *Ibid*
[xxxi.] *Sunday Times*, 18.1.1998, 44 "Minister of Education stresses the importance of *talent search* in schools."
[xxxii.] "Making an Ability Driven Education Happen," Ministry of Education Fiscal Year 2001 Committee of Supply Debate. 15 March 2001, 2.
[xxxiii.] *Straits Times*,10. 4. 1998, 50. "Accept Change, Don't Look Back."
[xxxiv.] Press comments by Parliamentary Secretary Chan Soo Sen and Principal Goh Hwee Choo. Reported in *Straits Times*, 18.8.1998, 50 "Catholic High pulls up its socks."
[xxxv.] *Straits Times* 4.7.1998, 48 "Schools set out to woo pupils."
[xxxvi] RI stands for Raffles Institution, a premier school in Singapore
[xxxvii] RICE is an acronym for a computer program. IT stands for "Instructional Technology".
[xxxviii.] See *Straits Times*, 11. 2. 2000, 43
[xxxix] Str*aits Times*,15. 3. 2000, 70. "All work and no play"
[xl] *Sunday Times*, 18.1. 1998, 1.
[xli] Talking points for RADM Teo Chee Hean at the 1998 World Economic Forum Annual meeting. Educating tomorrow's Global citizen: What should we be teaching today's youth (3. 2. 1998) http://www1.moe.edu.sg/speeches/1998/030298.htm
[xlii] See Appendix for the titles of the textbooks.
[xliii] ST3, Secondary 1, 10.
[xliv] They are ranked according to 3 criteria. The first is a composite measure of student's overall results in the annual GCE level examination. The second measures schools' "value-addedness' by comparing students' examination performance with their examination scores upon entry to their respective schools. The third criterion is a weighted index that measures a school's performance in the National Physical Fitness test and the percentage of overweight students in schools.
[xlv] "Many Parents try to come to the Child's Rescue by attending workshops to keep pace with Junior's homework" (*Straits Times*, 10.4.2000, 7)
[xlvi] According to a survey commissioned by Singapore's main English daily, the *Straits Times*, of children aged 10-12, students are more afraid of examinations than of their parents dying; one in three

thinks that sometimes, life isn't worth living; nearly 4 out of 5 spend as many as three hours studying after school; and 7 out of 10 receive extra classes after school hours. See Trish Saywell, Education: Thinking out of the box. *Far Eastern Economic Review,* 14.12. (2000), 62-63.

[xlvii] *Sunday Times*, 9. 8. 1998. "Dark Cloud 1: Aging Society"

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Book Review

Pragmatics

Yan Huang. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. ix + 346.

Reviewed by Gregory P. Glasgow

Teachers College, Columbia University

Tokyo, Japan

The field of pragmatics has come a long way from its erstwhile characterization as the "wastebasket of linguistics" (Mey, 2001, p. 10), and the past twenty odd years has seen a steady growth of interest in pragmatic problems as the world abounds with a myriad of contexts where language use serves to be a worthy subject of examination. Huang (2007), in his new textbook, *Pragmatics*, a book written for second and third-year undergraduate and graduate students of linguistics, addresses this.

Beginning with Aristotle, the introduction and remaining two sections of his text provide a fresh overview of established paradigms and a thorough interpretation of newer ones. In the first chapter, which is also the introduction, Huang stresses that pragmatics needs to be recognized as a major component of language along with syntax, phonetics and phonology, morphology, and semantics. This outlook encompasses the central tenets of the Anglo-American Component school of pragmatics, a contrast from the wider Continental Perspective school which regards pragmatics to be more overarching, intersecting with wider disciplines such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and psycholinguistics. Huang cautions against the latter and argues that this outlook risks making pragmatics seem like the study of everything, which, in his view, it is not.

Chapters 2 through 4 which comprise part 1, "Central Topics in Pragmatics," delve into the areas of implicature, presupposition, and speech act theory, respectively, and the section concludes with a discussion of deixis--usual areas covered in a pragmatics textbook. What makes Huang's approach innovative and provides the text with a very up-to-date feel, however, is the way in which he interweaves more current areas of inquiry such as neo-Gricean pragmatic theories of implicature and cross-cultural

speech act concepts across a variety of languages. Also, aside from delineating the major concepts of these sub-areas, Huang raises awareness of new developments in these areas such as attempts to integrate classical and neo-Gricean pragmatic theories and areas that need further demarcation (e.g. a further analysis of presupposition cross-linguistically).

The remaining chapters which make up part 2, "Pragmatics and its Interfaces," commence with the exploration of Sperber and Wilson's newly formed Relevance Theory and its comparison to neo-Grecian theory. The section then progresses with a detailed description of the relation of semantics to pragmatics, areas which overlap in many ways due to their mutual concern with meaning in language--"inextricably . . . intertwined in a neat and systematic way" (p. 242). The section concludes with an analysis of Chomksy's binding theory (a paradigm generalizing binding conditions for anaphors and pronomials) and its presence in a variety of world languages. At this stage, Huang engages the reader in the interesting question of whether through Chomsky's binding theory there are generalizable claims of absolute restrictions; a fact that Huang contradicts, as he contends that these rules are "general, violable tendencies" (p. 271).

In addition to providing wide coverage, the book has two notable features which make it quite appealing. First, the exercises interspersed within the chapters, occasioned after the explanation of key constructs, effectively assist absorption of the material. Second, the way in which Huang applies a wide variety of languages to the theories is very impressive and adds global validity to the presentation of the information. Of course some readers may contest Huang's rigid delineation between the Component and Perspective schools of pragmatics; that is they may agree that "the study of 'everything' is hardly a viable academic enterprise" (p. 5) but take exception to his limiting pragmatics to more of a linguistic role and thereby forsaking its societal importance. Despite this possible criticism, there is no doubt that Huang's *Pragmatics* successfully consolidates both earlier and more recent knowledge in the exciting field of linguistics and therefore applied linguists and TESOL educators will find it to be a valuable addition to their professional libraries.

Reference

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Book Review

Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology

Robert DeKeyser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. ix + 321.

Reviewed by Jim Bame

Utah State University

Utah, USA

The multi-authored volume's articles in *Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology* critically consider student practice in second language (L2) learning from theoretical and research viewpoints and support what nearly all teachers accept intuitively for successful second language learning: Learner practice facilitates learner learning.

The book is of interest to many audiences - graduate students, practicing teachers, materials and course designers, and researchers. It is divided into an introduction, conclusion, and three major sections: Foundations, Institutional Contexts, and Individual Differences.

Robert DeKeyser's introduction provides a definition of practice as “specific activities in the second language, engaged in systematically, deliberately, with the goals of developing knowledge of and skills in the second language” (p. 1). He then situates this definition in research from applied linguistics, educational psychology, and cognitive psychology. Finally, he gives a very comprehensive overview of the book's contents.

The first two chapters of part 1 frame the theoretical foundations, research models and applications for input and output in the L2 classroom. Within this framework, in the first chapter, “Input in the L2 classroom: An Attentional Perspective on Receptive Practice,” Ronald Leow discusses six questions relevant to classroom teachers. Two examples are “Does providing explicit grammatical information during receptive practice have an effect on L2 development?” (p. 37) and "How much receptive practice is needed?” (p. 42). Hitoshi Muranoi in "Output in the L2 Classroom"

describes three models of output, reviews five empirical studies as to effects of output practice, and gives suggestions for enhancing output.

In "Interaction as Practice," Alison Mackey describes the development of the Interaction Hypothesis and four interaction processes. She then discusses how interaction impacts L2 learning and indicates how this research can be applied to the classroom. Jennifer Leemen in “Feedback in L2 Learning: Responding to Errors During Practice” explains terminology related to feedback, overviews relevant theory, and describes empirical studies of negative error response and their implications for theory and classroom practice.

Part 2 consists of four chapters. In "A Cognitive Approach to Improving Immersion Students’ Oral Language Abilities: The Awareness-Practice-Feedback Sequence,” Leila Ranta and Roy Lyster review immersion studies and propose a sequence of instruction as a pedagogical intervention for developing activities to offset the fluent, but non-native, speaking skills of French immersion students in Canada. Kris Van den Branden's “Practice in Perfect Learning Conditions?” advocates a learning situation designed for various L2 classrooms focusing on form and meaningful interaction with repeating and elaborate tasks in a safe, positive environment.

In “Meaningful L2 practice in foreign language classrooms: A Cognitive-interactionist SLA Perspective,” Lourdes Ortega contends that practice for foreign language classes in the United States should be interactive, meaningful, and have a focus on language which is integral to the efficacy of that practice. She advocates mixed proficiency in the classroom, technology use, and teachers considering interaction in the task design phase of teaching. In the final chapter of this section, “Study Abroad as Foreign Language Practice,” DeKeyser argues that linguistic progress while in a study abroad program can be greatly enhanced if the program offers practice in the foundation stages leading to a pre-departure training, a during-experience observation and guidance, and follow-up courses for returning students.

The third part consists of two chapters. In “Age-related Differences and Second Language Learning Practice,” Carmen Muñoz discusses differences caused by factors such as cognitive development, learning styles and strategies, language aptitude, personality, and social factors. The chapter's tables clearly summarize how these factors influence outcomes of practice in L2 learning at different ages. In “Aptitudes, Abilities, Contexts, and Practice,” Peter Robinson looks in detail at the cognitive

factors which contribute to aptitude and how they affect L2 learning and performance. DeKeyser's conclusion, “The Future of Practice,” summarizes goals for practice, possible resolutions, questions raised in this volume, and future implications for research.

Despite being slow reading at times because of the lengthy reporting of research and theory, *Practice in a Second Language: Perspectives from Applied Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology* is a useful reference for graduate students to learn from leaders in the field, researchers to frame research questions, and second language educators to design curriculums.

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Book Review

Psychology for Language teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach.

Marion Williams & Robert L. Burden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. vii + 240.

Reviewed by Jaleh Hassaskhah

University of Guilan

Rasht, Iran

A major barrier to changing the learning environment can often be educators' preconceived notions of how students should learn and how they should be taught. Accordingly, Williams and Burton's *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach*, originally written in 1997 and now in its 8th printing, is written for language teachers, teacher trainers, head teachers, and inspectors interested in understanding the teaching/learning process well enough to improve it.

The first two chapters historically cover the different ways psychology has been applied to education, particularly with regard to pedagogy and its key elements: the learner, the teacher, the task, and the context. More specifically, chapter 1 opens the discussion on educational psychology by introducing behaviorism and cognitive psychology and chapter 2 explores humanism & social interactionism.

In chapters 3 and 4, the authors focus on teachers. They, in chapter 3, suggest that since all knowledge is instrumental and meaningless in isolation, learners need to know why they are required to act in particular ways. The authors further advise an inner exploration of oneself rather than a search for the outward characteristics of the perfect teacher. Then, in chapter 4, the authors move on to Mediation Theory to help teachers see what they can do to promote learning.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 take a different perspective and deal with the aspects of learners. First, chapter 5 offers a discussion of the contribution of the individual student to the learning process, and, later, chapters 6 and 7 address the problems associated with the notion of individual differences and attempt to measure such differences.

Chapters 8 and 9 move to the issues of tasks and contexts. Here readers learn about

topics such as tasks in the language classroom, different versions of a task-based syllabus, what is involved in a language learning task, and the cognitive processing approach.

Finally, chapter 10 summarizes the key points of the book by differentiating learning and education and highlighting the importance of such factors as the learners' control of what they are learning, the teacher's role as mediator in the language classroom, the interface between teacher and learner, and the context in which the teaching/learning process occurs.

Readers will immediately find that this book's many notable features aim to help teachers improve their teaching. First, written as the result of several years of collaboration between two colleagues from different professional backgrounds, applied linguistics and educational psychology, the book secures the theoretical positions covered and the issues raised and indirectly suggests and encourages interdisciplinary solutions for teachers' common problems in the field. Moreover, its stimulating style generates a sense of discovery in the reader to explore how constructivism can be applied to a number of different issues in learning and teaching; its multiple examples and flexible pacing also aid readers in gaining the kind of knowledge needed to help them fill in the gaps in their competence and apply these to their day-to-day practice. Lastly, it summarizes the issues discussed in each chapter to highlight the potential points of concern to suggest appropriate instruction and ascertaining teaching effectiveness.

Despite the book's many advantages, this work, like most texts, is not perfect and therefore leaves room for improvement in future editions. With regard to the writing itself, it seems that some parts were written without the necessary revision. For example, in the first paragraph on page 37 and the last paragraph on page 54, the authors begin their classification by stating "first" which creates an expectation of having a "second" and "third", yet this is not fulfilled. Furthermore, contrary to the text's claim of universal readability, the book cannot be well understood without the reader having background knowledge of psychology. Thus, since the terms introduced are not operationally defined by the authors, different readers might come up with varying interpretations of the text.

Nevertheless, *Psychology for Language Teachers: A Social Constructivist Approach* is of significance to the field because it underscores the educator's role in preparing

students to learn how to learn and enables teachers to critically reconstruct their practices.

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Book Review

Succeeding with English Language Learners: A Guide for Beginning Teachers

Thomas S.C. Farrell. Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006. Pp. xi + 160.

Reviewed by Handoyo Puji Widodo

Politeknik Negeri Jember Vocational College

East Java, Indonesia

Learning to teach is a complex process, so novice teachers need much support. In response, Farrell's *Succeeding with English Language Learners: A Guide for Beginning Teachers,* a practical and reader-friendly resource, provides indispensable support for beginning EFL/ESL teachers to help make the transition from the teacher education institution to the real classroom smoother.

Designed to help novice teachers gain the pedagogical skills beginning teachers need, the text is comprised of ten chapters, each of which provides an easy-to-ready discussion of each topic as well as questions and chapter reflections to help readers engage the material.

The book begins by emphasizing two first-year development models to provide new teachers with a useful picture of what they are going to experience during their first years: Fuller and Brown's model (survival, mastery, resistance and adaptation) and Maynard and Furlong's (early idealism, survival, recognizing difficulties, reaching a plateau, and moving on).

The next chapter moves on with an explanation of the importance of lesson planning they will need to become familiar with: modeling, development, implementation, and evaluation. Chapter 3 then examines several classroom management issues: how to organize a class, conduct group work, elicit positive student behavior, organize classroom communication, and facilitate diversity.

In the fourth chapter, the text introduces fundamental approaches to teaching grammar (inductive and deductive) along with suggestions for alternative approaches and succinct guidelines for preparing lessons. Chapter 5 addresses writing instruction. It discusses commonly held perspectives on product and process models, helpful

suggestions for writing lesson preparation, a guide to peer response and evaluation, and a writer's checklist to make in-class writing conferences feasible.

Chapter 6 describes core speaking dimensions such as turn taking, conversational topics, repair, the important features of accuracy and fluency and offers valuable speaking tasks (e.g. project tasks and reports) to help teachers promote communicative activities in the classroom. The following chapter explores the teaching of reading. It introduces fundamental reading process models such as top-down, bottom-up, and an interactive model which combines the two along with guidelines for reading lesson preparation. The remaining sections succinctly touch on basic reading sub-skills such as prior knowledge activation, prediction, scanning, skimming, word guessing, and rhetorical awareness.

The eighth chapter looks at three listening dimensions--interactional, transactional, and interactive--and suggests that teachers should consider learners' active participation. It then offers a listening activity, TV Soaps, which is based on several pedagogical tenets: Listeners make no response, a short response, or a longer response. The chapter finishes by arguing how such activities are an exceptional way of integrating other language skills (e.g. grammar, writing, speaking, and reading).

Chapter 9 begins by touching on language assessment types and criteria, providing a strategic approach to assessing spoken English, and treating two core criteria of language assessment, reliability and validity. The final chapter then goes on to close the book with a discussion of professional development opportunities (e.g. action research and classroom observation), suggesting that teachers who pursue professional development can find it invigorating.

Throughout the book, readers will be pleased with the text's wide coverage of the important points new teachers need to become familiar with, yet some may desire a more in-depth exploration of particular points. Nevertheless, as an introductory text, *Succeeding with English Language Learners: A Guide for Beginning Teachers,* is a valuable starting point for new teachers to get acquainted with fundamental facets of ELT.

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1. Reviews should be prepared using MS Word and the format should conform to 12 pica New Times Roman font, 1.5 spacing between lines, and 1 inch margins.
2. The reviewer(s)' full names including middle initial(s), title, school affiliation, school address, phone number, and e-mail address should be included at the top of the first page.
3. The complete title of the text, edition number, complete name(s) of author(s), publisher, publisher's address (city & state), and date of publication should be included after the reviewer(s)' identifying information.
4. Reviews should be between 500-700 words.
5. A brief biography of the author(s) should be included after the review.
6. A statement that the submission has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere should be included at the bottom of the page.

Organization:
Reviewers are encouraged to peruse reviews recently published in the quarterly PDF version of the Journal for content and style before writing their own. While creativity and a variety of writing styles are encouraged, reviews, like other types of articles, should be concisely written and contain certain information that follows a predictable

order: a statement about the work's intended audience, a non-evaluative description of the material's contents, an academically worded evaluative summary which includes a discussion of its positive features and one or two shortcomings if applicable (no materials are perfect), and a comment about the material's significance to the field.

Style:

1. All reviews should conform to the Journal's APA guideline requirements and references should be used sparingly.
2. Authors should use plural nouns rather than gendered pronouns such as he/she, his/her him/her and adhere to the APA's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language, which can be found at:
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