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Testing the NPAH on the GEPT Test-takers' Output in Taiwan

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Abstract

Keenan and Comrie's (1977) "Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy" (NPAH) proposed that language learners' acquisition order of relative clauses (RC) could be predicted. The present study investigated the NPAH on the speaking and writing test scripts of 170 GEPT (the General English Proficiency Test) test-takers across four levels (74 males and 96 females). The GEPT is a four-skill standardized test developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan and mostly taken by Chinese EFL learners. This study assumes that if clear developmental sequences could be found among GEPT test-takers' RC production across levels as predicted by the NPAH, the NPAH would be supported by Chinese learners learning English and the GEPT test would also prove to be a theoretically grounded test. The quantitative analysis indicates that the GEPT test-takers' language output did not entirely follow the NPAH predictions in that subject and direct object relatives were not used as predicted, but the use of oblique relatives seemed to have followed the predictions to appear at the later stages of language development. The qualitative analysis suggests that the GEPT test-takers did show progress from level to level in

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terms of their RC attempts, accuracy and types, even though this progress did not entirely follow the NPAH predictions. However, such lack of conformity might be attributed to the test-takers' L1 influence or other linguistic features rather than the test itself. Generally speaking, the GEPT test is believed to be a reliable assessment tool for anchoring test-takers' RC development over its four levels.

Keywords: NPAH, GEPT, SLA, relative clause, output

Introduction

Although Language Testing (LT) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) focus on different aspects of applied linguistics, researchers are finding an "expanding area of common ground" in both fields (Bachman, 1998, p.191). For example, SLA studies often use standardized language tests to determine second language learners' developmental stages (Brindley, 1998; Gass & Selinker, 2001); while many LT studies are based on SLA theories (Shohamy, 1998). When looking at this situation, it would be expected that there would be more research linking SLA proposals to standardized language tests or vice versa.

Based on one common claim in the SLA theories that more marked forms would be the last to be acquired or one could expect fewer errors in the less marked forms, Keenan and Comrie (1977) proposed the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH), a generalization predicting the ease of relativization. The basic concept of the NPAH is that language learners' production of relative clauses (RC) could be predicted according to the NPAH; that is, the following hierarchy reflects the ease of RC formation so as to constitute a developmental sequence on the part of learners:

SU > DO > IO > OBL> GEN > OCOMP[2]

[2]SU: Subject relative clause
DO: Direct object relative clause
IO: Indirect object relative clause
OBL: Object of preposition relative clause
GEN: Genitive relative clause
OCOMP: Object of comparative relative clause

Furthermore, based on the study of typological universals, the test of the NPAH would be salient only if the learners' native language and target language are different with regard to the specific universal in question; that is, relative clause formation. Otherwise, it could be claimed that the universal in question was only a matter of "language transfer" (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p.145). In that regard, Chinese and English seem to be perfect candidates for testing the NPAH, since the two languages happen to have so-called "mirror images," structures that are reversed from one language to another, in terms of the RC construction.

Fortunately, since 2013, the Language Training and Testing Center[3] (LTTC) has started to sponsor researchers and teachers in Taiwan for conducting research on its locally-developed tests, such as the General English Proficiency Test[4] (GEPT), College Student English Proficiency Test (CSEPT), etc. The present study was awarded the sponsorship for the year of 2013-2014, including a research grant and access to the GEPT test data for research. More importantly, the GEPT test data come mostly from native Chinese speakers learning English as a second language, which is good for testing the predicted RC acquisition order based on the NPAH.

Accordingly, this study analyzed the GEPT test-takers' responses in their speaking and writing tests at different levels. As the NPAH claims the difficulty of relativization increases higher up the hierarchy, it would be reasonable to assume that if clear developmental sequences could be found among GEPT test-takers' RC production across different levels as predicted by the NPAH, it would be supported by Chinese learners learning English in this study and the GEPT test would also prove to be a theoretically grounded test to differentiate its test-takers. So, the present study answers the following question:

Does the GEPT test-takers' RC production across levels conform to the predictions of the NPAH?

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[3]For more information about the Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan, please check out their official website at https://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/abouttheltc.htm

[4]Developed by the LTTC since the year of 2000, the GEPT test is a criterion-referenced test on four language skills and administered at five levels (elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, advanced and superior).

Literature Review

Many SLA studies have been conducted based on Keenan and Comrie's (1977) Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH), as the focus of most early NPAH studies was on the European languages and have reached quite convergent conclusions in supporting the NPAH as a linguistic universal (Croteau, 1995; Dasinger & Toupin, 1994; Doughty, 1991). However, later NPAH studies, especially those on non-European languages, have found disagreements and concluded language typological diversities should also be taken into consideration, such as studies on Japanese (Ozeki & Shirai, 2010; Shirai & Kurono, 1998), Korean (Jeon & Kim, 2007) and Cantonese (Matthews & Yip, 2002).

Among the NPAH studies on typologically diverse languages, researchers have attributed the divergence of these languages from the NPAH predictions to a number of different factors. For studies on L1 acquisition of RCs, Diessel (2004), viewing RCs constituting a network of interrelated constructions that children pick up bit by bit, proposes word order might be a factor that influences the acquisition sequence of RCs; that is, languages that have different word orders are supposed to demonstrate different RC acquisition patterns, such as English (SVO) vs. Korean (SOV) and English (with postnominal RCs) vs. Chinese (with prenominal RCs). Hsiao and Gibson (2003) from the psychological point of view claim that, in contrast to the NPAH, subject relatives are more complex than object relatives for native Chinese speakers due to the storage costs associated with predicting syntactic heads to form a grammatical sentence. Ozeki and Shirai (2010) observed five Japanese children in a longitudinal study and found their RC development was not constrained by the NPAH on the ground that Japanese RC construction is governed by semantic and pragmatic principles instead of syntactic operations as in many European languages. In a quite similar vein, Rahmany, Marefat and Kidd (2011) conclude in a study on Persian-speaking children that syntactic-semantic correspondence has come into play in the RC acquisition of Persian, a typologically different language from typical Indo-European languages, even though the Persian pattern seems to have followed the NPAH.

For studies on L2 acquisition of RCs in typologically diverse languages, the NPAH is not strictly followed possibly for other reasons, among which language transfer seems to play an important role. For example, Chan (2004) examined the interlanguage of Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners and found that syntactic transfer from L1 to L2 caused major difficulties in learners' production in relation to five error types, including failure to use the relative clause. Similarly, Yip and Matthews (2007) conclude that Cantonese-English bilingual children's object relatives emerged before subject relatives in English, which is contrary to the NPAH predictions. They also appealed to transfer effects (from Cantonese prenominal relatives to English postnominal relatives) as well as general learning strategies to explain the divergence as they saw the effects interacting with the NPAH. In addition to L1 interference and learning strategies, Ozeki and Shirai (2007) in a study on Japanese as a second language learners (JSL) found that semantic features of a language, such as animacy of head nouns, could also affect L2 learners' development of the RC structure in Japanese; that is, there are strong associations between SU relativesand animate-head NPs and between DO/OBL relatives and inanimate-head NPs, which might have caused the JSL learners' RC acquisition to deviate from the NPAH predictions.

On the other hand, some studies on L2 acquisition of RCs in typologically diverse languages found the NPAH still holds true. For example, Xu (2014) examined 45 English learners of Chinese taking a written sentence combination test and the test results followed the predictions of the NPAH, as the learners produced more SU and DO relatives than IO and OBL relatives and the qualitative analysis further shows a preference for SU over DO relatives. Phoocharoensil (2010) analyzed 30 Thai college EFL students' spoken data and found the frequency counts and accuracy rates of the learners' use of different types of English RCs conform to the NPAH.

What is worth noticing is that, after 30 years, Comrie (2007) reinterpreted his 1977 original proposal of the NPAH as he would rather take the original NPAH as a reflection of more fundamental "psycholinguistic principles" other than "clear-cut differentiation in grammaticality judgment" (p.304). He further argued:

> …any linguistic principle must be seen in its interaction with other linguistic principles…there is no claim that the grammatical positions (which are for the most part also grammatical relations) are the primitives that drive accessibility. (p.304)

Comrie's reinterpretation of the NPAH seems to suggest that for the NPAH to work as a linguistic universal, more cross-linguistic evidence and generalizations are still needed.

Methodology

To answer the research question formulated in the introduction section, this present study was conducted on the GEPT test data provided by the LTTC. First in this section, the data inclusion criteria, data transformation procedures and tagging criteria and approaches will be made clear for subsequent analysis.

Data inclusion criteria

The GEPT speaking and writing tests at lower levels include test questions that elicit responses not exactly reflecting test-takers' production, such as reading aloud, paraphrasing, etc., so not all the test response data in the speaking and writing tests fit into the present research framework. In other words, only responses fully involved with test-takers' production were used in the present study. Table 1 summarizes the parts of the speaking and writing tests that were included for analysis in the present study at each of the four levels.

The intended data that the LTTC provided for this present study came from a total of 170 GEPT test-takers' speaking test responses (audio files) and writing test scripts (scanned files), along with their listening, reading, speaking and writing sub-scores on the GEPT test. The 170 test-takers belonged to four different level groups: 50 at the elementary (M: 20; F: 30), 50 at the intermediate (M: 21; F: 29), 40 at the high-intermediate (M: 17; F: 23) and 30 at the advanced level (M: 16; F: 14). All of them passed both stages of the GEPT test at that level and were differentiated accordingly in terms of their English proficiency.

For the GEPT elementary, intermediate and high-intermediate level, the perfect score for the listening or reading test is 120; while a combined score of 160 on the listening and reading tests (with neither sub-score lower than 72) is required for passing the first stage of the level. The perfect score and passing score for the speaking or writing test are 100 and 80 respectively (except that the passing score for the elementary writing test is 70). For the GEPT advanced level, the perfect score for the listening or reading test is 120; while a combined score of 150 on the listening and reading tests (with neither sub-score lower than 64) is required for passing the first stage of the level. A point of 3.0 on a 5-point scale indicates a passing score for either the speaking or writing test. Table 1 also shows the scoring details for the speaking and writing tests at each level.

Table 1 The parts of the GEPT speaking and writing tests included in the present study at each of the four levels and the scoring details

<table>
<tr><th>Levels</th><th>Speaking Test</th><th>Scoring</th><th>Data used</th><th>Writing Test</th><th>Scoring</th><th>Data used</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Elementary</td><td>Part I
Repeating</td><td rowspan="3">Holistic*
(0-5 points, converted to the 100-point scale later)</td><td>No</td><td rowspan="2">Part I
Sentence Writing
-Paraphrasing
-Sentence combination
-Rearrangement</td><td rowspan="2">50%</td><td rowspan="2">No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part II
Reading Aloud</td><td>No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part III
Answering Questions</td><td>Yes</td><td>Part II
Paragraph Writing</td><td>50%</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Inter-mediate</td><td>Part I
Reading Aloud</td><td rowspan="3">Holistic
(0-5 points, converted to the 100-point scale later)</td><td>No</td><td rowspan="2">Part I
Chinese-English Translation</td><td rowspan="2">40%</td><td rowspan="2">No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part II
Answering Questions</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part III
Picture Description</td><td>Yes</td><td>Part II
Guided Writing</td><td>60%</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">High-intermediate</td><td>Part I
Answering Questions</td><td rowspan="3">Holistic
(0-5 points, converted to the 100-point scale later)</td><td>Yes</td><td>Part I
Chinese-English Translation</td><td>40%</td><td>No</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part II
Picture Description</td><td>Yes</td><td rowspan="2">Part II
Guided Writing</td><td rowspan="2">60%</td><td rowspan="2">Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part III
Discussion</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Advanced</td><td>Part I
Warm-up Interviews</td><td rowspan="3">Holistic
(1-5 points)</td><td>Yes</td><td>Task I</td><td rowspan="3">Holistic
(1-5 points)</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part II
Information Exchange</td><td>Yes</td><td rowspan="2">Task II</td><td rowspan="2">Yes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part III
Discussion</td><td>Yes</td></tr>
</table>

****For the elementary level speaking test, the total score consists of two sub-scores: (1) pronunciation, intonation and fluency and (2) grammatical accuracy and vocabulary, with the former based on the performance in Part I, II and III and the latter on Part III only. Each sub-score accounts for 50% of the total score.***

Data transformation

To prepare the above-mentioned data for further analysis, the researcher alone first transcribed the 170 test-takers' recorded speech samples and then retyped their writing samples to appear in Microsoft Word format. During the process of transcribing and retyping, the researcher roughly tagged the data at the same time by following the minimum criteria for determining a qualifying RC (as shown in Table 2). The purpose of rough tagging at this stage was to include both qualifying RCs without or with minor grammatical errors, and attempted but disqualifying RCs for final tuning of the data to be analyzed.

Table 2 Minimum criteria for determining a qualifying relative clause

Basic requirements		Examples
1.	Presence of both a subject and a verb in a relative clause	(O) *We are designed to digest any food sources **that are** available to us.* (X) *There are lots of people want to get some cheap things* (X) *I would buy a cell phone which **easier using.***
2.	Presence of an antecedent prior to a relative clause	(O) *I can do **something** I want.* (X) *We might feed the animals **that the food** is unhealthy to them.*
3.	Presence of an accurate relative pronoun or adverb in a relative clause unless omitted (as in DO / IO / OBL / SC / OTH types)	(O)*There is one thing**(that)** they agreed on.* (O) *The reason (**why**) I am writing this letter is because I felt this topic should draw more attention from the public.* (X) *There are four boys **which** is playing soccer.*
4.	Presence of a preposition in a relative clause if required (as in IO / OBL types)	(O) *These are the problems we have to deal **with**.* (O) *It's a good place that parents should take their children **to** on holidays.* (X) *There are many cell phones nowadays I can use the internet ___.*
5.	No redundant occurrence of an object in a DO / IO / OBL relative clause other than the relative object pronoun	(O) *It is something I completely dislike.* (X) *She decided to buy the broken vase which she dropped **it** on the floor.*

Formal tagging of the data

At the next stage, the transformed and roughly tagged data were ready for formal tagging. It was then important to define an 'accurate' RC and an 'inaccurate' one among those roughly tagged RC attempts, as well as to define different RC types.

(1) Determining an 'accurate' RC: This present study did not apply a very strict standard in determining an accurate RC, since the primary goal of the study was to examine whether the GEPT test-takers across levels demonstrate developmental progress in RC formation. In that regard, RCs were classified as 'accurate' as long as they met the minimum criteria for forming a qualifying RC, as listed in Table 2, even though they might not be 100% grammatically correct. Among the pre-tagged qualifying RCs with minor grammatical errors, the tolerated grammatical error types were generalized and summarized in Table 3. Thus, qualifying RCs without or with the tolerated grammatical errors were classified as 'accurate.' On the other hand, attempted but disqualifying RCs were classified as 'inaccurate' RCs.

Table 3 Tolerated grammatical error types in an 'accurate' relative clause

Tolerated grammatical error types		Examples
1.	Inappropriate usage of the tense, aspect or voice of the verb in the relative clause	*-Last time I **get** together with my relatives **is** three weeks ago.* *-There are some foods that **are feed** for animals to eat.*
2.	Wrong usage of the singular or plural form of nouns in the relative clause	*-I'll buy a cell phone that has not so **much button**.* *-The food we feed the **sheeps** are sold by the farm.* *- Parents should put more attention on whom your **childrens** are making friends with.*
3.	Improper word usage in the relative clause	*-Are there a lot of guests you have to **service**?* *-I should like one that is with a big screen and not too **weight**.*

(2) Defining RC types: As mentioned in the earlier section, Keenan and Comrie's NPAH consists of five types of relative clause based on the position of the antecedent of the relative clause to be relativized, namely, SU, DO, IO, OBL, GEN and OCOMP. However, the present data show that there was also quite heavy use of relative clauses not belonging to any of the five types in the GEPT test-takers' language output, such as the use of *where*, *when* and *why* in the relative clause (relative adverbials), *which* referring to the antecedent as a whole proposition, the antecedent relativized as the subject complement and so forth. In order to put these non-basic relatives into analysis as well, the formal tagging was executed using type labels of the relatives on the NPAH (excluding OCOMP for no such occurrences in the present data) and the extra categories that appeared in the present data, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 RC types tagged for the present study

NPAH RC types	**Definitions**	**Examples**
SU	Subject to be relativized	-The man **who / that** lives next door is very friendly. -The machine **which / that** broke down has now been repaired.
DO	Direct object to be relativized	-The woman **(who / that)** I wanted to see was away. -Have you found the keys **(which / that)** you have lost?
IO	Indirect object to be relativized	-He knows the girl **(who / that)** I wrote a letter to.
OBL	Relative pronoun as the object of a preposition	-This woman **(who / that)** he fell in love with left him. -Are these the keys **(which / that)** you were looking for? *The hotel **(which / that)** we stayed at wasn't very clean.
GEN	The antecedent having a possessive role in the relative clause	-This school is only for children **whose** first language is not English.
Non-basic RC types	**Definitions**	**Examples**
SC	Subject complement to be relativized	-They help us to become the person **(who / that)** we want to be.
OTH (others)	The antecedent as a whole proposition	-Tom passed his driving test, **which** surprised everybody.
	Adverbial clauses functioning as relative clauses	*The hotel **where** we stayed wasn't very clean.
		-The last time **(when / that)** I saw her, she looked fine.
		-The reason **(why / that)** I'm calling you is to invite you to a party.
		-We hope the government can change the way **(how / that)** elementary schools educate their students.

***These two sentences, though having the exact same meaning, were tagged under two different labels.**

To implement tagging, the emergence of test-takers' accurate and inaccurate use of each type of relative clause in their oral and written production were judged and marked in different colors manually. Manual tagging was used in this project because some of the omissions of relative pronouns as direct or indirect objects have caused difficulties for automatic retrieval of such types of relative clauses from the texts. In addition, some of the attempted but inaccurate RCs could not be easily parsed without human judgment either.

After the formal tagging was executed manually, the data were then partly double-checked using Microsoft Word's 'Find' function; that is, partial automatic checkup of the manually tagged texts was done by searching key words such as *which, who, that, whom, whose, where* and *why* with Microsoft Word's 'Find' function for any missed or incorrect tagging in the manual process. At last, final proofreading was performed to make sure (1) the RCs were categorized into the types as defined and (2) the 'accurate' and 'inaccurate' RCs in each type were distinguished as defined. The formal tagging, partial automatic checkup and final proofreading were all completed by the researcher alone as well.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the results of the data analysis will be presented and discussed to examine whether the GEPT test-takers' language output conforms to the predictions of the NPAH. More discussions will follow to finalize a few minor details.

Data summary

As shown in Table 5, the transcribed data of the intended speaking test responses contain a total of 4,935, 22,115, 26,940 and 30,501 tokens for the elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced levels, leading to an average of 98.7, 442.3, 673.5 and 1,016.7 tokens per person for each of the four levels respectively. For the writing test responses, the total numbers of tokens for each level are 3,417, 9,068, 9,407 and 27,923 and the average tokens per person for each level are 68.3, 181.4, 235.18 and 930.8 respectively.

After the completion of the tagging process, a total of 4, 106, 148 and 251 attempted RCs (including accurate and inaccurate ones) were extracted from the speaking test data for each of the four levels (from elementary to advanced) and the numbers turn to 20, 43, 88 and 402 from the writing test data, as shown in Table 6. Obviously, there seems to be a surprisingly big gap between the numbers of attempted spoken RCs and written RCs at the intermediate and high-intermediate levels (106 vs. 43 and 148 vs. 88). However, if the total numbers of tokens in both tests were taken into consideration, the situation would not seem so bizarre. As shown in Table 5, the total number of tokens produced in the speaking test is far greater than the number in the writing test at either the intermediate or high-intermediate level (22,115 vs. 9,068 and 26,940 vs. 9,407). Consequently, if the RC numbers are compared per 100 tokens, the rates of RC production are actually quite close between the two tests (0.48 vs. 0.47 and 0.55 vs. 0.94) at both levels, as shown in Table 6.

The less surprising gaps between the numbers of attempted spoken RCs and written RCs for the elementary and advanced levels could also be resolved by looking at the numbers of attempted RCs per 100 tokens (0.08 vs. 0.59 and 0.82 vs. 1.44). In that sense, the GEPT test-takers tended to be able to produce even more RCs in writing than in speaking.

Table 5 Numbers of tokens in the speaking and writing test data for each level group

Test / Level		Speaking Test		Writing Test	
		Total tokens	Average tokens per person	Total tokens	Average tokens per person
Elementary	N=50	4,935	98.7	3,417	68.3
Intermediate	N=50	22,115	442.3	9,068	181.4
High-intermediate	N=40	26,940	673.5	9,407	235.18
Advanced	N=30	30,501	1,016.7	27,923	930.8

Table 6 Numbers of RCs in the speaking and writing test data for each level group

Test / Level		Speaking Test					Writing Test				
		ACC RC	INA RC	ATT RC	ATT RC per100 tokens	Accuracy Rate	ACC RC	INA RC	ATT RC	ATT RC per100 tokens	Accuracy Rate
Elementary	**N=50**	3	1	4	0.08	75%	17	3	20	0.59	85%
Intermediate	**N=50**	88	18	106	0.48	83%	40	3	43	0.47	93%
High-intermediate	**N=40**	122	26	148	0.55	82%	86	2	88	0.94	98%
Advanced	**N=30**	235	16	251	0.82	94%	390	12	402	1.44	97%

ACC RC=Accurate RC; INA RC=Inaccurate RC; ATT RC=Attempted RC

The spoken RC accuracy rates are 75%, 83%, 82% and 94% and written RC accuracy rates are 85%, 93%, 98% and 97% at each level respectively. The RC accuracy rates generally increase as the test-takers' language proficiency gets higher. The written RC accuracy rate tends to be higher than spoken rate at each level. More details about the RC extraction are presented in Table 6.

The conformity of the RC output to the NPAH

To examine the conformity of the GEPT test-takers' RC output across levels to the NPAH, all the extracted RCs (including accurate and inaccurate ones) were categorized into the seven RC types given in Table 4. For each level group and for their speaking and writing test data respectively, the percentages of the accurate RCs by types were obtained by having the number of accurate RCs in each type divided by the total number of accurate RCs. The percentages of the attempted RCs (accurate plus inaccurate RCs) were calculated in the same manner as accurate RCs. Tables 7 and 8 summarize the calculations of the accurate and attempted RCs in the speaking test data. Tables 9 and 10 summarize the writing test data.

Table 7 Percentages of accurate RCs by types in the speaking test data

Level \ RC type	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	SC	OTH
Elementary	--	100%	--	--	--	--	--
Intermediate	27%	30%	--	1%	--	--	42%
High-intermediate	50%	39%	1%	1%	--	1%	9%
Advanced	41%	37%	--	10%	--	--	12%

Table 8 Percentages of attempted RCs by types in the speaking test data

Level \ RC type	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	SC	OTH
Elementary	--	100%	--	--	--	--	--
Intermediate	31%	25%	--	1%	--	--	42%
High-intermediate	49%	37%	1%	3%	1%	1%	8%
Advanced	41%	35%	--	11%	--	--	12%

Table 9 Percentages of accurate RCs by types in the writing test data

Level \ RC type	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	SC	OTH
Elementary	47%	47%	--	6%	--	--	--
Intermediate	20%	15%	--	5%	--	--	60%
High-intermediate	47%	21%	--	6%	--	--	27%
Advanced	55%	22%	1%	4%	1%	1%	16%

Table 10 Percentages of attempted RCs by types in the writing test data

Level \ RC type	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	SC	OTH
Elementary	40%	55%	--	5%	--	--	--
Intermediate	21%	16%	--	5%	--	--	58%
High-intermediate	45%	20%	--	7%	--	--	27%
Advanced	54%	22%	1%	5%	1%	1%	16%

The percentages in Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 reveal there is a tendency that the higher the test-takers' proficiency level was, the more frequently they used SU relatives, no matter in terms of accurate or attempted RCs in the speaking or writing test. In addition, the elementary test-takers used DO relatives exclusively in the speaking test and used DO relatives generally more frequently than other types in the writing test. All of the above-mentioned evidence indicates that the GEPT test-takers' RC output goes against the NPAH predictions about SU and DO, because, according to the NPAH, SU relatives are supposedly more likely to be used at the earlier stages of development in English.

However, Tables 7 to 10 also show that there is generally an increasing use of OBL relatives from elementary to advanced level, indicating OBL relatives were used more frequently at the later stages of development in English in this case, as predicted by the NPAH.

The use of IO, GEN and SC relatives appear to be very limited in the study (accounting for only 1% whenever they appear) so these three types will not be discussed here for their rare appearance in the study. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that the percentages of OTH relatives appear to be the highest at the intermediate level in all four tables (42%, 42%, 60% and 58%), but the percentages drop dramatically when it comes to the high-intermediate and advanced levels, since the use of SU and DO comes into very big play at these two levels along with a few other types. Therefore, it might be concluded that the total use of RCs did increase with the proficiency level and the increasing number of RCs at the higher levels belong mostly to the SU and DO types (as shown in Tables 7 to 10).

Another way to test the conformity of the GEPT test-takers' RC output to the NPAH is to check whether there were fewer errors in the less marked forms (in this case, SU and DO) than in the marked ones (in this case, OBL). As shown in Table 11, the RC accuracy rates by types were calculated by having the number of accurate RCs divided by the number of attempted RC for each type. It is found that both SU and DO have approximately the same accuracy rates and are higher than the OBL accuracy rate at each level, either in the speaking or writing test, which supports the claim that OBL did occur at the later stages of the RC development, but the relationship between SU and DO here is not clear. Meanwhile, the accuracy rates for each RC type generally increased from the lowest to the highest level, suggesting that fewer errors were made in each type as the test-takers' language proficiency became higher.

Table 11 RC accuracy rates by types in the speaking and writing tests over the four levels

Level \ RC type	Speaking			Writing		
	SU	DO	OBL	SU	DO	OBL
Elementary	0%	75%	0%	(100%)*	73%	(100%)*
Intermediate	73%	96%	(100%)*	89%	86%	(100%)*
High-intermediate	85%	85%	20%	100%	100%	83%
Advanced	93%	97%	85%	98%	97%	89%

The parentheses around 100% in this table indicate that there was only one such occurrence in that category, which happened to be accurate.

In summary, the GEPT test-takers' language output did not entirely follow the NPAH predictions in that SU and DO relatives were not used as predicted, but the use of OBL relatives seemed to have followed the predictions to appear at the later stages of development in English.

Correlation between the RC statistics and sub-test scores across levels

Correlational analysis was also conducted to investigate the relationship between the GEPT test-takers' RC production and their sub-test scores on listening, reading, speaking and writing. However, as shown in Table 1, not all the parts in the speaking and writing tests for the elementary, intermediate and high-intermediate levels were included for extracting the RC attempts, but the speaking and writing test scores used in the correlational analysis reflect the test-taker's overall performance on all of the parts in the speaking and writing tests. As a result, it would be safe to say that the correlational analysis was conducted between the test-takers' RC production and their "total scores on each component" of the listening, reading, speaking and writing tests respectively. The results are presented in Tables 12 to 15 for each of the four levels.

Table 12 shows that there is no correlation between the elementary test-takers' RC production and sub-test scores, which is obvious on the grounds that the elementary test-takers produced very limited RCs in both the speaking and writing tests.

Table 12 Correlation between the RC statistics and sub-test scores (Elementary)

	S-AccRC	S-AttRC	W-AccRC	W-AttRC	L-Score	R-Score	S-Score	W-Score
S-AccRC	1.000							
S-Att RC	.857**	1.000						
W-AccRC	-.003	-.043	1.000					
W-Att RC	-.027	.047	.928**	1.000				
L-Score	.024	.092	.033	.096	1.000			
R-Score	-.066	-.013	.129	.193	.635**	1.000		
S-Score	-.116	.012	.134	.151	.300**	.263	1.000	
W-Score	-.122	-.180	.221	.214	.141	.425**	.272	1.000

$*p<.05$ $**p<.01$ (*Acc RC: Accurate RC; Att RC: Attempted RC*)

Table 13 shows that at the intermediate level, there is a correlation between the test-takers' RC attempts in the speaking test and their speaking test scores (r=.318), while their accurate and attempted RCs in the writing test are correlated with their reading test scores respectively (r=.328 and .293). Their spoken and written RCs are also correlated with each other, either in terms of accurate or attempted ones (r=.360 and .365). However, the correlations here are weak due to the low correlation coefficients between the variables.

Table 13 Correlation between the RC statistics and sub-test scores (Intermediate)

	S-AccRC	S-AttRC	W-AccRC	W-AttRC	L-Score	R-Score	S-Score	W-Score
S-AccRC	1.000							
S-Att RC	.97**	1.000						
W-AccRC	.360*	.404**	1.000					
W-Att RC	.318*	.365*	.976**	1.000				
L-Score	.109	.046	.096	.016	1.000			
R-Score	.012	.000	.328*	.293*	.413**	1.000		
S-Score	.270	.318*	.187	.166	.249	.167	1.000	
W-Score	.177	.211	.276	.233	.133	.431**	.151	1.000

$*p<.05$ $**p<.01$ (*Acc RC: Accurate RC; Att RC: Attempted RC*)

Table 14 shows that the high-intermediate test-takers' accurate RCs in the speaking test are correlated with their listening and speaking test scores respectively (r=.314 and .332). Also, their RC attempts in the speaking test are correlated with their listening scores (r=.346). Again, these correlations are not strong due to the low correlation coefficients between the variables.

Table 14 Correlation between the RC statistics and sub-test scores (High-intermediate)

	S-AccRC	S-AttRC	W-AccRC	W-AttRC	L-Score	R-Score	S-Score	W-Score
S-AccRC	1.000							
S-Att RC	.924**	1.000						
W-AccRC	.250	.182	1.000					
W-Att RC	.251	.179	.994**	1.000				
L-Score	.314*	.346*	-.059	-.033	1.000			
R-Score	.169	.226	.092	.101	.645**	1.000		
S-Score	.332*	.290	-.143	-.105	.438**	.249	1.000	
W-Score	.082	.125	-.085	-.091	.482**	.426**	.534**	1.000

***p<.05 **p<.01 (*Acc RC: Accurate RC; Att RC: Attempted RC*)**

In Table 15 for the advanced test-takers, correlations can be found only between their speaking test scores and their accurate and attempted RCs in the speaking test respectively (r=.452 and .516). However, the correlations are stronger in this level group compared to the previous two levels.

Table 15 Correlation between the RC statistics and sub-test scores (Advanced)

	S-AccRC	S-AttRC	W-AccRC	W-AttRC	L-Score	R-Score	S-Score	W-Score
S-AccRC	1.000							
S-Att RC	.981**	1.000						
W-AccRC	.283	.344	1.000					
W-Att RC	.254	.317	.993**	1.000				
L-Score	.000	.067	.273	.270	1.000			
R-Score	.128	.150	.150	.152	.416**	1.000		
S-Score	.452*	.516*	.068	.044	.175	.093	1.000	
W-Score	.111	.100	.304	.288	.133	.303	.109	1.000

***p<.05 **p<.01 (*Acc RC: Accurate RC; Att RC: Attempted RC*)**

Generally speaking, the correlations between the GEPT test-takers' RC production and their sub-test scores are relatively weak. A rough pattern that could be concluded here is that it seems the higher the group's proficiency level is, the more likely their spoken RC production is correlated with their speaking test scores. In other words, if the test-takers in the advanced level group use more RCs in their test responses, they are more likely to get higher scores on the speaking test. On the other hand, there is no such relationship between advanced test-takers' written RC production and their writing test scores.

Qualitative analysis

The quantitative analysis in the previous sections concludes that the GEPT test-takers' language output did not entirely follow the NPAH predictions and their RC production was weakly correlated with some of their GEPT sub-test scores. However, to catch the nuances that the grouped data might not be able to show in the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis was conducted on the contents of a few test-takers' speaking and writing test responses.

Due to its very limited RC production, the elementary level was excluded from the qualitative analysis. For the other three levels, one or two test-takers each with the highest and lowest test scores (lowest but still higher than the passing scores) for each level were chosen for further analysis. Moreover, test-takers whose speaking or writing test responses did not show a single RC were also taken into consideration for how they managed to pass the speaking or writing test, especially at higher levels. The background information of the test-takers under investigation is listed in Table 16.

(1) Analysis of the intermediate level: According to the quantitative analysis, the intermediate test-takers' spoken and written RC production are correlated with their corresponding speaking and writing sub-test scores. Therefore, it is expected that test-taker A produced more spoken and written RCs than test-taker B, since the former got perfect scores on the speaking and writing tests (even the listening and reading test scores are among the highest); while the latter got only passing scores on the speaking and writing tests (and also the lowest combined scores for all the four tests among the 50 test-takers at this level).

Such a difference was easily observed by comparing the contents of the two test-takers' test responses. Test-taker A not only used more RCs than test-taker B, she also used more types of RCs than test-taker B. Compared to test-taker B, who used only one SU relative each in the speaking and writing tests, test-taker A used SU, DO and OTH in both tests (with one inaccurate RC).

A total of four test-takers (C, D, E and F) at the intermediate level did not use a single RC either in the speaking or writing test, but they still managed to pass the level. Some of these test-takers even got pretty good scores on the reading and listening tests, such as test-taker E. She got 104 and 117 on the listening and reading tests respectively; but only passing scores on the speaking and writing tests. Even without the production of relative clauses, these four test-takers still demonstrated their ability to use compound sentences as well as subordinate clauses such as noun clauses and adverbial clauses. Although there is no evidence to show these four test-takers were unable to use relative clauses at this stage, it still makes sense to speculate that their receptive knowledge of RCs (listening and reading) at this level does not necessarily turn into active use of RCs (speaking and writing).

Table 16 Background information of the test-takers for qualitative analysis

Level \ Scores	Code	Age	Sex	LS	RS	SS	WS	S-Acc RC	S-Att RC	W-Acc RC	W-Att RC
Intermediate	A	18	F	115	114	100	100	5	6	5	5
	B	17	F	80	81	80	80	1	1	1	1
	C	15	M	115	75	80	90	0	0	0	0
	D	14	M	117	87	80	80	0	0	0	0
	E	18	F	104	117	80	80	0	0	0	0
	F	17	F	99	90	80	80	0	0	0	0
High-intermediate	G	16	F	120	120	100	100	7	9	3	3
	H	17	F	120	115	100	100	2	2	0	0
	I	17	F	91	77	80	84	2	2	1	1
	J	20	M	77	88	80	84	3	3	7	7
	K	17	M	91	101	80	84	0	0	2	2
	L	19	F	109	104	80	84	0	0	6	7
	M	18	F	104	96	80	84	0	0	1	1
	N	18	M	88	101	80	84	0	0	1	1
	O	15	M	96	77	80	84	0	0	1	1
	P	15	M	109	93	100	88	6	6	0	0
	Q	37	F	109	104	80	84	5	5	0	0
	R	17	M	99	77	80	84	2	2	0	0
	S	16	F	96	80	80	84	1	2	0	0
Advanced	T	28	M	111	105	4.0	4	14	14	18	18
	U	15	M	114	93	4.0	4	15	17	35	38
	V	14	F	86	74	3.0	3	9	9	11	11
	W	39	F	80	83	4.0	3	13	13	5	5
	X	15	F	102	74	3.0	3	0	0	10	10

LS: listening sub-test score; RS: reading sub-test score; SS: speaking sub-test score; WS: writing sub-test score

In general, the qualitative analysis seems to suggest that the GEPT test-takers' RC production at the intermediate level might not yet play a crucial role in reflecting their language proficiency.

(2) Analysis of the high-intermediate level: All the test-takers at the high-intermediate level demonstrated an ability to produce RCs on the grounds that each one of them made at least one RC either in the speaking or writing test, which is a significant improvement over their intermediate counterparts. Based on the quantitative results related to the high-intermediate level, there is a correlation between the test-takers' RC production in the speaking test and their speaking test scores. The 13 test-takers' (G-S) scores and RC information in Table 16 seem to match such analysis quite well in that those producing zero RC in the speaking test (K-O) did get only passing scores (80) on the speaking test.

However, the two test-takers holding the highest scores on the four tests show quite different patterns of RC use, which deserves special attention. Test-taker G, who got perfect scores on all the four tests, made a total of 12 RC attempts (including 2 inaccurate ones) in both the speaking and writing tests, with the RC types ranging from SU, DO, OBL to OTH. However, test-taker H, who also got nearly all perfect scores on the four tests (except a score of 115 on reading), demonstrated only two RCs (one SU and one DO) in the speaking test and no RCs at all in the writing test. Since both test-takers' spoken and written production met the GEPT criteria for obtaining the same perfect scores, it is suggested that RC production is not necessarily responsible for the quality of a test-taker's language output at the GEPT high-intermediate level. This assumption is also supported by looking at the test performance of two of the lowest score-holders at this level, I and J. Both of them scored slightly above the passing scores on the speaking and writing tests (also slightly above the passing scores on the listening and reading tests), but test-taker J, especially, used a total of 10 RCs in the speaking and writing tests, including SU, DO and OTH.

In a similar vein, a close look was given to the 5 test-takers with no spoken RC production (K-O) and the 4 more test-takers with no written RC production (P-S) out of the 40 high-intermediate test-takers. It seems that, just as mentioned earlier, test-takers K-O simply got passing scores on the speaking test, test-takers P-S showed a similar pattern on the writing test as well, suggesting that even though the RC production might not be a deciding factor for ensuring the quality of a test-taker's language output, the lack of such production is often associated with some inadequacies, as judged by the GEPT criteria for the high-intermediate level, in one's speaking or writing performance.

(3) Analysis of the advanced level: Like the high-intermediate test-takers, all the test-takers at the advanced level demonstrated an ability to produce RCs on both the speaking and writing tests, except test-taker X, who made zero RCs on the speaking test (but 10 RCs on the writing test, including SU, DO and GEN). With a significantly larger amount of elicited tokens than the other three levels, it is no surprise that the numbers of RCs produced by the advanced test-takers are significantly higher than the other three levels either in the speaking or writing test. However, since it is clear that the formation of RCs never constitutes a problem for all the advanced learners, the quality, not the quantity, of the RC production deserves even more attention.

The quantitative analysis on the advanced learners' RC production and test scores shows that there is quite a strong correlation between the test-takers' spoken RC production and their speaking test scores. This relationship seems to apply quite well to the five test-takers (T-X) in Table 16 in that the three test-takers with higher speaking test scores (T, U and W) produced more spoken RCs than V and X, who got lower rankings on the speaking test. Both test-takers T and U are also among the highest score-holders in terms of the listening, reading and writing tests; while V and W got the lowest combined scores on listening and reading among the 30 test-takers as well as a passing score (3.0) on the writing test. However, no matter whether it is the highest test score-holders (such as T and U) or the lowest test score-holders (such as V and W) or a test-taker simply with no spoken RCs (such as X) that are being taken into consideration, it is easily seen that each one of them produced at least two to three or even four types of RCs in either the speaking or writing test, not to mention the much higher accuracy and productivity of these RCs. In that sense, the association between the test-takers' RC production and their test scores at this level does not seem to have much meaning as compared to the lower levels, because the RC construction tends to become an underlying structure that a qualifying advanced learner should have acquired. It is likely that the quality of the spoken and written production of an advanced test-taker is determined by criteria other than the ability to make RCs.

Conclusion

The present study employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis on 170 GEPT elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced test-takers' RC production in parts of their speaking and writing test responses in order to test whether these test-takers' developmental progress of relativization follows the predictions of the NPAH from level to level. Some minor details will also be finalized here in this section along with the major conclusion of the study.

The quantitative analysis concludes that the GEPT test-takers' language output did not entirely follow the NPAH predictions in that SU and DO relatives were not used in a way that was predicted, but the use of OBL relatives seemed to have followed the predictions to appear at the later stages of development in English. In addition, the correlational analysis shows that the GEPT test-takers' RC production and their sub-test scores are weakly correlated in that the higher the group's proficiency level is, the more likely their spoken RC production is correlated with their overall speaking test scores.

The qualitative analysis conducted on the intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced levels suggests that test-takers' RC production at different levels seems to weigh differently in relation to their language proficiency. At the intermediate level, the GEPT test-takers' RC production might not yet play a crucial part in reflecting their language proficiency. However, at the high-intermediate level, the lack of RC production is often associated with less adequate performance in either the speaking or writing test. Finally at the advanced level, the RC construction is considered to be an underlying structure that a qualifying advanced learner should have acquired so the quality of the spoken and written production at this level is probably determined by criteria other than the ability of making RCs.

In general, the GEPT test-takers did show progress in their RC production from level to level in terms of their RC attempts, accuracy and types, even though this progress did not entirely follow the developmental sequence as predicted by the NPAH. Such lack of conformity, however, should probably be attributed to, as mentioned in the literature review section, the test-takers' L1 influence (in this case, mostly Mandarin Chinese) or other linguistic features (which is beyond the scope of this present study) rather than the test itself.

In addition, it is quite natural to see weak correlations between the GEPT test-takers' RC production and their speaking or writing test scores, since the GEPT scoring criteria for speaking and writing evaluates not only the test-taker's lexical and grammatical use, but also, more importantly, the content relevance and adequacy as well as organization (such as coherence and cohesion)[5].

As a result, it is concluded that the four levels of the GEPT test differentiates its test-takers in terms of RC production in the following ways: It is expected to see test-takers who passed only the elementary level produced very limited RCs. Those who passed the intermediate level might still be unstable (or unable) in producing RCs but they could still manage to get their meaning across without RCs. As for the high-intermediate level, test-takers who passed this level are believed to be able to produce RCs but not without some slight inadequacies. If test-takers managed to pass the advanced level, then supposedly they should have no problem producing RCs and their language proficiency is higher than simply knowing how to make correct RCs. In other words, the GEPT test works as a reliable assessment tool for anchoring test-takers' RC development over its four levels: elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate and advanced levels.

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[5]For more details about the GEPT scoring criteria, please refer to the LTTC's official website at https://www.gept.org.tw/About/gept_01_02.asp

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Strategies in Promoting Independent Learning through Self-Access Centre (SAC) at Tadulako University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the contributing factors to the effectiveness of the concept of Self-Access Centre (SAC) in promoting independent learning and propose specific strategies to manage SAC in order to achieve learning objectives. This article focuses on concept of independent learning, motivation, the influence of culture on independent learning, and the relationship between independent learning and SAC. Several management strategies were developed to be applied in SAC. The main objectives of SAC are to promote independent learning and address students' needs in language learning, and also to give clear understanding towards the concept that need to be modified in order to accommodate the Indonesian cultural perception of the teaching and learning process. The result of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses,

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Opportunities, and Treats) analysis exposed a number of issues that need to be addressed to ensure that SAC migh function effectively. Consequently, strategies were proposed for implementation in SAC particularly at Tadulako University.

Keywords: Self-Access Centre (SAC), independent learning, teaching and learning strategies

Introduction

Independent learning in the form of self-access is a new learning approach for students at Tadulako University. This approach needs to be promoted and explained to students who seems doubtful about its usefulness. The reported literature reveals that limited attention has been devoted to self-access centres in Indonesia. Although, SAC can promote independent learning, it has been no empirical evidence to support this opinion in Indonesia. This study concentrates on how SAC at Tadulako University, Central Sulawesi has been beneficial to students, teaching staff and the general community in promoting independent language learning.

Like other institutions, some challenges and problems have been emerging since the beginning of its inception. Some of the problems are limited to human resources, poor management system and financial issues.

Some studies conducted in Asia, like Hong Kong, Malaysia, and China, demonstrated that learners have strong extrinsic motivation to improve their English, yet they seem to be reluctant to use the self- access mode of language learning (Detarmani & Chan, 1999). On the contrary, learners who are eager to use SAC have a higher level of desire to improve their English, have higher intrinsic motivation and more positive attitudes towards learning English (Detarmani & Chan, 1999). However, few studies have been done to evaluate the value of self-access centre in promoting independent learning in developing countries. This poses a challenge to the education institutions generally and the tertiary levels particularly due to the differences of learning culture.

Self-Access Centre at Tadulako University in Central Sulawesi was established in 1999 as part of the Language Centre. The concept of SAC was introduced under the supervision of the British Council. SAC became synonymous with the centre for learning English as well as a centre that has responsibility to run general English courses for students of Non-English department.

Apart from its function as the centre for independent learning, the main purpose of SAC includes improving students' performance in the English language; advocating autonomous learning; encouraging students to become effective learners; assisting students to set their own targets and objectives to learn English; and helping students to choose various types of self-access materials according to their own interest, ability, and needs (Tadulako University Guideline Book).

Most studies in relation to the SAC for promoting independent learning were conducted in the developed countries such as the United State, New- Zealand and Australia. This is due to the impact of years of education system, which has created dependent learners particularly in Indonesia.

Based on the background stated above, therefore, this study was designed to explore the way of SAC promoting independent learning. Therefore this study has three aims. First, it aims to look briefly at the context of learning in SAC. Second, it aims to explore how SAC promotes independent language learners. Third, it investigates the barries encoutered by SAC of Tadulako University in promoting independent language learning. The significant of the study would be useful for future development of SAC in Indonesia in general and at Tadulako University in particular.

The findings may provide an understanding of how to manage SAC effectively to promote independent learning as well as to suggest strategies to improve the management of SAC in order to facilitate students to be independent learners based on the literature review. More specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the main learning objectives of Self-Access Centre in Indonesian context?
2. How does the Self-Access Centre promote independent learning?
3. How could the Self-Access Centre at Tadulako University be managed effectively to achieve its goals?

Literature Review

Definition of independent learning

The term independent learning, is sometimes used synonymously with terms such as ‘autonomous learning’, ‘self- directed learning’, ‘independent study’ and ‘self-regulated learning’ (Benson and Voller 1997). However, these terms basically lead to a single concept which is the move towards learner-centered approaches which view learners as individuals with unique needs and rights (CIEL Project, 2000).

Independent learning is an approach to learning which aims at widening access and acquiring skills for life-long learning, and promoting the development of learners’ autonomy or learner independence (CIEL Project, 2000). Furthermore, independent learning is an integral part of learning and teaching process where students have an opportunity to extend their learning and develop self-management skills. This does not contradict the concept of self- access, which was introduced to facilitate the learning of students who are eager to take charge of their learning.

Motivation and independent learning

Motivation is essential for independent learning. The results of study on students in Hong Kong Polytechnic University by Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) indicated that there was a strong relationship between a high-level motivation and engagement in outside class activities. Motivated students are likely to call for more space and support in their learning experience. They require being free to find the materials as well as the learning methods, they consider appropriate. The notion that motivation leads to autonomy or independence is supported by Spratt, Humphreys, Chan (2002, p. 262).

Thanasoulas (2000) suggests that motivation and attitude are important factors in the development of independent learning. This view is supported by Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002). They argue that motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously and that the role of teachers could be to ensure that students are motivated to become independent.

The role of teachers in increasing student's intrinsic motivation and positive attitude toward learning English is essential. Detarmani and Chan (1999) suggest that teachers should try to develop student's intrinsic motivation to learn English. Teachers should encourage the students to be more independent in finding their preferred learning materials and methods.

Motivation can be achieved by assisting students to become more self-directed in the learning. Motivating students by making them experience the process of learning and using the language can be satisfying. By finding it useful for their language learning process, students can become conscious of the benefit of being independent learners. As a consequence, they are encouraged to make use of the self-access approach where the learning environment supports the learner in a way that provides room for creativity and choices.

The influence of culture on independent learning

Like other Asian countries, Indonesia has its own distinctive culture with its own strengths and weakness. Three major aspects of the Indonesian culture influence education system.

- Religion

Faith has brought impacts on the way the Indonesian people live. Children are taught religious teachings in the early years. These teachings include the way they interact with older people such as parents and teachers. Teachers in school are seen as the students' de facto parents whose instructions should be complied with. Students see the teachers as a model to follow because if they do not obey they would be in breach of their religious teachings. Religion, especially Islamic teachings, plays a role, in forming the personal identity. Novera (2004) in Adiningrum (2008) states that Islam is the basis of moral values in Indonesia.

- Respect as Social Value

It is apparent that due to the effects of religion, the way in which people perceive teachers, influences the social relationship between the students and their teachers. It is often seen as a relationship between subordinates and superiors. This view is supported by the findings of study conducted by Determani and Chan (1999) to explore students' perception of their learning preference and teachers. They found that students from Asia prefer to have a teacher who guides their language learning. They argue that Eastern cultural training has taught learners to follow the teachers as the voice of authority.

- Collectivism

Indonesian's national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" translated as "Unity in Diversity", encourages people in all aspects of their life. Apparently, this philosophy has an effect on the education in Indonesia. The collectivistic culture embedded in this philosophy is extended to their attitude to life and by extension to education. A combination of religion and culture in Indonesian social life has entrenched collectivism. As a result, from educational perspective, students are encouraged to work together in their studies in terms of sharing knowledge and ideas (Adiningrum, 2008). In the classroom, students tend to use the dominant learning approach used by the majority of the class, which is usually in accordance with the teachers' instructions. This has been the common pattern in Indonesian schools. Students are often reluctant to contribute to the classroom discussion because they do not want to break the group's harmony. Consequently, independent learning seems to be inconsistent with the philosophy.

The Development of Independent Learning

Independent learning addresses the needs of individual learners for independence and active participation in their own learning. This approach to learning essential and has become part of Indonesian curriculum. This is due to the strength of the approach in making the students responsible for their own learning. Independent learning can assist students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, values and motivation that enable them to analyze learning situation and develop appropriate strategies for action (Kesten, 1987). Furthermore, Knowles (1975, p.18) uses the term 'self-directed learning' to describe independent learning as

> A process in which individuals take the initiatives, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating

> learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies and evaluating learning outcomes.

These characteristics lead one to conclude that independent learning makes student be good managers, not only in the learning process but also in their social life. Additionally, Knowles (1975) proposed three reasons to promote independent learning. Firstly, he argues that there is credible evidence that people who take the initiative from learning (proactive learners) become more effective learners than people who totally depend on presence of the teacher (reactive learners).

They (proactive learners) enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn better and longer than do the reactive learners (p.14)

Clearly, proactive learners are motivated and therefore invest their time as they are interested in and eager to benefit from learning. On the other hand, unlike proactive learners, reactive learners respond to action or instruction from the teachers.

Secondly, independent learning is more in tune with a persons' natural process of physiology development. Knowles (1975, p.15) states that one significant aspect of the process to be mature is the development of the ability to take responsibility in order to be more self-directed in life.

Lastly, independent learning is necessary because many new developments in education put a heavy responsibility on the learner to take a good deal of initiative in their own learning. Therefore, students need to familiarize with the skills of having control over their learning and be responsible in their learning process to prepare them for their working and social life in the future. To clarify it, Knowles (1975, p.15) adds that

> "Students entering into these programs without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration, and often failure, and so will their teachers."

In the process of independent learning, autonomy and participation of students are needed. This may take place if the students are motivated and have a high reliance on the learning value. Teachers, then play a significant role in ensuring that responsibility and control shift does take place. They should develop the relevant learning materials and methods to suit the learners' needs. Besides, teachers are also models in terms of the instruction given in the learning process. They should be able to provide techniques, strategies and approaches to promote students' participation and confidence (Kesten, 1987).

The relationship between independent learning and self-access

The term 'self-access' as defined by Sheerin (1997, p.54) is learning materials and organizational system (designed for directed access by users), whereas the term 'independent learning' refers to an educational philosophy and process. The way learners and teachers use self-access facilities will determine whether independent learning occurs. Furthermore, Sheerin (1997, in Determani & Chan, 1999, p.124) defines self-access as "a way of describing materials that are designed and organized in such a way that students can select and work on tasks on their own … and obtain feedback on their performance". She states that self-access provides the opportunity to students to develop initiative, responsibility, self-awareness, confidence and independence in learning. It is about making choices and flexibility in learning.

The concept of self-access centre (SAC)

The concept of language learning which take place in Self-access Centers has been promoted since 1960s (Gremmo & Riley 1995, as cited in Cotterall & Reinders, 2001). In the last few years, self-access language learning has attracted great deal of interest as evidenced by growing number of conference papers, journal articles and books which seek to analyze and enhance the understanding of this approach to learning.

CRAPEL was the first self-access centre at the University of Nancy in France (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; cited in McMurry, 2005, p.10). Since then, self-access centers have spread in the United States throughout Europe, Asia including Indonesia. The main purpose of these centers is to accommodate different learning beyond the classroom (Keating & Gabb, 2005, p.6).

SAC plays an important role in language education and it is predicted that self-access centers are likely to flourish as they are able to promote independent learning (Benson & Voller, 1997; as cited in Morrison, 2005). Moreover, according to Miller et al, 2007, Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) is a powerful tool for enhancing students' capacities for independent and lifelong learning. It is the place, where students are free to choose the activities according to their time, levels and needs. Self-access environment supports the philosophical and pedagogical framework in preparing independent language learners (Keating & Gabb, 2005).

Gardner and Miller (1999) view self-access as an approach to language learning not to teaching language. The self-access approach, along with supporting students' language aims to develop the capacity of learner to learn independently. While Fitzgerald et al (2000) argue that preparing the learner to study independently is an essential part of philosophical and pedagogical framework of a self-access environment. In addition, self-access is a way of encouraging students to move from teacher dependence towards autonomy (Gardner & Miller, 1999).

SAC is a powerful medium for enhancing students' capacities for independent learning (Pemberton et al 1996; as cited in Miller, Shuk-Ching & Hopkins, 2007). In addition, SAC may also be a useful resource for class teachers who need to direct students to materials for further practice of items learnt in class or to help individual students with specific needs (Yeung & Hyland, 1999).

Aston (1993; cited in Detramani & Chan, 1999) views SAC as a place where an "individual is free to choose the activities to carry out and the time to decide on them, learning is self directed and autonomy is encouraged". Self-Access also requires learners to be responsible, diligent and motivated. Students can decide which language skills they would like to improve, what learning style or method they prefer and is most useful for them so they have a wide range of choices.

Learning in SAC can build up higher motivation or initiative in learning based on Dam's (1990 cited in Lai, 2001) experience together with other learner autonomy facilitators from different parts of the world, students will generally be "interested, motivated, happy, engaged and satisfied learners" in a SAC or an autonomous learning context where there is no pressure from competition with other students. Because these features, self-access learning tends to generate "a feeling of confidence, security, acceptance and respect" among students and each of them is only competing with himself/herself (Lai, 2001).

Moreover, a self-access centre can provide more learning opportunities and learning spaces than traditional classrooms, thus allowing room for "diversity rather than informality" in learning (Kwan & Lyons, 2001). Providing learning possibilities and opportunities for the learners is generally positive factor in enhancing learning motivation.

Another value of learning in SAC is being able to accommodate different learning needs of learners. Proponents of self-access approaches argue that the centre must be more than a physical place with a collection of self-instruction recourses. Gardner and Miller (1999) describe a number of elements that may lead to as successful self-access approach; resources, people, management, system, individualization, need analysis, counseling, learner training, staff training, assessment and evaluation. Furthermore, Gardner and Miller (1999, p.11) state that:

> Self-access is very flexible. It can be used on a large or a small scale. It can be conducted in a classroom, in a dedicated self-access centre or elsewhere… it can function at all learning levels. It allows for different level of independence among learners encompassing both teacher directed groups of learners and virtually autonomous learners. It allows individualization but also supports groups. It is not culturally specific.

In addition, the major strength of SAC is the accommodation of various student levels individualized study as far as possible by giving choice and opportunity to work at their own speed (Monk & Ozawa, 2005).

Principles of self-access centers

As previously mentioned, SAC plays an important role in language education due to its functions that address students' language needs. Therefore, to maintain its function, there are principles of self-access that should be applied, according to Cooker (2008). These are:

1. Self-access learning should be truly self-access. It implies that SAC as a language learning facility should be socialized and guide students how it operates. Student or users come to SAC not because it is an institution's requirement or as part of a course study but because they realize that it provides their language learning needs.

2. Student should have an integral role in the running of the centre. This is one way to promote it and attract more students to use it. Involving student in taking the initiative for the centre, developing materials, negotiating objectives and activities will attract more students to use SAC.
3. Language learning should be fun. If a self-access centre is truly self-access, then learners need to be enticed into the centre, and the most effective way of doing this to make language learning fun. Providing SAC with music and movie-based activities, and the interaction between learning advisors and fellow students allow learners to see that effective language learning should be related to everyday pastimes, rather than something, which is confined to classrooms and grammar textbooks.
4. The self-access centre should aim to be a place where learners choose to be. SAC should be a place where a student would choose to rely on, and thereby encourage them to use the facilities and materials.

Promotion of Independent Learning through Self-Access Centre

Recent studies on independent learning have dealt much with self-access centers. The main aim of the research is to find out how and of these centers indeed promoting autonomy. In some studies, researchers have tried to determine what makes a person a good language learner. Gremmo and Riley (1995) tried to find a way to transfer these techniques and integrate them into language programs. They noticed that in self-directed learning there is a link between language learning and learning how to learn. They suggest that research should be done with regard to counseling and development of learning-to learn programs. By learning how to learn the language, students are likely to gain knowledge in a shorter time.

Gardener and Miller (1999 in Cotterall & Reinders 2001) highlighted the way in which SAC promoted independent learning.

1. It provides facilities such as listening aids to practice listening materials with different level of difficulties, which allows learners to pursue their own goals and interest while accommodating individual differences in learning style, level and pace of learning. This suggests that SAC must be well equipped with technology and other appliances as the language tools to support the students in learning the language.
2. The resources (facilities and advisors) have the potential to raise learners' awareness of the learning process by highlighting aspects of the management of learning such as goal setting and monitoring progress. To clarify this, both infrastructure and the teachers or counselors should give the students a thorough understanding about the function of SAC as well as its benefits to the students' learning process.
3. SAC can act as a bridge between the teacher-directed learning situation, where the target language is studied and practiced, and the 'real world', where the target language is used as a means of communication. SAC can help the students in acquiring instructions to learn the language as well as to let the students experience use the language in real.
4. SAC can also promote independent learning for learners who prefer or are obliged to learn without a teacher, by supporting their learning in the absence of an organized language course. In different context, "SAC offers varying degrees of guidance but encourages students to move towards autonomy" (Gardner and Miller 1997 cited in Cotterall & Reinders, 2001, p.25). SAC is the place where the students from different levels of competence come to find the best learning experience, which suits them. It is

the way where the students have and carry out their autonomy in learning to meet their needs.

Barriers to the promotion of independent learning in SAC

Like other institutions, SAC encounters challenges in achieving its objectives in promoting independent learning. The following are major challenges identified in Indonesian context in general and in Tadulako university in particular.

Cultural Influence

Despite the great value of SAC for promoting independent learning, in the specific case of Indonesia, promoting independent learning is subject to problem such as education system and cultural differences which in turn affect the success of SAC. As stated previously that teacher in Asian cultures is expected to be in authority figure to take charge, look after or nurture his/her students. Therefore, Asian learners find it difficult to accept a system which does not have teacher directed language learning programs. Self-access, as a new pedagogy which originated in the West, needs to be modified to suit the cultural context in Indonesia (Yeung & Hyland, 1998). In Indonesia the value of respecting teacher means that the students are required to remain passive in the classroom and listen attentively to the teachers' explanation. This leaves no room for creativity in learning which eventually leads students to be dependent on the teachers' existence.

Management of SAC

Another obstacle for SAC is the way the centre is managed to effectively achieve its goals. Consequently, if it is not well-managed, it may disconnect students and other users from its immediate objectives. McMurry (2005) found that many institutions had been equipped with self-access centres, but were not promoting independent learning. If independent learning is not promoted, the centre just becomes a computer lab or library with regard to its efficacy and functionality. Sadly, many of the well-equipped centres in Indonesia have experienced this condition due to some basic management issues which are not well addressed.

At Tadulako University, some issues have emerged in relation to the effectiveness of SAC such as poor management and the low awareness and understanding of students and teachers of the function of the SAC. In terms of management issues, SAC encounters some problems requiring strategies to revitalize its function, providing training and development for students and teachers, and updating learning resources such as learning materials. These are essential to satisfy the students' learning needs.

Additionally, low awareness and understanding of students and lectures of the function of SAC have adulterated the slow progress of the centre. Students and lecturers are not well-informed about the objectives of the centre and how it may benefit them. Clearly, the lack of SAC's marketing or promotion to students and lecturers is essential to take into consideration as well. Therefore some strategies are suggested to address these issues.

Methodology

This study is analysed by descriptive method. The review of literature were based on the examination of textbooks, journal on articles, reports, and personal experience. SWOT analysis was conducted in order to identify the needs, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This involves specifying the objectives of SAC and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable for achieving them. Besides that, this research study will conduct class observation to find out the learning and teaching process, and how students are responsible for their own learning in class room. At the end, the researcher will provide questionnaires to the students and cross-check their feedback through interview whether they are happy toward the way they learn.

Table 1 SWOT Analysis of SAC at Tadulako University

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Status of Tadulako University as the only state University in Central Sulawesi • Status of SAC in Tadulako University as TOEFL Test Centre which is accredited by both national and international institutions, such as ETS of USA, NEC of Nederland, and the British Council • Qualified and experienced teaching staff for English courses, such as BELT, TOEFL and Pre-IELTS • Supporting Infrastructure and facilities for teaching and learning activities • Strategic location of SAC for students' and public access	• Unfamiliarity of SAC's top leader on the organization's fundamental understanding such as its vision, mission, goals and programs • Lack of leader's response to the issue of students' needs, course method, and the target of students' achievement • Lack of attention and trust to the staff • Lack of professionalism resulted as unpreparedness in supplying English course • Sole funding from the university as the core institution which leaves SAC to be incapable in developing its program • Lack of staff interest, motivation, and commitment in working professionally due to management system and the unfamiliarity of SAC's programs and facilities • The absence of updated and challenging materials • The learning materials provided are not based on the student' learning needs and preference.

Opportunities	Threats
• Increasing needs of TOEFL and IELTS for lecturers and students • Extention of co-operation with other public and private institutions increase the demand for English training and course • Increase in public demand especially from the students facing the final test and placement test for prominent university requiring TOEFL and IELTS score • Increase in demand to provide English courses for non-English department students • Stronger networking with SACs from other universities in Sulawesi and Java island	• Decreasing interest and motivation of the lecturers to improve their English proficiency • Downward movement of the TOEFL test score and participants which may lead the sponsors to losing confidence in the centre • The rapid development of science technology which forces the staff and the lecturer to adapt and utilize those modern technologies quickly • Exponential growth in more attractive and promising English courses outside SAC as competitors • SAC's reliance on casual and part-time staff

Based on the analysis, several major issues need to be addressed to revitalize the effectiveness of SAC at Tadulako University. These include:

a) Management system

- Mismatch between SAC's management and its objectives and programs
- Lack of responses to students' needs and learning styles
- Students' low level of confidence in the local teaching staff

b) Human and Physical Resources

- Low staff moral in terms of staff's interest, motivation and commitment
- the absence of career path for casual staff

c) SAC's programs

- The absence of updated resources
- irrelevant materials' to the students' learning needs and preferences.

Findings and discussion

Management strategies for self-access centre at Tadulako University (Proposal)

SWOT analysis of SAC emerged as needing further development in order to maintain the existence of SAC at Tadulako University. These are planning, resource development, and support from management. A model for management planning will be presented as a step guide for implementation in the planning stage.

Management Review and Planning for SAC

Proposed Model

A model for management review and planning based on a report of the Queensland Consortium for Professional Development in Education (Dwyer, 1996) was developed for possible application in SAC. The proposed model consists of five stages which involve some consideration to be addressed:

Stage 1: **Consider what needs to be achieved:**
For the individual - For teams and groups - for language centre and SAC as a whole.
What sort of management do we want to develop for SAC?
How will development planning benefit in the building of management?
What specific goals do we want to pursue?

Stage 2: **Decide what is currently being done and can be built on:**
For the individual - For teams and groups - for language centre and SAC as a whole.
How is language centre and SAC policy currently made and implemented?
How are professional development needs identified?
What have been some of the successes and achievements of Language Centre and SAC policy?
In what specific ways can we build on these?

Stage 3: **Produce a plans for action**
List all the tasks and activities that need to be carried out in order to introduce personal development planning
Consider how these activities can best managed and prepare an action schedule, using the team work-Task; Time required; to be managed by; intended outcomes

Stage 4: **Make plans to support the implementation**
For the individual - For teams and groups - for language centre and SAC as a whole.
How can the management commitment to this policy and its implementation be demonstrated?
How can we show that we value the recording of experience and achievements?
How can equal opportunities in the development be ensured?

Stage 5: **Put the plan into action**

Recommendation for improvement

Based on the proposed model, some suggestions for improvement are proposed to overcome the problems identified in the centre.

A. Needs Analysis

Conducting need analysis at three leves: 1) with the management, 2) with the staff, 3) with the students as users. These three levels should be clear about the expectation of SAC.

B. Training and Orientation

a. Management

Leadership plays an important role in any organizational activities. In any effort of language centre and SAC development, leaders should create a supportive learning environment. They should be the innovators and effective facilitators. They should know the profile of their working unit and should be positioned to assist in the development of others.

b. Human and Physical Resources

Effective empowerment of the human resources, both the teaching staff, and the effective use of the facilities contribute significantly to the improvement of SAC.

c. Students

It is important to believe that students are eager to grow and succeed and meet the expectations of their institution and for their future. Therefore, orientation and training regarding independent learning through SAC and its objectives is essential

C. Pilot Project

This approach is taken when the earlier two approaches are done and the modelling is required to show real examples of the desired working of the learning centre.

Strategies for management improvement of SAC

The management of SAC should possess some specific language skills in order to perform their language learning effectively. Therefore, training other professional development activities focusing on some managerial skills for the management levels should be held. The following are the required skills.

Management skill

It refers to the ability to engage in a set of behaviours functionally related to one another that leads to a desired performance level in a given area

Technical skill

It refers to the proficiency of performing an activity in the correct manner and with the right techniques. This skill reflects both an understanding of and proficiency in a specialized field (Boyatzis, 1982). Understanding the process of adult learning in an autonomous learning environment, integrated with the techniques in helping to facilitate the process is one of the main issues in developing technical skill for the SAC.

Communication Skills

Effective management is associated with the manager's ability to work well with others, both as a group member and as a leader who gets thing done through others. Leaders with effective human skill are typically adept at communicating with others and motivating them to develop themselves and perform well in pursuit of organizational goals.

Conceptual skills

These refer to a creative sense in developing and discovering new and unique ideas. Creative skill in SAC can be demonstrated in curriculum development. Adapting the learning materials to suit independent learning approaches needs innovation and creativity from the staff.

Marketing Plans

Marketing is an important strategy to promote SAC. As an organization selling its services, it is important for SAC to specifically address the promotion or marketing issue. The marketing of SAC should involve the following:

1. The development of an attractive resource base and programs to encourage the learning process
2. The encouragement of participants' motivation through counseling in order to meet participants' learning objectives
3. Analyzing and monitoring and following-up of the progress program.

Strategies for human and physical resources

Human Resources

Strategies proposed by O'Dell (1992) is highlighted for consideration to address the human resources issue. Based on the problem identified, a number of strategies are given:

Induction materials for new staff members

This is presented in the form of a folder containing basic information to start their learning centre work. This may include some clear instructions about how to use the equipment in the learning centre, along with the list of names of the best people to approach when they have particular types of problems.

Learning Centre Lessons

The preparation of sets of lessons are essential to attract the users. They should provide a range of learning activities around a topic or language point. These obviously provide students with abundant choices on the kinds of learning materials they are interested in as well as in line with their learning levels. Consequently, these allow the students to do something relating to their own special needs or preferences.

Concelling materials

The teacher has to take on a conselling role both for individual students in their own class and for students from other classes. The non-teaching staff also should prepare hand-outs to give to new students to answer their queries.

Training

On-going training in learning centre use is essential. Seminars, workshops and discussions are forms of training that can be given to equip SAC staff with the necessary skills to perform their duties. To update staff on new materials and teaching methods, training should be held regularly.

Recruitment and scheduling of permanent staff

The absence of permanent staff in SAC at Tadulako University has been problematic. It is essential for the centre to recruit competent staff for the effectiveness of SAC in the future. It is recommended that SAC's management or the coordinator hold advertised vacancies addressing staff from the language centre, English department and other university supporting units in order to attract qualified staff to work in the centre. As soon as they are appointed, meetings should be organized by the coordinator to familiarize them with SAC and how it works.

Physical resources and learning resources

Improvement of physical resources relies mainly on the effectiveness of the management system, human resources and programs of SAC. However, the maintenance of SAC's physical resources is urgent. It is important to consider the empowerment of qualified personnel or technicians to maintain the facilities such as the computers, audio system, and multimedia system. Regarding the learning materials, this is closely connected to the improvement of its human resources' effectiveness in running their functions by delivering regularly updated materials.

Strategies for SAC program improvement

Raising Students' Awareness

Self access facilities can increase awareness of the learning process.

Students Orientation and Training

Orientation and training are essential components of SAC programs. Students should be familirized with facilities.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to examine the concept of SAC and independent learning and the relationship between them. The review of the related literature indicated that SAC has the potential to promote independent language learning. Relevant literature on independent learning was analyzed to ascertain how independent learning is promoted through learning in SAC. It was found that utilizing SAC would result in a motivational, stimulating educational experience for all students as their learning is driven by their own needs. Consequently, it was proposed that to help students achieve these goals their needs should be assessed and addressed. The discussion revealed the importance of cultural differences in the learning process and the need to modify SAC to accommodate students' culturally-based approaches to learning.

Several problems were identified in the management system of SAC such as lack of professional training and development for teaching administration staff. The effectiveness of SAC, it was found, could be improved if all stakeholders are included in the decision making in relation to issues pertaining to facilities and management. Having strong and well-management will enable SAC to achieve its objectives in terms of helping students to become independent learners.

Recommendation

This study provided recommendation that need to take into consideration for future development in order to socialize the function of SAC at Tadulako university particularly and other universities generally to promote the life of independent learning particularly for the new academic year students.

For Students

1. Students should be oriented at the beginning of each semester so they are aware of what is available and how to find information in the centre.
2. Students should be given orientation focusing on the concept of independent learning Students should be provided with easy access to a database to help them locate materials for language learning as well as graded learning materials to suit their pace of learning.

For academic staff

1. Teaching staff should be familiar with the concept of independent learning
2. Teacher' orientation meetings should be conducted to help motivate them to encourage students to use SAC to improve their English in their own time

3. Teaching staff should be trained in the development of SAC programs.

For the University

1. Institutional support, particularly financial, for ongoing activities in SAC is critical to enable SAC to resume its activities at Tadulako University
2. Developing teaching/learning resources that take into account students' needs should be given priority to motivate students to use SAC
3. Feedback from the students must be taken into consideration in the process of developing SAC activities.

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Abstract:

Bangladesh is predominately a monolingual country. However, since her inception in 1971, English has been an integral part of the education system. To bring changes with English literacy, several ELT initiatives have been implemented in Bangladesh by several donor agencies. This investigation attempts to identify the predominant factors that influence project initiation and implementations. It also tries to present the extent to which the major education initiatives in Bangladesh have been successful in reaching their goals and the contributive factors responsible for the ultimate achievement, or lack thereof, of education reforms. The study was conducted on the

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[2]'Micro political issues' in the title has been influenced and borrowed from an article by Hunter, T. (2009). Micropolitical issues in ELT project implementation. In J. C. Alderson (Ed.), *The politics of language education: Individuals and institutions* (pp. 64–84). Bristol: Multilingual: Matters.

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basis of a desk review of various secondary document and the interviews of selected project personnel and consultants in Bangladesh. Interviewees were carefully selected from a wide range of disciplines, with varying degrees of knowledge and experience, such as teachers, ELT advisers, professors, education specialists, education reporter, etc. The discussion will show that there are a number of micro-political issues which often remain unreported but play a very important role in determining the success or failure of any donor-funded projects. Finally, there will be an attempt to come up with some recommendations for similar future projects.

Keywords: English language projects, reform initiatives, micro-political issues.

Introduction

Bangladesh is considered to be predominately a monolingual country. However, since her inception as an independent country in 1971, English has been an integral part of the education system. It has evolved at different stages and at different times. In 1974, it was made a compulsory subject in year 6 to 12 (secondary level). In 1976 it was introduced in year 3 (primary level) and in 1986, English language became compulsory from the elementary level (year 1) to secondary level. In spite of the emphasis on English in the curriculum, the standard of English remains poor especially in the rural area. It is often argued that Bangladesh has made considerable progress in access to primary and secondary education in recent years. While quantitative growth remains impressive, the quality of education remains a major concern, as reflected in high dropout rates, poor quality of teaching, failure of many schools to meet the performance. The impact of the situation started to affect the socio-economic growth of the country. A lack of English language competency meant less effective participation in the growing global economy.

There is no doubt among the intelligentsia and policy makers in Bangladesh that “English studies have been useful and helpful in many visible and invisible ways”. But major concern has been how to make the studies more effective and creative (Choudhury, 2001, p.25; cited in Rahman, S., 2007). ‘Academic Domain’ is the major area where English is used most extensively (Rahman, S., 2009). It is here that it has its own space, though English in education has been affected largely because of the language policies favoring the mother tongue, Bangla. Immediately after the independence, in a frenzy of patriotic zeal, efforts were made to replace English completely with Bangla; As a result, English medium schools were abolished in 1972. However, as reality shows, English could not be erased from our national conscience completely. At present, Bangladeshi students learn English language as a compulsory subject, right from the primary to higher secondary level; that means they learn English for twelve consecutive years, on an average of 50 minutes a day, spending a total of approximate 1600 hours learning English. And yet, it has been found that a Bangladeshi student lags behind at least by six years in the level of English competency (Rahman, H., 1996). At present, the level of proficiency in the English language of the majority of students passing high school in Bangladesh is well below insufficient. According to the report placed by the Public Service Commission (PSC) before the National Parliament (*Jatiya Sangsad*) in 1999, about 20% of the total number of candidates appearing for the examination got 'zero' in English. This statistic is evidence that that our education system has failed to produce students with even a minimum level of proficiency in the English language. In 1990, a baseline survey was undertaken by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NTCB) as part of a project for the improvement of English language teaching at the secondary level funded by the British Government Overseas Development Administration (ODA) One of the key findings of the project was that the majority of students did not have the proficiency to meet even the standards required by their class textbooks. The gravity of the situation was more pronounced in non-government rural schools. The trainees of the Teacher Training Colleges also fell much short of the standard required (Ministry of Education, National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 1990, p.24)

In 1975, English was made an optional medium of education at the tertiary level. As a result, education at the university level degenerated into confusion, with some faculties adopting Bangla medium of instruction, some English (especially in science subjects), and the rest, a mixture of the two. Students were allowed the choice of writing their exam papers in either English or Bangla (a practice still being followed). English in Action (2009, p.i) in their Baseline Study 1 reports that there is little real progress for the majority of students through Primary and Secondary education. However, the diagnostic test on teachers is even more disheartening, as it indicates that 34% of teachers of English have an entry level of 2 or less. Another 14.5% have an entry level of 3. This means that nearly 50% of English teachers have an entry level lower than the final grade of the Trinity 'Initial' band. It is evident that teachers are teaching students at levels higher than their own ability in the language allows.

English language policy has witnessed many shifts and contradictions in the subsequent policies by the government. This is because time and again the policies have attempted to reconcile the language necessities of the nation with the collective conscience of the people. On the one hand, policy makers could not afford to sideline the populace's strong emotional connection to their Bangla language, and on the other hand, they could not ignore the strong presence and need of English as an international language and thus a tool of assimilation into the global village.

In spite of the emphasis on English in the curriculum, the standard of English remains poor especially in rural areas. A reason for the promotion of English language education in development contexts is, in part, a response to a growing conviction that English language education can play an important role in helping people gain the resources to lift themselves out of poverty and increase their ability to participate in the world economic systems from which they have previously been excluded (Erling, Seargeant, Solly, Chowdhury and Rahman, 2012, p.2).

Bangladesh is, at the moment, aiming to promote a shift in its economic structure from agriculture to manufacturing and to deepen integration with global markets (World Bank, 2007). Such developments call for a sound proficiency in English (Rahman, S., 2005). A lack of English language competency means less effective participation in the growing global economy. Since 1980s, a few initiatives have been taken to address the issue. Each of these initiatives had its own mandate to deal with the ELT component and have gained at some unique realization or experiences. However, it is yet to be determined what are the exact causes are which combine to progress of English language learning in Bangladesh. Also, from a sustainability point of view, none of the projects or initiatives managed to bring in 'change' in terms of enduring impact.

Background and context of English reform projects

There is a growing conviction that English language education can increase the ability to participate in the world economy. The discourse adopted to promote such projects and embedded in many of their policy documents often assumes a positive relationship between language and development to be self-evident (Seargeant, Elizabeth & Erling, 2011).

To bring changes in English literacy, several ELT initiatives have been implemented since the 1980s by different donor agencies, such as, DfID, CIDA, World Bank, ADB and by the Government of Bangladesh.

Timeline of some projects

1. OSSTTEB- Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh (1990 – 1995), funded by DfID and Bangladesh Government.
2. ELTIP – English Language Teaching Improvement Project (1997 – 2010), funded by DfID, UK Government.
3. SESIP – Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (1999 - 2005) as a follow up project of SEDP (Secondary Education Development Project), funded by ADB.
4. TQI-SEP – Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education project (July- 2005). The TQI-II has been scheduled to continue within the period July 2012 to June 2017, funded jointly by ADB and CIDA.
5. SESDP – Secondary Education Sector Development Project (2007– 2013), funded by ADB.
6. SEQAEP – Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (2008- 2014), funded by World Bank.
7. EIA - English in Action (2008 – 2017), funded by DfID.

Several developments took place in the 1990s to improve English language teaching and learning at the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher School certificate (HSC) level which was discussed in the evaluation of ELT reforms section elaborately.

Methodological approaches

The study was conducted mainly based on various document analyses and interviews with national consultants and other stakeholders. Documents were collected from the government and donor agencies. Major information were collected by interviewing key personnel and by interviewing teachers who were trained by different project personnel at various stages of the project cycle. Interviewees were purposefully selected covering a wide range of knowledge and experience, such as teachers, ELT advisers, professors, education specialists, education reporter, etc. Names of the participants for this study have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Apart from providing an overall picture of some major English language projects initiated by the donor agencies and government since the Independence, the study aimed to find out to what extent, the English language initiatives in Bangladesh have been 'successful'/ 'unsuccessful' in reaching their goals. The research aimed to find out the answers to the following research questions:
Q1: What are the key factors that contributed to the projects' success or failure?
Q2: What are the factors which impede project implementation?

Discussions and an evaluation of ELT reforms

This section discusses five major projects mentioned earlier which were/are running at the national level and have contribution to ELT reformation.

Table 1 presents a timeline for policy formulation of English education in Bangladesh after the liberation war. The Constitution was written in 1972 and it declared that the state language would be Bangla. The status of English was not mentioned in it. Also English was eliminated from the primary level and removed from the tertiary level but remained in secondary level. In 1974, National Commission on Education in its report, mentioned the importance of English as an international language. English was introduced as a compulsory subject from grade 6 to 10 after the recommendation of this commission. A Task Force was set up in 1975 to assess the English language teaching situation in Bangladesh. The immediate response to the recommendation of the task force resulted in the introduction of English from grade 3 in 1976. The National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee (NCSC) were formed in 1976. Based on the report of National Curriculum and Syllabus Formulation Committee, new textbooks began to be written by groups of ELT specialists with native-speaker ELT specialist support in 1978. The English textbooks of grade 3 to 12 were completed in 1986 under the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), a permanent government body which was set up in 1983. In 1992, the Private University Act was passed by the parliament, allowing for the proliferation of the US system of education operating through the English medium in private universities.

Table 2 **A timeline of policy formulation of English education in Bangladesh**

Year	Changes in Policies
1972	First Education Commission, Qudrat-e-Khuda was prepared. The constitution written in Bangla with no mention of the status of English.
1974	Report of the National Commission on Education. English as a compulsory subject in year 6 to 10. *"Use Bangla as the medium of instruction at all levels of education to make our educational schemes successful. Bangla must be used as a compulsory language up to class XII."*
1975	English Language Teaching Task Force was setup. "*English should be taught compulsorily either from class III or class VI. If English is made compulsory from class III, English language and training in teaching English should also be made compulsory at each Primary Training Institute."*
1976	English to be introduced from year 3 to 12. The National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee (NCSC) was formed. A high-powered English language teaching workshop evaluated the teaching of English.
1977	Kazi Zafor Commission Report
1978	National Curriculum and Syllabus Formulation Committee Report published. New textbooks based on NCSC's recommendations begun to be written by groups of ELT specialists with native-speaker ELT specialist support.
1983	NCSC dissolved and NCTB, a permanent government body was setup. Mojid Khan Education policy report was prepared.
1986	Graded English textbooks for school years 3 to 12 were completed by NCTB. English to be introduced from year 1 to 12.
1988	Mofiz Uddin Education Commission
1992	The Private University Act passed by the parliament. Introduction of English medium universities in private sectors. The Government of Bangladesh passed an act for the reintroduction of English at the tertiary level. The Government made English a compulsory subject for all B.A. Honours and Pass course students and declared that there would be a two-year English language course carrying a total of 100 marks.
1994	English to be re-introduced in the BA courses.
1995	New communicative English curriculum and textbooks was introduced.
1996	Introduction of one year English foundation course at public universities.
1997	The ministry of Education raising the retirement age of all English teachers by three years. Prof. Shamsul Haque Commission: "*Given the fact that the learners in Bangladesh have limited opportunity to use English and also, the country lacks efficient teachers in English, the committee recommended English Learning at the primary level from Class three (*Education Commission Report, 1997, *5.3:43)."*
2001	Professor MA Bari Commission report submitted
2003	Prof Moniruzzaman Mia Education Commission *"Since, the country lacked a definite policy on language teaching and use a committee should be formed to prepare a uniform National Language Policy.* *"The language efficiency of the students in both Bangla and English need to be improved. With the present four year honours courses, the first six months should be devoted to improve English language proficiency that eventually will qualify them for the university education (*National Education Commission Report, 2003, p.115-116, p129*)."*
2010	Private University Act 2010 passed ensuring more English Medium higher

	institutes

English, which was withdrawn from the tertiary level, was reintroduced in BA courses in 1994. A new Communicative English language curriculum was adopted and textbooks were introduced in the year 1995. A compulsory English language foundation course was introduced in public universities in 1996. In the same year, the Ministry of Education raised the retirement age of English teachers by 3 years to meet the increased demands created by these changes in education policy.

OSSTTEB (Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh)

The project titled "Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching of English in Bangladesh" (OSSTTEB) started in 1990 with the aim of revising and updating the secondary level English curriculum focusing on communicative approach. It was implemented from 1990 to 1995. It was a joint project of the Government of Bangladesh and the Department for International Development (DFID). This was the first initiative on communicative English language development in Bangladesh. It had three main objectives: i) teaching secondary English teachers how to teach English effectively and communicatively, ii) designing and developing secondary level textbooks and iii) developing the English curriculum and one year B. Ed (Bachelor of Education) English curriculum and course materials (Haque, 2011).

Monitoring and Supervision activities

The project did not have any monitoring or supervision activities. The function of the project was limited to teacher training, curriculum development, textbooks and course materials writing. OSSTTEB developed and modified English textbooks of grade VI to grade VIII underpinned by the theory of communicative approach. It also developed a one-year B Ed English curriculum and course materials. Through these curriculum and course materials, teachers were being given inbuilt training on the new communicative textbooks.

Sustainability issues

The sustainability of the projects were not given consideration during the project initiatives. However the textbooks of grade VI-VIII which were developed by the project are still in use.

ELTIP (English Language Teaching Improvement Project)

Realizing the deficiency in English language teaching in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) undertook a project entitled English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) in the later part of the 1990s with a view to improving the situation. The project was undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UK's Department for International Development (DfID) in 1997 to initiate changes in the curriculum, textbooks, teaching methodology, the examination system and training the in-service teachers of English in Bangladesh. It was undertaken to promote the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in the secondary level in English Language Teaching (ELT).

The main objective of ELTIP was to fulfil the GoB's intention to strengthen human resource development, through teaching and learning of communicative English.

Assessment of ELTIP, one of the largest projects, showed that it had the following weaknesses:

- According to the trainers, the weakness of ELTIP stemmed from varied factors including lack of sufficient training materials, residential facilities and adequate training allowance.
- The lack of monitoring system and follow-up training opportunities compounded the weakness of the project.
- A large number of students during FGD (52%) reported that the teachers did not use any teaching aid in the English class.
    (Evaluation of English Language Teaching Improvement Project: Phase 3, 2009, p29-36)

Khan (2002) said in her *Impact Assessment of an In-service Teacher Training Programme in Bangladesh: A Research Report* that ELTIP had the following weaknesses:

1. It was difficult to implement pair work and group work activities successfully in classes

2. It was difficult to convince untrained teachers who had very rigid attitudes

3. The current examinations systems seemed to be a problem
4. Continuation of traditional practices by senior teachers.

From the interviews in the study, she has found that the monitoring and supervision was very weak. At the beginning, monitoring and supervision was done almost regularly. But when the fund was stopped by the donor agency, government did not emphasize on this appropriately. Only one teacher informed that a follow-up supervision was taken by ELTIP in 2000. All other teachers received 14 days training only. The project is now almost dead. The only activity of the project is providing training to the teachers. One of the project's personnel said in the interview about the fall of

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But even in this bleak landscape, there is a glimmer of hope. The most noteworthy and encouraging finding from classroom observations was the teachers' effort to use L2 in the classroom. In addition, changes were noted in their feedback styles and the variety of activities used in class. Feedback, albeit oral, was supportive and constructive (p.42-43). It is important to mention that some teachers also expressed doubts about the effectiveness of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Bangladesh. This feeling is thought to stem from teachers' perception of their role as teachers, their perceptions of the learner's role, their perceptions about previous language learning and finally, their perceptions of contextual factors and societal expectations (p.43).

Trainers identified a number of obstacles to the establishment of ELTIP principles in schools, which have been mentioned earlier. However, most of the respondents said that the most significant moment was when they first conducted the training sessions on their own. They said that it gave them immense pleasure and that the experience doubled their confidence.

Teachers reported receiving little cooperation from their Head teachers as these individuals were widely resistant to plenary feedback. They also stated being subjected to opposition from some teachers arguing the futility of preparing lesson plans, and the bleak future of Communicative English Language Teaching (CELT) in Bangladesh.

Analyses of the findings (Khan, R. 2002, p.44) showed that ELTIP teacher training program seemed to have made an impact. There was evidence that there has been a change of attitude in teachers and they were engaging themselves in new approaches which can be traced to ELTIP practices.

It will be interesting to find out the present state of ELTIP as *The Independent* (Khan, S. 2011) found that English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) of the education ministry has remained suspended since June 2010 owing to a severe funds crunch. From 2002 to early 2010, nearly 33,000 English teachers were given 21-day training under the project. “Paying little heed to the education ministry’s request, chairpersons of the education boards have refused to fund the project. The ministry had asked the boards to provide Tk. 40 crore for the three-year ELTIP phase IV,” said M Mujibur Rahman, the ELTIP project director.

> “I have told the education secretary to transfer me from the project. Me and my 74 colleagues are not getting salaries since June, 2010,” said Mujib, who is also a joint secretary of the government (The Independent, 2011).

Replying to a query, Professor Fahima Khatun, said:

> “The ministry runs a number of projects with the revenue budget. If it really considers the particular project to be important, it should provide funds from the revenue budget. Education boards cannot fund such projects because of legal barriers (During the interviews, 2012).

One of the disappointments of ELTIP was its failure to bring any changes with the examination and evaluation policy but possibly that was not even within the scope of ELTIP. One of the informants shared clearly that, "It could (try to bring change with evaluation) but the ELTIP project was not looking beyond its own defined aims which extended to training teachers" (During the interviews, Hakim Islam, 2012)

Sustainability issues

The project had a monitoring wing. But monitoring and supervision procedures were not implemented as rigorously as the warranted. Specialists from ELTIP monitor the trainers' activities during the activation period. After phase-I of the project, DfID reduced their fund significantly (ELTIP phase 3 report) and the picture changed drastically. As Haque (2011) mentioned, 'No monitoring was done during the activation period'.

From the teachers' interview, it was found that in most of the cases no monitoring or evaluation was taken place after the training. Two teachers were of the opinion that that if monitoring was running regularly the training would have been more effective.

Sustainability issues *were* considered at the time of project initiation. It was mentioned that after the cessation of donor funding, the Bangladesh government or any other internal agency will take over responsibility for the continued financing of the project. The ELTIP was jointly financed by the GoB and DfID during Phase I (from July 1997 to June 2002), while Phase II (July 2002 to June 2005) was launched with the financial assistance of the seven general education boards and the NCTB. Phase III (July 2005 to May 2010) was also supposed to be funded by them but the general education boards pulled out, unwilling to provide any more funding. Therefore, the project collapsed and Phase IV could not be launched (Khan S. R., 2011). Though the project is now defunct it has created an indelible impact. Some of the teachers trained in the approach are still trying to practice CLT in the classroom but not all of them got training from ELTIP. Other projects on ELT initiated after ELTIP have almost identical aims and objectives. So, teachers are still practicing the methods and techniques learned from ELTIP which were also reinforced by recent projects.

ELTIP had a great impact on many teachers who received training on CLT approach for the first time through the program. CLT was a new approach for them and now this method of English language teaching has become trendy, with more emphasis put on it than ever before. During the data collection stage, one of the English teachers interviewed had this to say about ELTIP training: “As an English teacher, teaching is not fulfilled without knowing these new approaches of teaching.” The most effective features of ELTIP were discouragement of memorization, encouragement of active participation of students, and insistence on both teachers’ and students’ speaking in English in the classroom.

Khan (2002, p.44-45) reported that the teacher trainers during her investigation expressed the following views about the impact of teacher training:

- The majority of them stated that the training was significant and had made an impact on them as they had learned new things on the training.
- ELTIP training gave teachers ideas of teaching the new communicative textbooks effectively and they reported that they observed that teachers were trying to teach communicatively. They perceived this to a positive impact of the training.
- They said that ELTIP training had created awareness of teaching amongst some teachers that the old system of teaching is not effective and should be changed.
- The training had increased both teachers’ and trainers’ confidence.
- ELTIP training would hopefully give teachers the strength and skill to make their classes communicative.

Hamid (2010, p.300) maintained from several research findings that ELTIP -1 funded by DfID and managed by the British Council with the NCTB was ‘generally successful’.

SESIP (Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project)

The Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) was put into operation in June, 1999 as a follow up project of Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP) and Higher Secondary Education Project (HSEP). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided assistance to Government of Bangladesh (GoB) for the development of the secondary education sector and supported three projects in Bangladesh between 1984-98. As part of ADB’s support, it provided Technical

Assistance (TA) to GoB for preparing the Secondary Education Sector Development Plan (SESDP) to be implemented from 2000 to 2010 (IMED, Intensive Monitoring Report of Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project, 2006, p.1-2).

The Project Completion Report (Asian Development Bank, 2008) stated that the project implementation arrangements were satisfactory in carrying out the Project effectively. The reasons cited included (1) establishment of the project implementation unit for day-to-day project implementation, (2) utilization of consultant services, (3) establishment of several committees to coordinate various activities at different levels, (4) mobilization of professional institutions under MOE, school management committees, and beneficiary institutions and (5) utilization of four institutions for international training.

The project planned to establish an Education Management Information System (EMIS) at DSHE with a network in zones and districts by June 2003. But the design of the project had weaknesses included (a) the lack of benefit monitoring and evaluation, (b) the failure of the EMIS design to address coordination of monthly payment processing, a regular DSHE function, (c) developing the capacity of Education Management Information System (EMIS) staff without a concrete retention plan, and (d) the failure to define Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics (BANBEIS)'s role, an apex body under MOE. So the evaluator finds weak design, implementation, and utilization of the project's EMIS.

The Project Completion Report (PCR) found that even though the project has achieved some outcomes, the Evaluator rates the Project *effective*, rather than highly effective, because the following outcomes have not yet been achieved: (a) as stated in the Government's PCR, the dropout rate for grades 6–10 remained high (42% in 2005), though it decreased from 44% in 1998; (b) most of the reforms initiated were not institutionalized (e.g., curriculum improvement, examination reform, and decentralized management) during the project period; and (c) here is inadequate evidence of an increased percentage of grade 10 graduates (who did not continue schooling) who were gainfully employed or self-employed.

Project Sustainability

The project had a significant impact on the secondary education sub-sector in terms of institutions, the quality of secondary education, and other related aspects. Evidence of institutional impact consists of strengthening (i) MOE's policy and planning capacity, (ii) the capacity of DSHE for decentralized performance-based management, and school performance-based management, and (iii) the capacity of NCTB for improving the quality of (a) textbooks, (b) curriculum development, and (c) textbook publishing (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

TQI (Teaching Quality Improvement)

TQI project was initiated in July, 2005 to improve the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools and improve learning outcomes for all children enrolled in secondary education by managing and coordinating secondary teachers' training nation-wide and establishing an integrated national secondary teacher's training network and improving the teacher's training system. The objectives of the project was (i) to help the Government establish a Non-Government Teacher Registration and Certification Authority and a Teacher Education Authority for the registration, accreditation and deployment of qualified and competent teachers in non-government secondary schools, (ii) to provide the scope of initial and in-service teacher's training for the teachers serving in government and non-government secondary schools, (iii) to increase training access in the under-served and disadvantaged areas and thereby ensure quality teaching, and (iv) to build upon an appropriate integrated system for linking the Ministry of Education with its stakeholder institutes to raise awareness about their roles and responsibilities. The overall objective of the project is to improve the quality of teaching in secondary education in Bangladesh.

The follow-up evaluation was done only once after the trainings. Sometimes this evaluation was done after six months. Evaluation team observed teachers' class and then gave feedback. But it had no regular monitoring. One of the teachers said, "Without regular monitoring, trainings could not be effective."

Project Sustainability

To strengthen access, quantity and quality and relevance of education, the government, being approved by the National Education Policy (NEP), has embarked on a comprehensive reform process. In 2011, a new phase of primary education reform program started, with ADB being one of the key partners. The TQI-I and TQI-II projects are core building blocks to strengthen quality of secondary education in line with the reform proposed in the NEP. Building on the TQI-I achievements and gaps, TQI-II includes the following features to enhance teachers' quality:

- Establishing partnership between universities and teacher training colleges to enhance content and pedagogical knowledge of teachers and recognizing prior learning within an integrated teacher's development framework;
- Developing one of the TTCs as a center for excellence for teaching English;
- Introducing teacher and head teacher competencies, and institutionalizing teacher classroom performance monitoring by head teacher;
- Piloting computer aided learning to support the government's large investment envisaged in the use of computers and multi-media to enhance teaching and learning. (ADB ,2009).

The Teaching quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project TQI-I has improved the expertise and pedagogical knowledge of a large number of secondary teachers through targeting classroom level teaching and learning with a continuous professional development (CPD) approach which includes supporting and monitoring the usage of new participatory teaching approaches of participants in the classroom. According to an initial assessment by TQI-I project, this has resulted in considerable changes in the classroom. Acknowledging the challenges of improving quality of teachers, the government has established a National Teacher Education commission (NTEC) with support of TQI. A Non-government Teachers Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) has been established by an Act to improve the teacher recruitment system.

Shibli Haque (not real name), a reporter, comments bitterly on TQI during the interview of the present study (2012). He thinks the entire project TQI is ineffective. He mentions from his own findings that,

> "In some places, it was found that non-teachers were taking TQI training, and after that an investigation committee was set up with members from education cadre. As a result the Project Director was transferred to another ministry (During the interview, 2012). "

SECONDARY EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (SESDP)

The gradual deterioration of the standards and qualities of both the educators and the learners of the secondary level against the ever increasing number of educators, learners and schools through the expansion of primary education has been accentuated as one of the burning issues by the concerned section of the country. According to the final report of Secondary Education Sector Development Project (Nov, 2011), to come out of this barren situation emerged from the poor management and the conventional methodologies of imparting education, skilled monitoring and proper evaluation are indispensably needed. At this backdrop, to bring about positive and substantive changes, SESIP with the aid of ADB (Asian Development Bank) introduced the reformative activities in the secondary education sector. SESDP (Secondary Education Sector Development Program/Project) is, in fact, the follow- on project of SESIP (Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project).

It is worth mentioning the comment of aforementioned Shibli Haque (during the interview with the researcher 2012), a reporter on this project:

> "A number of unprofessional conducts were found practiced during this project by the key personnel; it seems they preferred personal gain to project achievement for example, one of the key personnel went abroad with family members on project money. The other component head of the XXXX (real name of the project has been withheld) have no practical knowledge of what s/he is working on, for example, head of scholarship did not know anything about scholarship. Since inception of this project for last 10 years, only very few are throughout actually controlling everything, they are the main decision makers for which car to buy, who to send abroad. They never did not show any concern to maintain the quality of the training of English teachers going on or will be".

English in Action (EIA)

EIA has been by far the most ambitious and the most expensive funded project in Bangladesh. However, as Hamid (2010, p.300) echoes the confusion of many educationists, "It was not clear why Bangladesh needed another DfID funded project with almost similar objectives as instead of launching a new project, could the DfID have re-funded the ELTIP which faced serious funding problems in its second and third phases?" The program of work has been conducted by a consortium of partners including the BBC World Service Trust and the Open University. The project is managed, on behalf of DFID, by BMB Mott Macdonald. The project will run in three phases over 9 years. The project has already crossed 7 years of 9 projected years.

However, there has not been any systematic evaluation of the project yet, except a few reports from baseline study are available at the website of EIA.

As we visit the official website of a £50 million English language project we find strong claims that:

> "English in Action aims at enabling 25 million Bangladeshi adults and school children to improve their English language skills that will help them access better economic and social opportunities."

It goes further to mention that EIA is using mobile phones, the internet, print-materials, television, and peer-to-peer learning to help 25 million Bangladeshis improve their English as a route into work and out of poverty. With English rapidly becoming the global language of business, fluency in working English can play a major role in helping people escape from poverty. Nearly 70 million Bangladeshis survive on less than a dollar a day and a third of the urban population lives in slums. The program, English in Action, supports the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, which are aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (EIA website, 2015).

EIA came up with the idea of "trainer in the pocket", a concept with its mobile phone service transforming a simple handset into a low-cost learning device. Anyone can learn and practise English by calling a mobile shortcode, from any Bangladeshi mobile operator. According to their claim, so far, more than 7 million people have accessed 3-minute audio lessons for the cost of less than 50 paisa per minute (EIA Website). However, it is believed the success rate claimed by EIA is questionable and need to be validated (Hakim during the interview, 2012).

Project Sustainability

In schools, The EIA program introduces new English language teaching and learning activities to teachers and students across Bangladesh. By April 2014, more than 12,500 teachers and almost a million students have been reached by the program. By 2017, it aims to reach 51,000 teachers and over 7 million students.

The EIA schools program has been trying new classroom activities for teachers and students, for instance, audio-visual professional materials available at low cost through memory (SD) cards on teachers' mobile phones. The materials have been designed in the line of the national textbook, *English for Today*. At this moment, in the final stage, EIA is working with the different NGOs and organization for institutionalization.

EIA has claimed from their own study that 95% of surveyed teachers reported that EIA had helped them improve their own language skills and 90% feels EIA has an impact on the way they teach. Over 90% of their talk is now in English in the classroom. And, with this new opportunity to speak and practice English, students are learning more. When tested on an international 12 grade scale, within 12 months, 54% of primary students improved a whole grade, and 38% of secondary students improved a whole grade (www.eia.bd.com). However, the figures seem to be too true to believe.

During the interview sessions with the present researchers, all the consultants expressed their apprehension of the achievement of EIA as projected in their policy guideline. One of those consulted who has been engaged with almost all funded projects regretted that EIA never invited the consulted to share their experience which could be real useful for EIA. One of the respondents who has good knowledge about funded projects mentioned that the information about EIA is not easily available to them. That is why it is difficult for anyone to evaluate the project outcome. However, to reach its goal, EIA or its research partners have conducted several studies to establish a direct link between English learning and development. There has not been any significant breakthrough with the results.

SEQAEP (Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project)

Another recent project (July 2008) under the Directorate of Secondary Education- the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) is a donor financed project. The project will be implemented over a five-year period (2008-2013) in 121 Upazilas (Upazila is a sub part of a district). At the national level, under the guidance of a Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary, MoE, the overall responsibility for the proposed project would lie with the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) as the implementing agency. The proposed Project contributes to Bangladesh's long-term objective of human capital development for sustaining economic growth and poverty reduction. The objectives of the project are well aligned with the recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS).

The objectives of the project are to improve the quality of secondary education, systematically monitor learning outcomes, and to increase access and equity in project Upazilas). This project consists of: (a) improving education quality and monitoring learning levels in project areas, (b) improving equity and access in project areas through provision of stipends to poor girls and boys, (c) strengthening the institutional capacity of Ministry of Education (MoE) both at central and local levels, and (d) establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation system (World Bank, 2008).

The focus of this project is on English because school examinations and SSC results have indicated that English language is one of the weakest subject areas at the secondary level. The project mainly focuses on quality of mathematics and English subject. It aims to develop the basic skills and concepts of the secondary level students. Teachers need to be trained to make their classes more effective. Therefore, the one of the main objectives of this project is to provide support to English teachers by enhancing their skills.

Internal efficiency and quality remains low, many poor children are still left out of the secondary school system and Institutional capacity remains weak despite past capacity-building efforts.

A comprehensive and integrated data monitoring system would be in place to ensure that all project inputs, process, outputs, and outcomes are tracked by (a) systematically document all project input, process, output, and outcomes; and (b) link project interventions with outcomes.

The evaluation report of The World Bank (2010) reported, “Overall, implementation is moderately satisfactory in light of the reasonable progress made in the delivery of key project components - improving education quality and improving equitable access. Achievements in the quality component include disbursement of various incentive awards to more than 65,000 students, 3000 teachers and 2000 institutions (schools), delivery of more than 200,000 additional classes in English Language and Mathematics, and initiation of the reading habit program in 1,000 institutions.”

Project Sustainability

The sustainability of this project will ultimately depend on the success of the implementation of the quality interventions, the PMT mechanism and capacity development. Various risk factors are also considered.

The World Bank (2010) informed in the evaluation report on SEQAEP, "GoB and IDA have agreed that results can be further enhanced with refinement and institutionalization of all incentive awards and delivery of additional classes in English and Mathematics, increased community awareness and mobilization, and continued efforts to provide adequate staffing, technical assistance, monitoring and logistics support to project implementation unit and coordination among implementing partners."

There is a grave concern about misappropriation of SEQAEP fund as reported in *the Independent* (Khan, S. 2011)*,*"Financed jointly by the World Bank and the Bangladesh government, SEQAEP in 2009 had introduced extra classes for English and Mathematics in 1,621 selected schools and madrasas located in remote rural areas. However, the initiative came to an end in March 2011. A circular, signed by SEQAEP director Md. Sirajul Islam, had been sent to all 121 Upazila secondary education officers, directing them to stop the programme as teachers allegedly took money without arranging for extra classes. "They pocketed a considerable sum without taking extra classes. This project has cost us Tk. 20 crore since June 2009," said Islam. Then the Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Independent that the ministry will bring some major changes in accordance with recommendations made by the 16-member committee (Khan, S. 2011)."

Interview findings: Micro-political issues

Hunter (2009), who was a project leader of ELTIP, has mentioned several micro political issues that influence the project implementation in a developing nation.

> "As a team leader I was both puzzled and frustrated by the behaviour of stakeholders in the project process. ...some were, at best Neutral in their support for the work of the project, while others seemed to conspire against its success."

As part of the investigation of the English initiatives, interviews of trainee teachers, national consultants of different English initiatives and an education report were conducted.

One of the effective ways to get an insight into the outcome of different English initiatives is to have interviews of different stakeholders who were engaged and benefitted from the projects like trainee teachers, consultants, reporters. Another important source is the study of various literature and evaluation reports available on the projects. For a discussion on the different English initiatives the researcher arranged Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with teachers who had the opportunity to take part in training program as part of reform initiatives. The participants were selected according to certain criteria, that is, all of them had received training under different English initiatives. The questions ranging from the selection procedure to classroom implication of training as part of the initiatives were asked. Names of the participants were changed and pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

Findings from Teachers FGD

Selection procedure of teachers for the training as part of a project

Compared to ELTIP, most of the participants believed that TQI was fair since they all got equal opportunity. During ELTIP, only the people who were close to the Head teacher got the opportunity.

Quality of the training and its impact on classroom teaching

All of them considered the training to be useful. They also shared that the immediate impact on classroom teaching really satisfactory but as time goes on they tend to get back to their original teaching style. However, one senior teacher Mahabubur Rahman (pseudonym) who did his Master in English from the University of Dhaka said (about ELTIP):

> "I have been benefitted in many ways from ELTIP training that I could successfully apply in my teaching at college. After we got training, we felt confident to speak in English. We learnt to use pair work, interaction, participation, sharing then interaction- these in reality we had to do in the class after getting this training. So, I believe we are highly benefitted."

Another teacher said :

> "We got training from TQI at Dhaka Teachers' Training, organized by NAEM. I have been really benefited. But I believe that you have to know some grammar, grammar is something like how to cook. I know all about language but if I do not know grammar I will not be able to cook."

Comment from senior teachers will reflect teachers' attitude towards projects and training:

> These small trainings are absolutely essential… for the school teachers of Bangladesh. But I think, in Bangladeshi situation they have started the communicative approach…we are not prepared as teachers to teach the

> students. Already, instructions have come to the schools that communicative system should be implemented. But teachers are not trained in that way.

Findings from interviews with national consultants and education specialists

Five national consultants, with teaching and training experience ranging from 25 to 40 years, who were engaged with previous initiatives in different capacities attended one-on-one interviews with the researcher. Interview of an investigative journalist who writes reports on education was conducted taking into account his considerable knowledge about present and past initiatives. He has been writing prolifically about English initiatives in Bangladesh. Apart from writing educational investigative report, he also regularly writes on the future of different English initiatives. The interviewees were asked several questions regarding the strengths and the limitations of former and present initiatives. Questions ranged from selection criteria of consultants, materials designed to success or failure of the projects.

The following major themes were explored in the interview data:

1. The limitations and the strengths of previous initiatives: This included issues like teacher training, research component and school support.

2. Materials development: This included issues about the role of materials, people's attitude towards the materials, etc.

3. Other issues: Selection procedure of consultants, trainees and other subsidiary issues.

Limitations:

Factors responsible for the failure of teachers training program are listed as follows.

a) Lack of support from the school authority and senior colleagues

Almost every participant raised serious concern about school support for the successful implementation of raining element in classroom.

> In a project usually, the young teachers are targeted to be trained to bring changes with the teaching. However, the problem is that the trained young teachers in the context of Bangladesh, are quite powerless. They may not be allowed to teach English subject. Even if they are allowed, they do not have much influence either with the head teacher or with the senior teachers, or with society. (Sultana Khan, former National consultant, ELTIP, during the interview with the researcher 2012)

This was evident during last English initiative ELTIP. Consequently the outcome of the training met with disaster. One consultant who observed the training closely narrated the experience:

> …when these teachers went back to their school, they had to meet the resistance of the head teacher, of the senior teachers who had the ear of the head teacher and the society. So, as it happened with me, I was in charge of the Khulna-Jessore area. One of the teachers, poor soul, was about to lose his job, because he was carrying out what he had been trained to do. So, I said, "you better go back to your own system whatever the school approves of. You cannot afford to lose your job. I can't get you a job." (Sultana Khan and Afroza, during the interview with the researcher 2012)

b) **Problem with the Cascade training**

The other aspect was the cascade. Teachers were entrusted to get together with teachers from far-flung areas. However, no rickshaw fare was provided. And the roads were bad. In the Khulna-Jessore area, the communication wasn't favorable at all. As a result, the trainees were not motivated to perform the task. In addition, there was no one to check on them. For these and many reasons, teachers became demotivated to do the cascades (Sultana Khan, former National consultant, interview 2012)

c) Task fulfillment

ELTIP left off without completing other components envisioned at project conception. The components for the college, i.e. class XI and XII were not attempted at all till the end of the course.

d) Materials of previous initiatives

> The material was being designed by the teachers' worn out approach. There was no question of training those teachers, because it was far too late, towards the end. They did not do anything about it. (Sultana Khan, former National consultant, ELTIP)
>
> The materials were good. But not without criticism from different corners (Hakim, National consultant). The first criticism was "There's no grammar." And who are the people who said this? The first of all, the senior teachers. Secondly, the private tutors. Thirdly, the head teachers. (Sultana Khan, former National consultant, ELTIP)

Afroze Begum who was one of the writers of text books, clearly stated the problem with the materials development and the politics of book writing:

> "I wrote a book for 11-12. Major factors were illustration, we expected a colourful book with illustrations reflecting social awareness like working women, domestic help of a husband, so that text books are not merely text books, rather it conveys social message. To my utter surprise the quality of the pages, was very bad, faded pages were used instead of colour pages….. we wanted to show that even a husband can help in domestic work. The concept was destroyed. As writers, we gave the ideas but they destroyed our ideas" (During the interview, 2012).

Begum also mentions the politics behind the book writing in NCTB ,

> Another shocking thing was there were two chapters on population which were not written by me. I disowned those two chapters because I did not write them. Interestingly, training programs were organised throughout the nations to teach those chapters (During the interview, 2012)

The materials designed were very useful and effective and in fact this is how it should be with any successful project. They were designed keeping in line with the national curriculum so they need not have been adapted. However, trialing ought to have been carried out.

Habibur Rahman who was one of the persons actively involved in materials development says:, …… "this is a weakness of NCTB management. They could not reach teacher's guide to all the teachers and subsequently, the teaching is hampered".

During ELTIP project a Teacher's Guide was prepared but

> "Not a single teacher had these guidebooks. In fact, when I went to some of the schools to observe, the teacher was late, and he hadn't brought his book, and so Notebooks were written prolifically, and teachers were proud to say that they were ELTIP trained teachers. That is what I saw. That was the outcome." (During the interviews, Sultana khan, 2012)

e) Selection of resource persons, project directors and trainees

Most of the interviewees agreed that the selection of resource persons and trainees were fair. But four out of five former informants raised the issue of selection of PD (Project Director) who happened to be the wife of one of the national consultants as unfair.

Sultana, Hakim ,Habib and Afroza during the interview mentioned the following

> "If the PD had been qualified, I would definitely have supported her. The PD had no clue what the project was about. And what we all minded, and I still mind, I still say with very great bitterness is, she was given an MA degree on the project money during the project's life in Britain, whereas

> other teachers who had been prepared to go abroad, They could not go because there was not enough money by that time. All that money had been spent on the project director's qualification, which has come to no good because after that see left the job, to go into private practice and other things.
>
> Sometime it happened that in a project's main helmsman, s/he is not even in this subject's, expert is a far idea. Suppose a person is from Micro-biology, if runs English Language project nationwide. So s/he, is not even a teacher by profession. So, now he is leading the project." (Sultana and Habibur Rahman, 2012)
>
> Selection of certain personnel – was an administrative failure, surely, the project being disowned by NCTB, the initiative not being taken up by the government resulting in its discontinuation." (Hakim Islam, interview 2012)

The selection of Project Director (PD) is always a problematic issue. One respondent shares the process of selecting a PD:

> "It's interesting to note that entirely people with opposite kind of professional background are appointed as PD or director with recommendation even from sometimes Prime Minister office and Ministry of Education. Former secretary of education is now a consultant in Monitoring and Evaluation of XXXX project. He is from Hobiganj and from the same area of the minister. Now a new PD has joined. World bank, DFID an ADB, British council have appointed their favorable people using their good connection, there are some people like ....who has definite allegation of corruption, who were transferred out of Dhaka, just because of pressure from Word Bank, he was appointed again in the project. World Bank, ADB, British council will make sure that their favored people will be placed in these projects." (Education Reporter, 2012)

f) Support from Local government and the issue of ownership

> "In most of the cases, there is serious lack of sense of ownership from the government point of view. The government representatives were never present, in, on any occasion." (Habibur Rahman, Afroza Sultana, 2012)

Though one of the consultants believe that,

> "How much support you can get will depend on the network and the leadership of the Project Director, initiatives ought to be from the grassroots level upwards and the testing system needs to be modified to reflect the communicative method of teaching to build up communicative competence." (Habibur Rahman, Hakim Islam, interview, 2012)

g) Project outcome and issues of support and monitoring

> "Little support was received from Head Teachers. And Head teachers

> were guided by senior teachers. HTs were not trained during ELTIP. They were only called during stakeholders' meeting. They went back and they did exactly as they pleased. And it happened most in the public schools, not in the private schools so much. In some of the private schools I've met very motivated Head teachers". (During interview 2012, Afroza Sultana and Hakim Islam)

In all previous projects including ELTIP, one major issue that has been highlighted by all respondents was *there was no effective and consistent follow up of progress.*

h) Involvement of national consultants

The expertise of the national consultants was not utilized. They were asked to work only for couple of days in a month, but they were asked to write a report.

i) Learning experience from previous projects

All respondents opined that they do not utilize the learning experience from previous projects:

> "No project tries to utilize the good effect of the last one, or what the last one established. So, everybody is trying to reinvent the wheel, and that's where most of the energy and the money go into. If project had been trying to use the good effects of ELTIP, whatever came later after that, at least used some of our expertise, some of our knowledge, some of our experience, I don't think it, we would've been in so badly off by now. And that is why we are constantly, going back and forth, reinventing the wheel, and we are spending all our energy." (During the interview 2012, Sultana, Afroza, Habib, Sabbir, Hakim)

j) Lack of integration

> "Project should be designed according to the needs of the country. The decisions of policy making should try matching the findings of the research conducted by the local consultants, local demands and, local needs." (During Interview 2012, Habibur Rahman)

On problem with initiatives,

> "…to save the continuation of the projects, we don't incorporate the recommendation of impact study on previous projects---I mean lessons learnt from other projects. If we could have considered, then we could have some good results. In previous projects which we achieved, or we failed to achieve, can be used effectively in the new projects. In practice this never happens; as a result, we see overlapping actions in many projects such as TQI, SESDP or SEQAEP". (During interview 2012, Habibur Rahman, Consultant and materials developer)

k) Discrimination of remuneration between national and international

consultants

During last initiatives, the local consultants were always undermined. As Sultana puts it, "We were pushed to the periphery". The national consultants also highlights that there was a serious disparity and discrimination of remuneration between the international and local consultants with similar qualification and expertise.

As one of the participants bitterly shares her experience:

> "Everybody felt that the national consultants were not given their due share in terms of participation, in the project, and at the end of it, all those international consultants and team leader etc. got huge fees. And we hardly got anything. That is what happens in consultations."

l) Assessment and examination system

The most important part that the previous project failed to change was the examinations. They could have done something from the very beginning.

> "*…….. nothing will ever change, nothing will happen to the teacher's training. It will not be accepted unless your examination requires that skill*". (During interview 2012, Sultana, Afroza and Habibur Rahman former National consultants, ELTIP)

Assessment is one area where all projects seem to fail to anything with. Whatever good practice the projects advocated it failed one reason because the examination system there was no scope to evaluate the practice.

m) Madrasa Education system

Habibur Rahman, one of the former consultants, raised an issue that he believed has been ignored by projects,

> One very important part is 'Madrasa education. That seems to me that Madrasa is ignored. But they deserve same or sometime more attention because in terms of population it is huge. I am observing that according to the present information, 70% teachers in Madrasa are not trained. There is no training. So, there should be a place to give special attention on this part. And when we will give positive attention to them and call them, will make them work, then the difference will be minimized between Madrasa education and traditional mainstream education. (During interview 2012, Habibur Rahman)

n) Sustainability issues

Research and development is an important side of any big project. To be in a continuous research, to make the findings workable again, to share, to assimilate, it is a must for any project. ELTIP lacked a research component which was the biggest weakness. Though ELTIP tried to involve people through a research work, the respondents confessed that it was not authentic research. Hakim Islam (interview 2012) clearly points out the issue of sustainability about ELTIP:

> I wouldn't term it a failure. In one sense, if there was administrative failure, it was in the selection of PD. In the second place, the project being disowned by NCTB, the responsibility was thrust upon them, and the government, the MoE not looking to sustain it – with the set-up they floated this training could have continued, into the secondary level, for a considerable amount of time, later on this could have been integrated with a new project, but they did none of that.
>
> Teachers did improve a lot, my experience says they made significant improvement but to sustain this, close monitor and evaluation was required. (During interview 2012, Sabbir Ahmed)

Shibli Haque (interview 2012), an investigative journalist who has been writing report about foreign aided projects, shares completely a different perspective,'

> "The major problem is that the aim of British council, ADB and World Bank is merely to do business here not to bring Educational reforms. The projects are forced on us."

o) Strengths of ELTIP

During the interview, most of the participants highlighted on the outcome of ELTIP project and the following strengths of ELTIP were indentified:

> As for success, undoubtedly it was, it was a very useful project. It was able to bring about a change in the consciousness, in the ideology, in the practices of the teachers. Its administrative capability was admirable. It was well-organized, all the work, in all the areas, I saw these being implemented beautifully. This is the reason for its success. (During interview 2012, Hakim Islam)
>
> ELTIP came and immediately set out to identify the teachers of English Language Teaching community in this country; wanted to engage in a dialog with them, almost all individuals who were experienced in the field of ELT, integrated into the program at various times, in various ways, they listened to them. This is one of the reasons it gained popularity. (During interview 2012, Sultana and Hakim)
>
> The teacher training (ELTIP) was really good. I saw it. How they operated it in their very large classrooms was effective. The book was good. But unless the examination requires it, and unless a substantial number, the demography matters here. Substantial numbers of teachers are trained, you will not change anything. And there were such hard resistance from the senior teachers that the junior teachers gave up.

(During interview 2012, Hakim)

p) Success of ELTIP in training teachers:

> ELTIP claims that they have already trained up more than 35000 teachers. So, if that happens, then that is huge number, which is closed to almost total number of secondary English teachers. (During interview 2012, Habibur Rahman)

Both Habibur Rahman and Hakim (During interview 2012,) highlights the strength of ELTIP in terms of trained teachers who were trained in abroad or in the homeland as a trainer, *"if it could be possible to hold them by good re-training, good appointment, good work, then possibly you could have really developed a big pool of trainers which would have been an assets for the country"*.

Key findings of the study

Following findings are listed and categorized in terms of different emerging issues to identify sustainability issues of different initiatives:

Textbook reformation and curriculum design:

- OSSTTEB developed and modified English textbooks of grade VI to grade VIII focuses on communicative approach. It also developed one year B Ed English curriculum and course materials. However, it was found that orientations of teachers for the new textbooks were not well organized.
- ELTIP-trained writers wrote two textbooks (based on CLT approach) accompanied with teachers guide for grade 9-10 and 11-12. However, the effectiveness of the books was questioned since ELTIP failed to bring any changes with the existing national examination system.
- SESIP proposed for having improved curriculum development, reforming student assessment and public examination.
- B. Ed in English curriculum was developed by OSSTTEB.

Teachers' Professional Development

- SESIP is trying to reform teacher education. As per the recommendation of taskforce, 67 teacher educators have received foreign training for this purpose.
- The objective of TQI is to improve the quality of teaching in secondary education in Bangladesh. Teachers Registration and Certification Authority (NTRCA) is initiated by TQI to improve the teacher recruitment system.
- SEQAEP could train Eight thousand teachers in English and Mathematics so far.
- ELTIP trained 25 English language teacher trainers at the college of St. John and St. Mark (Marjon) in the UK for 12 weeks and the Project Director got trained in the UK for one year. ELTIP also trained 8 textbook writers at Marjon for 12 weeks for producing textbooks and teacher's guides for classes 9-12.

Teacher Training and Monitoring

- Teachers trained by OSSTTEB were not found to implement their learning in the classroom properly.
- Trained teachers of ELTIP seemed to be familiar with CLT approach but not always capable of applying that in their classrooms effectively
- It was found that non-Teachers were taking TQI training

Teacher Training and Monitoring

- TQI gave almost similar ideas that ELTIP gave and TG was also similar. It enhanced teacher training program and delivery system.
- For monitoring classroom practice TQI involved HTs.
- SEQAEP identified English as an area to improve and provided support to English teachers.

- ELTIP provided TG to the trainees which required to be upgraded with ideas to teach grammar in context.

- At present, activities of ELTIP is suspended since June 2010 owing to a severe funds crunch.

Management and implementation

- SESIP has strengthened capacity and management system of MOE and other concerned agencies. It developed decentralized management system through School Performance-based Management System (SPBMS). Upazila (sub part of districts) Academic Supervisors (UAS) has been appointed by SESIP.

- Most all SEQAEP institutions (6,700) have established Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). Fifty thousand PTA members have received orientation training.

- ELTIP had a very strong management system that was appreciated by all consultants

Conclusion

The findings indicate that trainees deemed initiatives very useful. The above findings show that though the projects gained some sort of achievements, they could not bring significant changes with education system in general and with English education in particular. The major factors that hindered the projects are mainly the lack of monitoring and evaluation during and post project period, lack of ownership on government's part, teachers' reluctance to adopt new techniques, lack of support from Head teachers, senior colleagues and lack of integration among projects running simultaneously with almost similar objectives. Concerns were also raised about the selection of project directors who may not have sufficient background to run Education projects.

The findings showed that though the projects gained some sort of achievements, little change they could bring with English education. The major factors that hindered the projects are mainly the lack of monitoring and evaluation during and post project period, lack of ownership on government's part, teachers' reluctance to adopt new techniques, lack of support from Head teachers, senior colleagues and lack of integration among projects running simultaneously with almost similar objectives. Concerns were also raised about the selection of project directors who may not have sufficient background to run Education projects. Every project reinvents the wheel while projects could actually utilize the learning outcome of previous projects and start from the point where they left. Finally, recommendation and future directions are given for new projects.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of documents reviewed and interviews, the following recommendations may be put forth:

- There should be clear policy awareness that developing English proficiency among the population is an overly ambitious goal requiring unaffordable resource investment.
- Developing nations including Bangladesh need to scrutinize critically, to reassess their English access policy and to redefine its role, status and curricular weight in the light of national resource investment.
- Although donor-funded projects may serve short-term goals in English teacher training, overreliance on them may not be beneficial in the longer term.
- In developing national capacity for sustainable teacher training, developing nations need to explore the potential of local institutions and expertise.
- Developing nations as well as donor agencies can encourage local ELT experts, academics and language educators from local universities to work with primary and secondary schools and English teachers to contribute to the latter's professional development and ongoing learning as a kind of community service.

- Foreign funded initiative should embark based on the aspiration, expectation and needs of the people.

- There should be integration among all initiatives runs simultaneously with almost similar objectives. This saves time, money and also helps to avoid overlapping that might create confusion among the stakeholders. Lack of integration is a serious concern as raised by all consultants.

- Projects should emphasize and improve their monitoring and supervision wing. Most of the previous projects lacked a clear and goal orientated monitoring and evaluation system that is a must to sustain any project.

- Government should own and feel the ownership of a project. Funded projects timeline ends the moment the donors call it off. Failure on government part to own is one major problem why the outcome of project met with frustrating results.

- Time has come to formulate a ELT policy that will eventually contribute to the development of the country

- Need a reform in present examination system and emphasize on four language skills. No project will be successful until they can convince the government to reform the evaluation system

- School support is important to bring changes in education. Head teacher and managing committee should help teachers to introduce, implement and practice new approaches. They should welcome and encourage changes that trained teachers are willing to bring as an outcome of their training.

- Project should be implemented following a bottom up process after realizing the social reality and the challenges at the grassroots level. Projects often come with high ambition that does not fit into the socio-economic reality of Bangladesh. One of the major reasons projects disintegrate after the end of the project period is because of the top-down model. So if project can get the teachers at the Upazila level to take the initiative, organize them then one may see a change. They will ultimately begin to raise their voice, voice their requirements.

- Participation of the local experts should be ensured based on their expertise instead of their network or influence. Selection of non-expert in a project often met with frustration on other stakeholders' part. A minor issue sometime may become a major obstacle.

- Projects should give a clear future direction for the government and for the future initiatives. New Initiatives should not reinvent the wheel. They should start from the point where previous projects end.

In conclusion, what Haque (2011) who is a senior English Teaching Specialist commented is noteworthy:

> Projects come and projects go, and in sync with their coming and going communicative English causes quite a stir and silently disappears. But if, with technical support from a project, our mainstream education system develops trainers, teachers, supervisors, education officials, textbooks, supplementary materials and assessment system, effective teaching and learning will take place and we can have the English we need.

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Designing a Pre-Service Teacher Education Course in English for the Medium of Instruction

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Abstract

Since the turn of the century, many universities in non-Anglophone countries have switched to a policy of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) for many of their courses or programs. This policy switch has created pedagogy challenges. Two of those pedagogy challenges include 1) the ability of the students to learn in English as a Second Language (ESL) and 2) the ability of some teachers to teach in what is termed here as "English for the Medium of Instruction" (EFMI). This paper will discusses the process of designing and assessing an EFMI course at a university in Hong Kong intended to address that second challenge. The first stage in the process was to gain institutional acknowledgment of the reification of EFMI, followed by university approval of an EFMI course syllabus, and the design and development of course materials in the final stage. The course was recently offered for the first time as part of pre-service teacher education for future instructors who do not use English as their primary language. The design of the EFMI course had to negotiate three pedagogical/educational approaches to course design: 1) an outcomes-based teaching approach which is expected for all publically-funded universities in Hong Kong, 2) a

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functional approach to language pedagogy, and 3) a 'discovery' approach embracing the university curriculum-at-large.

Keywords: EMI, EFMI, university, teacher education

The higher education trend towards EMI

At higher education institutions in countries as diverse as Austria, Korea, The Netherlands, Japan, Taiwan, Norway, and Turkey, English is emerging as the medium of instruction for some courses (Brenn-White & van Rest, 2012; Chang, 2010; Corrigan, 2014; de Graff, Koopman & Westhoff, 2007; Hellekjaer, 2007; Hudson, 2009; Klaassen, 2008; Kim & Sohn, 2009; OECD, 2010; Sert, 2008; Tatzl, 2011). More recently, a quartet of higher education institutions operating in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Vietnam, and China were taking initial steps towards using English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) for some or all of their courses, in addition to the subject of English (personal communication with author, December 2014). While there appears to be a nascent shift towards EMI at many institutions in non-Anglophone countries, most discussions of EMI in the literature have centered on EMI as policy rather than EMI as pedagogy (Corrigan 2014). At the same time, because most students from those countries would generally be learning in their second language and most faculty would be teaching in their second language, development of EMI pedagogy is needed to support EMI policy. To date, there is a lack of research literature on EMI as pedagogical practice, rather than EMI policy or assessment, in higher education. The identification of that gap, as well as the reification and initial development of EMI as pedagogy, is a feature of this paper.

Achieving EMI policy outcomes in institutions in non-Anglophone countries would be enhanced by initiatives which develop and train faculty in EMI pedagogy. One recent initiative in Hong Kong provided in-service teacher education for faculty at postsecondary colleges in effective teaching in EMI (Corrigan, 2013). At the university level, another initiative in Hong Kong has seen the recent design and launch of a course in English for the Medium of Instruction (EFMI) at a publically-funded university. This article describes different stages in the design and assessment of that EFMI course.

Stages in EFMI Course Design

Tyler's (1949) enduring contribution to curriculum design has been to present a rational and linear model of curriculum planning, beginning with identifying course need. In the Tylerian model, courses are designed with a perceived need and such needs are usually about a recognized problem. In the case of the university being discussed there was initially anecdotal awareness of the struggles which new Ph.D. students had in using English for teaching demonstrations which they undertook as part of their pre-service teacher education in another course at the university. This awareness led to requisite diagnostic interviews in English new Ph.D. students – more than 200 per year - which helped to bring into focus the contours of their language problems and stimulated the reification of EFMI. Reification meant bringing the idea of EFMI into existence as a sub-genre of English for Specific Purposes. This reification of EMI as pedagogy was achieved by differentiating it descriptively from EMI as policy. In this act of reification, EMI was teased out as policy on the one hand and EMI as pedagogy (i.e., EFMI) on the other hand.

The next step in the first stage involved explaining to academic decision-makers what EFMI is and to demonstrate the need for it at the university. To achieve this latter objective, observations which had been made during the recent interviews conducted at the institution with more than 200 new Ph.D. students were communicated to key senior academics of the university. During those interviews, it had been observed that most of the new Ph.D. students faced challenges in explaining things in English. It was explained that this demonstrated inability would likely affect their future teaching in English at the university, even though they had met the English language requirements for studying for a Ph.D. in English at the university. The communication of these observations to key senior academics was instrumental in their recognition of the need for what was now reified as EFMI and in obtaining their support to draft an EFMI course syllabus. In keeping with quality assurance practices at the university, course intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks were included for the new EFMI course during this drafting process. The outcomes were based on the perceived needs of students to overcome the inabilities which they had demonstrated during those interviews. Teaching and learning activities, as well as assessment tasks, were then aligned with those outcomes.

In the second stage, the course syllabus draft was submitted to the course approval system of the university. Approval had to be obtained at many checkpoints in the university's quality assurance system, including endorsement by the academic department responsible for the teaching of the course; approval by the school committee tasked with scrutinizing new course proposals and reviewing existing courses; gaining approval from the university new course review committee, and finally, approval by the university senate, the highest academic body in the university. Owing to the strong support obtained in the previous stage from key senior academics and to the quality of the course syllabus, it was approved at each of these checkpoints.

In the third stage, the course content was designed according to the blueprint found in the course syllabus. The task was to integrate three necessary features of the course syllabus: an outcomes-based teaching and learning approach (OBTL) (Biggs, 2003); a functional approach to language pedagogy, and a discovery approach expected of all courses at the university under study.

Outcome-Based Teaching and Learning (OBTL)

For over ten years, all publically funded universities in Hong Kong have been expected to use an outcomes-based teaching and learning (OBTL) approach for their undergraduates. Professor John Biggs, the former Dean of the School of Education at the University of Hong Kong and developer of this approach, acted as a consultant to the university when it began to refit its courses to the OBTL approach more than ten years ago.

Biggs differentiates between a "surface approach" (2003, p.14-16) and "deep approach" (2003, p.16-17) and asserts that "constructive alignment", or the union of the constructivist nature of learning with teaching, will maximize the possibility that the more desirable deep learning will occur (2003, p.27). To briefly summarize, teaching and learning in Biggs' OBTL framework should follow "intended learning outcomes" (ILOs) expressed from the students' perspective and expressed along a continuum of four categories from "unistructural', which includes being able to name things; to "multistructural", which focuses on listing things; to "relational", which involves integration and application; and finally to "extended abstract", which is learning that "goes beyond existing principles" (2003, p. 39-40, 49-50). Biggs suggests observable and assessable action verbs for each of these ILO categories, which together comprise his Structure of Observable Learning Outcomes (SOLO) taxonomy (2003, p.38-49). In the Biggs' framework, Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) should align with the ILOs and the Assessment Tasks (ATs) so that student and teachers know clearly what students are expected to achieve and are assessed on those outcomes, while TLAs should facilitate the student's attainment of the ILOs.

The course described in this paper, English for the Medium of Instruction, was therefore designed to conform to Biggs' OBTL framework of ILOs, TLAs, and ATs, as required by the university.

Functional Approach

Function is among "the most widely used terms in linguistics, with a correspondingly wide range of meanings" (Crystal, 2008, p.201). In the context of the design of this course, function is meant in terms of a functional or communicative approach to language teaching which facilitates the learning and use of language functions which interlocutors need in order to carry out their communicative purposes. Communicative language use can be understood as persons achieving their communicative purposes by performing functions such expressing feelings, offering advice, elaborating, and so on. A functional approach in EFMI, more specifically, requires identifying functions which teachers need for teaching (i.e., achieving their pedagogical purposes) in English. Secondly, it means facilitating the acquisition of those functions by the future teachers of the institution so that they could deploy them appropriately when they do take up teaching.

While the number of functions required by teachers must be immense, the planned duration of the course was limited. The challenge was to identify the most-needed language functions for teaching in English at the university and then develop teaching and learning activities for the six week period during which the EFMI course would take place. A list of language functions was drawn up based on professional reflection, observations made during the diagnostic interviews of new Ph.D. students, and on the four categories found in Biggs' SOLO taxonomy. These were adopted as the most important functions to cover given the limitations of a six-week course and included 1) defining and classifying, 2) comparing and contrasting, 3) describing processes, and 4) describing cause and effect. Additional language functions such as office hour consultations and classroom language were added based upon professional reflection by the course designer.

Discovery Approach

Since the establishment of the university, many of its course developers have found it useful to include teaching and learning methods such as experiential learning or discovery method in their particular courses. In recent years, these bottom-up practices have been articulated, consolidated, and promoted by the university as a unique, institutional-wide curriculum priority which 1) places discovery and invention at the focal point of the curriculum, and 2) gives students a chance to discover or generate new knowledge. In developing the EFMI course, it was therefore necessary to articulate how the curriculum of the course was enriched with this so-called discovery approach. This was achieved by designing TLAs which required students to discover embedded functions within discourse in authentic listening materials as a step towards gaining mastery over the use of such functions for their own future teaching. In other words, authentic materials were selected in which students could discover discourse patterns for defining and classifying, process, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect. They could not only discover in those authentic materials how discourse was organized in English for those functions, but gain good listening input which in turn provided much-needed models for intelligible speaking output.

The completed design

The design of the course in English for the Medium of Instruction was completed just before the 2014-15 academic year commenced. Authentic listening materials were sourced from YouTube, which allowed easy access for students and teachers on the course. The diverse selection of short videos from YouTube reflected the students' areas of Ph.D. research and the type of teaching it was expected they would undertake as part of their Ph.D. student duties. Scripts were typed for all the videos, followed by the creation of classroom activities around them to facilitate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. In addition, materials on phonetics were sourced on-line to assist students in the acquisition of intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation, rhythm, and stress. Additional materials were created by the course designer. The course was designed to be held for sessions of two hours per week for six weeks and included the ILOs, TLAs and ATs listed in the tables which follow.

Table 3 Course design (sessions 1-6)

Session 1: Introduction to the Course / Speaking Clearly		
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	**Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**	**Assessment Tasks (ATs)**
By the end of this session, you should be able to: Explain what are the elements of speaking clearly; Use on-line resources for improving your spoken English; Use some simple explanation strategies.	Teacher-fronted and pair/group work involving presentation, practice, and performance of: Limericks; Use of on-line phonetics materials; Pronunciation of sounds, with proper voicing of consonants and vowels; Pronunciation of individual words, including stress; Proper rhythm and intonation of sentences or groups; Using appropriate on-line dictionaries and technical dictionaries; Explanation strategies for name, function, process of using, category, composition, structure, dimensions, examples, textures, origin, production method, odor, sound, taste appearance, historical information, users, effect, and comparison and contrast.	Formative assessment of performance of pair and group work

Session 2: Definition and Classification		
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	**Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**	**Assessment Tasks (ATs)**
By the end of this session, you should be able to: Explain what definition and classification are and why they are important in teaching; Identify and apply organizational structures for definition and classification in teaching; Identify and apply definition and classification language for a brief teaching exercise with clear, correct, and appropriate spoken English; Use basic classroom language; Apply explanation strategies for definition and classification.	Teacher-fronted and pair/group work involving presentation, practice, and performance of: Gist listening of authentic video materials in students' disciplines to provide good input (i.e., good pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) for good speaking output in definition and classification; Detailed listening of same authentic listening materials to enable good speaking output in definition and classification; Discovering and analyzing discourse structure and language used in authentic listening materials; Making and practicing speaking with sense groups with Read and Look up technique; Classroom language.	Formative assessment of performance of pair and group work

Session 3: Comparison and Contrast		
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	**Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**	**Assessment Tasks (ATs)**
By the end of this session, you should be able to: Explain what comparison and contrast are and why they are important in teaching; Identify and apply organizational structures for comparison and contrast in teaching; Identify and apply comparison and contrast language for a brief teaching exercise with clear, correct, and appropriate spoken English; Apply explanation strategies for comparison and contrast.	Teacher-fronted and pair/group work involving presentation, practice, and performance of: Gist listening of authentic video materials in students' disciplines to provide good input (i.e., good pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) for good speaking output in comparison and contrast; Detailed listening of same authentic listening materials to enable good speaking output in comparison and contrast; Discovering and analyzing discourse structure and language used in authentic listening materials; Making and practicing speaking with sense groups with Read and Look up technique; Consultations with students during office hours.	Formative assessment of performance of pair and group work

Session 4: Process		
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	**Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**	**Assessment Tasks (ATs)**
By the end of this session, you should be able to: Explain what process is and why it is important in teaching; Identify and apply organizational structures for process in teaching; Identify and apply process language for a brief teaching exercise with clear, correct, and appropriate spoken English; Apply explanation strategies for process.	Teacher-fronted and pair/group work involving presentation, practice, and performance of: Gist listening of authentic video materials in students' disciplines to provide good input (i.e., good pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) for good speaking output in process; Detailed listening of same authentic listening materials to enable good speaking output in process; Discovering and analyzing discourse structure and language used in authentic listening materials; Making and practicing speaking with sense groups with Read and Look up technique.	Formative assessment of performance of pair and group work

Session 5: Cause and Effect		
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)	**Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**	**Assessment Tasks (ATs)**
By the end of this session, you should be able to: Explain what cause and effect are why they are important in teaching; Identify and apply organizational structures for cause and effect in teaching; Identify and apply cause and effect language for a brief teaching exercise with clear, correct, and appropriate spoken English; Apply explanation strategies for cause and effect.	Teacher-fronted and pair/group work involving presentation, practice, and performance of: Gist listening of authentic video materials in students' disciplines to provide good input (i.e., good pronunciation, stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.) for good speaking output in cause and effect; Detailed listening of same authentic listening materials to enable good speaking output in cause and effect; Discovering and analyzing discourse structure and language used in authentic listening materials; Making and practicing speaking with sense groups with Read and Look up technique.	Formative assessment of performance of pair and group work
Session 6: Assessment		
Students do a short teaching demonstration in English for the Medium of Instruction. Each student will be given a topic related to their discipline in advance and will need to prepare a five minute teaching demonstration.		

Students' responses to the course and future direction

After students finished the course in EFMI at the university under study, they were asked to complete a 10-item survey focusing on what they gained from the course. Seventy out of 106 students submitted the electronic survey. Although not all of the 70 responded to every item on the survey, their item responses were more than 95%. Students were able to give responses without their identity being known.

The following table (Table 2) summarizes the responses for each of the 10 survey items. The data collected from the survey found that the students had a very

Table 4 Responses of the 10-item survey

Survey Item	*Strongly Agree*	*Agree*	*Neutral*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*
1. The course helped me understand my **strengths and weaknesses** in English.	**42%**	**44%**	**10%**	**0%**	**4%**
2. The course helped to model or show me **methods and techniques** which I can use in my own teaching in the future.	**43%**	**47%**	**7%**	**2%**	**1%**
3. The course helped me strengthen my overall **listening skills** in English.	**30%**	**47%**	**20%**	**3%**	**0%**
4. The course helped me strengthen my overall **speaking skills** in English.	**27%**	**50%**	**20%**	**3%**	**0%**
5. The course helped me strengthen **my explanation strategies** in English.	**46%**	**43%**	**11%**	**0%**	**0%**
6. The course modelled examples of **effective teaching techniques and methods** to improve my own teaching in English.	**44%**	**46%**	**10%**	**0%**	**0%**
7. I feel **more confident** about teaching in English after taking the supplementary course.	**47%**	**30%**	**21%**	**2%**	**0%**
8. The course helped me understand about ***sense groups*** when speaking in English.	**43%**	**46%**	**11%**	**0%**	**0%**
9. I feel more confident he course helped me understand about ***stress, rhythm, and intonation*** when speaking in English.	**47%**	**44%**	**9%**	**0%**	**0%**
10. I could use **additional sessions** to improve my English for teaching.	**33%**	**52%**	**15%**	**0%**	**0%**

high level of satisfaction with the course but dissatisfaction with their own ability to perform in English as the Medium of Instruction. But given its limited duration, the course only focused on bringing students to an “adequate” of performing in English, as measured by the summative assessment at the end of the course.

Based on their responses, the need for additional training in EFMI seems clear among the students taking the course. Additional workshops could be offered to the students as either pre-service or in-service teacher education, or the number of contact hours of the course and the duration of the course could be increased, to help address that need. To do so, however, any constraints in the institutional culture inhibiting the adoption of such measures would need to be clearly identified and strategies to address them would need to be developed. Such an undertaking would necessarily be the topic of another project at a later date.

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From a Knowledge-Based Language Curriculum to a Competency-Based One: The CEFR in Action in Asia

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Abstract

In recent years the Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, teaching assessment (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001a) has started to gain more attention amongst language professionals in Asia. This article reports on a Japanese university English department's use of the CEFR to transition from a knowledge-based English curriculum to competency-based language one. The first part of the paper reviews reasons for the reform, and how the CEFR became the main tool for that change. The basic features of the CEFR are introduced including its current standing in Japan. The second part of the paper is a descriptive account of the key issues that surrounded the use of the CEFR in designing a skill-based English curriculum. Some of the more important issues concerned are: why we bypassed the reflective scheme for teacher training, how we handled the lack of lexico-grammatical information in the CEFR, what role we gave to task-based learning, and how the CEFR's concept of partial competence had a significant impact on the objectives we set for the curriculum. It is hoped that this paper critically demonstrates the CEFR's relevance for language curriculum development in Asia.

Keywords: CEFR, partial competence, task-based learning, can do descriptors

Background

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In 2010 key stakeholders at this author's university set up a reform committee to address the declining student enrolment in university's English Department. The committee recognized a number of contributing external factors, but identified the lack of a competency-based English language curriculum as the principal factor. An increasingly globalizing world, and the perception of it, has put pressure on higher education language programs in Japan and around the world to prioritize language competency. Despite this reality, the English department's professors stood steadfastly to their traditional knowledge-based language curriculum centered on literature and linguistics. The committee's acknowledgement of the need for a substantial competency-based language curriculum signaled a new direction for English education at the university.

The key stakeholders' consent for a new skill-based language curriculum depended upon the program having demonstrable proficiency outcomes. As non-specialists in language education these senior officials favored curriculum objectives that aimed for 'marketable test results' on reputable language proficiency tests. Language education specialists on the committee countered that the starting proficiency level of students enrolling in the university was too low to achieve attractive language proficiency test results; and, moreover, focusing primarily on test passing would ultimately be detrimental to the students learning and the attractiveness of the department. The language specialists also noted that the specific proficiency tests in question did not adequately measure the more important productive skills. At this point of the debate a member of the committee introduced the CEFR. He suggested that the CEFR's globally recognized *can do* scales could be used in conjunction with, or as an alternative to language proficiency tests for assessing student language proficiency gains. Moreover, he noted that these scales could be used to identify language gains at the lowest levels of language proficiency. This unplanned entry of the CEFR into the committee's discussion is as Parmenter and Bryam (2012) note not unusual, as other users have reported its introduction into curriculum debate by "happenstance" (p. 262). At this time only a few members of the committee had ever heard of the CEFR, and none had any extensive experience with it. This unfamiliarity amongst language professionals with the CEFR is still the norm in Japan and most of Asia (Byram and Parmenter, 2012). In the case of Japan, both Majima (2010) and Sugitani and Tomita (2012) report that the CEFR's use is still mostly at the level of individual teachers at the tertiary level incorporating *can do* statements into their syllabi.

The CEFR

The CEFR has three basic parts. The first is its action-oriented approach, "an attempt to characterize comprehensively, transparently, and coherently the act of language communication in terms of what competent language users do and the competences (knowledge and skills) that enable them to act" (Trim, 2012, p. xxxiv). The second feature of the CEFR, and its least known, is the four chapters which review the methods of learning and teaching for the purpose of facilitating reflective practice and coordinating with the language professionals at all levels. The final, and most well-known feature of the CEFR is its global communicative competency scale comprised of three broad brands each with two skill-based levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) that are expressed as *can do* statements. The CEFR also contains 54 supporting subscales of different communicative competences and strategies that are also mostly presented as *can do* statements.

The worldwide popularity of CEFR amongst language professionals stems from the thoroughness of the development and empirical validation of its scales. All of this information is presented in appendixes A and B of the CEFR manual. As Hulstijin et al. (2010) note, the scales are probably the best researched of their kind. Despite the rigorousness of the validation process, there are as Coste (2007) writes, calls for further empirical and statistical validation outside of the original Swiss context. Hulstijin (2007) also reminds users that the empirical foundation of the CEFR scales is based on the judgments of teachers and experts, and not on SLA processes or SLA research. The authors of CEFR have never considered the CEFR to be a completed or standalone document. Supporting work on the CEFR scales started in 2005 with the establishment of the English Profile Programme (EPP) (see Green, 2012). This program, led by Cambridge University, has been developing reference level descriptions (RLD's) of English that provide language-specific guidance for each of the six levels of CEFR. As Figueras (2007) writes what is unique about RLD's is that instead of relying on "traditional linguistic description" the developers are currently using learner corpora to develop specifications that are more closely linked to "learnability and language use" (p. 674).

Settling on a CEFR referenced language curriculum

As committee members developed a basic understanding of the CEFR, they started to appreciate its potential for providing the department with a systematic way to build a competency-based program with globally recognized standards. Members of the committee also recognized that the CEFR over time would probably gain more traction in Japan. Since these initial meetings, the CEFR-J (Japan) (see TUFS Tonolab, 2012) has been completed, and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT, 2011) published a report encouraging the use of *can do* lists at the junior and senior high school levels. The committee stage of the language education reform ended with unanimous agreement among members to endorse a new CEFR-referenced language curriculum.

Setting the parameters and principles

For the next stage of planning the committee established a small working group to create the new curriculum. The first issue for us (the working group members) involved deciding how much of the department's language curriculum would be competency-based, and who would teach in it. In order to achieve targeted proficiency goals, the working group designated 23 one-year classes each 90 minutes spread over three years as required language skill classes. We concluded that this amount of total class time (1035 hours), besides being competitive with other intensive university language programs, was sufficient enough for our students to achieve the objectives for the program (A2 - B1).

The working group felt it necessary to give all teaching staff the option to teach in the program or opt out of it. We retained enough knowledge-based language classes outside of the skill-based curriculum to allow the colleagues with specialization or interest outside of language education to continue to have a relevant role in the department. For those teachers who wanted to teach in the curriculum, they had to agree to three preconditions:

- Teaching and learning focus on the development of English language competency.
- Learning and teaching objectives are defined first by *can do* statements.
- Assessment methods must be consistent with the competency-based objectives.

The working group considered these basic steps of offering teachers a choice to teach in the program or opt out, and setting preconditions for teaching in the program as crucial to ensuring the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Many of us planning the new curriculum had in the past experienced the problems and frustrations that emerge when knowledge-based language curriculum and competency-based curriculum are treated as one and the same thing.

Step forwards: Creating a new discourse and teaching culture

For the next step in curriculum planning, selected members from the working group (including this author) conducted a teacher-training workshop to reintroduce everyone involved in the program with instructed language learning. We felt this workshop was necessary because half of our teaching staff had specializations outside of language education. This group of teachers all had experience with teaching English, but they were what Tsui (2003, p.3) refers to as "experienced non-experts," in that almost none of them engaged in professional language teaching development activities outside of the classroom. For the workshop, appointed organizers decided to focus on key pedagogical principles of instructed language learning as well as task-based learning (TBL). We chose focusing on pedagogical principles because first, we wanted to develop our program around well-established L2 research and L2 pedagogy; second, we wanted everyone to develop familiarity with this literature in order to establish a common discourse, which we felt would be necessary to sustain the long-term development of the curriculum.

In planning the workshop we bypassed the CEFR's chapters dedicated to facilitating teacher development and reflection. The CEFR follows a descriptive approach for teacher development rather than a prescriptive one because the CEFR aims to be neutral towards teaching methodologies and learning. The authors of the CEFR state this neutrality in the introduction and numerous times throughout the manual: "One thing should be made clear right away. We have not set out to tell practitioners what to do or how to do it. We are raising questions not answering them" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. xi). The rationale behind this neutrality is first the authors recognizing the variety of contexts in which the CEFR could be used. Second, they contend that there is "no sufficiently strong research-based consensus of how learners learn" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.139). The CEFR's reflection section for teaching and learning is designed as the quote states, to raise questions. Users are presented with neutrally worded prompts on learning and teaching issues that are designed to facilitate discussion. The problem we recognized with these prompts is that they seem more suitable for language professionals that have the background knowledge to connect the neutrally worded prompts to specific research, theory, and pedagogy of instructed language learning. Without this initial background knowledge we were doubtful that any productive outcomes for our group would come from using the CEFR's reflective scheme. Even with prompts for methodological teaching options where the practical experience of teachers would seem sufficient for reflective discussion, there seemed to us to be a need for a sufficient level of knowledge with the relevant literature in order for any reflective dialogue between teachers to be productive. For example, in section 6.4.4 teachers are asked to consider to what extent learners should be expected to learn from tasks and activities. A number of scenarios on a continuum are presented that range from the position that task engagement alone is sufficient to facilitate learning, to the other end of the continuum that suggests that tasks should be imbedded into a pedagogical sequence where students also develop explicit awareness of the pedagogical rationale of each part of the learning process. Besides, first having to know the difference between a task and an activity, which only half of the teaching staff in our program did know, this prompt in order for it to be productive seems to require substantial experience with TBL, and equal familiarity with its literature. Overall, we felt that without reference to specific research, theories, practices in the field of language education, which the CEFR deliberately avoids providing, than any reflective practice use the CEFR would for our group be superficial. Our inability to make use of the reflection section of the CEFR seems to be common. Komorowska (2004) found that teachers and teacher trainees did not like the CEFR's lack of guidance for choosing curriculum options, nor its non-evaluative approach to teaching methods, which with this latter criticism they felt that all teaching methods are equal in value. It is for these reasons that both North (2007a) and Little (2007) admit that it is the least influential component of CEFR.

Instead of the CEFR's reflective practice chapters we used Ellis's (2005) principles for instructed language learning for the workshop. These basic principles incorporate a number of theoretical perspectives based on Ellis's synthesis of second language acquisition research. He sees these principles as a provisional "guideline for effective instructional practice" (p.33) that can be applied across a broad spectrum of contexts. Ellis is not alone, as Doughty and Long (2003) and Dörnyei (2013) have compiled similar lists identifying mostly the same principles. Our familiarity with this literature, and the needs of our teaching staff convinced us that a more prescriptive approach to teacher training and curriculum was justifiable. Long (2015, p.32) writes that while "theoretical disunity" characterizes the field of second language acquisition, for the sub-field of instructed second language acquisition there is more consensus. Long attributes this to the field's narrower scopes, which besides focusing attention on the same issues, also requires researchers to be accountable to each other. The benefits we saw with Ellis's (2005) principles is that as a succinct document, for each principle he provides relevant theoretical perspectives, competing research studies, and practical ideas for realizing the principle in the classroom.

TBL and the CEFR

For the second half of the three-hour workshop, organizers focused on TBL. After a general introduction using Willis's (1996) well-known model, teachers practiced in pairs identifying tasks and planning task-supported lessons. The reason for focusing on TBL is the obvious relevance it has for a *can do* curriculum, especially at the higher CEFR levels. The importance the CEFR authors give to tasks is evident in that they dedicate a whole chapter to it. As part of our TBL lesson planning practice, teachers discussed in pairs where in their lesson plans Ellis's principles could be facilitated, or would be expected to be present. As East (2012, p.52) notes most of Ellis' principles are "concordant" with task-based pedagogy.

The working group would have preferred more workshops, but we had to be sensitive about how many times senior professors participated in teacher training activities. To compensate for the lack of workshops, we created peer-planning teams for each course within the curriculum. The working group organized the curriculum so that in most cases at least two teachers taught the same course. This arrangement allowed us to pair teachers who were familiar with TBL and language pedagogy, with teachers who were not. While regularly consulting with the head planner, each pair had responsibility for developing their respective courses. The head planner's role was to help the pairs as well as oversee that each course was consistent with a competency-based curriculum. As "arranged collegiality" (see Hargreaves & Fullan

2012, p.126) this system seemed to work well as teachers reported that they appreciated the private environment, and the learning by doing approach to curriculum development.

Developing the c*an do* curriculum

The first step for the peer planning stage of developing the new curriculum involved all teachers in the program identifying roughly where our incoming students would be located on the global scale of the CEFR. Through discussion (social moderation) we developed a basic group consensus. After this, the next step required each peer planning team to comprise a list of *can do* statements that students would be expected to demonstrate at least partial mastery of by the end of the course. These *can do* lists became each course's objectives. For comprising our *can do* lists, in addition to using the CEFR's descriptors, we also followed Naganuma's (2010) advice by triangulating it with other banks of *can do* descriptors. All teachers used the banks of descriptors for EQUALS/ALTE, ELP, as well as genuine CEFR influenced textbooks like Longman's *Total English*, and Cambridge University Press' *English Unlimited*. This process of identifying *can do* descriptors facilitated a lot of teacher discussion as judgments had to be made from an inexhaustible list of what should be excluded or included for the specific level/year. In some instances teachers after careful analysis created their own can do statements. This creation of *can do* descriptors mostly involved 'unzipping' more macro or general *can do* descriptors into micro or more specific ones.

Instead of using the CEFR's innovative action-oriented descriptive scheme that replaces the four skills with communicative language activities (Reception / Interaction / Production / Mediation) (see North 2014); the working group decided to stick to a four skills model with the exception of dividing speaking into production and interaction. Once teachers had tentative *can do* lists for their respective courses they then used the lists to determine what material they would need to teach and assess the *can do* objectives. In the past, teachers generally used textbooks for structuring courses, and intended to do the same with the new curriculum. The peer planning teams quickly discovered though that many so-called communicative textbooks did not fit well with a *can do* approach to language learning. For example, some of the writing textbooks that we had used in the past had a heavy focus on process writing (pre-write organize, draft, revise, edit) at the expense of expanding student ability to write a sufficient variety of texts. Of course lack of fit did not mean that a text could not be used or adapted. What it did require is for teachers to make sure that they had other supplementary material to ensure that their course material was consistent with totality of the course's objectives. In choosing material everyone developing their courses also discovered as Poszytek (2012) warns that some publishers have used the CEFR's global scale or *can do* concept as a sales gimmick. We found these texts to be often misaligned with the CEFR scales and/or lacking pedagogy that is consistent with skill-getting language curriculum. Nonetheless, we did find textbooks (*Total English* and *English Unlimited*) where the authors and publishers had in a principled and systematic way used the CEFR. Teachers found these textbooks to be useful examples of a CEFR referenced curriculum.

Identifying lexico-grammatical features

A number of teachers during the early stage of course development expressed concern about the absence of grammar in the CEFR to help guide their planning. Keddle (2004) echoes the same concern as she writes that as a course designer she would prefer more guidance from the CEFR on grammar rather than mostly having to discover features for the different levels on her own. This criticism of the CEFR is not entirely fair as the pre-CEFR Council of Europe content specifications, started in the 1970s, and updated in the 1990s (see Breakthrough (A1), Waystage (A2), Threshold (B1), Vantage (B2)), influenced the CEFR's development and provide descriptions of discrete language points easily transferable to the CEFR levels. In recent years though the English Profile Project and the British Council – EAQUALS Core Inventory for General English have been developed to provide language support for the CEFR (North et al. 2010). The first (EPP) as North (2014) explains locates what language appears at a certain level while the second document (Core Inventory) places specific language features at different level(s) where they are most relevant for teaching and learning. Early in our planning working group members used the Core Inventory to provide invaluable information to teachers about grammar, vocabulary, functions, and discourse markers for each level of the CEFR. It proved to be a very important document for planning our curriculum. Teachers also used it to confirm the appropriateness of *can do* statements by cross-referencing them with lexico-grammatical information. For the main planners of the curriculum, the Core Inventory made it possible to ensure that all the main lexico-grammatical features for a targeted level (e.g. A2) were potentially present in the curriculum.

Task-based learning and task-supported learning

Another significant course development issue for the working group concerned how much of a syllabus had to be task-based. We decided that teachers at minimum needed to have "task-supported language learning" (Ellis, 2003, p.27) in their classrooms, including assessment being conducted primarily with tasks. With task-supported learning the teacher uses tasks in a lesson mostly in a supplementary role to usually practice specific lexico-grammatical features. We accepted a task-supported syllabus for two reasons. First, we understood that the teachers in the program unfamiliar with TBL would have struggled implementing a strong task-based curriculum. Second, we recognized that there is no strong evidence that TBL facilitates language learning more effectively than other traditional methods (Swan 2005). Our decision concerning the role of TBL in our *can do* curriculum aligns with Little's (2011) suggestions about where on the CEFR levels task work should feature as a core component of the curriculum. He notes that the A1 and A2 *can do* descriptors, especially the former, are mostly narrow behavioral objectives that can be learned relatively quickly with traditional teaching methods (drilling, memorization, role play, etc.). Little believes it is at the B1 level/independent user level where the need for substantial target language exposure in the classroom presupposes the use of teaching methodologies that follow a more 'learning by doing' approach with the target language as the medium of instruction. We learned from earlier experience as well that a strong task-based curriculum in our context could be counterproductive with some students at the pre-A1 to A1+ levels. A student survey (Moser, 2014) showed popularity in our context for more traditional input-based learning activities.

Vertical and horizontal dimension of language development

The CEFR introduced the working group to many new ideas for planning a competency-based language program. One of the most important was the vertical and horizontal dimension of language development. These dimensions are outlined in chapter three of the CEFR, and their descriptive scales and categories are mapped out in chapters four and five. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of language development reflect the fact that users develop their overall communicative language competence by improving both the quality of their language (vertical development), and by expanding the breadth of communicative activities that they can engage in (horizontal development). With the framework of vertical and horizontal progression, Hulstijin (2007) suggests three basic language user profiles: users whose linguistic quality matches their quantity range; users who can engage in a large range of communicative language activities, but at minimal linguistic quality; users who may be able to perform a limited number of communicative/language activities at a high level of linguistic quality. This idea of uneven proficiency profiles is what the CEFR authors refer to as partial competence. Partial competence is a significant concept for language learning and teaching because it recognizes that a language user's proficiency is fundamentally uneven, and often purposely so. No two users share the exact same language profile, and even the most proficient language user is unlikely to have the same proficiency across all of the CEFR's 50 plus scales.

Prior to the new curriculum many members in the working group had a tendency to set too idealistic proficiency objectives that were usually described in vague lofty language and/or as test scores. At the early stages we appeared to be repeating the same mistake as key stakeholders on the initial committee suggested that our proficiency objectives target B2+. They did not derive this recommendation from an understanding of the CEFR and our students, but rather from simply looking at how popular proficiency test scores purportedly aligned with the CEFR. The CEFR's vertical and horizontal framework and its facilitating of partial objectives provided us with the theory and blueprint to successfully argue for a curriculum that had more doable and relevant language objectives for our students. Despite the almost common sense reality of partial competency some stakeholders seemed hesitant to accept what some mistakenly construed as half standards. Martyniuk and Noijons (2007) in their survey on CEFR use also found amongst teachers a "reluctance" to accept partial competence. This seems somewhat puzzling considering the reality of language learning in the classroom requires most teachers to accept intermediate objectives over all or nothing ones. Without stakeholders accepting partial competency in our curriculum, we would have in all likelihood ended up with a two-faced curriculum – one that was unattainable but official, and the other which was actual but hidden.

A can 'doable' curriculum

As part of planning our curriculum, the working group conducted informal environmental and needs analyses. We identified two key constraints. The low language level of our students entering the program, combined with the time limitations of a three-year program meant that even with some overseas study most of our students would graduate between A2 and A2 + for both productive and receptive skills. For stronger students B1 was a possibility with receptive skills. However, the CEFR's concept of partial competence helped us appreciate that language development does not have to be solely about moving up the vertical scale of complex language use, in some contexts broadening performance ability in communicative activities and strategies across domains (personal, public, academic, professional) (section) at a specific vertical level may be more important. On this point our needs analysis confirmed that the majority of students had common occupational goals where basic business English would be necessary. The working group decided that the first two years of the curriculum should target A2 to A2+ for receptive and productive skills in the personal domain with the curriculum flexible enough to accommodate stronger students who might progress to B1 in receptive skills. In the third year rather than focus on B1 proficiency, which for the reasons stated was unattainable for our students, we instead decided to move laterally to the public and occupational domains to focus on expanding the students' context of use at the A2 and A2+ levels. This lateral movement would prepare our students to use English in future occupational and public environments.

From the CEFR to the CEFR-J

As all teachers in the program developed familiarity with the CEFR we realized that almost half of the vertical levels had no relevance to our students. Our students are no exception as Negishi et al.'s (2013) survey of Japanese EFL users suggests that 80% are between A1 and A2. The CEFR's global vertical scale has nine levels with the A2, B1, and B2 levels for different subscales consisting of a lower band called the criterion level (e.g. A2) and then an upper band called the plus level (e.g. A2+). The plus level reflects a higher level of proficiency within that band. We initially started with the EQUALS scales for our program because they provided a more detailed description of *can do* descriptors and language quality for the lower and upper bands within a level, and unlike the CEFR they contained A1+. Two years into the program, we switched to the just then released CEFR-J (Japan). This modified version of the CEFR uses a branching approach with narrower levels. The CEFR-J, as its authors (Negishi, Takada & Tono, 2013) write, is an attempt to make the CEFR more useable in the Japanese context where the majority of EFL users fall between A1 and A2. Negishi et al. (2013) with the support of CEFR researcher Tony Green, conducted a series of validation phases to produce a 11-level CEFR-J with over half of these levels ranging from pre A1 to A2 (pre A1 / A1.1 / A1.2 / A1.3 / A2.1 / A2.2 / B1.1 / B1.2 / B2.1 / B2.2 / C.1 / C.2). Initially, only four levels of CEFR were relevant to our context, using the EQUALS scales it expanded to five, and, finally, the CEFR-J extended it to seven. This increase to seven levels allowed teachers to better fine-tune student assessment, which meant being able to create more separation between students within a band. In addition, our adopting of the CEFR-J addressed the disappointment of near A2 or A2 students who did not typically see their progress improve on the vertical scales over the first year and half of the program because of the longer time needed to acquire the skills to be considered an A2+ or B1. As North (2007b) writes a branching approach with its narrower levels allows teachers and students to see more progress, which especially at the early levels is critical for developing motivation. The one obvious drawback our teachers had with the narrower levels is that the language distinguishing adjacent sublevels becomes more nuanced, which in turn created a little more variability between teacher assessments than previously. Not surprisingly, Runnels (2014) in a statistical analysis of the CEFR-J found inconsistency of difficulty ratings by student participants of *can do* descriptors for the five A levels, but she also concluded that the CEFR-J A levels form “strongly reliable scales” (p. 84).

Incorporating a language portfolio

To involve our students actively in the curriculum the working group decided to introduce our own portfolio based on the European Language Portfolio (ELP) (see Council of Europe, 2001b). The ELP was released the same year as the CEFR, and is designed as a supporting application for it. The ELP’s intended purpose is to be used to facilitate learner autonomy through the use of descriptive tools for planning and monitoring language learning, and recording learning outcomes. Westhoff (2000) explains that portfolios in general are designed in two basic ways, either as a report tool (product-oriented) like the original ELP, or as a pedagogical tool (process-oriented). Selected members of the working group initially designed a product-oriented portfolio, but as we started to appreciate the learning potential of a student portfolio we expanded it to include new sections and formats to be used by students during lessons for planning, monitoring, and assessing their learning. In addition to these process-oriented features the program's portfolio, like the ELP, consists of a language passport, language biography, and dossier. For our passport section, students at the start of the program record past language learning experiences including certificates and test scores. For our biography section the students set their own learning goals based on a self-assessment of their current level. The biography also includes a student and teacher end of semester assessment section for the four skills with speaking divided into production and interaction.

The transparency that comes with using a portfolio put expected pressure on teachers to ensure that we properly assessed and recorded student language skills in a manner consistent with the CEFR. For student self-assessment on individual *can do* descriptors teachers needed a basic framework that reflected the positive *can do* spirit of the CEFR and partial competence. As part of this formative assessment (assessment that informs subsequent teaching and learning) during the semester, we borrowed Nagamuma's (2010) idea of dividing a descriptor into a graded performance based on how much a student had to depend on "borrowing" (using notes, dictionaries, and interlocutor or even the L1 during a task) (Prabhu, 1987, p.61) to achieve the task goal. Students after completing a task that tests a specific can do descriptor self-assess using the basic format below (Figure 1).

The end of semester student self- assessments follow the same concept as above only as a summative assessment for each descriptor, students self-assess their test performances on specific can do descriptors by choosing one of three performance grades (*I can, I almost can, or I still cannot)* for each descriptor. This is recorded in the biography section of the portfolio (Figure 2).

Name:

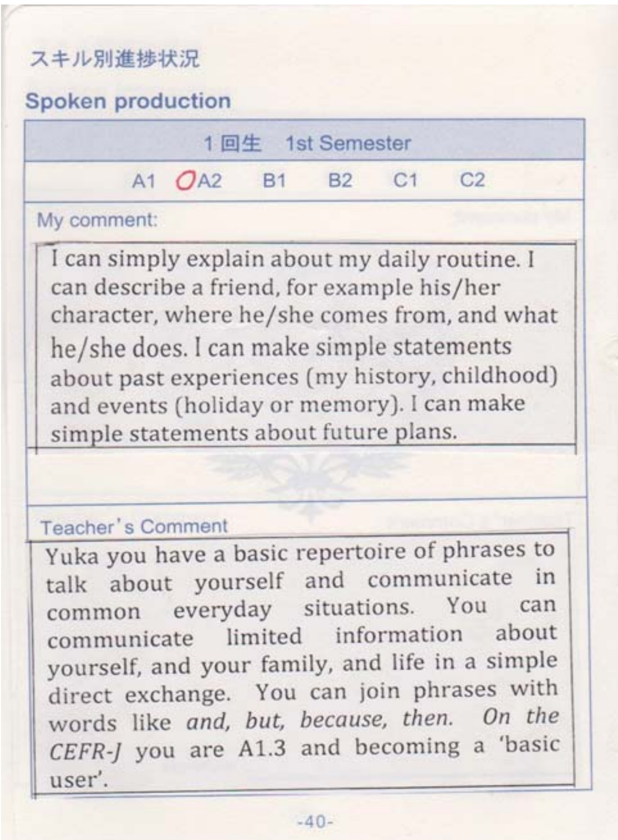
I can describe my family

1	I have difficulty even if I use my notes and/or Japanese.
2	I can do it if I look at my notes and/or use Japanese.
3	I can do it without my notes and Japanese.

Have you done this task before?
a) Yes b) No

Do you think you need to do it again?
a) Yes b) No

Figure 1 Students' self-assessment form


スキル別進捗状況

Spoken production

1回生 1st Semester
A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2
My comment: I can simply explain about my daily routine. I can describe a friend, for example his/her character, where he/she comes from, and what he/she does. I can make simple statements about past experiences (my history, childhood) and events (holiday or memory). I can make simple statements about future plans.
Teacher's Comment: Yuka you have a basic repertoire of phrases to talk about yourself and communicate in common everyday situations. You can communicate limited information about yourself, and your family, and life in a simple direct exchange. You can join phrases with words like *and, but, because, then*. *On the CEFR-J* you are A1.3 and becoming a 'basic user'.

-40-

Figure 2 End of semester assessment form

With teacher assessment of students the first major issue teachers in the program encountered with *can do* assessment involved recognizing that students being able to do a specific *can do* descriptor or descriptors did not necessarily mean the students had enough of the underlying linguistics competences for the proficiency level. Early on, some of our teachers mistakenly assumed that a *can do* curriculum simply involves having the students practice specific descriptors for the relevant CEFR level until they can do them, and once a student can do a number of these descriptors then the student is assumed to have achieved that level. This 'can do practice approach' does work at the A1 level with its narrow behavioral objectives, which can be learned relatively quickly, and in some cases over a few lessons. However, at the higher vertical levels as Little (2009) reminds us, these *can do* descriptors reflect different aspects of an "increasingly complex and wide-ranging communicative repertoire" (p.11) that is derived from the acquisition of underlying linguistic competences. For this reason, Little (2006) advises that the vertical scales for different skills be used in conjunction with the CEFR's scales of linguistic competences (general linguistic range, vocabulary range, vocabulary control, grammatical accuracy, etc.) and language quality (see sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competences, functional competence) found in chapter five. Using this advice, we realized that we had to ironically assess more than *can do*, and in conjunction with task-based assessment we needed to incorporate traditional testing to help more thoroughly assess various linguistic competences.

As part of developing our task-based assessment of language skills, the working group established detailed criteria for aspects of language quality. Besides referencing chapter five of the CEFR, we also found the EQUALS revised checklists' language quality sections for each level very useful for developing a language assessment criteria grid. While both of these documents provided general descriptions of language quality we relied more heavily on the task-based learning CAF constructs (complexity, accuracy and fluency) (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005) to give us specific measures for assessing language quality. For example, the CEFR in a general manner describes A1 fluency as slow short spurts of speech with much pausing to search for or repair speech. The CAF literature is more detailed in that it divides these basic features of fluency described above into three clear sub-dimensions (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005): speed fluency (length of run, speech rate), repair fluency (hesitation phenomena - false starts, repetitions, reformulations, misformulations), and breakdown fluency (number, length and location of filled/unfilled pauses). Applying these fluency measures like most of the CAF measures during assessment was mostly straightforward, and allowed us to develop a detailed set of criteria. For instance, with breakdown fluency we were able to distinguish better performances if students followed a more native-speaker standard by pausing at clausal boundaries rather than mid-clause (Tavakoli, 2011).

Once the program had a basic set of criteria for assessing students, the next step involved developing a common understanding amongst teachers on how to accurately place students' language proficiency on the CEFR. For this standardization training, teachers through informal group discussions identified a number of students at different levels of proficiency with whom they were already familiar in terms of various competences, including what they knew about their scores on proficiency and placement tests. From this we discussed and developed a clear consensus of where each of these students' language ability is on the CEFR. We also took a cautious approach to assessing proficiency with our goal being to identify base proficiency levels, and taking into account that some task performances during assessment may reflect a temporary inflated level of performance. Teachers found the standardization training process of creating reference points using students they were familiar with to be a very productive way to concretely tie the scales of the CEFR to their students. Part of this standardization training also involved teachers learning how to write CEFR assessments in the positive spirit of CEFR language. To do this we relied on the DIALANG scales in Appendix C of the CEFR, which provided teachers with examples of how to write positive *can do* assessments.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to critically describe how the CEFR was used to help a language department in an Asian context transition from a tradition knowledge-based curriculum towards a more competency-based one. As this paper explains the CEFR played a central role by providing us with essential guidance and tools. In four years since this transition, we have been able to develop a transparent, coherent, and comprehensive curriculum that has been well received by both prospective and current students. It is fair to say that without using the CEFR this outcome would not have been possible. It is hoped that this paper provides ideas of how the CEFR can be used, and some of the issues users can expect to emerge with its use. While the CEFR is originally an European document for Europe, this paper should also show that it has important relevance for Asia as well. As this paper hopefully demonstrates, the CEFR is most effective when it is not treated as a standalone document, but is used with other literature. Trim (2012) also reminds us that the CEFR is not by any means a completed document as it is still open to change and development (e.g. see EPP). This fact opens up opportunities for language professionals in Asia to aid in its development and adaption, as we see with the CEFR-J. Perhaps, the most important feature of CEFR is that in the authors' commitment to transparency they have made the CEFR and almost all its major supporting guides and documents free to download. It is very rare in the language teaching profession to see such important innovation made so accessible. While the CEFR is accessible at this level, on another level it has been criticized for not being 'reader friendly' (Figueras, 2012; Komorowska, 2004; North, 2009). The CEFR is no doubt a demanding read and study. We have found that its difficulty at times has impeded transparent collaborative decision-making. This readability issue can be overcome by using related support guides, or by following the advice of Komorowska (2004) who recommends learning the CEFR through slow and gradual steps. Although our initial use of the CEFR constituted an abrupt change, the majority of developments we introduced in this paper occurred as part of a slow trial by error process over a four-year period. As with just learning to understand the CEFR, the best advice with using it to develop existing curriculum is to follow a 'little by little' approach. Finally, we share the same experience with the CEFR as Weicheng (2012), who reporting on its influence on his colleagues in China notes that it helped them better understand the complexities of instructed language learning. From our experience, we are convinced that many language programs in Asia would benefit from looking more closely at what the CEFR can offer them.

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