Language Education in Asia

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Language Education in Asia

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About *Language Education in Asia*

Background Information

Language Education in Asia (LEiA) is a publication that presents well-researched aspects of language education and learning, innovative, practical approaches to classroom practice, discussion on language education issues in Asia, and reviews of books on research, practice, or issues in language education relevant to the region. Papers can be submitted by researchers, educators, educational leaders, and other language education professionals. All papers are blind-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board. Accepted papers are published on a biannual basis. The first issue of each volume will highlight exceptional papers presented at the annual CamTESOL Conference Series during that publication year. Each volume is online for public viewing and downloading at: http://www.camtesol.org/publication

The *Language Education in Asia* Advisory Board

Since 2011, IDP Education has invited a number of eminent ELT professionals, including several recent CamTESOL plenary speakers, to join an Advisory Board for the *Language Education in Asia* publication. The Advisory Board will offer advice as the publication is developed and expanded.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that no misleading or inaccurate data, opinions, or statements appear in the *Language Education in Asia* online publication. Articles included in the publication are the sole responsibility of the contributing authors. The views expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Advisory Board, the Editorial Board, the conference organizers, the hosting institutions, or the various sponsors of the conference series; no responsibility or liability whatsoever is accepted by these groups or institutions regarding the consequences of any information included in the authors' articles.

Notes to Prospective Contributors

The readership of *Language Education in Asia* is comprised of Asian and expatriate educators as well as those from international institutions. *Language Education in Asia* encourages the submission of papers presenting innovative approaches of interest to both local and international audiences. The development context of Asian TESOL should be considered; most schools have limited resources and teachers often have to contend with large numbers of students in their classrooms. The Editorial Board takes into account the regional context as well as areas of interest for international participants when selecting papers for publication.

The *Language Education in Asia* online publication includes four sections:

- **Research** highlighting ongoing projects in the Asian region, based on and emphasising a practical focus in the discussion and conclusion sections. Maximum 5,000 words.

- **Teaching Practice** focusing on classroom-based and action research more directly related to the realities of language teaching in the region. Maximum 3,500 words.

- **Commentary** focusing on well-researched, balanced reports and discussions of current or emerging issues in the Asian region. Maximum 2,000 words.

- **Book Reviews** of books focusing on research, practice, or current issues relevant to language education in Asia. By invitation.

For more details concerning specific guidelines, formatting, and submission, please refer to the *Language Education in Asia* page on the CamTESOL website at http://www.camtesol.org/ For any questions, please contact the Editor-in-Chief, Ms. Kelly Kimura, at leia@idp.com. Papers for consideration for Volume 6, Issue 1 should be submitted to leia@idp.com by 8 March 2015, and those for Issue 2 should be submitted by 7 June 2015.

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The language learning and teaching context in the Asian region is as varied and complex as the countries encompassed in this part of the world. Each context is defined by the history and culture of each specific country and the region as a whole and the language policies and languages involved, including a myriad of local, indigenous, colonial, and "global" languages.

In 2010, in response to the ever-changing and challenging linguistic landscape in this area, IDP Education (Cambodia) established the fully peer-reviewed online journal *Language Education in Asia* as a forum to highlight and exchange research and insights into language education in this dynamic region.

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Editor's Note

Academic Writing for Publication and English as a Lingua Franca Audiences

Kelly Kimura
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English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has been described as "*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*" (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). ELF is not used exclusively among non-native speakers; the "first languages" in this description include English (Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011). In spoken ELF interactions, when there are differences in language proficiency or difficulty in comprehension, speakers tend to cooperate to help the interaction succeed (Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011). The study of written ELF in academic settings (WrELFA) is an emerging field (see http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/wrelfa); if and how ELF authors of academic papers write differently from native English speaking authors for the success of their interactions with audiences are not yet known. As non-native English-speaking teachers and other language education professionals find increasing acceptance in the field (see Yilin Sun's article in this issue), these audiences include growing numbers of ELF users. In the absence of studies on the topic, as an advocate for both our authors and our audience, I recommend that authors, regardless of their first language, consider how to successfully communicate with audiences which include ELF users.

That authors follow this recommendation is of obvious importance to this publication. *Language Education in Asia* (LEiA) has an international readership of multilingual language users and monolingual users of English. The journal's reach is even wider than the 26 countries from which we have received submissions in the past three years. Every year, CDs containing all issues to date are distributed to all CamTESOL Conference participants. At the 10th annual conference earlier this year, participants came from over 40 countries. Furthermore, the publication is freely available online. Teachers, researchers, and other language education professionals in Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Laos are part of the LEiA audience, as are those in Australia, Japan, and the U.S.

Authors interested in sharing their research and teaching practices must think of this audience when writing for submission to LEiA. Assuming that papers are based on good research projects (see Brian Paltridge's paper in this issue), there are several general items for authors to consider. First, authors should address the greater readership, not only narrow audiences within, such as other researchers interested in the same topic or university teachers in a certain country. This means that authors need to study what is happening beyond their own contexts in the region and include this information in their papers. Authors should also consider the audience's familiarity

with the topic, relevant areas of the topic where the audience lacks knowledge, and what its members would like to know about the topic. Next, authors should realize that teachers as well as researchers may read their research articles; teachers may look for recommendations that can improve their related practices. Authors of teaching practice papers should provide information on practices and materials that can be adapted for use in different situations. In addition, authors must consider the diverse audience contexts throughout Asia.

However, the considerations above are not sufficient for an audience that includes ELF users. While we at LEiA expect submissions to be professional and academic, academic writing should not hinder communication with our audience. In papers where reading academic writing is difficult for native speakers of English in academia (Pinker, 2014), highly proficient ELF users will have at least the same difficulties. Access to current knowledge in the field is already limited in some of the areas we serve. When up-to-date papers are available, they do not benefit the audience if the authors have used academic writing for purposes other than communicating. When an author does not focus on appropriately communicating with the audience, academic prose can easily get in the way of the message.

Authors should acknowledge that users of ELF form the majority of our audience by writing papers for submission to LEiA using academic English as a lingua franca. Here, writing with a lingua franca perspective means that authors make accommodations to help their attempt to communicate succeed with ELF audiences. While in an ELF conversation, participants can negotiate meaning as communication breakdowns happen (Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011), readers are likely to decipher texts for meaning alone. When readers have difficulties with a paper, they may use a dictionary or ask someone for help; however, they may also stop reading. If an author's goals are to contribute to knowledge in language education, engage the interest of the audience, and encourage further research, discussion, or improved practice—that is, if the author wants to communicate with our audience—the author should accommodate the audience from the beginning to try to avoid communication breakdowns. These accommodations include being clear and concise, yet sufficiently explicit.

Writing with clarity will more effectively communicate the author's message to ELF users. Papers too often include passages where meaning (or lack of meaning) is obscured by the use of the passive voice, overly complex sentence constructions, jargon, and more. Writing should present the content, not itself. While not aimed at writing for ELF audiences, a relevant and thought-provoking article on academic writing for publication and an accompanying free, downloadable booklet point out problem areas and give guidance on writing more clearly (Pinker, 2014).

Writing with conciseness also conveys the author's message more effectively to ELF audiences. We regularly see oversized submissions above and below our word limits, but authors should not burden audiences of ELF users with redundant text. Regardless of the article's length, words, sentences, and passages should be examined objectively and eliminated when they are unnecessary. Authors struggling with being concise sometimes declare that reducing any part of the paper is impossible; however, what usually emerges is a better text. Authors should note that article word limits are the maximum number of words allowed, not the number of words required. If complete, clear, and concise, an article with a word count lower than the word limit will not suffer in the review process for this reason. It will also be much appreciated by an audience which traditionally has little free time.

While clarity and conciseness are important accommodations, at the same time, writing with explicitness is necessary for this varied ELF audience. Sufficiently explaining terms, procedures, and other items is essential. We have noticed that sometimes a deep knowledge of the topic leads an author to forget that the audience does not share this familiarity. Our editorial team and review editors form a first, constructively critical audience to represent our larger audience, and we often ask for more explanations and details. Authors should check that their articles are sufficiently explicit, perhaps by asking other people to read their work. If the paper is not explicit enough, the audience's work in understanding is more difficult than necessary.

Although having a paper published is an accomplishment, a truer mark of scholarship is an author's ability to present relevant research and practices in an accessible way and thus inspire and inform further research, action, and discussion by the audience. This ability starts with considering the audience. While all of the accommodations above could and should be done for writing in general, for this publication and many others, authors must be more conscious of making accommodations when writing for audiences of ELF users.

As Mauranen (2012) noted regarding speakers of academic English, there are no native writers of academic English. The increasing interactions between authors and ELF readers have the potential to improve academic writing. By taking the lead in consciously using English as a lingua franca to communicate with ELF audiences, authors of all language backgrounds can contribute to making reading and learning for research and professional development more audience-friendly for this community of communities.

Turning to the papers, Volume 5, Issue 1 starts with an article by Yilin Sun, LEiA Advisory Board member, opening plenary speaker at the 10th CamTESOL Conference, and current President of TESOL International. She writes on important worldwide trends that she observes in these areas in the language education field: perspectives on the field, educational goals, teaching approaches, curriculum content and design, communicative competence, non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) as English language educators, the timing of the introduction of English as a foreign language in educational systems, information technology, and the roles and responsibilities of teachers. The influence of NNESTs on a number of these trends is shown.

Brian Paltridge, the current co-editor of *TESOL Quarterly* and author or editor of publications on academic writing, research methods, discourse analysis, and English for Specific Purposes, was a plenary speaker for the CamTESOL Regional Research Symposium. While his plenary topic was "Current and Future Directions of English for Specific Purposes Research," his paper in this issue is on his CamTESOL workshop topic: "What is a Good Research Project?" This article is particularly excellent for beginning researchers and those who need guidance or a review. Brian covers developing research questions and proposals that lead to well-constructed research projects and papers with a good potential for publication. He discusses an interesting study to illustrate the characteristics of a good research project and lists resources for further guidance.

The research section begins with Do Thi Quy Thu and Dang Thi Cam Tu's study on video recording presentations for use as feedback in a public speaking course at a university in Vietnam. Students' ability to observe and reflect on their own performances had positive effects on their communication competence and apprehension about public speaking. In the second research paper, Indika Liyanage and Brendan Bartlett in Australia and Thomas Tao in China report on the

extent of Chinese university students' usage of the cognitive strategies of translation, deduction, and contextualisation when listening and speaking in EFL classes. The authors discuss the need to develop students' oral communication skills and the washback of China's required English test for university graduation on EFL programs. In the next paper, Kerry Pusey and Karen Lenz examine the relationship between visual input, working memory, and L2 listening comprehension, particularly in the context of assessment. They provide questions for teachers to consider to more effectively assess L2 listening with visual input. From Japan, James Emmet Owens describes an experiment at a university in which students used a standard reading exercise (SRE) in a foundational literacies course. The SRE, used repeatedly throughout the term with a range of texts, is found to have a number of benefits. The SRE is included in the appendix.

How Japanese university students feel about peer feedback for written work and how teachers think students feel are explored by Brett Morgan, Bjorn Fuisting, and Jeremy White. They offer useful suggestions for teachers interested in using peer review. Linda Mary Hanington reports on a study on professional development in the area of reading aloud for preservice primary school teachers in Singapore. The phonological awareness that teachers gained from an intensive program may improve their required reading aloud activities in the classroom. In the final research paper, from Japan, Michael Guest reports on his field observations of conference presentations and the speech forms used in four areas of successful performances. While the professionals he observed were in the medical field, the examples are suitable for professionals in many other fields.

The teaching practice section starts with Monica Hamciuc's examination of Japanese students' perceptions of the effect that studying with international students had on their communicative skills and confidence. In their shared classes, Japanese students prepared topics of their choice for discussion or presentation and had opportunities to ask and answer questions. From Indonesia, Ignatius Harjanto writes about teaching academic writing to graduate students using the I-Search approach, in which students choose, research, and write about a topic that has interest and meaning for them. On a post-course questionnaire, students indicated the approach had been useful in developing their writing skills. In the last paper in this section, Aeric Wong and Paul Leeming, writing from Japan, demonstrate that dictation can be used as an informal and inexpensive test of language proficiency. The authors use dictation tests for purposes such as group construction in classes with students of varying language proficiency levels. The design and administration of such a dictation test is described.

The issue concludes with the first book review for LEiA, co-authored by George M. Jacobs in Singapore and Harumi Kimura in Japan. The topic of Graham V. Crookes' *Critical ELT in Action: Foundations, Promises, and Praxis*, incorporating social justice into second language education, is one of the trends Yilin Sun observes in her plenary paper. The reviewers examine a number of points Crookes explores and show that Crookes' deft handling makes responsible critical pedagogy accessible for teachers who are interested in its practice for their classrooms.

Moving on to the people behind LEiA, many people contribute a generous amount of time and effort to LEiA and the production of each issue. I am very grateful to John Middlecamp for his continuing work for the journal. John created the framework of our new editorial team and has also authored or made major contributions to documents that are making the publication process run more smoothly. In addition, he is in charge of copy editing. Our new editorial team members include Keuk Chan Narith, a longtime review editor who has received recognition from the

CamTESOL Conference for his contributions to scholarly research on education in Cambodia. Rith now oversees the initial screening of papers and is additionally is responsible for the review and revision process for Issue 2. Rith recently gave a presentation titled "English Language Teacher Research in Cambodia: Development and Challenges" at AILA (International Applied Linguistics Association) in Australia. Another new editorial team member, Naashia Mohamed, has joined us from the Maldives; she is in charge of the review and revision process for Issue 1 of each volume. She also presented at AILA; her presentation was titled "Bilingual Children's Language Use and Linguistic Identity: Home Contributions and Family Language Policy." Rheanne Anderson, Caroline Ho, and Anthony Fenton coordinated reviews and revisions between authors and review editors and checked papers at every step for Issue 1; Rheanne and Caroline continue to do so for the second issue. Alice Svendson and Deborah Sin ably assist John Middlecamp in copy editing. I very much appreciate the editorial team members' voluntary work for LEiA on top of their responsibilities at their universities or institutions and elsewhere. My thanks and best wishes go to Phanith Pheng, who was our very capable editorial assistant; he is leaving us to further his education. We welcome our new assistant, Vathana Serey.

The editorial team relies on our dedicated Editorial Board to inform our decisions on papers and guide authors in revising. Their professionalism and their willingness to support the journal and their peers in contributing to published knowledge in the field are essential for LEiA, and we are grateful. Gratitude also goes to the Advisory Board for their continued valuable guidance and support.

Thank you to all the authors who submitted for consideration for publication. There were many good papers, and we had difficult choices to make.

Finally, congratulations to those whose articles appear in this issue. We appreciated these authors' patience with our questions and our requests; they were made with our audience in mind.

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Plenary Paper

Major Trends in the Global ELT Field:
A Non-Native English-Speaking Professional's Perspective

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Twenty-nine years ago, as a young EFL university teacher full of dreams, I left China, going across the ocean to Canada to pursue my goal of getting a graduate degree in TESOL and Applied Linguistics. As the only graduate student from China in that prestigious Canadian graduate school, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) / University of Toronto, I encountered all kinds of challenges in addition to cultural shock during the first few months. The terminologies in the field were all very foreign to me. "Comprehensible input," "UG," "SLA" – I had never heard these terms. Even the daily interaction with Canadians was definitely not Small Talk to me. Whenever someone initiated a "small talk" with me, my heart started jumping fast. "Small talk" always felt like "stressful talk" as my English learning in China was based on grammar-translation, literature-translation and memorization. With persistence and good learning strategies, I overcame one barrier after another and became the first Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from mainland China to graduate from OISE. OISE is one of the leading institutions in ELT in the world where many well-known ELT scholars have taught and / or studied, like David H. Stern, Jim Cummins, Merrill Swain, Michael Canale, J. P. B. Allen, Alistair Pennycook, Bonnie Norton, Ryuko Kubota, Brian Morgan, and Angel Lin, to name a few. Today, I am able to teach graduate students, do teacher training, and work with adult English language learners. I also have had the opportunity to serve as President-elect of TESOL International Association and am serving as President in 2014-2015. I have been working with people in the field whose work I read and respect. My story is just one of many stories about the journey of non-native English-speaking ELT professionals. Together, we are making a difference in our professional lives and writing a new page in the ELT field.

This paper, which is based on my opening plenary at the 10th Annual CamTESOL Conference, addresses nine major trends in the ELT field from my perspective as a non-native English-speaking educator.

Trend 1: Changes in Perspectives on English Language Teaching and Learning

Over the last 50 years, and especially during the last 20 years, the ELT field has seen a dramatic change in educators' views of the role of English language teaching. English language educators have realized that many new English language learners already know two or more

languages. English is not just their second language anymore. With this awareness, acronyms for the field have also evolved – from ESL (English as a Second Language) to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), from TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) to TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Western English to English as an International Language (EIL). The term TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason because it is in the school curriculum and it is a job) has been replaced by TSR (TESOLers for Social Responsibility) and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching, Contextualized Language Teaching) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Nowadays, more and more research and discussions are focused on the issues of "World Englishes" and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) rather than simply referring to any English spoken outside of the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia as EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

Trend 2: Changes in Goals of English Language Teaching and Learning

In the 21st century, the goals of ELT have changed from focusing solely on developing language skills and mimicking native English speakers to fostering a sense of social responsibility in students. Students should be treated as language users.

A series of questions that have been put forward by many educators (Kirby, 1989, as cited in Cates, 1997)

> What good is it to teach our students to read if they only read degrading pornography? What good is it to teach students to write if they use their knowledge to write racist graffiti?

Today, more educators are realizing that ELT cannot be considered successful when students do not know about global issues or care about societal problems, or worse yet, in the future use the language skills they have learned for such destructive activities as participating in global crime networks or damaging the environment (Brown, 1994, 2007; Cates, 1997; Sun 2010).

With the awareness of the importance of producing responsible citizens for society, teachers now have well recognized that teaching English is not simply to prepare students to imitate native English speakers as language learners but to produce fully competent language users, critical thinkers, and constructive social change agents as Crystal (1997, 2004), Cook (2002), and Brown (2007) noted.

Trend 3: Changes in Teaching Approaches

The TESOL field has evolved from using traditional grammar translation methods to communicative language teaching approaches where the focus of language teaching is on meaningful language use in a broad context, to where we are now: the 21st century is what Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2006), Brown (1994, 2007), and Richards and Rodgers (2001) referred as the "Post-Method Era" in which the ELT discussions are more focused on eclectic approaches rather than on a single method or approach. Brown (1994) called it *enlightened eclecticism*. Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2002) have used the term *principled eclecticism* to describe a coherent and pluralistic approach to language teaching and learning.

Here are the main characteristics of principled eclecticism:
- Maximize learning opportunities
- Facilitate negotiated interaction
- Encourage learner autonomy
- Increase language awareness (tolerant of learner errors)
- Activate self-discovery (utilize learning and communication strategies)
- Contextualize language input
- Integrate language skills
- Ensure social relevance (a means for self-empowerment and expression)
- Raise cultural consciousness (goal, purpose of teaching / learning)

(Kumaravadivelu, 1994)

Today, the use of L1, as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities and assessments, is encouraged in teaching and learning.

Trend 4: Changes in Teaching Content, Curriculum Design, and Assessment

Today's ELT classroom is now interdisciplinary. The hot topics nowadays are CBLI (Content-Based Language Instruction), CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), or SIOP (Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocols), in addition to ESP (English for Special Purposes). With such changes, now more and more programs require English teachers to use cross-curricular, cross-disciplinary content in teaching so the students learn both the content and English. English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn subject area knowledge such as history, mathematics, and science.

In terms of teaching content, textbooks and learning materials have more inclusion of multicultural content both from local and global resources to help students gain multiple perspectives and multicultural understandings. Students read from multicultural writers. They take a "field trip" to Angkor Wat or the Great Wall of China, but never leave the school. They work on collaborative projects to address critical issues locally and globally.

Curriculum designs are more content-based and theme-based with emphases on both language and content knowledge. The learning outcomes or learning standards are much broader and includes not only language skills, but critical thinking, learning strategies and related content knowledge and skills in the real world. They emphasize both the learning process and the product. These learning standards / outcomes are guiding the curriculum design and classroom instruction.

Today, standards, accountability, and assessment have become a major focus of the educational reforms in many countries in the world, including Cambodia.

Trend 5: Expanding the Dimension of Communicative Competence

Much recent research and many publications have focused on the discussions of expanding the framework of communicative competence. Some scholars introduced a new way of looking at SLA as "multi-competence" (Cook, 2002 and others, such as Byram (1997) and Kohn (2013), focused on the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

According to Cook (2012, para 1-2),

> Multi-competence…presents a view of second language acquisition (SLA) based on the second language (L2) user as a whole person rather than on the monolingual native speaker… It changes the angle from which second language acquisition is viewed. It constitutes a bilingual 'wholistic' interpretation of bilingualism as opposed to a monolingual 'fractional' interpretation of bilingualism, in Grosjean's (2009)'s terms).

Another dimension of the expansion of the communicative competence framework is the discussions on intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2009; Kohn, 2013). Those with intercultural communicative competence are able to effectively communicate with interlocutors from other cultures in appropriate ways. The implication here is that when teaching intercultural communicative competence, teachers need to teach both local and international cultures. Nowadays, there is less focus on the culture of native speakers of English unless there is a specific purpose. The goal is to produce effective language users who can use English as lingua franca, not just learners who mimic the "inner-circle" countries' language and cultures. Only in this way, TESOL educators can, for example, introduce the world to students in Cambodia and introduce Cambodia to the world.

Several researchers in the ELT field have raised a series of conceptual issues (Honna, 2005; Wen, 2013) in terms how cultures should be expressed in English:

> As a speaker, should you stick to your own way of thinking? Or should you adapt to the listener's way of thinking when you communicate with the listener? As a listener, should you impose your own way of thinking on the speaker? Or should you be sensitive to and tolerant of the speaker's different way of thinking?

Honna (2005) shared a study that he and his colleagues had conducted back in 2000 using the following story. The story, *My Mother Isn't Well, Sir,* was told by an Australian to Honna, a Japanese professor. The following conversation between a Hong Kong police superintendent who was British and a Chinese constable took place in the superintendent's office.

There was a quiet knock at the door and in came a young Chinese police constable. He was, of course wearing his uniform. He saluted the superintendent and stood smartly to attention in front of the large wooden desk.

"Yes?" enquired the superintendent.

"My mother is not very well, sir", started the constable.

"Yes?" repeated the superintendent, a frown appearing on his brow.

"She has to go into hospital, sir", continued the constable.

"So?"

"On Thursday, sir".

The superintendent's frown was replaced by a look of exasperation.
"What is it that you want?" he asked sternly.

At this direct question, the constable's face fell and he simply mumbled, "Nothing, sir. It's all right", and turned and left the room.

As soon as the door had closed the superintendent turned to me and said:
"You see. A classic case. They can't get to the point."
"So, what would you want him to say?" I asked.

"Well, instead of beating around the bush, he should come straight to the point. He obviously wants some leave so he can look after his mother. He should ask for leave and not waste my time going on about his poor mother."

"You want him to say something like, 'Can I have some leave please, sir?'"

"Yes, exactly", replied the superintendent.

> (Honna, Kirkpatrick, & Gilbert, 2000, pp. 16-17, as cited in Honna, 2005, p. 80)

The study surveyed 138 students and asked them to respond who they thought was responsible for the communication breakdown for the case *My Mother Isn't Well, Sir.* As indicated in Figure 1, sixty-nine percent of the respondents believed the British superintendent was responsible. While the British superintendent had understood the words and meaning of the constable's request, he refused to accept the style of the request since it reflected norms different from his own.

**Who Do You Think Is Responsible
for the Communication Breakdown?
("My Mother Isn't Well, Sir")**
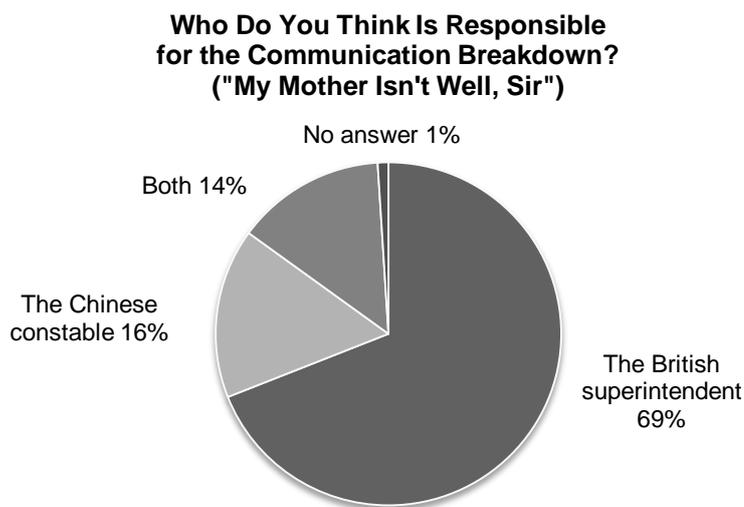
Figure 1. Student responses (*N* = 138) (Honna, 2005)

If this exchange had happened between a Chinese speaker and a Cambodian speaker, the outcome would have been very different:

Chinese: My mother is not very well, sir.

Cambodian: Oh, you must be worried. Would you want to take a leave and take care of your mother?

(adapted from Honna, 2005, p. 81)

In Asia, non-native speakers of English frequently begin to relate to and understand each other more when not following native speaker communication norms (Honna, Kirkpatrick, & Gilbert , 2000, as cited in Honna, 2005; Wen, 2013). Being able and willing to listen and try to understand what others are saying without expecting them to conform to one's cultural values and communication norms is essential in intercultural communication. As Honna (2005) stated, "with some degree of intercultural awareness, one is capable of understanding the other even if the two persons' communication styles are different."
It is clear that communicating effectively and appropriately involves both the speaker and the listener. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) requires:

- Openness and respect: the ability and readiness to regard other people's values, customs and practices as worthwhile in their own right and not merely as different from the norm and willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own,
- Empathy and tolerance: the ability and willingness to understand, acknowledge and accept different behaviors and ways of thinking, the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with,
- Sensitivity and flexibility: the ability and willingness to adapt and to deal appropriately with the feelings and ways of thinking of other persons, and the awareness and responsiveness to other people's behaviors and ways of thinking, and
- Knowledge and application of critical cultural awareness: knowledge and critical awareness of social groups, values and cultural practices in one's own and in one's target culture, and the ability to apply and act effectively using that knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

(Byram, 1997, 2009; Kohn, 2013; UNESCO, 2013, Wen, 2013)

These traits and abilities are more important for successful intercultural communication than the native English speakers' (NES) norms of communication.

Trend 6: Changes in Views of an Effective English Educator

With the changing views of communicative competence and the awareness of intercultural communicative competence, the perception of what is an effective English teacher is also changing. Recent studies on World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca as well as the roles of NNESTs (non-native English speaking teachers) in the TESOL field have made more people recognize that the effectiveness of an English teacher should be determined by his / her linguistic, instructional, and intercultural competence rather than simply being a native speaker of English. In fact, English is used by more people whose mother tongue is not English (Canagarajah, 1999a, 2007; Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Such a shift has further raised the awareness of non-native speakers of English teaching in the TESOL community. English teaching is no longer dominated by native speakers. Educators

who are speakers of English as a non-native language are thought to outnumber those who are speakers of English as a native language. Today, more and more non-native speaking educators are working in the ELT profession and playing important roles in TESOL leadership, research, and teacher training. They are in the front line with EL learners. Their significant contributions and impact on learners and the profession are no longer peripheral. TESOL, a leading professional association for English teaching around world, for example, has a Non-Native English Speaking Teachers Interest Section (NNEST-IS), with many well-known TESOL researchers and scholars as members. It is one of the most dynamic Interest Sections within the TESOL organization. The NNESTers work tirelessly together with native English-speaking researchers and educators to raise awareness of non-native English speaking educators.

In fact, there are many advantages that NNESTs possess in ELT. NNESTs are better at:
- Teaching learning strategies and anticipating learning difficulties
- Sharing multilingual and multicultural perspectives
- Empathizing with the needs of language learners
- Serving as models of successful learners and users
- Providing useful information about the language
  (Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 1999b; Cook, 2005; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Seidlhofer, 1999)

Educators want to make sure that students are served by well-prepared and well-qualified teachers, regardless their first language background (Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 1999b; Cook, 2005; Liu, 1999; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2003; Medgyes, 1992; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Seidlhofer, 1999, to name a few).

Trend 7: Early Start in Learning English

In recent years, many countries have started teaching English in earlier grades at school (Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2011). For example, in 2011, Japan made English as a required subject in the primary level. In 2012, Dubai introduced English in the kindergarten level instead of Grade 1. In Egypt, English is a required subject starting with the first grade. Since 2011, English learning has been introduced from Grade 4 in Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. Also In 2004, Taiwan's Ministry of Education mandated all public elementary schools should start English courses from Grade 3 but the majority of schools actually begin to teach English in the first grade (C. Chern, personal conversation, 2013). In the People's Republic of China, since the new millennium, English has been a required subject for students from Grade 3 all the way to college and graduate school, and in 2011, the Ministry of Education introduced new national English curriculum standards for compulsory education which further raised the bar for all students in both primary and secondary schools (Y. Gong, personal conversation, 2013). In Thailand, English was first mandated to be taught in primary Year One in 1996, but in 2001, all schools had to be ready to teach English from Year One; in 2013, the Ministry of Education in Thailand announced another education reform aiming to improve students' English proficiency (S. Nimmannit, personal conversation, 2014). English is a compulsory subject in kindergartens in Malaysia, and almost all Malaysian children will learn at least some English in their kindergarten years. This trend can be seen in many countries around the world (Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2011).

Trend 8: Rapid Development and Integration of Information Technology in ELT

Today we face an information explosion. The World Wide Web contains seventeen times the information of the U.S. Library of Congress (Johnston, 2012). The recent rapid development of technology and the use of cell phones and different multimedia devices have opened endless

possibilities for teachers to teach English and access information. The Internet, YouTube, Web 2.0, e-books, and various websites have changed the way teachers prepare their lessons and instruct their students. Now, with ready-made materials at the touch of a keyboard button, it is much easier to bring real-life issues to the classroom and have meaningful discussions. Teachers have free access to online resources and are less worried about limited class budgets in preparing lessons and creating teaching activities. Appropriate integration of technology in the classroom encourages students to use language in many different ways and bring world issues into the classroom.

Furthermore, learners from different parts of the world can be connected and exchange ideas via the Internet and other media devices. Thus, the way to gain information and knowledge in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and mobility has changed drastically. Students may know more about how to use technology than their teachers: nowadays, it is said that the 26 letters in the alphabet in English start with A for Apple, B for Bluetooth, C for Chat, D for download, E for e-mail, F for Facebook, G for Google, H for Hewlett-Packard, I for iPhone, and J for Java. Children, starting from a very young age, have been using digital devices in learning, communicating with others, and playing games, yet they need proper guidance from their teachers on how to select, analyze, and utilize the right information to achieve their learning goals.

Trend 9: Changing Roles and Increasing Responsibilities of Teachers

With all the new trends happening, the role of today's teachers is also evolving and their responsibilities have also been increasing. Trilling & Fadel (2009) outlined the seven most important skills that students need to be ready for as 21st century citizens:

> The 7 Cs
> 1. Critical thinking and problem solving
> 2. Creativity & innovation
> 3. Collaboration, teamwork, and leadership
> 4. Cross-cultural understanding
> 5. Communication, information, and media literacy
> 6. Computing and ICT literacy
> 7. Career and learning self-reliance
>   (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 176)

The needs of the classroom of today differ from those of the past few decades. In the 21st century classroom, teachers have multiple roles and responsibilities, the most important being facilitating learning and making an environment where learners are able to develop skills necessary for success in today's workforce (Learning Services International {LSI}, 2007). In ELT, the goal of teachers should not be just to prepare language learners with knowledge of the language but to produce effective language users who are critical thinkers with strong 7C skills. To achieve this goal, teachers need to understand the students' learning styles, and even more importantly, engage learners with different strategies and ways to learn and use the language. One possible way to do this is to focus on learners having a preliminary experience of work environments. This can be done through a content- and project-based curriculum through which students work collaboratively, building skills in communication and higher order critical thinking as well as acquiring technological knowledge (LSI, 2007). The integration of technology is not an add-on but *a must* in teaching and learning.

Another important change is that teaching is not necessarily a solitary activity now (LSI, 2007). There are opportunities to co-teach, team-teach, and collaborate with teachers from other

disciplines. For example, in 2013, I co-taught an ESP teacher training class with instructors from the Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT) program to prepare future teachers who will teach students in the AMT program overseas as there is a rapidly growing demand for such teachers overseas. The co-teaching experience has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had during my more than 28 years of teaching.

Furthermore, teachers are no longer considered to bear the entire responsibility of making learning happen effectively; other parties include parents, school administrators, boards of education, local and larger communities, and the students themselves (LSI, 2007). However, in reality, teachers are still the ones who shoulder the most responsibility to educate students and implement all the mandates. Therefore, teachers need real institutional support on all levels including funding, and release time to attend training and implement new ways of teaching and assessing learning.

Final Words: Our Responsibilities

With the rapid changes in the ELT field, teachers are expected to engage in continuous professional development activities in order to keep current on trends, research, development, and practices as well as to remain effective and competitive.

Educators need to improve professionally by:
- Increasing their knowledge base and skills in ELT through professional development (PD) activities.
- Urging institutions and policy-makers to create supportive environments where PD is highly valued.
- Ensuring that institutions provide funding and release time for PD activities.
- Engaging in and critically reflecting on new ways of teaching, including different strategies and technologies.
- Implementing a "principled eclectic approach" and the 7Cs in an informed and effective way.
- Forming teacher learning communities to build support systems and exchange teaching and learning ideas.
- Sharing teaching and learning strategies and successes with others at conferences and in publications.
- Valuing perspectives, expertise, and resources of non-native speaking teachers of English.
- Being confident and open minded, embracing every opportunity to grow as professionals and as learners.

While teachers can make a difference in students' lives in the classroom, teachers can also make a difference in their own professional lives and make professional organizations better in serving them, their colleagues, and communities. The awareness of "World Englishes," "English as an International Language," the roles of non-native English-speaking teachers in the TESOL field, the mission of English language learning, and the global English teaching / learning community did not occur by happenstance. This progress has been achieved through the concerted effort of all involved individuals who care about the profession, the students, and the equality of all TESOL educators in the education system. The stronger the professional association, the louder the voices can be heard at different policy-making levels and professional organizations. Also, the more publications that are from NNEST educators and on the current research and teaching practice in the ELT field, the better the awareness and opportunities that can be created for teachers and for learners.

In conclusion, today, English language teaching has entered a new era. The role of English in global, social, cultural, and linguistic contexts has changed greatly over the decades. This is also reflected in the way English is taught in the classroom. However, ELT educators still face many challenges and responsibilities to ensure quality education for students and maintain professional integrity. The mission to improve ELT for all learners must continue. There is also a strong commitment to putting principles into practice to fulfill social responsibilities as TESOL educators. Professional development at all levels is necessary to improve our English proficiency and teaching skills and to continue sharing cutting edge research ideas and effective teaching strategies and successful stories, so challenges can be overcome, students can be prepared to achieve to the best of their abilities, and teachers can be reflective practitioners and critical constructive social change agents in this world of globalized Englishes.

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What is a Good Research Project?

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Abstract

This paper discusses characteristics of a "good research project." It also discusses strategies for developing a research proposal. This includes suggestions for how to choose and focus a research topic as well as how to refine a research question. Details to include in a research proposal as well as the very specific areas that a research proposal needs to address are discussed. Questions to guide the design of the research proposal are also presented. The paper concludes with the discussion of a sample study which contains the characteristics of a good research project referred to in the paper. Suggestions for further reading on the development of a research project are also provided.

A key feature of a good research project is that it has never been done before; that is, it is in some way *original* in the sense that it is not aiming to find out something people in the field already know. The project also needs to be *worth doing*. It is, then, important to consider the value and relevance of the project as there are many things that might be capable of being done that are not worth doing. A good research project also needs to be *feasible* and *manageable* within the time frame available for it, with the resources that are available for the project and by the person (or people) who will be carrying out the study. Thus, a project that may take three to four years, as with a PhD project, will be much too ambitious if there is only a year available to carry out and complete the study. There may also be financial resources required for the project, such as airfare and hotel costs, that without them, the project may not be able to proceed. It is also important to consider whether the people who wish to carry out the project have the theoretical background and methodological skills that the proposed study requires. For example, if the study is a conversation analysis project, the people carrying out the study need to know how to do conversation analysis. If the study requires some kind of statistical treatment, the researcher (or researchers) needs to be able to do this. It is also important that the topic of the research be of interest to a wider audience, such as the international readership of a journal, as one of the aims of conducting research is disseminating it to a wider audience. Connected to this is whether the completed project is likely to lead to some kind of publication, such as a journal article or a book, so that the research is able to contribute to the development of the discipline in which it is located.

Developing a Research Proposal

There are a number of important steps to go through in developing a research proposal. A good place to start with this is by drawing up a shortlist of topics that might be worth investigating. It is then a good idea to take this list to someone who has had experience in carrying out research (such as a colleague or potential mentor) to get advice on which topic, in their view, is the best one to proceed with. The next thing for researchers to do is to formulate a general question that

the research will answer and, from there, focus the question. This stage of the process often causes new researchers the most trouble, so people who are new to research should not rush this stage and should take as much time as needed to do this. In short, the question has to be both worthy and answerable. A question may be worth asking but impractical to answer, or answerable but not worth researching. The study, thus, needs to have a question that both has value and is answerable in terms of the proposed methodology and the question's capability.

Table 1 provides more detailed advice on ways to refine a research question.

Table 1

Ways to Refine a Research Question **(based on Stevens & Asmar, 1999, p. 17)**

- Read broadly and widely and to find a subject about which you are passionate. Immerse yourself in the literature, use your library, read the abstracts of other recent theses and dissertations, check theses on the web. For example: http://www.ndltd.org/

- Narrow your focus to a single question: be disciplined and not over-ambitious

- Be prepared to change or modify your question if necessary

- Be able to answer the question "Why am I doing this project?" (and not a different one)

- Read up-to-date materials - ensure that your idea is achievable and no one else has done or is doing it

- Work through the implications of your research question: consider existing materials and ideas on which it is based, check the logic, spell out methods to be used

- Condense your research question into two sentences: write it down, with pride, above your working area. Change the question if needed.

- Ask yourself: What will we know at the end that we did not already know?

Table 2 shows how a Chinese student who was a beginning researcher started from a very general topic and moved from there to a more narrowly focused research question that had value and was answerable. In his particular case, he was studying at a university outside China but was interested in how a communicative approach to language teaching could be implemented in university classes in his country. As he was not living in China, he could not get any firsthand data that he could use for his study. He did, however, have a set of textbooks with him that everyone in his university used to teach English. The researcher was also particularly interested in the teaching of listening so he brought the resources and the interest he had together by looking at how the teaching of listening was approached in Chinese university text books and comparing this with communicatively oriented textbooks published in English-speaking countries. He, thus, moved from a question that was worth asking but not, in his current situation, capable of being answered to one that was also worth asking and also capable of being done.

Table 2

Choosing and Focusing a Research Topic: An Example

Choosing a topic

Communicative language teaching in China

Choosing a question

Communicative language teaching in Chinese universities: Is it really possible?

Focusing the question

The place of listening in the communicative classroom: An East-West comparison

Narrowing the focus of the question

Focusing on listening in EFL coursebooks: An East-West comparison

Once the research question has been decided, a decision needs to be made about what data needs to be collected to answer the question, where and how it might be collected, and how the data might be analysed. An initial research plan can be drawn up from here. It is important, at the same time, to read enough in order to decide whether the proposed project is on the right track. To do this, previous research on the topic needs to be examined in order to see what research has already been carried out on the proposed topic as well as how this research was carried out. It is also essential to think about ethical implications of the research in terms of what permissions need to be obtained to carry out the research, and what guarantees of anonymity can be given to the people (if any) involved in the research.

The Structure of a Research Proposal

The next stage is to write a detailed research proposal. This should include definitions of key constructs in the proposal (such as "negotiation of meaning" or "willingness to communicate") that would enable someone else reading it (and in turn the completed research) to understand what exactly is meant by these terms in the research.

Table 3 shows the typical structure of a research proposal and the purpose of each of the sections of the proposal.

Table 3

The Typical Structure of a Research Proposal (adapted from Paltridge & Starfield, 2007)

Section	Purpose
Title	To summarise, in a few words, what the research will be about
Relevant background literature	To demonstrate the relationship between the proposed study and what has already been done in the particular area; that is, to indicate the "gap" that the study will fill
Research question(s)	To provide an explicit statement of what the study will investigate, i.e., the questions the study will answer or the hypotheses it will test
Definitions of terms	To provide the meaning of the key terms that have been used in the research question(s)
Research methodology	To provide an overview of the research approach that will be employed in the study, data that will be collected, how it will be analysed, etc.
Anticipated problems and limitations	To show awareness of the limitations of the study, what problems may be met in carrying it out, and how they will be dealt with
Significance of the research	To say why the study is worth carrying out
Resources required / Budget	To say what resources the research will require and what costs may be anticipated in carrying out the study
Ethics	To provide a statement as to how participants will be advised of the overall nature of the study and how informed consent will be obtained from them
Timetable	To give a working plan for carrying out and completing the study
References	To provide detailed references and bibliographic support for the proposal
Appendix	To provide examples of materials that might be used, or adapted, in the study

Details to Include in a Research Proposal

A research proposal is expected to include a focused research question that has value and is answerable. It should also contain the key terms in the question and their definitions so that during the study, these items can be observed. The proposal should include key research which has already been carried out on the particular topic. The main issues or controversies which surround the problem should be discussed, as well as any gaps in the previous research on the topic. It is also important to show how the previous research is relevant to the study being proposed.

The study needs to select a research approach that is an appropriate for the particular question or problem that will be investigated. A well defined list of procedures that will be followed in carrying out the research needs to be described. This includes both the method of data collection and its analysis. There should be an indication of how the study's participants (or data) will be selected for the study. It is also helpful to plan for a pilot study so that the research instruments can be trialed and evaluated.

It is also important to say why the study is significant; that is, why it is worth doing. Ethical issues, if there are any, need to be discussed. This includes whether informed consent needs to be obtained for the study, and if this is the case, how this will be done. It is also helpful to include a proposed timetable for the research as this will give an indication as to how realistic the proposal actually is. A budget statement is also important as this will give an indication of

how realistic the proposal is in terms of financial requirements and whether the research might need to be adapted in the light of these.

Nunan (1992) provides a useful set of questions for guiding the design of a research proposal. Each of these questions needs to be considered in the development and refinement of the proposal. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
***Questions to Guide the Design of a Research Proposal* (Nunan, 1992, p. 227)**

Area	Questions
Question	Is the question worth investigating?
	Is the question feasible?
	What are the constructs underlying my question?
	How will these be operationalised?
Design	Does the question suggest an experimental or a non-experimental design?
Method	What methods are available for investigating the question?
	Which of these are feasible, given available resources and expertise?
	Is it possible to use more than one data collection method?
Analysis	Does my research involve statistical or interpretive analysis, or both?
	Do I have the skills to carry out the kind of analysis I propose?

A Sample Study

Nakane's (2007) examination of silence in Japanese students' interactions in their regular university courses in an English medium university where there was mix of native and non-native speaker students of English is an example of a study that has many of the characteristics of a good research project described earlier in this paper. In her study, Nakane looked at the Japanese students' spoken interactions in the university classrooms as well as the other students, and lecturers' perceptions of the Japanese students' interactions. She combined the techniques of conversation analysis with ethnographic data in order to obtain multiple perspectives on the issue she wanted to explore.

Research question. The aim of Nakane's study was to examine the communication problems faced by Japanese students in their classes. She also wanted to see whether there were characteristic discourse patterns which could be sources of their communication problems. This question drew from her own experience as an English teacher in Japan, where she had begun to wonder how Japanese students would cope with academic interactions in an English-speaking country. She discovered from her reading of the research literature that we know very little about communication problems these students encounter and what causes communication problems for them. Her study, thus, was worth doing, capable of being done, and had not been done before. As such, it would fill an important gap in previous research about second language students' interactional patterns, and what they mean, in university classroom settings.

Methodology. The question Nakane proposed suggested a non-experimental, rather than experimental design as she had an open question she wanted to explore rather than a hypothesis she wanted to test. She used more than one data collection method for her study in order to give greater depth to her study. Nakane recorded classroom interactions which

included the Japanese students, conducted individual interviews, focus group discussions, and administered questionnaires. Each of these data collection methods were within her expertise and were permitted by the institution where she was carrying out the study. Nakane combined this data with three case studies which drew on video and audio recordings, field notes, and artifacts from her classroom observations. The case studies used stimulated recall interviews and follow-up interviews with the Japanese students, fellow English-speaking students, and their teachers. A large-scale survey that had been independently carried out at another university was also used as a data source for the study. Nakane also collected data from classrooms in Japan in order to make a comparison between her observations of the English-medium classrooms and how Japanese students might typically behave in a similar kind of setting in Japan. The Japanese data consisted of video recordings, field notes, and artifacts from the Japanese classrooms.

Data analysis. Nakane's study involved an interpretive analysis of her data. She carried out a conversation analysis of the English classroom data. She also carried out a content analysis of the interview and stimulated recall data which allowed categories and sub-categories to emerge from the data, rather than using a set of pre-determined categories as the starting point for her analysis. This was important for her study as she didn't want to base her analysis on any previous conceptions she had as to why the students had difficulty communicating in their classes. The video and audio material were coded following patterns that had emerged from the students' and staff's self-reports in the stimulated recall interviews and the follow-up interviews. The conversation analysis component of the data was counter-checked by another analyst who was familiar with the conventions and expectations of conversation analysis to increase the reliability of her study.

Nakane also considered the results of her study in relation to other issues such as teacher–student interactional modes, teacher control of classroom discourse, timing in the taking of turns, the Japanese students' perceptions of politeness, and, in particular, the hierarchy-oriented politeness system they were used to in their interactions with teachers in Japan. She also considered her findings in relation to the issues of the Japanese students' language proficiency and their different schema, or interpretive frames, for classroom interactions.

Results of the study. The silence of the Japanese students was one of the major problems in the classrooms. Nakane also found that gaps in assumptions about classroom communication between the Japanese students, fellow English-speaking students, and their lecturers contributed to the students' silence in each of her three cases. The Japanese students' silence in class, she suggested, seemed to prevent the establishment of rapport between them and their lecturers. She also found there was a conflict between the lecturers' view of the Japanese students' personalities (for example, as being shy) when this was not the case for the students outside of the classroom. The students' silence in class was interpreted, she found, as a negative attitude and lack of commitment to their studies, where in fact, for one of the students she examined, this was not at all the case. Her initial feelings about what the issues might have been for these students in their classes, then, proved to be correct, although she needed to carry out her study to find this out.

Awareness of limitations. Nakane is well aware of the limits to the claims that can be made on the basis of her study and argues for the accumulation of further data and analyses of the kind that she had carried out. In particular, she points to the need to further explore the types and aspects of silence that she observed. She argues that these analyses need to be at both the micro and the macro levels; that is, by a detailed analysis of the actual interactions as well as a broader analysis of the situation and circumstances that surround the interactions. She also

suggests the examination of student interactions in different types of study situations to see to what extent students' interactions in these situations are similar to, or different from, the interactions that she observed. She suggests looking at the reverse kind of situation as well; that is, looking at the interactions of English-speaking students in Japanese university settings to see to what extent the English-speaking students' experiences in a Japanese university classroom are similar to, or different from, the Japanese students' interactions that she examines in her study.

Commentary. A particular strength of Nakane's study was the multiple perspectives she took on her research question in order to provide both validity and depth to her research findings. These multiple data sources provided for a detailed and fine-grained analysis of the research questions. The project showed a good understanding of the importance of triangulation in this sort of study by combining different perspectives on the research questions that she examined. Her ethnographic data provided insights into her findings that would not have been possible by looking at the spoken interactions alone. Nakane's study is an example of a project that was well conceived, well designed, and well carried out. Further, it provided answers to questions that are of value to both university teaching staff and to students and that may help, in the future, to provide solutions to the kinds of communication problems the students in her study were experiencing.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to outline some of the key characteristics of good research projects and illustrate those characteristics with a sample study. There is, of course, much more that could be said on this topic than has been outlined in this paper. Bell's (2010) *Doing Your Research Project,* for example, is a very helpful book for beginning researchers to consult for advice on developing a research project. Chapter Two of Bell's book discusses planning a research project, selecting a topic, focusing the study, and presenting a project outline. The first chapter of Elphinstone and Schweitzer's (1998) *How to Get a Research Degree* is especially relevant to writing a research proposal. Section headings in this chapter include "Choosing a thesis topic," "Defining your thesis topic," "Methodology and research design," "The research proposal," "Criteria for assessing a research proposal," and "Checklist of questions to be asked about a research proposal." Punch's (2006) *Developing Effective Research Proposals* is also a very good guide for writing research proposals. The final chapter of this book contains sample quantitative and qualitative research proposals. Paltridge and Phakiti's 2010) *Continuum Companion to Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* discusses approaches to research and areas of research that are of interest to people working the area of language teaching and learning. Finally, *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language* (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) has a chapter titled "Writing a research proposal" which provides more detail on this process than has been given in this paper.

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Research

Impacts of Video-Recorded Feedback in Public Speaking Classes: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This paper presents a rather unexplored teaching technique in classrooms in Vietnam: video-recorded feedback. The objective of this study is two-fold: (1) to investigate the impacts of video-recorded feedback on students' communication competence and communication apprehension in a Public Speaking course of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at a university in Vietnam, and (2) to gain insights into students' attitudes towards the application of video-recorded feedback in the public speaking course. Data was collected via video recording of students' presentations, students' reflection forms, questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The findings have revealed positive effects of video-recorded feedback as well as positive attitudes of the students towards this still-new type of feedback. These empirical study results also have implications for the potential application of video-recorded feedback to EFL courses and programs in Vietnam and other similar contexts in Asia or elsewhere.

Public speaking plays a vital part in today's life. Patil (2006) stated that "the ability to give a great presentation can be a tremendous career booster, while the inability to do so can keep you on a dead-end path" (p. 1). Due to their importance, oral presentation skills in general and public speaking skills in particular have been greatly emphasized in the current English course syllabuses of many universities. In the context of the university in this research, students in several speaking classes and specialized courses are required to make oral presentations in class and these presentations are also assessed as part of their final results. When students go to work, they need to communicate effectively in various communicative events, using appropriate language and excellent presentation skills. Therefore, it is vital to enhance students' public speaking skills when they are still in university.

Providing effective and constructive feedback in a performance course such as a public speaking course, as indicated by Quigley and Nyquist (1992), is necessary for teachers to

improve their students' presentation skills. Quigley and Nyquist (1992) emphasized that thoughtful feedback, especially in the public domain, stimulates students to be reflective about their performance and has an important long-term influence on their communication skills. Specifically, feedback serves the following purposes: (a) to help speakers know about the audience's reaction to their speech, (b) to suggest improvements, (c) to encourage speakers to speak again or to enjoy speaking, and (d) to increase speakers' self-understanding (Brook, 1985, as cited in Quigley & Nyquist, 1992). In teaching public speaking and evaluating speeches, giving meaningful feedback on students' work is always "a commitment in any teaching-learning situation" (Kaur, 2005, para. 1). To obtain the most effectiveness from public speaking courses, with the ever-increasing integration of technology into classes over the last decades, a new type of feedback, i.e., video-recorded feedback, has been widely adopted in these courses, as found in many studies (e.g., Dupagne, Stacks, & Giroux, 2006; Glenn, 1996; Mallard & Quintanilla, 2008; Quigley & Nyquist, 1992).

Video-recorded feedback. Video-recorded feedback, or video feedback, "refers to a structured process whereby students review their recorded communication with the benefit of some guidance and / or evaluation from an instructor or peers" (Quigley & Nyquist, 1992, p. 325). Video recording, considered "a third eye as a tool for performance enhancement" (Glenn, 1996, p. 1), proves to be a powerful instructional aid in public speaking courses due to its capacity to preserve students' performances for later analysis and self-reflection. In this sense, and within the scope of the current study, video-recorded feedback is closely defined as self-evaluation feedback.

The positive effects of video-recorded feedback in public speaking courses have been firmly asserted by several researchers (Bankston & Terlip, 1994; Dupagne et al., 2006; Hinton & Kramer, 1998; Miles, 1981; Quigley & Nyquist, 1992). As stated by Quigley and Nyquist (1992) and Lucas (1995, as cited in Glenn, 1996), video technology allows students in public speaking classes to review their performances, thereby helping them know how they look and sound in the eyes and ears of their audience. Moreover, Quigley and Nyquist (1992) added three more benefits video-recorded feedback offers students: getting feedback at the time of their performance, identifying or emphasizing particular skills, and comparing different performances. Miles (1981) revealed that students showcase greater oral communication skills after viewing a video replay of their performances. Dupagne, Stacks, and Giroux (2006) further posited that by viewing their speeches, students can become more aware of weaknesses in their presentation style, such as poor body posturing, excessive gesturing, and frequent use of interrupters.

In reaching the main goals of a public speaking course, many studies have examined the impacts of these courses on students' perceptions of their communication competencies, in which very often students are measured on their communication competence and communication apprehension (e.g., Dupagne et al., 2006; Glenn, 1996; Hinton & Kramer, 1998).

Communication competence. According to Rubin (1990), communication competence is knowledge about appropriate and effective communication behaviors, development of skills to communicate appropriately and effectively, and motivation to behave appropriately and effectively (as cited in Dupagne et al., 2006).

Ford and Wolvin (1993) developed a course evaluation instrument containing 24 items with different communication competencies across three different contexts: in class, at work, and in social settings, shown in Figure 1 below.

1. Feeling confident about yourself
2. Feeling comfortable with others' perceptions of you
3. Reasoning with people
4. Using language appropriately
5. Understanding nonverbal messages
6. Communicating in personal relationships
7. Managing conflict in personal relationships
8. Asserting yourself (without becoming aggressive)
9. Listening to others in personal relationships
10. Feeling comfortable communicating in personal relationships
11. Preparing questions and materials for an interview
12. Conducting an interview
13. Feeling comfortable when conducting an interview
14. Completing tasks in a small group situation
15. Interacting with others in a small group situation
16. Listening to others in a small group situation
17. Feeling comfortable communicating in a small group situation
18. Preparing and organizing speeches
19. Presenting speeches in front of an audience
20. Listening to speeches
21. Feeling comfortable when delivering speeches
22. Persuading people
23. Your overall ability speaking to others in different situations
24. Your overall ability listening to others in different situations

Figure 1. Perceived communication competencies. Ford and Wolvin (1993).

Communication apprehension. McCroskey (1977) defined communication apprehension as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 78, as cited in Dupagne et al., 2006). Zimbardo (1977, as cited in Dupagne et al., 2006) found in his study that, as to university students, their shyness when speaking in public is a contributing factor to communication apprehension, which is exhibited in up to 73% of the students. This finding about communication apprehension could be relevant to what is found in EFL students in Vietnam or other Asian contexts, who "have added dimensions of fear, insecurity and anxiety when it involves speaking in front of their peers" (Kaur, 2005, para. 1).

McCroskey (1982, as cited in McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985) developed the latest version of PRCA-24 (Figure 2) based on an earlier instrument measuring communication apprehension by McCroskey and Richmond (1980). This new instrument involves four communication contexts, including public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings, and speaking in dyads. There are six items for each context. With this instrument, students indicate the degree to which each statement applies to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). As with McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, and Plax (1985), because this scale has already been extensively tested for validity and reliability, the standard scoring approach was used for the four subscales.

Directions: This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning your feelings about communication with other people. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Are Undecided, (4) Disagree, or (5) Strongly Disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly, *just* record your first impression.

___   1.   I dislike participating in group discussions.
___   2.   Generally, I am comfortable while participating in a group discussion.
___   3.   I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
___   4.   I like to get involved in group discussions.
___   5.   Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
___   6.   I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
___   7.   Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
___   8.   Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.
___   9.   I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.
___   10.   I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
___   11.   Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
___   12.   I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
___   13.   While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
___   14.   I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
___   15.   Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
___   16.   Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
___   17.   While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
___   18.   I am afraid to speak up in conversations.
___   19.   I have no fear of giving a speech.
___   20.   Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
___   21.   I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
___   22.   My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
___   23.   I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
___   24.   While giving a speech I get so nervous, I forget facts I really know.

SCORING:
Group = 18 - (1) + (2) - (3) + (4) - (5) + (6)
Meeting = 18 - (7) + (8) + (9) - (10) - (11) + (12)
Dyadic = 18 - (13) + (14) - (15) + (16) + (17) - (18)
Public = 18 + (19) - (20) + (21) - (22) + (23) - (24)
Overall CA = Group + Meeting + Dyadic + Public

Figure 2. Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24). McCroskey (1982, as cited in McCroskey et al, 1985).

The two above-mentioned instruments display their wide use of evaluation in different communication contexts, i.e., in class, at work and in social settings (Ford & Wolvin, 1993), and in groups, in meetings, in dyadic and public speaking (McCroskey et al., 1985). Research adopting either of these two instruments has shown that taking a basic public speaking course increases students' perceptions of their communication competencies in such different contexts

(Ericson & Gardner, 1992; Kramer & Hinton, 1996; Rubin, Rubin, & Jordan, 1997). However, limited research suggests that students' communication competencies could be enhanced in public speaking courses with the application of technology such as video recording. What is more, whilst much literature has grown around the public speaking arena, studies on video recording and video-recorded feedback are still largely neglected in the Vietnamese pedagogical setting (Do & Dang, 2012; Duong, 2003). Video-recorded feedback, although already addressed as a convenient way to enhance students' public speaking skills for the long term (e.g., Bankston & Terlip, 1994; Bourhis & Allen, 1998; Bunz, 2002; Hirschfeld, 1968), remains an unproven technique, specifically in Vietnam pedagogical public speaking context. Do and Dang's (2012) review article of published studies of video-recorded feedback in public speaking has suggested that this kind of feedback can be potentially employed as an effective pedagogical tool to improve the overall performance of students in public speaking courses. To increase teaching success in public speaking courses, this research was implemented to scrutinize the effects of video feedback on students' communication skills in public speaking. It specifically uses Ford and Wolvin's (1993) course evaluation instrument of communication competencies and McCroskey's (1982, as cited in McCroskey et al., 1985) Report of Communication Apprehension to find the results for the study. Within the recent research's focus of investigating impacts of video-recorded feedback in public speaking classes, the application of these two instruments has been modified and restricted to a scope relating to public speaking only.

This study, with its all useful information and implications, is anticipated to arouse EFL teachers' consciousness of the importance of applying video-recorded feedback in public speaking classes. Also, the study hopefully provides a good grasp on the effects of video feedback on students' communication skills and communication apprehension. Lastly, students' attitude towards the application of video feedback in real public speaking courses is probed, which offers teachers a chance to reflect on the feasibility of applying this technique in their teaching environment. In pursuit of the aforesaid goals, this research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How does video-recorded feedback affect the students' communication competence and communication apprehension in public speaking courses?
2. What are the students' attitudes towards the application of video-recorded feedback in public speaking classes?

Research Methodology

Participants
The participants were 50 third-year EFL students in a public speaking course at a university of foreign languages in Vietnam. At this level, the students were categorized as upper-intermediate or advanced in terms of their English language speaking proficiency based on the required Common European Framework of Reference tests they took at the end of their second year. The instructor is also the researcher.

Course Description
The public speaking course is also called Speaking 5. Students register for this course after finishing four prerequisite courses, Speaking 1 to Speaking 4. The course lasts for 30 periods and has one two-period meeting (50 minutes per period) per week. The first 10 periods are for theory, with one mid-term test on theory, and the last 20 periods are for practice. In this study, each student was required to do two 5-7 minute presentations: one related to theory in the first

10 weeks and the other on an optional topic. The interval between the two presentations was five to six weeks.

Instruments

Video recording. All presentations were video recorded with the instructor's camera. Recording of each student contained his / her five to seven-minute presentation and two minutes of questions and answers. Each recording was burned into a DVD and sent to each student one to two days afterwards.

Reflection forms. Each student was advised to view his or her video-recorded presentation and fill in the questionnaires and reflection form. The two reflection forms (see Appendices A and B) were delivered by the course instructor and submitted to the instructor one week after each of the two presentations. The reflection forms, with some intentionally different question items in the first and the second forms, aimed at collecting data regarding the students' attitudes towards this type of feedback as well as the strengths and weaknesses that they perceived after watching their presentations. All the students' statements in the reflection forms as well as the forms themselves were in English. All fifty and forty-seven out of the 50 students handed in their first and second reflection forms respectively. Data for the study was consequently taken from the forty-seven students who submitted their two reflections.

Questionnaires. Questionnaires were designed to deliver before and after the course (pre-test and post-test), aiming to investigate the impacts of video-recorded feedback on the students' communication competence and communication apprehension. Two scales were employed in this research: one measuring communication competencies and one measuring communication apprehension.

Communication competencies. Communication competency items were modified from the course evaluation instrument of Ford and Wolvin (1993) (Figure 1). Aiming at evaluating students' communication competencies in public speaking classes, the researcher selected 10 items relevant to public speaking classes for this research. Student-respondents described their abilities for each item with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *0* (none) to *7* (great).

Communication apprehension. Communication apprehension items were modified from the instrument PRCA-24 of McCroskey et al. (1985; Figure 2). With this instrument, the students indicated the degree to which each statement applied to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale from *1* (strongly agree) to *5* (strongly disagree). The researcher selected six items relevant to public speaking classes for this research.

In-depth interviews. Five volunteer students from the participants were interviewed about their attitude towards video-recorded feedback. These interviews were conducted in the native language of the participants and the researcher, i.e., Vietnamese, in order to avoid any potential language barrier to the participants' expressions.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the reflection forms, questionnaires, and interviews were categorized, coded, and analyzed by qualitative methods and quantitative methods using the Statistics Package for Social Studies Version 19.0. The students' reflections and expressions in the reflection forms and interviews were translated into English by the researcher for analysis. The names of the students appearing in this research are pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

Impacts of Video-Recorded Feedback on Students' Communication Competencies

The impacts of video-recorded feedback are evaluated based on analyzing data on changes in students' perceptions before and after the course. The researcher chose 10 items (out of 24) in the instrument of Ford and Wolvin (1993) and divided them into 3 categories: confidence, presentation, and interpersonal communication. The findings for the pre-test and post-test are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Changes in Perceived Communication Competencies (Mean Scores)

			Pre-test	Post-test
Confidence	1	Feeling confident about yourself	3.06	4.87
	2	Asserting yourself without becoming aggressive	3.49	4.94
	3	Feeling comfortable when delivering speeches	3.74	4.83
	4	Persuading people	4.11	5.26
Presentation	5	Preparing and organizing speeches	4.36	5.55
	6	Presenting speeches in front of an audience	4.30	5.23
Interpersonal communication	7	Understanding nonverbal messages	3.74	5.15
	8	Feeling comfortable with others' perceptions of you	4.72	5.34
	9	Reasoning with people	4.06	5.40
	10	Using language appropriately	4.02	5.57

Note. n = 47

The overall mean scores of the above three main categories (i.e., confidence, presentation, and intercultural communication) are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Changes in Perceived Communication Competencies (Overall Mean Scores)

	Mean *(M)*		Pre-to-post change
	Pre-test	Post-test	
Confidence	3.60	4.98	1.38**
Presentation	4.33	5.39	1.06**
Interpersonal communication	4.14	5.37	1.23**

Note. n = 47; ** *p* < .001

A pair sample t-test was also conducted to identify the significance of these changes and the findings showed that the *p* value of these changes was smaller than .001, proving the reliability of the changes.

As can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, the overall mean scores of all three main communication competencies increased from pre-test to post-test. These findings suggest a strong relationship between video-recorded feedback and improvements. This result could correlate with that of

Hinton and Kramer (1998), who found that over 75% of the respondents indicated improvements in communication competencies.

After viewing their presentations, the students realized their weakness in confidence and promised to improve in the next set of presentations. For example, one student stated:

> I didn't speak loudly enough. I forgot some ideas so I spoke softly. Although I didn't read information in the slideshow, I didn't have much eye contact with the audience as I was trembling.

On the reflection forms, some students admitted that they recognized some pronunciation mistakes they had made but had not paid attention to before. Many students wrote about their presentation pace; some were too quick and some were too slow. Several students mentioned that they should be more careful about preparation and rehearsals next time. More than half of the students reflected on their limitations in eye contact and facial expressions. Typically, one wrote:

> I think my presentation would have been more interesting if I had smiled to the audience more and shown a more friendly attitude, instead of my nervous face.

As for another student, the reflection was:

> I have to find wiser ways to respond to the audience's questions, especially when I don't know the answer immediately.

Generally, students' improvements in communication competence can be perceived to some extent through the findings above.

Impacts of Video-Recorded Feedback on Students' Communication Apprehension

As shown in Table 3, there was a big difference in the students' apprehension before and after viewing their recorded presentations. This difference, to some extent, reflected positive impacts of this type of feedback on students' communication apprehension.

Table 3

Changes in Communication Apprehension

		Totally agree (%)		Agree (%)		Not sure (%)		Disagree (%)		Totally disagree (%)	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	I have no fear of giving a speech	0.00	21.28	4.26	38.30	2.12	4.26	29.79	21.28	63.83	14.89
2	Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech	61.70	21.28	25.53	21.28	0.00	2.13	12.77	34.04	0.00	21.28
3	I feel relaxed while giving a speech	0.00	10.64	0.00	21.28	6.38	0.00	25.53	25.53	68.09	42.55
4	My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving the speech	42.55	25.53	40.43	31.91	0.00	0.00	10.64	31.91	6.38	10.64
5	I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence	0.00	14.89	10.64	14.89	0.00	4.26	55.32	53.19	34.04	12.77
6	While giving a speech, I get so nervous, I forget facts I really know	55.32	29.79	25.53	23.40	8.51	2.13	10.64	29.79	0.00	14.89

Note. For the pre-test and post-test, *n = 47*

Specifically, before the study, only a small percentage of students (4.26%) thought that they didn't feel afraid of presenting while most students (93.62%) did. After video-recorded feedback being applied in class, only 36.17% reflected that they still felt afraid.

For the third item, none of the students felt relaxed giving a speech at the beginning of the course, but this figure increased to 31.92% afterwards. Also, for the fifth item, only 10.64% felt confident before the study, but this number nearly tripled after the study.

Regarding thinking ability, 82.98% of students chose "totally agree" or "agree" for "My thoughts become confused and jumbled when giving a speech" in the pre-test; this rate decreased to 57.44% in the post-test. In addition, 87.23% agreed that some parts of their bodies became tense and rigid during their speech, but this rate fell by over half in the post-test.

Many students emphasized their apprehension in their reflections. Bich, a student in the class, wrote:

> When I stood in front of many people, my heart beat fast; my face sometimes became flushed. I couldn't control myself and I began to forget all my presentation content.

Thanks to video-recorded feedback, this student became aware of her weaknesses and prepared and rehearsed more for the next presentation. In the second presentation, Bich tried holding a pencil in her hands and used more gestures; accordingly, she did much better.

Overall, the findings in this study are compatible with those of Dupagne et al. (2006), in which students who experienced video-recorded feedback were less frightened of presenting than those who did not have the same experience.

Students' Comments on Aspects of Video-Recorded Feedback

The findings revealing students' attitudes towards video-recorded feedback were collected from students' reflection forms and in-depth interviews, which display both positive and negative attitudes.

Positive aspects. All student-participants (50 out of 50) shared the same opinion that video-recorded feedback was a useful technique as because of it, they recognized the limitations in their performance. One student noted:

> I can see what and how I acted during my performance. This technique helps us see our strengths and weaknesses as on viewing, we ourselves become audience. (Ly)

The application of video-recorded feedback encouraged students to make more well-prepared presentations.

> The recording reminded us to try our best in order to have a few-of-mistake performance. (Ngoan)

Some student-participants pointed out that this modern teaching aid, together with the new teaching technique, inspired them to learn and helped boost their confidence in long-term presentation skills development.

> The presence of a camera in my public speaking class makes us curious, happy and eager. I think that is because we are experiencing something new that we have never had before. (Hung)

> For the very first time, I was completely surprised by a 'big' camera firmly set in the middle of the room, recording our presentations. (Nam)

> I like the camera because I see it as a tool of modern teaching and learning with which I should be acquainted. (Lan)

> Thanks to the camera, this presentation becomes an unforgettable memory of my college life. (Hoa)

> This technology-bound method is a professional learning and teaching method. (Huy)

Negative aspects. Besides the above mentioned benefits, the negative sides of video-recorded feedback should also be taken into due consideration. The application of video-recorded feedback complicated students' learning process, as what stated by the following two students:

> I hate the camera because it is too complicated to me and it is time-consuming. (Loan)

> The sound quality of our recorded video is poor. And we lack computers and equipment to watch our video again. (Hoa)

The camera was also a great distracter for students. Although the camera was used to help students increase their confidence in the long-term, it turned out to be a source of fear and pressure for many in the first few days.

> I feel uncomfortable with the camera. When presenting, I paid much attention to it and sometimes I forgot my scripts. (Nguyen)

> I felt a bit nervous and trembling when I saw a camera facing me. (Nga)

> I know that I was not natural in front of the camera. (Hoa)

Conclusion and Implications

From the findings, it can be concluded that video-recorded feedback created some improvements in students' communication competence and simultaneously helped reduce students' communication apprehension to some extent. Although students showed both positive and negative attitudes towards video-recorded feedback, all admitted that this feedback had a great impact in helping them realize their mistakes. Instructors of public speaking courses therefore should recognize the significance of video-recorded feedback and widely apply this technique in speaking and public speaking classes. So as to achieve the most benefit from this application, public speaking course instructors are also encouraged to learn more about advanced technology and facilitate the learning process of video-recorded feedback for students. In addition, students should take advantage of evaluation via video-recorded feedback to facilitate their own self-directed learning and be aware of the significance of self-reflecting in their progress.

A limitation of this study lies in the research design. The lack of a control group caused us not to know whether students enrolled in other courses without the application of video-recorded feedback can receive the same benefits as students in the course with video-recorded feedback.

Regardless of this limitation, this research does provide some additional insights into the effectiveness of applying video-recorded feedback in public speaking courses that can be beneficial to the enhancement of students' communication skills. The study suggests the need for further assessment of the effectiveness of technology integration in communication courses. Further research might replicate this study but with the inclusion of a control group, or examine the relationship between student self-assessment and instructor assessment of students' video-recorded presentations.

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Appendix A
Student Reflection Form 1 (After Presentation 1)

Name of presenter:
Topic:

Instructions: Each category should be rated on a scale of 1-5 (circle the relevant number of your rating).

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent

I. OVERALL EVALUATION

Speech met the time limit	1	2	3	4	5
Speech showed evidence of research	1	2	3	4	5
Established a need for audience to listen	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

What do you think you could have done to improve your presentation?

II. ORGANIZATION and CONTENT

Overall organization of the speech was clear and easy to follow	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational pattern was appropriate for topic and type of speech	1	2	3	4	5
Transitions provided necessary links between ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting and informative content	1	2	3	4	5
Effective selection of key points	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

What do you think you could have done to improve your presentation?

III. DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

Lively and enthusiastic manner	1	2	3	4	5
Stance and posture was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
Gestures added emphasis and description	1	2	3	4	5
Communicated naturally (did not read)	1	2	3	4	5
Clear and fluent delivery	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

What do you think you could have done to improve your presentation?

IV. WORD USAGE / LANGUAGE

Appropriate use of language / words	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate use of grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Correct pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

What do you think you could have done to improve your presentation?

VI. USE OF AIDS / SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Speech utilized appropriate supporting materials	1	2	3	4	5
Speech utilized a variety of supporting materials	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting materials were clear and easy to see	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

What do you think you could have done to improve your presentation?

TOTAL SCORE: _____/ 100 points

OTHER SELF-REFLECTION:

What can be your strengths?	
What can be your weaknesses?	

In your next presentation, what do you think you should do to improve your presentation?

Appendix B
Student's Reflection Form 2 (After Presentation 2)

Name of presenter:
Topic:

Instructions: Each category should be rated on a scale of 1-5 (circle the relevant number of your rating).

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent

I. OVERALL EVALUATION

Speech met the time limit	1	2	3	4	5
Speech showed evidence of research	1	2	3	4	5
Established a need for audience to listen	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

In this presentation, what do you think you did better / worse than in your first presentation?

II. ORGANIZATION and CONTENT

Overall organization of the speech was clear and easy to follow	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational pattern was appropriate for topic and type of speech	1	2	3	4	5
Transitions provided necessary links between ideas	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting and informative content	1	2	3	4	5
Effective selection of key points	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

In this presentation, what do you think you did better/worse than in your first presentation?

III. DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

Lively and enthusiastic manner	1	2	3	4	5
Stance and posture was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
Gestures added emphasis and description	1	2	3	4	5
Communicated naturally (did not read)	1	2	3	4	5
Clear and fluent delivery	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

In this presentation, what do you think you did better / worse than in your first presentation?

IV. WORD USAGE / LANGUAGE

Appropriate use of language / words	1	2	3	4	5
Appropriate use of grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Correct pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

In this presentation, what do you think you did better / worse than in your first presentation?

VI. USE OF AIDS / SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Speech utilized appropriate supporting materials	1	2	3	4	5
Speech utilized a variety of supporting materials	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting materials were clear and easy to see	1	2	3	4	5

Total: _____

In this presentation, what do you think you did better / worse than in your first presentation?

TOTAL SCORE: _____ / 100 points

OTHER SELF-REFLECTION:
1. What do you think you have learnt and improved after your two presentations?

2. What do you think about the application of video-recorded feedback to this Public Speaking course? Any suggestions for the improvement of the course?

Cognitive Strategies for Dual Imperatives: EFL Listening and Speaking in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

Strategic development of oral communication skills (i.e., listening and speaking) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China is fraught with difficulties, including lack of contexts for authentic language use, examination-oriented pedagogy, and tacit educational practices. The quantitative study reported here was designed around a research question of how extensively three specific cognitive strategies – translation, deduction, and contextualisation – are used when students are listening and speaking in class. It was conducted with a large sample ($N = 1,440$) of Chinese EFL learners at the tertiary level who were learning in class to speak and listen in English. Findings indicate all three strategies are used extensively in both modalities, but significantly more so in speaking. These findings are interpreted in relation to instructional objectives of preparing students for oral communication beyond the classroom and for passing the listening test in the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4).

The development of oral communication (listening and speaking) skills as opposed to the development of literacy (reading and writing) for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in mainland China has been a slow and cumbersome process for both learners and teachers. Whilst factors such as limitations on access to resources and upgrading teachers' qualifications are constraining variables, most difficulties stem from lack of authentic contexts and purposes for oral language use, together with use of pedagogy which is culturally inappropriate within the Chinese educational tradition (see Anderson, 1993; Harvey, 1985; Rao, 2002; Y. Wang, 1991). Multilingual communities usually present pragmatic reasons for authentic use of oral English as a medium of intracommunity communication. However, in non-English monolingual contexts such as China, typically there is no need for intracommunity communication in oral English. As a result,

use of oral English has been limited mainly to language classrooms where learners are prepared for end-of-course examinations rather than for out-of-class contexts. Examination-oriented instruction also calls for heavy reliance on textbook-contrived linguistic accuracy. Hence, major focus has been on explicitly teaching and learning grammar (Rao, 2002).

The present study is one of several in a large ongoing research project between Australian and Chinese universities to examine the use of language learning strategies (LLS) by Chinese learners of English. The current research stems from one of the studies (Liyanage, Bartlett, Birch, & Tao, 2012) which explored usefulness of strategies in developing listening and speaking skills as perceived by Chinese EFL learners. The authors extended the focus of that study by revisiting its data with specific interest in three language learning behaviours that are used typically by Chinese learners of English in developing oral communication skills in class. The three behaviours are relying on translation to and from Chinese in mediating meaning in oral English, attending to rules of grammar to deduce meaning when engaging in the use of oral English, and using context as an aid to meaning in the comprehension and production of oral English (see Barlow & Lowe, 1985; Harvey, 1985; Maley, 1983; Scovel, 1983). These behaviours are well represented in the literature – for example, they correspond to the cognitive strategies of *translation, deduction,* and *contextualisation* respectively, as described by O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 137), and were used in their language learning strategy inventory. In the current study, use of these three cognitive strategies by Chinese EFL learners in university settings was investigated. How these strategies are realised in listening / speaking lessons for a regular class of freshmen and the effect of the use of these strategies on the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) preparation classes is described in detail.

Literature Review

At the initial stages of LLS research, researchers relied on a macroskill framework (see for example, Oxford-Carpenter, 1985) to investigate the processes used by learners in learning second languages. The perception by most learners that the mastery of a language is the mastery of its macroskills and the process they use to master those (Bradshaw, 1974) aligns well with cognitive theories of learning (Bartlett, 2010). While metacognitive strategies address the broad, executive processes that learners adopt when attempting to acquire a language (Bartlett, 2010; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2010, 2012; Liyanage, Grimbeek, & Bryer, 2010), cognitive strategies address the specifics of language learning, such as its grammatical elements and how these are realised through macroskills at the more *micro* level. Consequently, it may be possible to plan metacognitively for a listening comprehension test because the test follows a standard format in patterning response. However, most listening is done in less structured and predictable formats than in test situations – whether inside or outside the classroom. Thus, despite some conceivable advantage for test taking, it is no more possible to predict accurately (and therefore to prepare for) the detailed content of other listening comprehension events in the classroom than for those outside it.

Metacognitive strategies oversee language learning processes (Liyanage & Bartlett, 2010; Liyanage et al., 2010), whereas cognitive strategies address specific demands of language learning, and social-affective strategies address interactivity processes in language learning. The use of taxonomies has been common in LLS research of which the Language Learning Strategy Inventory (LLSI) of Chamot, Kupper, and Impik-Hernandez (1987) is a good example. This LLSI had been framed to gather information about 16 strategies under metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective headings when learning Spanish and Russian as foreign languages. However, additional

interviews conducted by the same researchers found 10 extra strategies for which no questions had been framed. Subsequently, Liyanage (2004) adapted Chamot et al's (1987) LLSI to embrace the missing 10 strategies to investigate LLS use reported by Sri Lankan learners of ESL ($N = 886$). The strategies in the adapted LLSI are listed in Table 1. The adapted inventory was translated (see Appendix A for the English original used) into Chinese (Liyanage et al., 2012). It was the measure applied in the current study.

Table 1
Twenty-six Strategies in the Adapted LLSI (Liyanage, 2004)

Metacognitive	Cognitive	Social Affective
Advanced Organisation	Repetition	Questioning for Clarification
Organisational Planning	Rehearsal	Cooperation
Directed Attention	Resourcing	Self-talk
Selective Attention	Translation	Self-reinforcement
Self-monitoring	Grouping	
Self-evaluation	Substitution	
Self-management	Note-taking	
	Summarising	
	Deduction	
	Imagery	
	Auditory Representation	
	Contextualisation	
	Elaboration	
	Transfer	
	Inferencing	

Using LLSI surveys completed by 1,440 Chinese university students, Liyanage et al. (2012) found high frequency usage of selective attention, organisational planning and self-management, observing that these metacognitive strategies were favoured highly by students both in class and out of class. Notably, usage was significantly greater out of class. The authors explained these effects largely in terms of in-class preparation for the CET-4 listening test. The listening component of the CET-4 involved coaching for a highly predictable test format (see Appendix C), which may have affected students' strategy preferences related to their ideas about what are likely and possible as listening test items. In contrast, outside the classroom, students were faced with situations which were far broader in range, much less predictable – and often individually determined. It was considered that these out-of-class factors encouraged a more varied repertoire of strategies from which to draw adaptive responses. Associated with this was a high degree of washback into their ongoing learning, both within and outside class (see Lin, 2009; Shao, 2006).

Washback

Washback has long been recognised as a highly probable outcome of what Alderson and Wall (1993) termed high-stakes tests. For Chinese students and their teachers, national English tests at the end of secondary schooling, as well as at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in tertiary

education, are high-stakes tests. As undergraduates, they cannot graduate at bachelor's level without first passing the CET-4. Extremely large numbers of students are involved as this test is administered nationally, presenting logistical problems for conducting the speaking test in particular. Outcomes are such that now this macroskill is available on the CET only for those students who have scored better than 85% on the written test. As one would expect, the washback into university classrooms has resulted in considerably more emphasis on listening than on speaking. As Shao (2006) reported,

> teaching activities in test-preparation classes mainly are centred on listening, reading and writing exercises, followed by translation, with the practice of speaking skills neglected. Although the curriculum stipulated attention to the five basic skills, speaking skills were not assessed in CET and the communicative approach existed in name only in this period. . . . the skills taught and practiced in test preparation classes were solely those required in the test . . . . (p. 56)

Shao's (2006) comments refer to effects of CET-4 on classroom teaching in undergraduate programs at a typical university in China, specifically based on time given to various components of the ELT curriculum at different stages of students' progress through their programs. The study compared the time allocation in regular classes in students' first year with the allocation given to CET-4 preparation in their second (see Table 2).

Table 2
Class Time on Curriculum Components (Averages Based on Shao, 2006)

Component	Regular Classes (1st Year)	Test-preparation Classes (2nd Year)
Listening	42 hr (28.0%)	45 hr (31.4%)
Speaking	53 hr (35.3%)	0 hr (0.0%)
Reading	48 hr (32.0%)	46 hr (32.2%)
Writing	6 hr (4.0%)	34 hr (23.8%)
Translation	1 hr (0.7%)	18 hr (12.6%)
Total	150 hr (100.0%)	143 hr (100.0%)

Similar data were reported in studies conducted at other Chinese universities (see Jin, 2008; W. Wang, 2010). Shao (2006) observed that "in the regular classes, the implementation of classroom teaching follows the College English Teaching Syllabus (1999) and The Requirements of College English Teaching (2004) without being influenced by CET" (p. 56). Such data reveal the pervasive effects of CET-4 preparation on what tertiary-level learners' EFL programs contain. In addition, those program components that remain are significantly influenced by the form that the testing takes in the CET-4. T. Tao (personal communication, April 7, 2011) reported on the teaching practices in a freshman English class and an interview with a teacher of a CET-4 preparation class (see Appendices B and C), which show a significant difference between language teaching and learning processes. It is to be expected, therefore, that use of language learning strategies will be affected by exposure to these different contexts.

The development of oral communication is complicated further by in-class preparation activities for nationwide high-stakes assessment tests which wash back on the pedagogy used by teachers

and on the strategies their students adopt. For example, at tertiary levels, success in English language tests is crucial in the academic goals of Chinese students. They must pass the CET-4 to qualify for their bachelor's degree. However, in most cases, the CET-4 is designed to test only listening, reading and writing. The listening component, which currently is worth 35% of the total CET marks, is likely soon to be increased to 70% (T. Tao, personal communication, April 7, 2011). The situation has contributed largely to an examination-success orientation to learning and instruction rather than one of developing communicative skills for authentic interaction.

A considerable literature has addressed the influence of Confucian principles on current instructional practices in China in which two particular issues are prominent: the relationship between the teacher and the taught and the exposition of what knowledge is and how it should be imparted, learnt, assessed and evaluated (see Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Peng, 2007; Rao, 2002; Tan, 2008). At the level of specific techniques, rote learning and memorisation of content, together with an emphasis on reproducing it at examinations, play a major role in current Chinese educational practice. Whilst these emphases are encouraged actively in the teaching and learning of all subjects in the curriculum, it is widely acknowledged that success in English involves a dual focus: success in an examination and success in communication beyond the classroom. This places specific demands on both teachers and students, given that examination success depends on accuracy of usage in test tasks together with test-taking strategies that may involve processes at odds with those needed for mastery of authentic discourse. Therefore, this quantitative study was designed around the research question of how extensively the cognitive strategies of translation, deduction, and contextualisation are used by Chinese EFL learners at the tertiary level when listening and speaking in class.

Method

Participants in the study were a large sample ($N = 1,674$) of non-English majors in CET preparation classes from three universities in China. After a brief explanation (Chinese and English) of the scope and purpose of the study by a bilingual research assistant in each university, the LLSI was administered to students in class. Respondents took approximately 45-50 minutes to answer the questionnaire. After data cleaning, 1,440 complete data sets remained. Of these, 35.1% ($n = 506$) were from male participants, 64.9% ($n = 935$) were from females. Participants were between 18-20 years of age and had studied English for 9-11 years.

The adapted LLSI (Liyanage, 2004; Liyanage et al., 2012) was used in the current study (see Table 3, alpha coefficient levels (> 0.5), for reliability statistics). Participants used a four-point Likert response scale (*always* to *never*) to rate how often they utilised the behaviours described in each item. Items illustrating each of the three targeted cognitive behaviours (strategies) are:

> **Translation:** I find myself translating what the teacher says back into Chinese so I can understand.
> **Deduction:** When listening to the teacher, I apply grammar rules to help myself understand.
> **Contextualisation:** When I learn a new word, I say it in a sentence as soon as possible.

Table 3
Reliability Statistics for the Three Scales

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Metacognitive	20	0.782
Cognitive	34	0.847
Social-affective	09	0.595

To facilitate reporting, responses to the Likert scale were collapsed into dichotomous categories: *Less often* (never, sometimes) and *more often* (usually, always).

Results and Discussion

Contingency analyses to compare the positivity of responses in relation to using the three strategies when listening in class compared with when speaking in class revealed that the outcomes were uniformly significant (Table 4) and that participants who used these three cognitive strategies when speaking in class were likely to do so also when listening in class – though usage was consistently greater when speaking (Figure 1).

Table 4
Chi Square Tests for Translation, Deduction and Contextualisation by Listening vs. Speaking in Class

χ^2 Tests	Value	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Translation	120.518	1	0.000
Deduction	101.356	1	0.000
Contextualisation	260.155	1	0.000
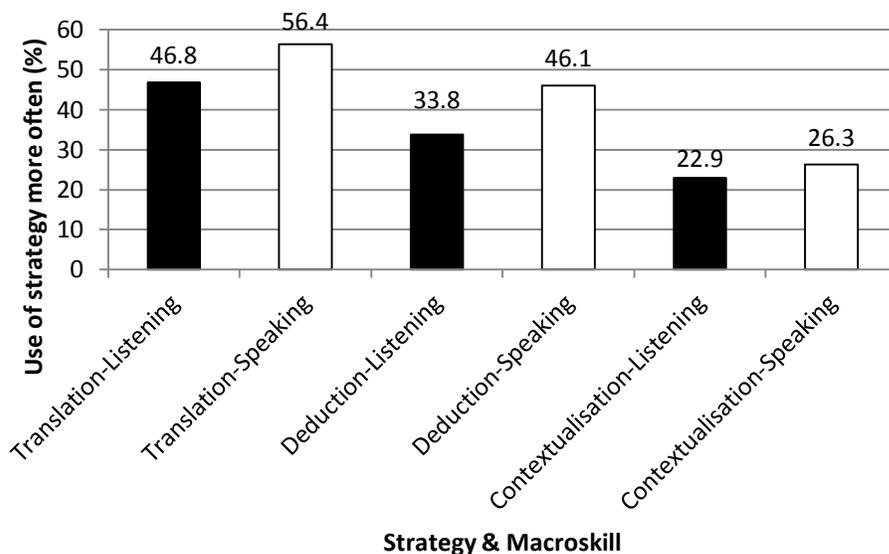
Figure 1. Three cognitive strategies while listening and speaking in class (percent of participants using strategy more often).

Follow-up sign tests (nonparametric related sample) of observed differences in use of translation, deduction, and contextualisation between speaking and listening revealed each of the three sets of differences was statistically significant ($p < .005$). Regardless of the strategy, cognitive engagement was much greater for learning when speaking.

Table 5
***Sign Test Statistics for Usage Differences of the Three Strategies When Speaking and Liste*ning**

Cognitive Strategies	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
SC7dich SC7 Translation - LC6dich LC6 Translation	-5.993	.000
SC9dich SC9 Deduction - LC8dich LC8 Deduction	-7.667	.000
SC12dich SC12 Contextualisation - LC9dich LC9 Contextualisation	-2.801	.005

The statistical data paint a picture that students use translation, deduction, and contextualisation when listening and speaking in English in and outside their classrooms. In particular, they showed learners made significantly greater use of these strategies in learning-through-speaking tasks. The nature of listening and speaking in Chinese EFL classrooms were re-examined to understand why this might be so, acknowledging the distinction between what have been termed "regular" and "test preparation" classes (Shao, 2006, p. 56). The analysis revealed that in regular classes, there is considerable interactivity between the two macroskills to the extent that these classes were often referred to as "listening and speaking" or "oral communication" classes. As a perusal of the lesson described in Appendix B shows, the two macroskills operate in tandem, and their interaction acts as a scaffold which promotes the development of both skills. For example, the discussion topic

("College Life") led to group discussions of aspects of the topic which resulted in the cognitive action of arousing and elaborating relevant schemata. These provided the content for top-down processing as the topic and language of discussion developed throughout the course of the lesson (see Breeze, 1998).

This lesson, based around a discussion topic that links directly to discussants' experiences in and beyond the classroom, contrasts with the test-preparation listening lessons that are described in Appendix C. The form of the CET-4 dictates what students will be exposed to in these test-preparation lessons. For a start, no activities require students to exercise their speaking skills. Rather, they receive a number of short conversational exchanges and answer multiple-choice questions on specific information contained in the exchanges. In addition, they listen to monologues and identify specific information. The form of the CET-4 listening test is summarised in Table 6, along with required responses and suggested preparation for the test items.

Table 6
CET-4 Listening Test with Notes on Required Responses from Students and Student Preparation

Test items	Required Student Response	Suggested Student Preparation
Section A Short dialogues	Identify information about daily life in English-speaking countries	Familiarise with words and expressions that relate to common situations
Section B Monologues	Answer specific questions drawn from monologues	Practise note-taking under stress; read extensively for general knowledge
Section C Cloze dictation: monologues	Contextualise key points	Extensive reading to develop vocabulary, spelling, and writing

If learners are to be successful in comprehending a spoken text, they first need to activate their topic-related schema. This enables them to access the gist of the text (Vandergrift, 1997). Typically, inside the regular listening classroom, they are provided with the topic of the listening text and perhaps even with specific discussion questions intended to guide them to key words needed in comprehending the spoken text (Appendix B). Consequently, in the early stages of listening comprehension, learners are involved in a working combination of metacognitive and cognitive strategies. The metacognitive strategies contribute through the tactical guidance inherent in such strategies as self-management, selective attention, and self-monitoring, where they provide procedural direction to the cognitive strategies, which are processing techniques such as translation, inferencing, and repetition.

In the beginning of a listening activity, it is likely that metacognitive strategies are particularly important, whereas feedback from listeners' self-monitoring about the sense they are making of a speaker's utterance may signal a shift in balance between the two strategy types – particularly when there is a need to comprehend detail rather than gist (Vandergrift, 1997). Given that in the authors' earlier study (Liyanage et al., 2012), students were finding more opportunities outside to be tactical about their practice in English (i.e., metacognitive procedures were more prominent in out-of-class situations than in class), the current finding that they did the same with the cognitive strategies challenges Vandergrift's inference. Seemingly, for these students, the balance was maintained rather than shifted. The authors' interpretation is that the greater operation of metacognitive processing facilitated a more extensive use of translation, deduction, and

contextualisation in students' larger worlds of listening and learning outside class and in the in-class approximations of those worlds in lessons such as "College Life."

Although participants in the current study identified a range of cognitive strategies to assist listening comprehension, many strategies do not lend themselves to the constraints of real-time listening, in particular if learners are beginners. Listeners are likely to find problems with real-time constraints particularly for the three cognitive strategies under discussion. For example, deduction (involving the application of grammar rules to segments of the spoken text) was found in Vandergrift's (1997) study to be a rather cumbersome way of extracting meaning from the speech stream. In the same study, translation was frequently used (by 13.09% of listeners) as novice learners attempted to negotiate meaning through the familiar forms of their first language. However, when students discover that reliance on translation may actually impede comprehension by interfering with their attention to what follows in the speech stream (Goh, 2002), they tend to reduce its use severely (13.09% to 4.73%) by the time they achieve intermediate proficiency (Vandergrift, 1997). Current data show similar increases for students' outside-class use of the three cognitive strategies for speaking and for listening. Translation, when used for speaking, becomes a viable tool for an L2 speaker to bridge L1 and L2. Similarly, deduction and contextualisation strategies assist a learner to grammaticalise utterances and to move towards greater precision with spoken L2. Swain (1993) argued that it is this process that leads learners to engage with the language, indeed eventually promoting their accurate use of the L2 grammar.

Because of the nature of the process involved in speaking, learners can exercise greater control than when engaged in listening. For example, the real-time constraints that make listening an extremely difficult and stressful process do not exert the same influence on speaking. Once speakers have successfully bid for their turn and taken it, they are positioned to control a range of communication strategies which may be manipulated to buy time for processing. The positioning provides greater opportunity not only for the processing to occur but also for conscious awareness of the cognition involved. This is not so possible when engaged in listening – where a major part of control resides with the interlocutor – and is less likely in class where a teacher's voice typically is prominent and students are competing for turns. As was theorised in the previous study (Liyanage et al., 2012), when learners are encouraged to discover strategies for themselves, it is likely that these will become an authentic part of their own learning processes.

Conclusion

The findings in relation to the research question are that the specific cognitive strategies explored – translation, deduction, and contextualisation – are used extensively when students are listening and speaking in class. Within the limitations of this study, there are implications for education in these findings. In comparing the listening and speaking lessons in the regular classes (Appendix B) with the test-preparation classes (Appendix C), the authors were struck by the richness and variety of experience to which students are exposed in regular classes compared to that in the extremely narrow and predictable test-preparation classes. Regular classes allowed learners to engage in communication involving the interaction between speaking and listening, where meaning is jointly constructed by co-contributors. In contrast, test-preparation classes are rather one dimensional, with students foregoing interaction as they learn how to comprehend spoken English under examination conditions. This suggests that there are two major objectives that listening and speaking classes need to address in Chinese universities:

1. To prepare students for oral communication beyond the classroom; and,
2. To prepare students to pass the listening test in the CET-4.

Given the social, cultural, and educational imperatives at play in modern China, there are reasons both objectives must be respected. First, modern China needs an educated workforce of professionals capable of interacting with the rest of the world in the 21st century's lingua franca, English (Seidlhofer, 2001). Second, traditionally, Chinese education has put great store on national examinations due to perceptions that they ensure reliability and therefore equity (Hu, 1984). For these reasons, it is unlikely that a subject as important as English could be tested in any way other than a national examination, even though the logistics of testing has led to the CET-4 being regarded as having dubious validity as a test of oral English, if for no other reason than the absence of a speaking component for all test takers.

Preparation classes for the listening component of the CET-4 are a product of the washback from the test and as such promote a very narrow, if highly effective, range of learning strategies chosen exclusively for achieving success in the listening test. In contrast, regular listening classes adopt a pedagogy which has been influenced by communicative language teaching (CLT). The approach assumes that since, in practice, listening and speaking skills outside the EFL classroom typically are interactive, then this interactivity should be exploited in the classroom as well (Hinkel, 2006). A perusal of a typical lesson plan for a regular oral communication class (Appendix B) demonstrates a constructivist approach to developing oral communication skills (Crandall, 2000). For example, prior to listening to a comprehension text, students are likely to work in groups to discuss the topic with fellow students and the teacher, or perhaps to read relevant material to activate their schema in preparation for listening to the comprehension passage. Such an approach will yield a range of language learning strategies which are likely to differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from those that are prescribed in the test-preparation classes.

In speaking, the significantly higher use of the three targeted cognitive strategies is at first surprising given that the time over two years officially allocated for speaking (53 hours) is considerably less than for listening (87 hours). However, just as it appeared likely in the previous study (Liyanage et al., 2012) that frequency of metacognitive-strategy use is greater where strategies result from learners' own heuristic efforts, so the more constructivist approach of the regular class may be responsible for learners generating more of their own personalised strategies.

The issues raised in this study about teaching EFL oral communication skills are important for the Chinese context in particular and other contexts within and outside Asia where educational traditions and objectives are conditioned by examination success in general. The study also has highlighted distinctive objectives that drive the teaching of listening and speaking in these contexts, particularly in China. Of interest from this study is that servicing these two broad objectives leads to learners developing two distinctive types of focus for their cognitive learning strategies. Rather than nominate one as superior, it is better to see them for what they are, viz., responses to two different but legitimate educational objectives fashioned by imperatives in response to realities of contemporary Chinese culture and society. To be communicatively competent in modern China is to command the skills, and therefore the learning strategies, necessary to successfully negotiate the public examination system – as well as to interact through English with fellow citizens of a global society.

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Appendix – A
Adapted Language Learning Strategy Inventory (LLSI)
(Liyanage et al., 2012)

Note: For reasons of space, the presentation here does not correspond to that of the actual questionnaire. In particular, the numbers 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 appeared under each item to enable participants to record their scores.

Instructions

Students sometimes have special ways of studying – ways that help them learn another language. We want to know about the different things you do when you learn English. On the following pages you will find statements about learning English. Please read each statement, and circle one number (1, 2, 3, or 4) to indicate if the statement is:

1. Almost Always true of you [76–100% of the time]
2. Usually true of you [51–75% of the time]
3. Sometimes true of you [26–50% of the time]
4. Almost Never true of you [0–25% of the time]

There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers will only describe what you do. The following example shows how you should answers the questions on the following pages.

Example

Read the example below and draw a circle around the number that tells how often you do the behaviour described:

I write down any new words, phrases or rules my teacher says.

1 (Always)   **2** (Usually)   **3** (Sometimes)   **4** (Never)

If you almost always write down new words your teacher says, circle number 1. If you usually write down new words, circle number 2. Similarly, if you sometimes do this, circle number 3, and if you never do this, you would circle number 4.

A short paragraph at the top of each page describes the scenario in which each statement occurs.

Listening in class

Scenario

In a typical class period your teacher uses English to: give directions, explain new material or review old material, and to ask the class questions.

(1) When I listen, I plan in advance to pay more attention to what the teacher is going to talk about in general than to specific words and details.

(2) I write down any new words, phrases or rules my teacher says so I'll be sure to remember them.

(3) I ask the teacher questions when I don't understand what he or she is saying.

(4) When I hear a new English word, I try to learn the teacher's pronunciation by copying or imitating it.

(5) When I hear a new English word that sounds like a familiar Chinese word, I assume it has a similar meaning.

(6) I find myself translating what the teacher says back into Chinese so I can understand.

(7) When I learn a new word or phrase, I play it back in my mind to remember it.

(8) When listening to the teacher, I apply grammar rules to help myself understand.

(9) When I hear a new word, I think of a sentence in which I might use it later.

(10) When I don't understand what the teacher says, I get help from a classmate.

(11) I try to relate what I'm hearing to my own experiences or to information I already know.

(12) I guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words by using my knowledge of prefixes and suffixes.

(13) I pay more attention to some words and phrases than to others when the teacher is talking in English.

(14) After I listen, I try to summarise mentally what the teacher says to understand it better.

Speaking in class

Scenario

The teacher requires class participation. This means that you have to speak English in class, including asking and answering questions, participating in oral drills, reading aloud and perhaps giving a short oral presentation.

(1) When the teacher calls on me in class, I plan my answer in my head before I say a word.

(2) I listen carefully to what I say and correct myself when I make a mistake.

(3) If I have to give a talk to the class, I present it to a friend first so he or she can tell me how it sounds.

(4) If I have to give a talk to the class, I practise the talk several times paying attention to the meaning of the talk before I actually do it.

(5) If I have to give a talk to the class, I mentally practise the talk before I actually do it to reduce anxiety.

(6) If I can't recall a word or phrase when I speak in English, I try to use another word or phrase to replace it.

(7) I think in Chinese of what I want to say and then I translate it into English.

(8) When I speak, I am generally unaware of any mistakes I might be making.

(9) I consciously apply grammar rules when I speak English.

(10) I volunteer answers in class so I can practice using English.

(11) I try to answer all questions mentally, even when the teacher is addressing someone else.

(12) When I learn a new word, I say it in a sentence as soon as possible.

Listening and speaking outside of class

Scenario

You have an opportunity to speak English outside of class. For example, you meet several native speakers of English.
  (1) I listen especially for words or phrases that I already know to help me understand what is going on in a conversation.
  (2) I talk about the same sorts of things in English that I talk about in Chinese.
  (3) I ask native speakers the correct way to say things.
  (4) I try to talk with native speakers and keep the conversation going, because I get more practice that way.
  (5) If I don't completely understand what the other person says to me, I think about the words I did understand and try to guess what he or she might be saying.
  (6) I relate the English I hear in conversations to what I've learned in class.
  (7) If I don't understand what the other person says to me, I ask them to speak more slowly or to say it in a different way.
  (8) When I know I'm going to be around native speakers, I plan a few things to say.
  (9) I go home afterwards and think about what I said to see if I made any mistakes.

Reading in English

Scenario

The teacher assigns a reading selection for homework. This may be a short story or an article from a newspaper, or a cultural passage.
  (1) Before I read, I plan to pay more attention to the general meaning of the passage than to specific words, phrases and details.
  (2) Before I actually read (a passage or book), I arrange myself a treat to enjoy on completion of the task.
  (3) When I find the meaning of a new word, I read it over and over again to remember its meaning.
  (4) I take notes when I read, listing the new words or phrases I find in the passage.
  (5) I scan for special words, phrases or information to get the most important points when I read.
  (6) When I read, I organise information under different headings according to their attributes.
  (7) I try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by looking at the words in the rest of the sentence.
  (8) I get the major ideas of a reading selection by checking the comprehension questions before I begin reading.
  (9) When I read, I try to visualise what I read.
 (10) I first skim the material I must read to get the main idea and concepts.
 (11) I practice my reading skills by trying to read extra materials in English (such as newspapers, magazines, ads, etc).
 (12) When I read new words, I think of what other situations they might be used in.
 (13) I try to relate what I'm reading to my own experiences or to material I already know.
 (14) I use a monolingual dictionary (English) to understand additional meanings of the words I read.
 (15) After I finish reading, I check my understanding by seeing if I can remember the main ideas of the passage.
 (16) After I finish reading, I try to summarise mentally what I have read to understand it better.

Writing in English

Scenario

The teacher has assigned a short composition or paragraph to be written entirely in English. This might be to write a report or to describe a picture or a personal experience.

(1)   Before I actually do a writing task (e.g. writing an essay or a letter) I arrange myself a treat to enjoy on completion of the task.

(2)   I use what I know about writing in Chinese (structure. organization, etc) to help write in English.

(3)   Before I write the actual assignment, I write a few drafts to see whether it conveys the intended meaning.

(4)   When I write, I replace words and phrases that I can't recall with other words or phrases that have the same meaning.

(5)   I write the assignment first in Chinese, and then translate it into English.

(6)   I consciously use grammatical rules when I write in English.

(7)   For accuracy, I ask a friend to read over what I've written.

(8)   I use a monolingual (English) dictionary or other English reference materials when I write in English.

(9)   I use my textbook and dictionary to look up spelling, verb conjugations, and gender agreement, etc.

(10)   I carefully reread what I've written to make sure there are no mistakes.

(11)   Before writing, I make a plan or outline of what I want to say.

(12)   While writing a first draft, I try to get all my ideas down instead of worrying about spelling and grammar.

Appendix B
An Outline of a Listening and Speaking Class

Reflection by a teacher at a Chinese normal university of a listening and speaking class he has taught to a group of freshmen.

This is a reflection on a listening and speaking class I have given and a summary of the experience I have gained from it. I will illustrate the teaching strategies I employed and the process I went through in the process of preparing the lesson.

The topic for the lesson demonstrated below is College Life, and a tape script for the lesson is attached for reference. The textbook I used was New Horizon College English Viewing, Listening & Speaking published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, and the students were non-English major freshmen. To instruct the lesson, I worked out a plan as follows.

Time Allotment: 2 periods (90 minutes)

Teaching Objectives:
- To help students practice the listening skill of Focusing on Details
- To help students practice the listening skill of General Comprehension
- To familiarize students with English expressions to describe various aspects of college life
- To help students talk about college life freely in English

Lesson Content:
1. Warming-up Discussion:
   - Introduce the topic, divide students into 4 groups to discuss different aspects of college life, and assign a sub-topic to each group.
     Group 1: Study (e.g., course selection, registration, major, tuition, and scholarship, etc.)
     Group 2: Living on campus (e.g., living in a dorm, food, shopping, and commuting to class, etc.)
     Group 3: School facilities (e.g., stadium, swimming pool, library, dining hall, and labs, etc.)
     Group 4: Extracurricular activities (e.g., associations, part-time jobs, and parties, etc.)
     (10 minutes)
2. Observe the discussion, check students' vocabulary and introduce new words and expressions that may help them better explain their ideas. (5 minutes)
3. Finish Exercises Part 2 and Part 3 in the textbook. Exercise Part 2 helps students to practice the listening skill of focusing on details, while Part 3 aims to improve students' general comprehension. (35 minutes)
4. Oral Practice:
   - Finish Exercise Part 4. This exercise helps students to speak out some of the expressions they have just heard in the listening practice.
   - Further consolidate students' mastery of the expressions and sentence structures they have learned by some classroom activities:

       i.   Create Stories: One student begins a story like "I enjoy college life because living in a dorm with some friendly peers is fantastic. I went to the swimming pool with my roommates yesterday . . . ." Then another student continues with one or two sentences. Students are required to keep the story relevant to the topic College Life and use as many expressions they have learned as possible.

      ii.   Debate: Divide students into groups to debate over controversial issues in college life. Suggested topics for the debate include:
- ✓ Which is a better choice, living on campus or living off campus?
- ✓ What is more important, study or extracurricular activities? (25 minutes)

5. Comment on students' performance. If time permits, finish Exercise Part 5 (Further Listening and Speaking). (15 minutes)
6. Assignment: Ask students to review the language points after class and prepare for a quiz next class.

Notes:

Generally speaking, I instruct in a topic-oriented way. This is partly because the textbook is compiled in much the same way. I would identify a topic for each class beforehand, work out key words and expressions relevant to this topic, anticipate students' vocabulary and knowledge, and then search for information that I could complement in class.

The next step is to find out students' real understanding of the topic and their language proficiency. This is usually done by a warming-up discussion at the beginning of the class and a careful observation of the discussion. From the observation, I know what the students already master and what they don't know, and this helps me to provide them with something they really need.

After the warming up, students are equipped with basic vocabulary and knowledge to deal with the listening exercise in the textbook, which consists of gap-filling and short-answer questions to help them practice two listening skills that are mentioned in the lesson plan above.

As is known to all, listening and speaking are intertwined. If we compare the former to a kind of input, then the latter is output. To improve students' oral English, it is vital to help them speak out what they've heard as soon as possible. This is why the focus of the class shifts to speaking in the second session. In this session, apart from doing speaking exercises in the textbook, students are encouraged to participate in classroom activities to practice words, expressions and sentence structures they've learned.

Finally, to test the effectiveness of the above-mentioned teaching strategies, a quiz would be given in the following class to check students' command of language skills and knowledge they are expected to master.

Appendix B
An Interview with a Teacher of a CET-4 Preparation Class Regarding Listening
Comprehension Test Preparation

1. What (in detail) is the format of the listening comprehension test?
   A typical example to illustrate the format is the listening test in CET-4 (College English Test Band 4) or CET-6 (College English Test Band 6), a nationwide test to examine students' English proficiency in China. The test consists of eight short conversations, two long conversations, three short passages for multiple-choice questions, and one passage for dictation.

2. How does this affect what teachers do in preparing the students for this test?
   Different sections in the test pose different challenges to students. For example, conversations in Section A reflect all kinds of topics and situations students may encounter in their daily life. Thus, this section tests students' familiarity with English expressions used in daily communication. To prepare students for this part, teachers should help them identify various situations in daily life and summarize key words and expressions frequently used in these situations. Section B consists of three passages, which take the form of monologue or lecture and cover topics like politics, economy, history, culture, education, health, science, and technology. When it comes to the listening skill tested in this part, it is students' ability to pinpoint the information they need to answer the questions. Therefore, teachers should teach students techniques to anticipate needed information from the questions and take down the information quickly and correctly by means of shorthand. Meanwhile, to help students better understand the passage, they should encourage students to read extensively after class to gain background knowledge in various areas. Section C tests not only students' listening comprehension, but also their spelling and writing skills. Therefore, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar should be stressed in this part.

Investigating the Interaction of Visual Input, Working Memory, and Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of visual input on L2 listening comprehension within the context of a North American intensive English program. The interaction between visual input and working memory (WM) was also investigated, with the aim of clarifying what role visual input, together with WM, plays in L2 listening tests. The study compared two groups of upper-intermediate L1 Chinese and Arabic ESL students. All participants ($N = 24$) took a WM test and were divided into two groups to take a listening comprehension test under two treatment conditions: one with video and one with audio-only texts. Results indicated that the presence of visual input had a significant negative effect on listening comprehension, while working memory had no significant effect. Additionally, no interaction was found between WM and the presence or absence of visual input. This paper concludes by discussing further research questions and implications for L2 listening assessment.

Listening in a second language (L2) has been described as an arduous task: comprehension of speech requires the simultaneous processing of phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The act of listening, moreover, does not typically occur in isolation. Listeners usually receive visual input, such as observations of kinesic behavior and contextual information (Gregersen, 2007; Kellerman, 1992). In light of this fact, teachers began using video in L2 listening classrooms in the mid-1970s due to its ability to contextualize language and increase motivation (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). However, while the use of video has now become standard practice in many L2 classrooms, it is not always used in testing situations. This discrepancy begs the question of what effect, if any, the use of video has on listening comprehension test scores.

Another dimension of L2 listening is working memory (WM). Unlike aspects of language ability such as reading and writing, the aural channel through which listening is accomplished is typically more ephemeral in nature; the input listeners receive disappears after a speaker has finished speaking. This is particularly true in many academic contexts, where listening is often a one-way, *transactional* process (Buck, 2001; Morley, 2001; Peterson, 2001) that requires a high level of fluency and possibly a high WM capacity, especially at the discourse level (Juffs &

Harrington, 2011). Thus, the question arises as to whether or not differences in WM capacity impact performance on tests of listening comprehension.

The present study sought to investigate the relationships among visual input, WM, and listening comprehension. Such insight may influence test design, including selection of item types, testing conditions, scoring procedures, and training of raters. It would also alert test developers as to whether certain students (e.g., those with low WM) are being unfairly disadvantaged (i.e., questions of bias and construct-irrelevant variance). Investigating these relationships furthermore raises important questions about the construct definition of listening in academic settings (Ockey, 2007; Wagner, 2008) and the degree to which target language use (TLU) tasks (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) should dictate the format of L2 listening tests. In addition to informing test developers, a better understanding of the variables that affect listening comprehension may help shape curricular objectives, focus listening instruction, and guide learners in strategy selection and use.

Background

In light of the complexity involved in L2 listening described above, much scholarly work has been directed at developing pedagogical techniques to help students improve their listening comprehension skills. The following is a brief list of some of the more widely endorsed practices for L2 listening pedagogy:

- Teachers should activate students' background knowledge and promote purposeful listening in order to help learners "fill in the gaps" when microlevel comprehension problems occur (e.g., misunderstanding a single word or suffix) (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005).
- The rate of speech and length of listening passages used should be closely monitored (Buck, 2001), especially when teaching learners at lower proficiency levels.
- Sociocultural and other specialized knowledge should be taught prior to engaging in listening tasks (Buck, 2001).
- Listening passages should be neither too long nor too short (three to five minutes may be a good rule of thumb) and should be played more than once in order to minimize memory effects (Buck, 2001; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). This will vary, however, depending on the target listening objectives of the course.
- A variety of texts, tasks, and types of listening opportunities should be provided in order to develop a broad range of listening skills (Buck, 2001).

Some of these concepts also relate to the use of listening strategies. Language learning strategies are often divided into the following three types: cognitive, metacognitve, and socioaffective. In regard to L2 listening, cognitive strategies are generally conceived of as online "tactics" used during the process of listening, such as guessing from context and taking notes. Metacognitive strategies typically refer to advanced planning techniques, including making an outline and predicting what one will hear in a listening passage. Lastly, socioaffective strategies involve using available resources to help clarify gaps in comprehension (for example, asking for clarification and working with others).

Aside from strategies, many scholars have emphasized the benefits of including visual input (especially video) in language classes. Reasons for doing so include increasing student engagement (Brinton, 2014), exposing students to pragmatic aspects of the target language (Washburn, 2001), and aiding in listening comprehension (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Kellerman, 1992).

In addition to the support for using visual input in L2 pedagogy, much of the literature on L2 listening supports the use of visual input (specifically video texts) in language testing for reasons such as content and construct validity, as well as student perceptions and preferences. Feak and Salehzadeh (2001) argue for the use of video in listening placement tests in an English for Academic Purposes setting, noting that "nearly all of the listening encounters of our students—lectures, class discussions, seminars, lab experiments, and office hours — are accompanied by dynamic visual input" (p. 481). They analyzed students' perceptions of the fairness and authenticity of a video listening assessment and found that few students found the test to be unfair or unnatural. Progosh (1996) incorporated video texts in course materials at a Japanese tertiary institution after conducting a needs analysis and learning that students were interested in studying English through film. After administering tests and surveying students, Progosh found that 92% of learners preferred the use of video texts over audio-only texts in tests of listening comprehension. Ockey (2007) studied student perceptions of the usefulness of video texts in comparison with still images. In this study, most participants found the video texts more helpful than still images, though this finding varied according to text and participant. Several participants also commented on the benefit of specific visual cues present in the video texts (e.g., lip movements, hand motions, facial and body gestures), while the still images were only found to aid in establishing the initial context of the listening passages.

In addition to issues of validity and student perceptions, research has also investigated the effect of video on students' performance, but has yielded mixed results. In several studies, Wagner (2010, 2013) has examined the effect of visual input on test taker performance and has generally found a positive effect of video texts on listening comprehension test scores. On the other hand, Suvorov (2009) investigated the role of visual input and text type (dialogue and lecture) and found that while the test format (i.e., absence or presence of visual input) did not affect scores on a dialogue task, the use of video did have a negative effect on the lecture task, noting that context visuals may have been distracting, rather than facilitative, in this task. Other studies (e.g., Brett, 1997; Coniam, 2001; Londe, 2009) have yielded results that have shown no clear indication of an advantage or disadvantage to using video as opposed to audio-only texts.

These results point to the need for further research examining the relationship between visual input and listening comprehension, and also other factors (e.g., individual differences). One possible moderating variable is WM. It has been argued that WM span and L2 learning have a positive relationship (Atkins & Baddeley, 1998; Biedroń & Szczepaniak, 2012; Majerus, Poncelet, Van der Linden, & Weekes, 2008; Szmalec, Brysbaert, & Duyck, 2012). Therefore, if WM contributes to other aspects of language learning, it may affect learners' listening comprehension as well (cf. Cross, 2011, p. 47), especially in the absence of visual input that normally accompanies face-to-face communication (e.g., while taking an audio-only listening test). However, the interaction of WM and visual input during listening comprehension tasks has not, to the researchers' knowledge, been studied.

The Current Study

In light of these observations, the current study will address the following research questions:

RQ 1: Does the presence of visual input affect listening comprehension among university-level L2 learners?
RQ 2: Does working memory affect listening comprehension?
RQ 3: Is there an interaction between working memory and the presence of visual input on listening comprehension?

Because visual input typically accompanies the TLU task of listening in academic settings (Bachman & Palmer, 2010), it seems reasonable that the use of video would have a positive effect on listening comprehension. It also seems reasonable that students with higher WM scores will score higher on tests of listening comprehension. Finally, it is hypothesized that the positive effect of visual input on listening comprehension will be more prominent for learners with lower WM capacity.

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 24 first language (L1) Chinese and Arabic students enrolled in an intensive English program at a North American university. The majority of students in each class were male, and their ages ranged from approximately 18-24. The Intensive English Program (a pseudonym used here to refer to the program, henceforth referred to as the IEP) is composed of six levels (Level 1 being the lowest), and students are placed into levels based on their performance on a placement test consisting of listening, speaking, reading, and writing sub-sections. Two sections of Level 4 students participated in this study. Because students were all placed in the same IEP level, it was assumed that participants had relatively equal levels of English language ability. These particular participants were selected, in part, because at the time of the study, one of the researchers was teaching one of the Level 4 sections, thus making administration more convenient. (Participants therefore constituted a convenience sample.) Also, compared to other sections of IEP students, both sections of Level 4 students had not been involved in many research projects over the semester. Thus, taking class time to collect data was deemed less burdensome for Level 4 students and their teachers.

Measures

The variables in this study include listening comprehension, the presence of visual input, and WM. Listening comprehension was operationalized as participants' ability to respond correctly to a series of multiple-choice main idea and detail questions on an academic listening comprehension test (titled the Sociology Listening Test [SLT]). The presence and absence of visual input were operationalized as the use of video texts or audio-only texts (respectively) on the SLT. Theoretically, WM refers to "the mental processes responsible for the temporary storage and manipulation of information in the course of on-going processing" (Juffs & Harrington, 2011, p. 138). For the purpose of this study, WM was operationalized as the extent to which one can correctly repeat a series of numbers that are presented in increasingly numerous sets, as represented by scores on a digit span task (DST) and subsequent placement into low, middle, or high WM groups (WMGs).

As noted above, this study employed the SLT under two treatment conditions: one using video and one using audio-only texts. The test itself was identical in the two treatment conditions; the only difference between treatments was the presence or absence of visual input (i.e., the video texts), with a slight difference in audio quality (see below). The scripts used for both the video and audio texts consisted of three "lecturettes" (cf. Wagner, 2010) related to the content that students were studying during the time of administration (introductory topics in sociology). These scripts were chosen to increase the ecological validity of the instrument and lessen any potential negative impact on the participants (Brown, 2012). The speaker in the video texts was one of the researchers, video-recorded from the waist up, speaking at a normal pace in a lecture style for approximately three to five minutes per text. The audio for the audio-only treatment group was recorded using high-quality audio equipment; the audio used for the video treatment group was the audio recorded with the video camera, which was judged by the researchers to be of comparable quality.

As can be seen in the Table of Specifications (see Appendix A, Table A1), the SLT was composed of 20 multiple-choice main idea and detail questions, which were operationalized as questions about the overall message or questions about specific facts mentioned in the listening passage. In both cases, questions were about information that was either explicitly stated or "unequivocally implied" (cf. Buck, 2001; Wagner, 2010). The use and format of this instrument was chosen because it followed the same format used for large-scale listening assessments at the IEP, which students were familiar with from previous listening tests (thus increasing ecological validity [Brown, 2012]), and was therefore believed to have a positive impact on participants. Three subtopics were covered that related to the theme that students were studying at the time of administration (sociology). Each question was worth one point and was scored dichotomously (i.e., one point for a correct answer and zero points for an incorrect answer). The scale of possible scores was thus 1-20 points. Internal consistency was calculated for the test using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .59$).

The study also employed a test of WM. The DST is one of the more widely used measures in studies involving WM (Juffs & Harrington, 2011) and was used to categorize participants into low, middle, and high WMGs based on the percentiles in which students scored. The test used in the study was the Cambridge Brain Sciences Digit Span Test, freely available online at http://www.cambridgebrainsciences.com/browse/memory/test/digit-sp. For this test, participants were presented with strings of increasingly numerous digits, which they had to memorize and repeat by typing them in the correct order. Scores could range from 0 to infinity (theoretically), and correspond to the length of the number string correctly repeated. (The Cambridge Brain Sciences website reports that the average adult score is around 7.) To the authors' knowledge, no reliability estimate exists for this test.

Procedures

Research design. For this study, a postpositivist stance was adopted, with the aim of gathering evidence about the true nature of phenomena that exist in the world (i.e., the hypotheses about the research questions guiding the study). Although both researchers were teaching students in the IEP at the time of the study, every effort was made to maintain distance from the participants and to remain impartial, unbiased, and objective during every stage of the study. The methodology was deductive and involved quantitative statistical analysis. This method of analysis and overall methodological approach is aligned with other studies that have investigated similar phenomena (e.g., Wagner, 2010, 2013).

This quasi-experimental study employed a between-groups design, where comparisons were drawn between independent groups (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). Groups were assigned randomly via a coin toss. The SLT scores of the two groups were compared and conclusions were drawn regarding the effect of the presence of visual input (i.e., the videos' texts) on listening comprehension. All participants also took the DST in a computer lab on campus. Additional comparisons were made between SLT scores and WM scores in order to determine if WM had an effect on listening comprehension and if there was an interaction between WM and the presence of visual input on listening comprehension. For all comparisons, an alpha level was set at .05.

Administration. Data was collected in two stages during regular Level 4 IEP classes. During the first stage, the DST was administered during students' Computer-Assisted Language Learning class in a computer lab at the University. Students were assisted in signing up for a Cambridge Brain Sciences account and shown (through explanation and modeling) how to complete the DST. During the second stage, the SLT was administered during regular Level 4 IEP Listening

and Speaking classes. One section of Level 4 students took the audio-only version of the SLT and the other section took the video version.

Results

Research Question 1 investigated whether or not there were any differences in students' SLT scores when a video text was used as opposed to an audio-only text. In order to test whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between groups, the Mann-Whitney U statistical procedure was selected to compare the two groups' scores. This procedure was chosen because, after analyzing histograms of the two groups' scores, it was clear that the data were not normally distributed.

Descriptive statistics of listening comprehension scores are presented in Appendix B. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test are presented in Table 1. The observed z statistic of -2.39 can be found in the far right column. Because the observed value of -2.39 exceeds the critical value of ± 1.96, the null hypothesis that there is no difference in listening comprehension scores between students who received video input during the test and students who received audio-only input was rejected. Effect size was calculated using eta^2 and was found to have a value of .25, indicating a low / moderate degree of practical significance.

Table 1
Difference in Listening Comprehension Scores Between Video and Audio Groups

Group	n	Mean rank	z
Video	14	9.64	
			- 2.39*
Audio	10	16.50	

Note. Mann-Whitney U, $z_{critical}$ = 1.96; *p < .05; eta^2 = .25.

Research Question 2 investigated whether or not there were any differences in scores on the SLT among students with varying levels of WM, as determined by results of a DST. Based on the results of the DST, students were placed into one of three WMGs: low, middle, or high. Descriptive statistics of WM scores are presented in Appendix C. In order to test whether or not there was a statistically significant difference in listening comprehension scores among these three groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test was selected. Kruskal-Wallis was chosen because, after analyzing histograms of the three groups' WM scores, it was clear, once again, that the data were not normally distributed. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated no statistically significant differences among WMGs. (The observed chi-square statistic of 3.10 did not exceed the critical value of 5.99.)

Research Question 3 investigated whether or not there was an interaction between students' digit span scores and the use of video vs. audio texts on the SLT. This question was analyzed descriptively using a means plot of the two independent variables: WMG and the presence or absence of visual input (see Appendix D). Based on the descriptive analysis of the means plot, it was concluded that there was no clear interaction between the two independent variables, thus suggesting that the statistical conclusion drawn from the Mann-Whitney U test (i.e., that there was a statistical difference between groups based on the presence or absence of visual input) can be said to explain, in part, differences between the mean scores of the groups.

Discussion

In this study, it was hypothesized that the use of video would have a positive effect on listening comprehension (RQ 1). However, contrary to this hypothesis, the audio input group's scores were statistically significantly higher than the video input group's scores. One possible explanation for this finding is that the audio texts were played through higher quality speakers than the video texts. (The audio for the video group had to be played through external speakers, rather than the television speakers, due to technical difficulties.) While the researchers judged the audio quality as being comparable in each treatment, this slight difference may have impacted the results. The two classes were also given the SLT at different times of the day (morning and late afternoon), which may have affected performance on the test. The visual input group took the test in the late afternoon and may have been somewhat fatigued from a full day of classes. Additionally, although both groups of students were in the same IEP level, there may have been preexisting differences in listening proficiency between the two groups, which could have affected the results as well.

It was also hypothesized that students with higher WM scores would score higher on the SLT (RQ 2). However, the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test did not support this hypothesis, as there were no statistically significant differences in listening comprehension scores among the three WMGs. In fact, the high working memory group received the lowest scores. This somewhat unexpected result may be due to factors such as small sample size and the validity of the WM test, as the DST measured visual, as opposed to aural WM. The authors suggest that future research be conducted with larger sample sizes and different tests of WM.

Finally, it was hypothesized that if visual input had a positive effect on listening comprehension, this effect would be more prominent for learners with lower WM capacity (RQ 3). However, the plot of means (see Appendix D) did not support this hypothesis. No lines intersected, indicating no clear interaction between WM and visual input on listening comprehension. In fact, the relationship appears to be the opposite of that which was hypothesized: Students with low WM scored higher on the SLT when visual input was *not* present. On one hand, it seemed reasonable to hypothesize that visual input could aid students with lower WM by providing them with additional (i.e., visual) strategies for remembering content. On the other hand, this input may have also been overstimulating for some learners with low WM, making it difficult to cope with the cognitive demands of simultaneously attending to aural, visual, and written input (i.e., the multiple-choice questions from the SLT).

Limitations

There are several threats to the internal and external validity of this study. As previously noted, the slight difference in audio quality between the video and audio texts poses a threat to the study's internal validity. Another threat is the fact that the two classes were given the SLT at different times of the day. There are also concerns about the reliability of both measures used in this study. The Cambridge Brain Sciences Digit Span Test does not, to the researchers' knowledge, provide published information about the test's reliability. In addition, after calculating Cronbach's alpha for the sample population, the SLT was found to have a fairly low internal reliability of .59. Finally, because this study used intact groups, rather than random samples, the findings should not be generalized beyond the sample. Therefore, the results of this study should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the results of the current study have important theoretical and practical implications. In theoretical terms, this study has further problematized

the construct of L2 listening in academic contexts, aligning with studies such as Suvorov (2009). In practical terms, this may imply that L2 listening assessment that lacks a visual component does not necessarily hinder student performance; rather, visual input may in fact be detrimental to certain students (for example, those with high WM, though this claim is extremely tentative and merits further investigation). On the other hand, such tests may be underrepresenting the construct and disadvantaging those test takers who are more adept at utilizing visual input content (cf. Ockey, 2007; Wagner, 2008). These findings thus indicate that the construct of L2 listening may be in need of a critical update, and call into question how listening is conceptualized in current models of language ability (cf. Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Future studies should investigate whether scores on different types of listening test tasks (e.g., short-answer, note-taking) are affected by visual input. Brindley (1998), for example, discusses the processing demands of multiple-choice listening tests, noting that this test format requires test takers to listen to aural input, read test questions and possible answers, retain those answers in working memory, and match them with aural input. Therefore, it is possible that in multiple-choice tests, where the processing load is already heavy, additional visual stimuli may be distracting, rather than facilitative. However, this may not be the case in more open-ended listening tasks, where the test taker has more freedom to focus on the visual content, rather than the content of the test itself.

A qualitative component to future studies is also recommended. In particular, a mixed methods design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) may help clarify how students engage with visual input during testing situations and other TLU domains related to academic listening (e.g., lectures, groups discussions, labs). In the current study, both researchers noticed that test takers tended to look at their tests, rather than the video, during the first viewing of each video text. Although a few studies (e.g., Cross, 2011; Ockey, 2007; Wagner, 2008) have in fact included qualitative data on how students interact with visual input during listening comprehension tests, more research is needed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the various TLU domains that students engage with and the response types elicited in those domains (i.e., questions of situational and interactional authenticity [Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Buck, 2001]). This type of qualitative data may inform discussions of how performance on different task types is affected by visual input.

This study also has practical implications for teachers and administrators. As previously noted, visual input accompanies most of the aural input students receive outside the classroom. Therefore, it is recommended that visual input be used in both classroom activities and assessment. However, the authors suggest that teachers consider the following questions when creating or selecting classroom assessments:

- Do listening assessment tasks reflect the types of tasks that students (a) have been exposed to in the classroom and (b) will encounter outside of the classroom?
- In real life, will students be exposed to visual input for the task they are being tested on? In some tasks (e.g., taking notes during a phone call), visual input may not be necessary; in other tasks (e.g., summarizing a news program), visual input is necessary.
- What is the processing load of the listening assessment tasks? Will students be required to attend to *too much* visual input (i.e., will they be required to simultaneously attend to video texts, read test questions, and consider possible responses)?

It is hoped that the findings of this study have contributed to the growing body of research on L2 listening assessment. The researchers also hope to have provided some impetus for further research within this particular area of applied linguistics.

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Appendix A
Table of Specifications

Table A1

Table of Specifications: Sociology Listening Test

Construct	Listening comprehension		# of items	# of points	% of points
Subconstructs Content	Details	Main Ideas			
Body Image	1, 2, 4, 6	3, 5, 7	7	7	35%
Regional Differences	8, 10, 11	9, 12, 13, 14	7	7	35%
Youth Subcultures	16, 17, 18, 19	15, 20	6	6	30%
# of items	11	9	20	20	
# of points	11	9			
% of points	55%	45%			100%

Appendix B
Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores

Descriptive statistics of listening comprehension test scores are presented in Tables B1 and B2. In Table B1, SLT scores are categorized by input groups (video or audio), and can be found in the left column. As can be seen in Table B1, the audio input group had a higher mean score (18.60) and lower standard deviation (1.65) than the video input group (with a mean and standard deviation of 16.79 and 1.85, respectively). In Table B2, scores are organized by WMG (low, middle, or high). As shown in Table B2, the low WMG had a higher mean score (18.50) and lower standard deviation (1.52) than the other two WMGs.

Table B1
Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores by Input Group

				95% CI	
Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	LL	UL
Video	14	16.79	1.85	15.72	17.85
Audio	10	18.60	1.65	17.42	19.78
Total	24	17.54	1.96	16.72	18.37

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Table B2
Descriptive Statistics of Listening Comprehension Scores by Working Memory Group

				95% CI	
Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	LL	UL
Low	6	18.50	1.52	16.91	20.09
Middle	7	17.86	1.77	16.22	19.50
High	11	16.82	2.14	15.38	18.25
Total	24	17.54	1.96	16.72	18.37

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Appendix C
Descriptive Statistics of WM Scores

Table C1 contains descriptive statistics for WM scores. WMGs can be found in the left column. For the low and middle groups, the mean scores were 4 and 5, respectively; however, standard deviations were 0, as there was no variation in scores ($n = 6$ and 7, respectively). For the high WMG, the mean score was 7.10, with a standard deviation of 1.10 ($n = 10$). Overall, the mean score of the DST was 5.65, with a standard deviation of 1.53.

Table C1
Descriptive Statistics of Working Memory Scores

Group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Low	6	4	0	-	-
Middle	7	5	0	-	-
High	10	7.10	1.10	6.31	7.89
Total	23	5.65	1.53	4.99	6.31

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

Appendix D
Means Plot of WMG and Visual Input

In a means plot, if the lines cross, this indicates an interaction between the two independent variables, which would then compromise any claim of a main effect. As can be seen in Figure D1, WMGs (low, middle, and high) are plotted on the x-axis; listening comprehension scores are plotted on the y-axis, and the body of the figure contains the two visual input groups (*yes* and *no*). Looking at the low WMG, one can see that the visual input group had an average score just under 18, while the audio input group had an average score of about 20. For the middle WMG, the visual input group again had an average score just below 18, and the audio input group scored slightly higher, with a mean score just above 18. Finally, for the high WMG, the visual input group had the lowest mean of approximately 15.5, while the audio input group had a mean score of about 18.5. It should be noted that the means plots of the two visual input groups do not intersect.
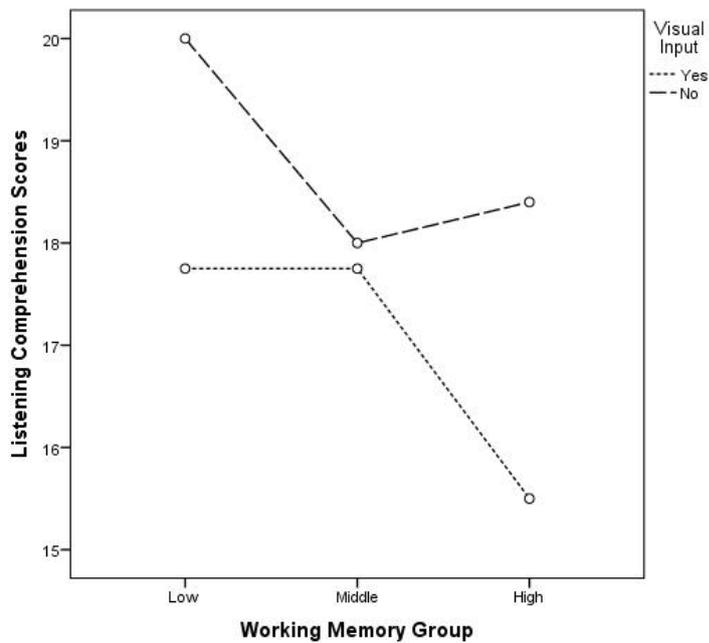

Figure D1. Interaction between WM and visual input.

Using a Standard Reading Exercise in a Foundational Literacies Course

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Abstract

The benefits of a standard exercise, whereby students regularly answer the same set of questions by applying them to a variety of different texts, were first explored by Scott, Carioni, Zanatta, Bayer, and Quintanilha (1984). The Foundational Literacies Advanced Stream curriculum design project at a Japanese university has decided to experiment with such an exercise, as it is felt that introducing students to a range of different texts can be a useful method of learner empowerment. Students were given the opportunity to offer feedback on the activity in the form of a survey. Additionally, three students provided further comment in interviews. This paper attempts to justify the inclusion of such an exercise in the curriculum, explain the text choices, evaluate the relative success and usefulness of the experiment by analysing the results of the survey and interviews, and also to advise of any improvements that might need to be made.

Utilisation of a standard reading exercise (SRE) has long been advocated, for example by Scott, Carioni, Zanatta, Bayer, & Quintanilha (1984) and more recently Paltridge (2002). Members of a curriculum design committee decided to implement its use in an Advanced Stream course for freshman students at a university near Tokyo, over the academic year 2013-2014. This paper will first explain the academic context for this decision, and then the design process. It will next justify the selection of texts, and finish by analysing both qualitative and quantitative data to consider the effectiveness of the exercise. The paper concludes that the SRE has been largely successful, and with some modifications will continue to be utilised. This paper is of possible interest to anyone involved in the teaching of reading. It contributes to a holistic understanding of the way learners acquire reading skills, in contrast to those understandings framed only by traditional views of literacy competency.

Literature Review

Background

Freshman students in the English department at a Japanese university take four 90-minute weekly communication skills classes, and two lessons of Foundational Literacies (FL). The course integrates reading and writing in a genre-based curriculum, and hopes to empower students by familiarizing them with a range of different text types. As Hyland (2007) wrote, "genre pedagogies" can help enable "learners to participate effectively in the world outside" of the school or institution (p. 148). A similar "genre-based approach" that pays close attention to both " the context of situation and the context of culture" (Chaisiri, 2010, p. 181) has been

made use of in South East Asian countries such as Thailand and found to be effective when teaching writing skills.

It was deemed necessary to develop a regular homework activity for this Advanced Stream that would complement the course. It was decided to utilize a SRE, inspired largely by the work done in Brazil by Scott et al. (1984).

What is a Standard Reading Exercise?

Scott et al. (1984) feel that in order to stimulate students and make resources relevant, material designers must constantly find new and interesting texts for their students to read and answer questions about. This means having to design a new task for every new text, demanding too much time effort. Budgets can also be a constraint in this respect, for example in certain poor nations. Their suggested solution is to create "a 'standard exercise' (SE)" designed to be compatible "with virtually any text" (p. 114). The texts that students read constantly change, but the questions that accompany these readings remain unchanged. This also helps reduce cognitive demand on learners, especially when they are engaged with challenging material, as only one variable is changed – the text itself. Additionally, the use of an SE can lead the person assigning the work to possess "much greater freedom in text selection" (p. 114), thus granting learners access to as many different genres of text as possible.

The Development of the Exercise

In their SE, Scott et al. (1984) identify three different types of reading comprehension: "general," "main points," and "detailed" (p. 116). Their list of questions (see Appendix A) thus develops progressively from predicting activities (in order to activate schemata) "to deeper and more critical levels of comprehension" (p. 116). They also end the exercise with some evaluation and self-reflection exercises, as "reading without some sort of personal involvement" (p. 117) is essentially ineffective. They hoped the use of the SE would discourage students from "frustratingly frequent reference to the dictionary," and encourage them to focus more "on the main ideas" (p. 115) given it is likely impossible that they would be able to understand every small detail. Whilst Scott et al.'s SE was designed in the 1980s, this obsession with understanding every word would seem to remain a problem experienced by many learners, and perhaps this is especially true in Asia.

The SRE designed for use by the author (Appendix B) follows the same principle as that designed by Scott et al. (1984): one list of questions used repeatedly with a variety of different texts. Some questions are similar, and the overall shape of the exercise is analogous to the original: it begins with a "Predicting" section and finishes with a "Reflection."

However, it was also hoped the activity would aid "genre awareness" (Johns, 2008, p. 238). To aid learner empowerment and critical thinking, questions were set that focused more on the field, tenor, and mode of each text. The exercise encourages students to consider language choice, the "reader-in-the-text" (Thompson, 2012), i.e., the intended audience, authorial intention, structure, and organization, especially in the second and third parts of the exercise.

The SRE introduces non-linguistic elements, hence Part 2 encourages the creative use of image. This is based on a belief that doing so can afford a learner something that written language cannot, relating to Nelson's (2008) conjecture that second-language learners possess a greater need to make use of the "communicative potential of nonlinguistic resources" (p. 69). A detailed analysis of such non-linguistic elements will provide the basis for a future paper.

The initial design resulted in an overlarge task to the point of being counter-productive, hence it was edited and condensed. This obviously compromises aspirations of the design, which is something to consider, but at this stage it was considered a priority to make the SRE as concise as possible.

Text Selection

The institution is encouraging students to study abroad, and has received a grant from the Japanese government to this end. One requirement is that students obtain high TOEFL scores; thus, it was necessary to include some test-style readings within the range of texts selected.

Aside from this one constraint, the committee wanted to make this range varied, agreeing with Scott et al.'s (1984) assertion that "there should be a wide choice of fresh and interesting texts" (p. 119). Familiarising students with many different text types empowers them, because in exposing students to a variety of different "contexts," the students can "learn a range of genres central to participation" in the creation of "political, social, and cultural realities (Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, & Sprang, 2006, p. 89). In this aspect, the selection of texts followed the example of Byrnes et al. (2006) by integrating a range of texts, progressing from "familiar interactions" to "public, institutional, and professional settings" (p. 89).

Byrnes et al. (2006) define this as a "primary-secondary discourse continuum" (p. 93). "Primary discourses" comprise personal, experiential discourses such as blogs, email, or personal narratives. "Blurred discourses" are typically literary discourses such as narratives or poetry. "Secondary discourses" are more institutional public or academic discourses, for example, expository prose, popular science articles, or pamphlets.

More than twenty texts were selected that divided roughly equally into these categories, with some grey areas. These were set as weekly readings, with answers submitted the following week. Primary discourses were generally assigned first, followed by blurred and secondary. Where time permitted, students had opportunities to discuss their answers with each other during lesson time.

How Successful was the SRE?

At the end of the academic year, students completed an online survey. One multiple-choice question asked respondents to grade the usefulness of the SRE. There were 63 responses to this question (out of an approximate 120 students in total). The results can be seen below:

Table 1
Results of the survey as to how useful students found the SRE

Usefulness	Responses (number)	Responses (%)
Not at all	0	0.0%
Not very	1	1.6%
No strong opinion	12	19.0%
Quite useful	24	38.1%
Very useful	26	41.3%

They reveal responses were overwhelmingly positive, with no respondents regarding the SRE as "not at all useful."   Almost 80% consider the exercise quite or very useful. The results seem congruent with Scott et al.'s (1984) conclusion, based on their own survey, that responses "confirmed the usefulness of the standard exercise as a teaching and practice procedure" (p.

118).

However, given the limited number of responses (it could be assumed, for example, that only more motivated students responded), the inherent limitation of asking the subjects themselves what is useful, and the consideration that in general surveys are "not very reliable instruments" (Scott et al., 1984, p. 118), these results by themselves are not conclusive. It was decided that conducting interviews would provide further insight.

Methodology

The research took the form of a pilot study, and it was decided to simply focus on three students from one of the classes, from hereon to be referred to as Students A, B and C. Their answers to the SRE were collected throughout both semesters, and they were interviewed for approximately an hour each at the end of the academic year.

The research questions the interviewer hoped to answer in conducting these interviews were:

How effective is the SRE in complementing the goals of the FL (Advanced Stream) course?
What effect does it have on students' reading ability?
What, if any, are the benefits of a repeated activity?
How can the SRE be improved for the future?

The interviewees were chosen by randomly selecting three volunteers. Arguably, volunteers are more likely to be highly motivated and thus provide perhaps unrepresentative responses. However, it was deemed important to only use willing students in a year that had been challenging for the freshman students. The reason it had been challenging was that this was the first year that the new course (with a more demanding workload than in previous years) designed especially for advanced-level students was implemented.

All three students were female freshmen (students at the university are approximately 75% female), aged 18-21, and from the same FL class. The interviews focused on just five texts: an email from a mother to her son's fiancé, a "spam" email asking for bank details, a recipe, a poem ("Thanksgiving Day Prayer" by William S. Burroughs) and a research article from the BBC website entitled "Kinder Children are More Popular." These texts were selected firstly as they cover all three of Byrnes et al.'s (2006) discourse types: primary, blurred, and secondary, and secondly as they generated the most interesting responses, especially with regard to the concept maps in Part 2.

The researcher (and also teacher and author of this paper) invited the students to provide general, informal comment on their answers and the SRE. Several similar themes emerge from each of these interviews. Though these themes inter-relate, each will be discussed below in light of how they relate to the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

How effective is the SRE in complementing the goals of the course? At one point in the interview with Student A, the following exchange takes place:

    A: I could see each form of each essay, or how can I say?
    T: Genre?
    A: Yeah, yeah, yeah! So email is always like this, and poem is so simple but has
        very deep meaning, so I could know form and afterwards I always think
        deeply and meaning.

When asked if this ability to recognise features of certain genres was the result of classwork or the SRE, Student A answers, "mainly class, but seeing many genre or this kind is from standard reading exercise." To this end, the SRE seems to have been useful in enabling genre awareness in the students. Student C seems to agree, as she comments in her interview that "having too many genre is good . . . because I was surprised this one, this email . . . I thought it's email but actually it's spam."

Interestingly, none of the students in the class were able to recognise the spam email (asking for bank details) for what it is, and all took it to be a genuine request for help. When asked why this is the case, all three students give similar answers. For example, Student A comments that she "didn't expect you will give us spam." Usually, she would "realise this is strange," but she "thought this was assignment." Similarly, Student B remarks that "you gave me this so I didn't think this is spam email." Student C also states she can normally identify spam, but in an academic context, her "focus is different . . . I think I couldn't notice it's spam because I think it's assignment and just text."

Clearly they were not able to correctly identify this text when doing the SRE due to their contextual expectations. This does not necessarily suggest that the SRE was a failure in getting students to reflect on field, tenor and mode, as Student C suggests that the eventual realisation in itself was useful: "I think if we have this kind of shock we will remember."

Student A believes that the exercise influenced how she and her classmates went about their regular classwork in the FL class, using her classmate ("X") as an example of a student who, as a result of repeatedly completing the SRE, began to reflect more on language use: "because for example X always says this is formal or informal language, we always discuss language choice, so helped class." Student A is convinced the SRE has not only benefited her classwork, but changed the way she generally thinks about language and text: "Until starting this I didn't try to read deeply," but now she reflects on "intended audience" and "appropriate language use . . . I didn't think any of this before doing this." Generally, doing the SRE has enabled her to "think complicated," which "was very useful for me." Whenever she reads, whether in English or Japanese, "after understanding, I try to think deeply."

Similarly, Student B says "I didn't care about texts' tone before," but after completing the SRE a few times, now "I care this kind of thing . . . maybe it helped me understanding . . . what the author wants to say . . . like why did he or she use academic words, like deeper reading." She has "started to think about tone, topic, ideas" whenever she reads.

Student C, however, does not believe the exercise has changed the way she thinks about field, tenor, and mode, claiming she "didn't focus on authorial intention," and that she continues to "just focus on each word." This opinion may not be accurate, as she was almost alone in being able to spot the use of irony in a poem and made imaginative use of concept maps in Part 2. Whether this is due to her own natural ability or the effect of the SRE, overall these interviews seem to illustrate that the exercise was relatively effective in complementing the goals of the FL course.

What effect does it have on students' reading ability? Student A believes the SRE "gave me process of reading in English . . . it is useful." She qualifies why this trained "process" is important; now whenever she reads, she "always try to find context . . . to read easily and this is because I did standard reading exercise." The student refers to any text she reads, not just assigned homework, when she describes this newly-acquired "process" of reading. She begins by "skimming" and then predicts content based on "key words," which aids her in

understanding the whole text. She states that she feels she "can imagine without dictionary."

Student B is also of the opinion that the exercise has improved her reading skills and strategies:

> Because of this assignment I was able to learn how to read texts . . . so key words, phrases . . . these words are important to read texts…We have to understand main ideas to read… Thanks to this paper, assignment, I was able to read better than before.

These two students' analyses of their reading abilities suggest, in this regard, the SRE is a success. Their reading ability has improved in relation to Scott et al.'s (1984) goal, stated earlier, to enable learners to acquire the ability to guess the meaning of words from context.

Student C's analysis is more complicated: "When I read a text I didn't see, I try to skim a lot of information." She claims she only does this now as a result of the SRE. As with Students A and B, the exercise has taught her a useful process for reading: "After skimming, I have to write down this. I have to read again and in more detail so I can understand more." However, it perhaps has not deterred her obsession with understanding every word: "I'd like to understand whole sentence and one word, one word… There are many unknown words so I have to research the words' meaning" using a dictionary. When asked why she still has this obsession, Student C replies that it is simply "my character."

This preoccupation with detail at the word level explains the excessive length of time she often spent doing the SRE, which in turn has had a detrimental effect on her motivation. Other students had similar complaints. Student B, for example, describes the exercise as being "helpful, but takes time." Scott et al. (1984) express similar quandaries; despite mostly positive feedback from their participants, they "have complained that it is quite a long exercise, and takes time to do" (p. 117).

It was emphasised to FL students that the SRE should take approximately 40 minutes at most. Nevertheless, Student B claims she typically spent from 40 minutes to 1 hour on each assigned reading. Student C states that she did not like the SRE primarily "because it takes much time," spending an hour or more on each assigned text. Interestingly, however, when she attempted to save time, for example, by drawing pictures in Part 2 to represent her understanding of irony in a poem, her answers were more insightful.

With this in mind, teachers need to emphasise the importance of focusing more on general meaning and spending no longer than 40 minutes on each reading, and perhaps the exercise itself needs additional editing.

Despite Student C's stated dislike of doing the exercise, the quality of her work was amongst the best in the class, and she acknowledges that "I know it's useful for me… because if I don't have this assignment I don't read texts so much, and I think reading speed is faster than before." Overall, the SRE seems to have had a positive effect on student reading ability.

What, if any, are the benefits of a repeated activity? Student A unequivocally in believes in the positive effects of repetition, stating "doing many times was so useful." For her, the SRE was initially difficult; she "didn't get used to this" at first. "But now I get used to this and think more deeply. But it is also difficult! Do you understand?" That is, the exercise was arduous to become accustomed to, but then became easier and yet at the same time more intellectually challenging. Student B similarly believes the routine of the repeated activity was beneficial:

"This standard reading exercise is habit for me, so… it's helpful for me."

Student C is more ambiguous. She agrees that the nature of a repeated set of questions meant the task "became easier" each time, commenting that, "at first I could not understand this text is formal or informal, but finally I can choose easily." The "good point" for her with regard to the use of the same activity every week is that "we can compare with the other texts." This cross-discourse comparison is useful for achievement of genre awareness, a stated aim of the FL course. However, for Student C, the "bad point is I think we always focus on the same points. I think sometimes we need different angle." She contradicts herself again upon reflection, concluding that "I think same question is better" than changing the questions every week.

A limited conclusion can be drawn here: although the SRE might initially prove difficult or seem monotonous, as it is habit-forming and builds genre awareness in students, the effect of the repeated activity is largely positive.

How can the SRE be improved for the future? While the majority of feedback was positive, all three students provide plenty of suggestions for improvement. Once again, interviewees' responses prove most enlightening when they touch upon similar points.

Both Students A and B suspect the installed habits and deep-reading that result from doing the SRE might have a detrimental effect "when I have to read so quickly, for example, exam or TOEFL" (Student A). The SRE, while "useful," is "sometimes too complicated," and in a "TOEFL test we have time limit" (Student B).

When asked which parts they found least useful, Student A suggests Part 1, Question 5 (Were your predictions in Questions 2 to 4 correct?) and Part 4, Question 1 (How interesting was the text?). One might assume students would find choosing point on a rating scale cognitively less demanding, but Student A explains that she "couldn't decide how much I could understand," and that the word "'interesting'… has too many meanings." For the same reason, Student B never answers Part 1, Question 5: "Every time… I don't know" (how correct her predictions were), and gives a similar reason for her dislike of Part 4, Question 2 (As a very rough approximate, how much of the text do you think that you understood?): "I don't know how much I was able to understand."

Student C regards the whole Reflection section as "the least useful… because it's not related to the contents and understanding" of the text. Echoing the concerns of the other two interviewees, she explains "this question is just interesting or boring, or how could I understand." She instead suggests the inclusion of a question asking "How fast" the text could be read as "it's related to understanding."

Student B logically suggests that the questions related to reflection and self-analysis would be easier after group feedback sessions in class, as she "wanted to compare with others." The value of these sessions that sometimes occurred after completion of the homework is another point upon which the students agree. Student B says that "listening to others' answers are really helpful… helped me a lot to think it another way… others' thinking, others' opinion so I can expand my ideas." Student C also appreciates the mutual reassurance and exchanging of ideas: "after we did this assignment we discussed in class… so, yeah I felt nervous… but finally I thought just say my opinion is okay, so relaxed." These sessions should take place more consistently.

Student A proposes an additional creative activity where "students have to make short story from picture or something." This could be made into a blog activity, and could alternate with the SRE. Student C suggests an additional question to aid students in recognising texts for what they are and overcome their expectations (as with the spam email): "Have you ever got this kind of email?" This question could be reformulated as "Have you ever seen this type of text before?" and added to Part 1.

Conclusion

On the whole, the utilization of the SRE has been a relative success. In the survey, over 79% rated the exercise as quite or very useful. This is not conclusive, as they may have felt some pressure to give positive answers for cultural reasons, although the survey was conducted anonymously.

All three interviewees rated it as useful and valuable, and two of them were very positive and seemed to enjoy the activity despite (or because of) its challenges. However, only interviewing three students, all of whom are highly motivated with good grades, obviously has its limitations. Nonetheless, many positives can be interpreted.

The SRE helped familiarise students with a large range of genres, encouraged them to think more deeply about language use, improved reading ability, and installed good reading habits, amongst many other potential benefits. There are aspects to consider for improvement. The area of concept maps will be discussed in a future paper. For now, considerations include reducing the length of time students spend on the activity, countering any negative impact on ability to read quickly in exams, alternating the exercise with more creative blogs, and making better use of digital media and multimodal forms of expression. There are solutions for these dilemmas, some suggested by the students themselves.

Finally, this study is useful for anyone who wishes their students to improve reading ability, especially where access to materials is compromised by budgets or time demands, as is often the case in some poorer nations. This study is a continuation of the work done by Scott et al. (1984), suggesting that the basic principle of a SRE is an effective one. If designed well, a simple list of questions that encourages students to think carefully and critically about text, used repeatedly with a large range of discourse types, is a worthwhile activity that produces many benefits and is an efficient learning tool.

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Appendix A
Scott et al.'s (1984, p. 116) Standard Reading Exercise
(*Figure 1. Standard Exercise translated from Portuguese*)

1. Read only the title of your text. Predict and write down at least five vocabulary items—key words—which you expect to see in the text. Use a dictionary if necessary. The key words can be noted down in English or in Portuguese.
2. Skim the text quickly (maximum one minute), looking for key words in the text. Use all the typographical indications, your previous knowledge, cognates, and repeated words. Now write down, in no more than fifteen words, the main theme of the text.

Re-read the text as often as necessary to answer the following questions:

3. What seems to be the author's main intention: to persuade you or just to inform you?
4. Write down any words which look important in the text (key words) which you did not know before reading it. Beside each one, write down your idea of what it probably means.
5. Write down the main idea of each paragraph, using only one sentence for each main idea. If the text consists of more than seven paragraphs, write down the main idea of each main section. Avoid translating, and try not to mention insignificant details.
6. Divide the text into sections. Is there an introduction? If so, where does it end? Is there a conclusion? If so, where does it start? Explain your answer.
7. Write one sentence reporting something which you learned from the text.
8. Critical reaction: whose interests does this text reflect? Which country, which social class, or which institution? Who would find the publication of this text desirable? Is the information in this text applicable to your own situation?
9. Indicate your interest in this text, using a scale from 1 to 5 (5 = very interesting, 1 = very boring).
10. How many times did you need to use a dictionary to answer the questions so far?
11. Write down the number of each paragraph which you feel you couldn't understand properly, or aren't sure you understood.
12. Try to work out why you found the paragraphs you listed in the last question so difficult. What was the main reason?—
    a. lack of previous knowledge of the topic
    b. a grammatical problem (which one?)
    c. inefficient reading strategies
    d. difficulty in separating main points from details
    e. difficulty in identifying the introduction or conclusion
    etc.
13. Now estimate your comprehension of the text (e.g. 50 per cent, 80 per cent).

Appendix B
Standard Reading Exercise Used in
the Foundational Literacies Advanced Stream Course

Standard reading exercise (to be completed every week with a different text)

Part 1 – Predicting

1. Skim through the text. Do you notice any key words or phrases? Write them down.

2. What do you think is the main idea (topic) in this text?

3. What do you think the genre of the text will be?

4. What do you think the tone of this text is generally:
    Academic
    Formal
    Argumentative
    Informal
    Literary
    Mixed
    Other:

NOW, READ CLOSELY THROUGH THE TEXT
Then answer the following questions.

5. Were your predictions in Questions 2 to 4 correct?

	1	2	3	4	5	
No - I got everything wrong :(	○	○	○	○	○	Yes - completely correct!

Part 2 – Reading for content

Read the text in more detail, and create a "concept map" showing 1) the organization of ideas within the text (e.g. give each paragraph a sub-heading); 2) what you think the author's purpose is; and 3) the tone of the text. Your teacher will show you an example framework for this, but you have freedom to draw this map in any way that helps you to understand. Try to include reasons or examples in your notes.

Part 3 – Text in context

1a. What kind of text MIGHT this be? *Choose only one.
- ☐ Business letter
- ☐ Diary
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Newspaper feature article
- ☐ Science magazine feature article
- ☐ Personal letter
- ☐ Work of fiction (e.g. novel, short-story, etc.)
- ☐ Academic textbook
- ☐ Research paper
- ☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿]

1b. Why do you think it could be one of these texts?

2. Who do you think the intended audience of the text is? What clues are there in the text that show this?

3. All language use (e.g., vocabulary, tone, sentence length) reflects a choice. Why does the writer choose to write in this style?

Part 4 – Reflection

1. How interesting was the text?

	1	2	3	4	5	
very boring	○	○	○	○	○	very interesting

2. As a very rough approximate, how much of the text do you think that you understood? (e.g., 10%, 50%, 90%)

3. If you found the text difficult to understand, what was the main reason? *Choose one:
- ☐ It wasn't difficult
- ☐ Lack of previous knowledge of the topic
- ☐ A grammar problem
- ☐ Too many new words
- ☐ Inefficient reading strategies
- ☐ Difficulty in separating main points from details
- ☐ Difficulty in identifying the introduction or conclusion
- ☐ Other: [＿＿＿＿＿＿]

4a. If you answered "A grammar problem" in Q4, AND you think you know what grammar point is that made it difficult to understand the text, please elaborate here. Note (1) If you didn't have a grammatical problem, write n/a. Note (2) If you answered "A grammar problem" in Q4, BUT you're unsure what the grammar problem is, please write "unsure" below.

University Student Attitudes Towards Peer Review in EFL Writing: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract

This quantitative study investigates student attitudes and teacher perceptions regarding peer review in EFL writing at a Japanese university. Prior research has suggested numerous benefits from employing peer review in L2 settings, but some studies have indicated learner difficulties with peer review. A total of 125 first-year students undertook a peer review activity and completed pre- and post-activity surveys concerned with how their attitudes changed throughout the process. Results showed that students' enjoyment of writing and students' willingness to offer and accept critical feedback increased. Furthermore, students showed confidence in their peers' abilities to give feedback, but greatly doubted their own abilities. Additionally, 36 instructors completed surveys regarding their perceptions of students' peer review attitudes, showing that teachers overestimated students' discomfort in giving and receiving written feedback. Implications include the need for learner training and confidence building and greater teacher awareness of students' views towards peer review.

Peer review in writing activities has become a common feature of many L2 writing classrooms that employ a process-writing approach (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Peer review, which in this paper refers to the process of students editing for mistakes and giving formative feedback on other students' writing, provides writers with alternative sources of feedback to their teachers'. Theoretical support for the use of peer review is found in Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist learning theory, which posits that social interaction is an essential component of cognitive development, and in collaborative learning theory, which contends that learners benefit from peer interaction and dialogue and the pooling of resources to complete tasks they may find too difficult on their own (Hirvela, 1999). With the myriad pedagogical possibilities offered by the employment of peer review, many EFL / ESL programs are including peer review in their writing curriculums (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). It is therefore prudent for educators to examine how to effectively implement this learning tool in their educational contexts.

One key area of concern in adopting any language learning activity is the attitudes of students and teachers towards that activity. Research has demonstrated the link between students' motivation and their language learning success (Gardner, 1985) and noted the negative impact of affective factors such as language anxiety (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997) on L2 learning. Thus, several attitudinal questions about the use of peer review in EFL classrooms arise: Do students want to do peer review? Do students feel competent enough to do peer review? Do they feel it is an effective learning tool? Furthermore, what are teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards peer review? This study aims to address these questions by examining the views of Japanese university students and instructors towards peer review in writing. The researchers hope these insights can improve the way peer review can be implemented in EFL writing classes.

Literature Review

Benefits of Peer Review

Initially endorsed in L1 writing classrooms as benefiting writers by providing them with an authentic audience (Elbow, 1973), peer review has in recent decades drawn the attention of L2 researchers, who have claimed numerous linguistic, cognitive, social, and affective benefits from the use of interactive peer review activities in L2 classrooms. Among these claims are that peer review has been found to improve learners' attitudes towards writing and increase their use of metacognitive strategies (Min, 2005), develop learners' self-awareness as writers and promote a feeling of ownership of text (Tsui & Ng, 2000), increase learner autonomy (Chaudron, 1984, as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006), and aid second language acquisition (Lockhart & Ng, 1995). While some researchers have noted that, among other difficulties, L2 peer reviewers are often unable to give useful, concrete feedback (Leki, 1990) or have argued that implementation of effective peer review is too complex to be of much use in L2 environments (Nelson & Murphy, 1992), the body of research indicates that use of peer review in EFL classrooms can have value on several levels.

Attitudes Towards Peer Review in L2 Contexts

Some research has focused on the preferences of students for either teacher or peer feedback. Zhang's (1995) study of 81 ESL students in the United States found that they overwhelmingly preferred teacher feedback. Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) argued the two forms of feedback need not be mutually exclusive, and indeed should be seen as complementary, as their survey of 121 EFL students in Hong Kong and Taiwan found a great majority desired peer feedback when assured of teacher feedback as well. Larger studies on peer review attitudes in other EFL contexts include Morra and Romano's (2008) study of 108 EFL teacher trainees in Argentina, which showed that, with sufficient training and a nonthreatening classroom atmosphere, students valued peer feedback. Their findings were reinforced in their interviews with two teachers, who reported noticeable positive changes in student attitudes. Although most attitudinal studies in EFL contexts have demonstrated positive student views towards peer review, some researchers (Nelson & Carson, 1998) in ESL contexts have suggested that students from Asian cultures with a more collectivist orientation, where maintaining face is important, may find peer review threatening to group harmony and thus might be reluctant to criticize their peers. This culturally specific notion of an affective filter that impacts language acquisition is examined in the current study.

Attitudes in Japan

Several studies concerned with attitudes towards peer review in Japanese university students have been conducted. Particularly relevant to this research project is Coomber and Silver's (2010) study concerning 70 first-year economics students' preferences for either anonymous or

face-to-face peer review, as the questions used for the current study were adopted from parts of their surveys. The authors administered four surveys designed to discover general pre- and post-activity attitudes towards peer review, as well as preferences for the two modes. Their findings suggested that after undertaking peer review, students showed an increased enjoyment of writing and a stronger belief in its effectiveness. They further concluded that students overall showed no strong preference for either mode, but that females preferred anonymous feedback. Silver and Coomber's (2011) subsequent analysis of a sample of the same students' written feedback and revisions, however, showed that anonymous feedback generated more, and more effective, feedback and greater learner uptake. This confirmed the findings of Hosack's (2003) earlier, smaller study that had a similar research focus. Taferner's (2009) study of 33 first-year students included pre- and post-activity surveys with questions about attitudes towards peer review. He found that, while maintaining skepticism towards their peers' feedback, students' opinions of peer review improved after undertaking it and that they wanted to continue using it. Hirose (2008) surveyed 15 students about their perceptions of peer review at the end of a writing course, finding that most students held positive views towards peer review, though it did not significantly improve students' writing abilities. Wakabayashi's (2008) study of 25 students confirmed that Japanese university students see some value in peer review and somewhat enjoy it, and also found evidence of a positive impact on their writing abilities.

With the exception of Coomber and Silver's (2010) study, most studies on peer review attitudes in Japan have had fairly small sample sizes, limiting the generalizability of their findings. The researchers hope the current study of 125 students can provide a broader picture of Japanese university students' attitudes towards peer review in writing. Additionally, little significant research has been conducted on the views or perceptions of EFL teachers in Asia towards peer review, an important missing element in the attempt to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the subject, and something which the researchers have tried to address with the current study and with their survey (White, Morgan, & Fuisting, 2014) of 41 EFL teachers' attitudes towards peer review.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this survey-based quantitative study is to examine students' attitudes and teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards peer review in EFL writing activities. By conducting attitudinal surveys before and after implementation of a peer review activity, the researchers hope to gain a deeper understanding of how Japanese university students feel about giving and receiving peer review, how students view their own and their peers' abilities to conduct peer review, and how effective they feel it is as a learning activity. It is also hoped that examining teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes will further inform educators about the attitudinal and affective aspects of the peer review process.

Research Questions
The following research questions were the focus of this study:
1. What are students' attitudes towards peer review in writing and how do students' attitudes change after undertaking peer review?
2. What is the gap between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards peer review and students' actual attitudes towards peer review in writing?

Method
This quantitative attitudinal study is part of a broader, multifaceted research project concerning peer review in EFL writing carried out at a private university in western Japan. Voluntary participants in the current study totaled 125 students and 36 English teachers.

Student Survey

Population and sampling. All 125 student participants were aged 18-20 and taking intermediate or upper-intermediate level compulsory English courses in their first semester at university. There were sixty-four information science majors and 61 business majors (91 males and 34 females), all native Japanese speakers. Participants were members of six intact classes taught by the researchers. These classes were chosen for practical administrative reasons. The initial population of all classes was 140 students. However, 15 students were absent or failed to submit writing assignments; their incomplete data were not used in this study.

Instrumentation. Two paper-based instruments were used for data collection: a pre-activity survey (see Appendix A) concerning students' views towards peer review before undertaking it, and a post-activity survey (see Appendix B) concerning how their views changed after undertaking peer review. Both surveys were in English with Japanese translations. The questions on the surveys were from some of the questions used in Coomber and Silver's (2010) survey of student attitudes regarding peer review at a Japanese university.

The pre-activity survey started with demographic questions and asked if students had experienced peer review in either English or Japanese before. These were followed by nine questions concerning their enjoyment of writing, their desire to participate in peer review, their beliefs about their own English abilities and that of their peers, and their feelings about the effectiveness of peer feedback. The post-activity survey posed the same nine questions worded in the past tense, followed by nine additional questions concerned with the benefits and difficulties of doing peer review. The questions were posed as statements. A six-point Likert scale was used, with 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and 6 indicating strong agreement. There was no neutral option.

Data collection. The peer review activity took place in six first-year English courses (three courses each for business and information science departments) in Spring 2013. As part of the process-writing component of the courses, students were asked to submit the first draft of a writing assignment and were informed that the revision process would first include peer feedback, then teacher feedback. Due to departmental curricular differences, business students wrote an academic paragraph and information science students wrote a three-paragraph essay. On the day of submission, students received a brief explanation about peer review and their consent to participate in the study was obtained. Students were next asked to voluntarily complete an anonymous pre-activity survey concerning their views towards peer review. Students were then given an approximately 30-minute instructor-guided training session on how to edit for a) layout, paragraph and / or essay structure and content, and b) grammatical, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation errors. Students then switched writings with a partner and spent approximately 30 minutes editing their peer's writing with a teacher-provided peer review worksheet (see Appendix C) guiding them through the process. After this, students briefly discussed their corrections face-to-face and returned the edited essays and corresponding completed worksheets to their partner. Students were asked to consider their partner's feedback and submit a second draft the following week. After submission of second drafts, students were asked to voluntarily complete an anonymous post-activity survey concerning their views towards the peer review process. Second drafts were edited by teachers, after which students submitted a final draft.

Teacher Survey

Population and sampling. For this study, data were used from 36 teacher respondents. The teacher surveys were sent to all the English language instructors (N = 101) at the same private university in western Japan, and 41 returned the completed survey. Five teacher respondents did not teach intermediate or upper-intermediate level English courses, and thus were not asked to complete the survey section providing data for this facet of the study. Of the 36 participants whose data were used in this study, 25 were foreign teachers and 11 were Japanese teachers. None taught the six classes participating in the student surveys.

Instrumentation. Data used in the teacher facet of this study came from one section of a larger paper-based survey (see Appendix D) concerning teacher attitudes towards peer review. This section asked teachers of intermediate or upper-intermediate level English courses about their perceptions of their students' attitudes towards peer review. The survey consisted of eight questions regarding the same aspects asked on the student surveys and used the same six-point Likert scale. The survey was designed to discover gaps, if any, between teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards peer review and students' actual attitudes towards peer review.

Data collection. The teacher survey was conducted throughout the spring semester in 2013. The paper surveys were sent with an explanatory cover letter via intracampus mail, and respondents were requested to return completed surveys in the same way to ensure anonymity.

Ethics and Consent

For the student and teacher surveys, researchers provided explanations of the purpose of the study and of steps taken to ensure confidentiality of participants. Student participants were informed, verbally and in writing, that participation was voluntary and would not affect course grades, and written consent forms (see Appendix E) with Japanese translations were obtained. Teacher participants were assured of anonymity and informed that submitting the completed survey indicated their consent.

Results

Description of the Sample

In total, 125 students and 36 instructors participated in the surveys. Demographic characteristics of students and instructors can be found in Tables F1 and F2 in Appendix F.

Descriptive Statistics

The results were analyzed in three ways. Firstly, the changes in attitude to peer review were tracked by comparing the answers to questions (Q) 1-9 on the post-activity survey with those given on the pre-activity survey. Secondly, the answers from the additional nine questions in the post-activity survey were analyzed. Finally, the post-activity survey answers to Q1-9 were compared with those given by the teachers to Q1-8 to detect any differences in perceived student attitudes to actual student attitudes. Descriptive statistics relevant to each section, including the questions, can be found in Tables 1-4.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Student Pre-Activity Survey Q1-9

Question	n	Mean	Mode	Median	Low-High	Range	SD
1. I enjoy writing in English.	125	3.44	4	3	1-6	6	1.1
2. Writing comments on my classmate's work is not a problem.	125	4.08	4	4	1-6	6	1.09
3. I want to show my work to my classmate.	125	2.6	3	3	1-5	5	0.89
4. I want to read my classmate's work.	125	3.91	4	4	1-6	6	1
5. My English level is good enough to help my classmate improve his / her writing.	125	2.12	2	2	1-4	4	0.86
6. My classmate's English level is good enough to help me improve my writing.	125	4.26	4	4	1-6	6	1.01
7. I feel uncomfortable writing on my classmate's work.	125	3.26	3	3	1-6	6	1.14
8. Negative feedback helps me improve my work.	125	4.99	5	5	1-6	6	0.81
9. Positive feedback helps me improve my work.	125	4.74	5	5	1-6	6	0.88

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics, Student Post-Activity Survey Q1-9

Question	n	Mean	Mode	Median	Low-High	Range	SD
1. I enjoy writing in English.	125	3.7	4	4	1-6	6	1.17
2. Writing comments on my classmate's work was not a problem.	125	4.25	5	4	1-6	6	1.13
3. I liked showing my work to my classmate.	125	2.94	3	3	1-6	6	1.02
4. I liked reading my classmate's work.	125	4.09	4	4	1-6	6	1.07
5. My English level is good enough to help my classmate improve his / her writing.	125	2.47	2	2	1-5	5	0.99
6. My classmate's English level is good enough to help me improve my writing.	125	4.38	5	5	1-6	6	1.05
7. I felt uncomfortable writing on my classmate's work.	125	2.98	3	3	1-6	6	1.19
8. Negative feedback helped me improve my work.	125	4.69	5	5	1-6	6	0.79
9. Positive feedback helped me improve my work.	124	4.51	4	4	1-6	6	0.84

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics, Student Post-Activity Survey Q10-18

Question	n	Mean	Mode	Median	Low-High	Range	SD
10. My classmate's written feedback helped me improve my work.	125	4.71	5	5	1-6	6	0.87
11. My classmate's oral feedback helped me improve my work.	125	4.67	5	5	2-6	5	0.87
12. It was useful to know who wrote the comments on my writing.	125	3.79	4	4	1-6	6	1.13
13. I felt like my classmate was criticizing me.	125	1.97	2	2	1-5	5	0.86
14. I think my written comments were useful for my classmate.	125	3.41	4	4	1-6	6	0.92
15. I think my oral comments were useful for my classmate.	125	3.51	4	4	1-6	6	0.92
16. It was easy to find something to say about my classmate's work.	125	3.14	3	3	1-6	6	1.13
17. Giving negative feedback was difficult for me.	125	3.11	3	3	1-6	6	1.13
18. I worried about hurting my classmate's feelings.	125	2.5	3	2	1-6	6	0.98

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics, Teacher Survey Q1-8

Question	n	Mean	Mode	Median	Low-High	Range	SD
1. My students enjoy writing.	36	3.75	4	4	2-5	4	0.92
2. Writing comments on classmates work is NOT a problem for my students.	36	3.36	4	4	1-6	6	1.16
3. My students want to show their written work to their classmates.	36	3.22	3	3	1-5	5	0.97
4. My students want to read their classmates' work.	36	3.83	4	4	1-5	5	0.9
5. My students' English level is good enough to help their classmates' work.	36	3.78	4	4	1-6	6	1.18
6. My students feel uncomfortable writing on their classmates work.	35	3.71	4	4	1-6	5	1.14
7. My students believe that negative feedback helps them improve their work.	35	4	4	4	1-6	6	1.22
8. My students believe that positive feedback helps them improve their work.	35	4.43	4	4	3-6	4	0.73

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

T-Test

To check if the changes in answers for the first nine questions of the student post-activity survey could be attributed to chance, a t-test was performed. The results are shown in Table G1 in Appendix G. The changes in answers to Q1, Q3, Q5, and Q7-9 were statistically significant.

Pre-Activity and Post-Activity Surveys Q1-9

Table 5 shows how many students chose each answer on the six-point Likert scale as a percentage. Columns Disagree and Agree show the aggregated percentages of respondents who disagreed (Answers 1, 2, and 3) and agreed (Answers 4, 5, and 6) with the statements.

Table 5

Changes in Attitudes, Pre- and Post-Activity Surveys Q1-9

Q	Survey	1	2	3	4	5	6	Disagree	Agree
1	Pre	2.4	19.2	28.8	34.4	12	3.2	50.4	49.6
	Post	4	9.6	28.8	32.8	19.2	5.6	42.4	57.6
2	Pre	2.4	6.4	16	36.8	32.8	5.6	24.8	75.2
	Post	3.2	3.2	16	30.4	37.6	9.6	22.4	77.6
3	Pre	13.6	26.4	47.2	12	0.8	0	87.2	12.8
	Post	8.8	20	47.2	18.4	4	1.6	76	24
4	Pre	2.4	5.6	19.2	48	20.8	4	27.2	72.8
	Post	2.4	4.8	16	43.2	25.6	8	23.2	76.8
5	Pre	24.8	45.6	22.4	7.2	0	0	92.8	7.2
	Post	18.4	33.6	31.2	16	0.8	0	83.2	16.8
6	Pre	1.6	5.6	8	41.6	36	7.2	15.2	84.8
	Post	3.2	1.6	9.6	35.2	40.8	9.6	14.4	85.6
7	Pre	8	14.4	36.8	28	10.4	2.4	59.2	40.8
	Post	11.2	21.6	37.6	20	6.4	3.2	70.4	29.6
8	Pre	0.8	0	1.6	20.8	50.4	26.4	2.4	97.6
	Post	0.8	0	0.8	41.6	41.6	15.2	1.6	98.4
9	Pre	0.8	0.8	3.2	32.8	44	18.4	4.8	95.2
	Post	0	1.6	6.5	42.7	37.9	11.3	8.1	91.9

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Post-Activity Survey Q10-18

Table 6 shows the answers to the additional nine statements concerned with the benefits and difficulties of doing peer review asked in the post-activity survey as percentages; it also shows the aggregated percentages of disagreement and agreement.

Table 6
Attitudes, Post-Activity Survey Q10-18

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	Disagree	Agree
10	0.8	0.8	2.4	36	42.4	17.6	4	96
11	0	1.6	4	37.6	39.2	17.6	5.6	94.4
12	4	8.8	20	44	17.6	5.6	32.8	67.2
13	33.6	40	23.2	2.4	0.8	0	96.8	3.2
14	3.2	11.2	35.2	44	4.8	1.6	49.6	50.4
15	2.4	9.6	32.8	47.2	5.6	2.4	44.8	55.2
16	4.8	26.4	33.6	23.2	9.6	2.4	64.8	35.2
17	8	22.4	31.2	28.8	8	1.6	61.6	38.4
18	15.2	35.2	37.6	8.8	2.4	0.8	88	12

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Attitudes

Table 7 shows the teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes towards peer review as percentages, as well as the aggregated percentages of disagreement and agreement.

Table 7
Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Attitudes Towards Peer Review

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	Disagree	Agree
1	0	11.1	25	41.7	22.2	0	36.1	63.9
2	2.8	27.8	16.7	38.9	11.1	2.8	47.2	52.8
3	2.8	19.4	41.7	25	11.1	0	63.9	36.1
4	2.8	2.8	25	47.2	22.2	0	30.6	69.4
5	2.8	16.7	13.9	36.1	27.8	2.8	33.3	66.7
6	5.7	11.4	14.3	42.9	25.7	0	31.4	68.6
7	2.9	14.3	8.6	34.3	34.3	5.7	25.7	74.3
8	0	0	8.6	45.7	40	5.7	8.6	91.4

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree.

Discussion

Some of the students' attitudes towards peer review in writing changed after undertaking it. Comparing the aggregated percentages in Table 5 indicates the shift in perceptions of the statements from disagreement on the pre-activity survey to agreement on the post-activity survey. In the post-activity survey (Appendix B), 8% or more had such changes on Q1, Q3, Q5, and Q7. This is also reflected in the changes in the mean score (see Tables 1 and 2). Q8 and Q9 also had large changes in mean scores, but for those statements, the changes in students' opinions were mainly within the category of Agree, i.e., moving from "strongly agree" to "agree" rather than changing from "slightly agree" to "slightly disagree." More students enjoyed writing and wanted to show their work to their classmates than prior to peer review (+8% and +11.2%). Whilst the clear majority (83.2%) still did not think their English level was good enough to help their classmates improve their writing, the percentage of students who believed they had the ability to help their classmates improve their writing more than doubled from 7.2% to 16.8%. Additionally, 11.2% less students felt uncomfortable writing on their classmates' work after having undergone peer review.

The post-activity survey (Appendix B) also highlighted additional attitudes towards peer review. In Table 6, Q10, Q11, Q13 and Q18, had aggregated percentages of more than 88% of students either agreeing or disagreeing with the statements. The students overwhelmingly thought that their classmates' written and oral feedback were helpful (96% and 94.4%), whilst only half said the same about their own written and oral comments (50.4% and 55.2%). Almost all (96.8%) students did not feel criticized by the feedback they received, and most (88%) did not worry about hurting their classmates' feelings when giving feedback during peer review. The students' attitudes and the trend in changes after undertaking peer review found in this study confirm the findings in Coomber and Silver (2010). Additionally, the findings of this study support the generally positive attitudes towards peer review that have been reported in prior research (Hirose, 2008; Morra & Romano, 2008; Wakabayashi, 2008) with EFL students.

Gaps in teachers' perception of students' attitudes towards peer review and students' actual attitudes were also found. Comparing the teachers' perceptions of the students' attitudes (Table 7) to the students' actual attitudes in the post-activity survey (Table 5), four statements (Q2, Q5, Q6 and Q7 in Table 7, compared to Q2, Q5, Q7 and Q8 in Table 5) had an 18% or higher difference. Whilst only 52.8% of teachers believed that students did not have a problem writing comments on their classmates' work, 77.6% of students stated that it was not a problem. In total, 66.7% of teachers believed the students' English level was good enough to help improve their classmates' writing. In contrast, only 16.8% of students agreed about their own level being good enough, but 85.6% of students thought that their peers' language level was up to the task (Q6 in Table 5). A much larger share of teachers perceived the students to feel uncomfortable writing on their classmates' work than was actually the case (68.6% vs. 29.6%). Whilst almost all students (98.4%) thought that negative feedback was helpful, only 74.3% of teachers thought students would think so.

Conclusion

Confirming what many studies in L2 contexts have found, students generally find value in peer review. They believe that the oral and written feedback they receive from their peers is beneficial to improving their writing. However, they doubt that their own ability to give feedback is good enough to help their peers. They are hesitant to show their own work but want to read their peers' writing. Although they have some difficulty in knowing what to write on peers' papers, they don't feel like they are criticizing or being criticized, and they feel comfortable writing on their peers' papers. This somewhat contradicts the notion of a face-saving affective filter for Japanese learners, at least for this age group. It is also clear that the teachers overestimate students' level of discomfort in actually giving written feedback, while they underestimate students' beliefs in negative feedback. One clear implication from this study is that students might benefit from some confidence-building measures in the peer review process, such as sufficient training and reassuring teacher feedback before final evaluation of writing. In general, teachers being aware of students' attitudes could lead to better implementation of peer review in EFL writing programs.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study could be applicable to other institutions in Japan and could possibly be relevant to other EFL contexts in Asia. However, all student participants belonged to the business and information science departments, and 72.8% of them were male; thus students with different majors or students at institutes with a larger female student body might not share the same attitudes. In addition, this study only collected reported attitudes and did not analyze the quantity, quality, or effectiveness of peer feedback. It also relied solely on statistical analysis, and the subject could benefit from more in-depth qualitative data.

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Appendix A
Student Pre-Activity Survey

<u>Explanation of Peer Review Research –</u> 「**Peer Review**」研究の説明

<u>What is peer review?</u>
Your peers are your classmates. Peer review is when you read another classmate's work and you write comments on their paper. You write comments on their paper to help them improve their writing. You should write both positive and negative comments, but try to write comments that will help your classmate. Sometimes you talk to them about their writing after you have read it.

「peer」とは、「能力・経験・年齢などが同等の人」という意味です。つまり、クラスメートは皆「peers」になります。「peer review」とは同じレベルの人による評価を意味します。今回皆の英語の作文力を上げるために、このクラスで「peer review」をしてみたいと思います。このクラスで行う「peer review」とは、クラスメートの書いた作文を互いに読み、評価しあうことを意味します。まず長所と短所がどこにあるかを考えながらクラスメートの作文を読みます。スペルや文法の間違いをしていないか、不要な文が書かれていないか、分かりにくいところはないか、あるいは構成や例が分かりやすい、「topic sentence」、「concluding sentence」が明確に書かれている、「support」の仕方が上手など直接英語、あるいは日本語でコメントを書いてください。それらのコメントを、作文を書いた本人に口頭で説明をしてもらうこともあります。

This survey is being carried out in order to help us find the best way to help you write better. Please fill out the questionnaire honestly in English or Japanese. It is entirely anonymous and it does not count towards your final assessment.

このアンケートの目的はライティング力の向上をどうすれば教師が助ければよいかを見つけることにあります。匿名で成績評価には一切関係ありませんので、英語もしくは日本語で自由な意見を書いてください。

Male   Female
男 ・ 女

Peer Review Pre-Activity Survey

a) Have you done peer review in Japanese before?   Yes / No
   日本語で peer review したことがありますか。   はい・いいえ

b) Have you done peer review in English before?   Yes / No
   英語で peer review したことがありますか。   はい・いいえ

c) Have you been abroad for more than six months?   Yes / No
   六ヶ月以上外国に住んだことがありますか。   はい・いいえ

     If yes, for how long:
     はいを選んだ人　期間：＿＿＿＿＿＿
     If yes, in which country：
     はいを選んだ人　　国：＿＿＿＿＿＿
     If yes, between what ages:
     はいを選んだ人　何歳から何歳まで：＿＿＿ 〜 ＿＿＿

1 Strongly disagree 全くそう思わない	2 Disagree そう思わない	3 Somewhat disagree どちらかといえばそう思わない	4 Somewhat agree どちらかといえばそう思う	5 Agree そう思う	6 Strongly agree とてもそう思う

1) I enjoy writing in English.
英語で書くのが好きだ。

1   2   3   4   5   6

2) Writing comments on my classmate's work is not a problem.
クラスメートの作文にコメントを書くのは特に問題ではない。

1   2   3   4   5   6

3) I want to show my work to my classmate.
自分の作文をクラスメートに見せたい。

1   2   3   4   5   6

4) I want to read my classmate's work.
クラスメートの作文を読みたい。

1   2   3   4   5   6

5) My English level is good enough to help my classmate improve his / her writing.
私にクラスメートの作文のアドバイスができるほどの英語力があるとは思う。

1   2   3   4   5   6

6) My classmate's English level is good enough to help me improve my writing.
クラスメートには私の作文のアドバイスができるほどの英語力があるとは思う。

1   2   3   4   5   6

7) I feel uncomfortable writing on my classmate's work.
クラスメートの作文にコメントを書くことに抵抗がある。

1   2   3   4   5   6

8) Negative feedback helps me improve my work.
悪い点を指摘されることで作文力を上げることができる

1   2   3   4   5   6

9) Positive feedback helps me improve my work.
良い点を指摘されることで作文力を上げることができる。

1   2   3   4   5   6

Appendix B
Student Post-Activity Survey

Male   Female
男 ・ 女

<u>Peer Review Post-Activity Survey</u>

1 Strongly disagree 全くそう思わない	2 Disagree そう思わない	3 Somewhat disagree どちらかといえばそう思わない	4 Somewhat agree どちらかといえばそう思う	5 Agree そう思う	6 Strongly agree とてもそう思う

1) I enjoy writing in English.
英語で書くのが好きだ。
1   2   3   4   5   6

2) Writing comments on my classmate's work was not a problem.
クラスメートの作文にコメントを書くのは特に問題ではなかった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

3) I liked showing my work to my classmate.
自分の作文をクラスメートに見せるのが好きだった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

4) I liked reading my classmate's work.
クラスメートの作文を読むのが好きだった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

5) My English level is good enough to help my classmate improve his / her writing.
私にクラスメートの作文のアドバイスができるほどの英語力があるとは思う。
1   2   3   4   5   6

6) My classmate's English level is good enough to help me improve my writing.
クラスメートには私の作文のアドバイスができるほどの英語力があるとは思う。
1   2   3   4   5   6

7) I felt uncomfortable writing on my classmate's work.
クラスメートの作文にコメントを書くことに抵抗があった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

8) Negative feedback helped me improve my work.
悪い点を指摘されることで作文力を上げることができた。
1   2   3   4   5   6

9) Positive feedback helped me improve my work.
良い点を指摘されることで作文力を上げることができた。
1   2   3   4   5   6

10) My classmate's written feedback helped me improve my work.
クラスメートが書いてくれたコメントのおかげで作文をより改善することができた。
1   2   3   4   5   6

11) My classmate's oral feedback helped me improve my work.
クラスメートが言ってくれたコメントのおかげで作文をより改善することができた。
1   2   3   4   5   6

12) It was useful to know who wrote the comments on my writing.
誰が書いてくれたコメントかが分かるので良い。
1   2   3   4   5   6

13) I felt like my classmate was criticizing me.
クラスメートのコメントに非難される感じがあった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

14) I think my written comments were useful for my classmate.
私が書いたコメントはクラスメートに役に立つと思う。
1   2   3   4   5   6

15) I think my oral comments were useful for my classmate.
私が言ったコメントはクラスメートに役に立つと思う。
1   2   3   4   5   6

16) It was easy to find something to say about my classmate's work.
クラスメートの作文について何かコメントを考えるのは難しくなかった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

17) Giving negative feedback was difficult for me.
悪い点は指摘し難い感じがあった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

18) I worried about hurting my classmate's feelings.
クラスメートの感情を害する恐れがあった。
1   2   3   4   5   6

Appendix C
Peer Review Worksheets

Peer Review Worksheet - Paragraph

Author _____ Reviewer _____

Please read your classmate's paragraph and answer the following questions. For each question circle Good, Fair, or Needs Revision and write a comment.

Layout

Is the layout correct?   *Good   Fair   Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Paragraph Structure

Is there a topic sentence with a clear main idea?   *Good   Fair   Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Do all supporting sentences develop the main idea?   *Good   Fair   Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Is there a good concluding sentence?   *Good   Fair   Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Grammar, Vocabulary, and Spelling

Read the paragraph again and look for grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling mistakes. Ask for help if you need it. Make some corrections on your classmate's paper.

Please write any other comments about your partner's paragraph.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Peer Review Worksheet - Essay

Author _____ Reviewer _____

Please read your classmate's essay and answer the following questions. For each question circle Good, Fair, or Needs Revision and write a comment.

Layout

Is the layout correct? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Essay and Paragraph Structure

Look at Paragraph 1

Does it clearly introduce the invention? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Look at Paragraph 2

Is there a good Topic Sentence? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Do all the other sentences support the Topic Sentence? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Look at Paragraph 3

Is there a good Topic Sentence? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Do all the other sentences support the Topic Sentence? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Is there a good Concluding Sentence? *Good* *Fair* *Needs Revision*

Comment: _____

Grammar, Vocabulary, and Spelling

Read the essay again and look for grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling mistakes. Ask for help if you need it. Make some corrections on your classmate's paper.

Please write any other comments about your partner's essay.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix D
Teacher Survey
Peer Review Teacher's Survey 2013

Demographics: Please circle the number.

1. At this university, do you teach:
   1 – Part-Time   2 – Full-Time

2. Are you:
   1 – Japanese   2 – Foreign

3. Which department(s) do you teach English courses in at this university?
   Circle all that apply.
   1 – Economics   2 – Business Administration
   3 – Information Sciences and Engineering   4 – Science and Engineering
   5 – Life Sciences and Pharmaceutical Sciences   6 – Sport and Health Science

1st Year UI & IM Students' Attitudes

- Do you teach 1st year upper-intermediate and / or intermediate level English classes at this university?
  1 – Yes   2 – No
- If Yes, please answer the 8 questions.

Instructions: Please answer these 8 questions based on your intuition and observations of your 1st year upper-intermediate and/or intermediate level students. Circle the number that best corresponds to your agreement with the statement.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Somewhat agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree

1. My students enjoy writing in English.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

2. Writing comments on classmates' work is NOT a problem for my students.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

3. My students want to show their written work to their classmates.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

4. My students want to read their classmates' work.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

5. My students' English level is good enough to help their classmates improve their writing.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

6. My students feel uncomfortable writing on their classmates' work.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

7. My students believe that negative feedback helps them improve their work.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

8. My students believe that positive feedback helps them improve their work.
   1   2   3   4   5   6

Appendix E
Student Consent Form

Dear student,

As well as teaching English classes I am also part of a research group that is studying the best way to conduct Peer Review in English classes for university students in Japan. We are interested in how Japanese students change their writing during the drafting process. We would like to ask you for your help to collect data. We would like you to do two short questionnaires. We also want to use the drafts and peer review forms from your writing tasks. We plan to analyse your data to find out what students think about Peer Review and how to best use it in writing classes.

Please read the section below carefully, and if you agree to participate please sign below. If you do not want to participate then it will not affect your evaluation for this class at all - we will not use your data for our research.

In the future parts of this research may be published, but no real names will be used and your anonymity will be protected. If you have any questions please ask us.

Thank you for your help,
Bjorn Fuisting, Brett Morgan, and Jeremy White

Participant consent form
- ☐ I have read, and I fully understand, the description of the research to be carried out by Bjorn Fuisting, Brett Morgan, and Jeremy White.
- ☐ I understand that the questionnaires, writing drafts, and peer review forms will be used for data analysis.
- ☐ I understand that my real name will not be used in any documents and my identity will be kept secret.

I agree to take part in this study.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

学生のみなさんへ

　私は英語授業を担当するのに加え、日本の大学生向けの英語授業において、ピアレビューの効果を研究するグループの一員でもあります。このグループでは、日本人学生のライティング力の変化に着目し、研究を進めています。研究に必要なデータを収集する上で、2 つのアンケートとライティング課題のピアレビューフォームを使用させていただきたく、みなさんにご協力をお願い申し上げます。収集したデータをもとに、みなさんのピアレビューに関する考えを分析し、今後のライティング授業でどう役立てるか、検討する予定です。

　つきましては、以下の項目を熟読いただき、ご協力いただける場合は、下記ボックスにチェックの上、署名をお願い致します。ご協力いただけない場合、我々の研究材料としては、一切使用致しません。なお、協力の有無に関わらず、授業評価の対象とは致しません。

　また、今後、本研究内容が雑誌に掲載されたり、出版されることがあっても、皆さんの氏名を公表することはなく、匿名を使用致します。ご不明な点等につきましてはご質問ください。

　ご協力、ありがとうございます。
　　フースティング　ビヨーン、モーガン　ブレット、ホワイト　ジェレミー

同意事項
　　☐　上記内容を読み、フースティング　ビヨーン、モーガン　ブレット、ホワイト　ジェレミーによる研究内容について、理解しました。
　　☐　アンケート、ライティング課題、ピアレビューフォームを研究データとして使用することについて、理解しました。
　　☐　どの研究資料にも氏名は使用せず、個人情報の保持に努めることについて、理解しました。

上記、同意致します。

署名

日付 _____ 年 _____ 月 _____ 日

Appendix F
Demographic Characteristics Tables

Table F1

Demographic Characteristics of the Student Sample

Characteristics

	N	%
Gender		
Male	91	72.8%
Female	34	27.2%
Department		
Business Administration	61	48.8%
Information Science and Engineering	64	51.2%
Prior experience with peer review in Japanese		
Yes	40	32%
No	84	67.2%
No response	1	0.8%
Prior experience with peer review in English		
Yes	7	5.6%
No	117	93.6%
No response	1	0.8%
Lived abroad for longer than six months		
Yes	9	7.2%
No	116	92.8%

Table F2

Demographic Characteristics of the Teacher Sample

Characteristics

	n	%
Position		
Part-Time	8	22.22%
Full-Time	28	77.77%
Nationality		
Japanese	11	30.55%
Foreign	25	69.44%
Department		
Economics	17	
Business Administration	21	
Information Science and Engineering	4	
Science and Engineering	12	

Note. As some instructors teach in multiple departments, no percentages were calculated for this section.

Appendix G
T-test Table

Table G1

T-test Pre-Activity and Post-Activity Survey Q1-9

Q	t-test
1	$t(124) = 3.813$, $p < .01$
2	$t(124) = 1.646$, $p = .102$ N.S.
3	$t(124) = 3.853$, $p < .01$
4	$t(124) = 1.864$, $p = .065$ N.S.
5	$t(124) = 4.556$, $p < .01$
6	$t(124) = 1.260$, $p = .210$ N.S.
7	$t(124) = 2.722$, $p = .007$
8	$t(124) = 3.366$, $p = .001$
9	$t(123) = 2.488$, $p = .014$

Reading Aloud as a Technique for Developing Teachers' Awareness of English Phonology

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Abstract

This paper describes an exploratory qualitative study that is part of a larger research project into the impact of experiential learning on teacher proficiency and practice. It focuses on how, through a process approach to developing and evaluating their own oral skills, trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education in Singapore became more aware of features of spoken language that relate particularly to reading aloud in class. Such awareness is important because when these teachers enter school, they will work with primary school children and follow the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) program, which takes a shared-book approach and involves both teachers and students in reading aloud activities. This paper demonstrates how increasing awareness of features of their own spoken English and reflecting on the implications for reading aloud helped the teachers improve their own delivery and relate what they had learned to the classroom.

Reading Aloud in the Development of Literacy

The primary literacy education task of preschool and early school years is not teaching children letter-sound correspondences but reading to them. If a child is experiencing difficulty in learning to read, we should not ask if he or she knows the sounds of letters but if he or she has been read to extensively.

(Moustafa, 1997, p. 78-79)

The importance of being read aloud to in the development of literacy has been extensively documented (Fox, 2008; Krashen, 2004; Trelease, 2006), and promoted through national literacy initiatives such as Becoming a Nation of Readers in the U.S.A. or through the National Literacy Trust in the U.K. A short article by McQuillan (2009) summarizes the benefits of being read to. These include learning the purpose of reading, exposing learners to different text types and to vocabulary and language patterns not part of their everyday repertoire, helping learners to imagine, and laying the foundation for good writing skills. Of particular relevance to this discussion is that it also enables learners to hear the phrasing, inflections, and expressions that good readers use.

While much of the research has focused on reading aloud in the child's first language, in today's multicultural world, many children come to school with home languages other than the school language. Similarly, children are learning foreign languages at ever-younger ages (de

Lotbinière, 2011). For such children, being read to in the new language may be a critical aspect of their literacy development. Being read to is not just for young children, however. Krashen (2004), for example, reported a study showing that college students benefitted from listening to stories and then discussing them, while Amer (1997) found that learners of English as a foreign language who were read to outperformed their counterparts on reading comprehension tests.

Given the importance of being read to for learners of different backgrounds and ages, ensuring that teachers have the skills to read aloud effectively can be seen to be an important aspect of their professional development. At the word level, teacher readers need to be able to decode written language and recode it as spoken language just as their students do. This means being able to translate graphic representations into sounds, which in English means understanding sound-spelling relationships and word stress patterns. Resources such as the phonetic alphabet and dictionaries can further help native and non-native speaker teachers alike with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Reading aloud effectively goes beyond the word level, however. Above all, it requires the reader to have understood what is being read and then to parse language meaningfully, stress relevant words, pause at appropriate points and for an appropriate length of time, and maintain the rhythm of the target language. Peha (n.d.) outlines some further skills effective readers employ when reading aloud, such as changing pitch, volume, rhythm, and tone. All these elements are subsumed under the term *phonology* as used in this article.

A final and important consideration is that language teachers, whatever their teaching context, are expected to be good models of the target language; they are still in many cases the primary, and sometimes the only, standard models their learners hear.

Background to the Study

Singapore is a multicultural country, and there are four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil. Education is conducted in the medium of English, but children entering school have varied levels of exposure to this language through their home or preschool backgrounds. In addition to different home languages, the use of colloquial versions of English, broadly categorized as Singlish, means that some may have little exposure to Standard Singapore English outside school. The primary school English Language syllabus is delivered through the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) program. This program was developed based on research in Singapore schools and "is designed to cater to a diverse range of EL learners in our school system" (Ministry of Education, 2012, para. 4); under STELLAR, "EL is taught through stories and texts that appeal to children" (para. 4) with the goal of building confidence in both speech and writing. As part of the program, both teachers and students read aloud target texts. Throughout school, reading aloud is also used to assess students' oral skills; for example, the critical Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) Oral Communication paper includes reading aloud.

The diversity of the students' language exposure outside school underscores the need for English-medium teachers to be role models of good language use. Indeed, the expectation is that "school leaders . . . must set high standards of spoken English for the whole school" (Wong, 2011, para. 7). As one way students are expected to demonstrate their skills is by reading aloud, this too is something teachers need to do well and model in their lessons. To help improve teachers' language awareness and their own language skills, in 2009, a supplementary program, the Certificate in English Language Studies (CELS), was introduced for students on diploma or degree courses at a university in Singapore. This program is for those training to

teach English in primary schools. It aims to help develop the English language content knowledge and skills of the participants. The primary focus for the skills enhancement component is a two-week intensive program which is followed by a series of personalized tasks.

This intensive program takes an experiential approach to learning (Kolb, 1984) and models process approaches (Tompkins, 2010) that teachers are expected to use in school. Through the process of developing a digital story (Ohler, 2008), participants first write and record a script. Using a process writing approach to composing the script helps increase their awareness of their writing skills, while preparing the recording is an opportunity to focus on aspects of phonology. The program has been discussed from the course tutors' standpoints in Hanington, Pillai, and Kwah (2013), and this discussion inspired a qualitative study into the impact of the approaches used on the course on the participants' learning the next time it was conducted.

Methodology

The subjects for this exploratory qualitative study were the students who took the course in May 2013. After the course was over and grades had been awarded, they were asked for permission to use data they had generated in the normal course of the program for research purposes.

Of the 70 participants, 61 gave their consent. Only data from those giving permission were included in the study, and the names used throughout are pseudonyms.

The data for a main study comprised the self-reports of the preservice teachers' prior experience of such process approaches to learning and of process writing in particular, their reflections during the course on each stage of the process of creating a digital story, and their reflections on the application of what they had learned during their subsequent practicum period. The course participants loaded these items onto the course website and they were collated from the site for research purposes. For this smaller study, data relating to the phonology component, which comprised peer feedback on the recorded narratives (see Appendix A for the peer evaluation checklist that guided feedback), the participants' reflections on the two days of work on oral skills, and their final reflections (see Appendix B for the prompts for these items) were explored to identify themes relating to two research questions:

1. Does helping these preservice teachers recognize and practice features of phonology with the goal of reading stories aloud increase their awareness of good oral skills?
2. Are they able to relate what they have learned to their future classroom practice?

Classroom Approaches

The phonology component of the program, effectively one day of classroom input and activities followed by a day during which the participants applied what they had learned or reviewed to their own reading and received feedback on this from their peers and tutors, took a broad-brush approach to the topic.

Tutors started by introducing the sounds of English through the phonemes on charts such as the British Council's Phonemic Chart (2010). Since the majority of participants could produce most of the individual sounds, though they had some issues differentiating specific vowel sounds such as long and short vowels and some voiced and unvoiced consonants, this was presented primarily as a resource and a way to check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words in dictionaries. Participants were also shown how to identify word stress indicators in phonetic transcriptions. To practice applying these segmental elements, the participants were given lists

of words commonly mispronounced in Singapore and used dictionaries to check and practice saying them in isolation and then in sentences which they might use in a school context.

Tutors then reviewed suprasegmental features of phonology such as linking, sentence stress, and intonation and practiced these using well-recognized activities including rhymes, jazz chants, and limericks. An amusing and effective limerick for this purpose is:

> There was a young lady of Niger,
> Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
> They came back from the ride
> With the lady inside,
> And the smile on the face of the tiger.
> (This limerick is generally attributed to W.C. Monkhouse, who was writing in the late 19th century.)

Limericks allow a discussion of syllable-timed versus stress-timed languages and the impact of the latter on the pronunciation of content words, such as nouns and verbs, and on function words, such as articles and prepositions. This idea is quite challenging for speakers of Singapore English, where there is less differentiation in vowel duration and there are fewer vowel reductions than in British English (Ling, Grabe, & Nolan, 2000). Jazz chants also help reinforce these points, and there are many chants that allow for discussion of how stress and emphasis on key words help convey meaning. A useful jazz chant for adults is Scrivener's (2005, p. 418) dialogue about some missing keys. Here, course participants can be asked to consider the relationship between the two speakers and how this would be reflected in the dialogue. This makes the activity more meaningful and more amusing, and encourages the participants to convey emotion by using their voices.

To encourage critical evaluation of the features reviewed, participants next listened to and analyzed recordings of students reading aloud. Finally, they read aloud extracts from books they might read to their own students and considered how to project meaning, emotion, and different characters. They were given feedback by members of their study group and the tutor.

After this exposure, albeit very brief, to an area some had never previously consciously considered, the participants focused on reading their own scripts aloud. Reading one's own story has the huge benefit of removing any burden of comprehension. What the participants knew they needed to do was to engage their listeners and convey to them the meaning they intended with their stories. This was done first in class to get some immediate feedback. The next day, an e-learning day, they practiced and recorded their scripts using the Audacity online audio editor and recorder. The recordings were uploaded onto the course wiki, and study group members and the tutor gave each participant feedback. Based on this feedback, the scripts were rerecorded to create the final version which would be part of the soundtrack for their digital stories. To round off this two-day stage, the participants wrote a reflection on their experience.

Findings and Discussion

Peer Feedback

In class, the participants first practiced being detailed in their feedback and also looking both at positive aspects of the narration and at areas for improvement. Their later online comments indicated that they recognized improvements from the initial readings and were able to direct

their peers to specific features of the narration, either to praise their performance or to highlight possible issues.

The two examples that follow show some of the feedback given to Philip, the first item pointing to earlier classroom discussion and the second considering impact on the listener:

> I liked the pausing which you used in this recording. Like Fatimah, I think you have taken into consideration our feedback yesterday. One pronunciation improvement would be on the word "table." In particular, the last syllable "ble." Other than that, job well done! (Tony)

> Hi Philip! Very nicely done. I especially like paragraph 2 where you have really placed emphasis on the sentences with exclamation marks. I can hear the excitement in your voice as you were reading the sentences. Your voice is very nice and the pace you read at was appropriate to the listener. (Lakshmi)

The next comments show a student giving her peer, Jin Hong, a resource that will help him check an issue with his pronunciation and other students providing input focusing on aspects of tone and sentence stress as ways to convey meaning (the narrator responded to his peers and then revised his recording):

> Hey Jin Hong, good reading, great pausing! I really love the part you added in some sound effects, e.g., the echoes. I agree that with visuals and more sound effect, it will definitely be awesome. The only part I find weird was the pronunciation for the word "attire." I felt it didn't sound very right. I checked the pronunciation with this website.
> http://www.howjsay.com/index.php?word=attire&submit=Submit. But, I think it is still better if you can check it out. :) (Doreen)

> Thanks!! I was pondering for quite a while on how to pronounce it haha, thanks for the suggestion! I'll see how I can work on it! :P :) (Jin Hong)

> Liked the change in voices throughout the reading! Haha the effect really brought out the story better. The pausing was good too :) I guess you could add a little more excitement in the "I did it, I did it" part, you just won the race!! (Mandy)

> I like your reading too! And yes, the effects really brought out the story. I just felt that for para. 2, "knowing you have an important day ahead," should stress on important instead of you, para. 5, "the announcement that somehow you are dreading to hear," could give more emphasis on "dreading." Just my suggestions though. I can't wait for the final product with your visuals and victory song! (Roslina)

These examples indicate that once the course participants had become more aware of features of phonology and the relationships between phonology, meaning, and the impact on listeners, they were able to guide others in their performance and make detailed recommendations. Many of the participants, including the recipients of the comments above, noted in their reflections how much they had benefited from peer feedback and how this had helped them when rerecording their narration. Indeed this process of noticing, with others' help, and reflecting seemed critical to their development.

Reflections

Research Question 1: Awareness of oral skills. The first set of reflections immediately after the sessions on phonology focused the participants on their own performance and addressed the first research question about increasing awareness of good oral skills.

The course participants found listening to and evaluating their recordings a useful exercise, and several noted later that they would like to use the same approach with their students. One noted that "teachers may get students to record their reading via Audacity and both teachers and students can listen to their own recording and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in their reading" (Gene). They commented principally on three aspects of their oral skills in their reflections. The two aspects receiving most attention were how to use their voices to convey their characters' emotions or the mood of their pieces and how to pace their delivery, pause appropriately, and emphasize important words. The third aspect was using resources to check the pronunciation of individual words.

The second reflection question included a reference to audience. In many instances, when responding to either of the reflection questions, the course participants commented on their performance and the improvements they made in terms of making their stories more accessible to their target audiences:

> I focused on speaking slowly and clearly, being mindful that my readers and those listening could be from the lower primary. They would take longer to process information. (Lily)

> I brought in humor with different intonation. I brought in varying tones to build a sense of drama and to kill monotony. I felt that it might help keep the audience engaged. (Siva)

The respondents also commented on their own pronunciation and found listening to themselves an effective approach because "as we seldom hear ourselves speak, we don't usually know when we make mistakes while reading and conversing" (Annie). In evaluating their pronunciation, some commented on specific sounds, some talked generally about articulation and enunciation, and some discussed researching and noting sounds and word stress. Roslina, for example, said, "I need to be very careful with my articulation, especially the end sounds as it would make a lot of difference, especially for words in the past tense, e.g., learn vs. learned"; while Pi Ying realized she was not sure of the correct pronunciation of some simple words in her text and commented, "This was a good learning point for me as I had to research the standard pronunciation for these words." A number of respondents, such as the following one, recognized that speaking too quickly had a negative impact on the articulation of words and addressed this when they rerecorded their texts:

> I also did many revisions of my narration as only when I listened to my recording did I start to find errors in pronunciation and pace. I also found out how muffled some words would sound if I rushed through the narration. (Shawn)

Critiques of themselves were not all negative, however. Some of the participants found the exercise an affirmation of their oral skills: "I have learned that I have good pronunciation skills. My friends as well as my tutor had great confidence in my pronunciation" (Ainah). Others commented positively on the impact of the activities:

Through the narration and dialogues, I had the opportunity to practice my oral skills. I became more aware of my pronunciation and articulation as I kept on replaying to hear for mistakes, and rerecording the narration over and over again to get the right pronunciation. At the same time, having the chance to receive constructive feedback from my classmates and tutor has helped to boost my confidence in oral skills. (Jean)

Research Question 2: Relating learning to classroom practice. The second research question was answered primarily through the reflections at the end of the program. Here the participants could choose to highlight any aspect of the course when linking what they had learned to their future teaching contexts, and many wrote about process writing and the software they had learned to use. Virtually all the respondents also chose to write about oral skills in their response to this task. Some talked about implications of the course for themselves as teachers, while others looked at how they could use some of the approaches from the course with their own students.

Comments about themselves as teachers ranged from immediate practical considerations, particularly relating being able to read aloud more effectively and in ways that would engage their students, to a recognition of themselves as models of target language:

> The pronunciation activities allowed me to learn the accurate way of pronouncing words, which will be useful when I start teaching. I have particularly chosen this item as this would be important when it comes to oral practice and examination for the children. By modeling the right way of pronouncing and enunciating words and sentences, my pupils will be able to emulate and learn the accurate way of speaking. (Chee Chen)

Some talked about continuing to use resources that had been introduced:

> Now that I am more aware of the International Phonetic Alphabet, I want to continue to learn more about it so that I am teaching my students the right thing. Especially when students are in the lower primary, I feel that it my duty to teach them the correct Standard English pronunciation. (Sharifah)

A few respondents extended the application of what they had learned beyond the immediate context of reading aloud:

> In schools, we rush through a lot of items when we speak to students as we want to get as much content to the students as possible, but now, I will take a step back to ensure that instructions are given clearly and content is delivered to students in a way that they will understand. (Philip)

While a significant number of respondents commented on implications for themselves as teachers, many focused on how the approaches they had been exposed to during the course could transfer to their own classrooms. Several participants talked about the phonemic chart being useful to both themselves and their students, because "when students are able to pronounce and articulate correctly, they will develop into confident speaking individuals" (Ruo Shin), and about its helping increase their autonomy in working out how to pronounce words. In a similar vein, others felt getting students to record stories and evaluate their own performance would help them become less dependent on the teacher for feedback. Jin Hong felt that having the students create and then narrate a story as a podcast was a very useful

procedure as "by listening to themselves they would be able to pick out their own flaws and work on their own improvement," adding that "[t]his helps to ensure that the learning ownership lies with them." Another advantage respondents saw in having students record themselves was getting peer feedback. Finally, some participants made a link with students' performance during oral examinations and felt that learning to read aloud more expressively would help them perform well.

Conclusion

The comments above seem to indicate clearly that the approaches used on the course and having to read aloud and record their own narratives did, at least in the immediate term, raise the participants' awareness of their own oral skills and of the requirements of good oral skills when reading aloud. They also indicate that, while different participants took different insights from the course, they could readily see the classroom relevance of what they had learned, both in terms of their own performance as teachers and in terms of helping their students in similar ways.

Although the activities and approaches described above were selected and tailored specifically for this program, the author has integrated many of these ideas into courses for non-native speaker teachers from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and China. Such courses tended to take place over more extended periods and focus on the different aspects of phonology in more detail, but it is possible that some of the findings from this study are applicable to wider contexts.

Limitations

Although the findings from this study seem very positive, there were a number of limitations. Firstly, it was a very short program, and as trainee teachers are exposed to many other aspects of language and teaching during their studies and early school career, this study can indicate a potential to transfer learning from this course to the classroom but not confirm that this will happen. The researchers involved in the larger study on the impact of experiential learning on teacher proficiency and practice, of which the current research is a part, hope to conduct a follow-up study with some of the course participants, once they start teaching, to establish this. A second limitation was that the reflections that constituted the data for this study were done as an integral part of the course, which limited the questions that could be asked and which may also have affected the nature of the responses to a certain extent. Thirdly, the program focused on aspects of phonology through reading aloud; it did not address wider methodology issues relating to reading aloud, such as integrating discussion of language and content and vocabulary exploration. Finally, approximately a third of the participants in this study were taught by the author. Being a tutor on the program and having a vested interest in its success may have influenced her interpretation of the data. Nevertheless, the overall impression was that the course was impactful in ways intended. A final reflection underscores this impression:

> I can safely admit that my whole perception of reading aloud has been changed! I've always had problems when it comes to reading and felt that I need to work hard in order to read well. I realize that it takes time and practice. I am more comfortable and much more interested in reading aloud with expression. Since I am more aware of the different aspects to reading like word stress on content words, sentence stress etc, I feel a renewed confidence. I feel better equipped to read to my students. (Sharifah)

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Appendix A
Peer Evaluation Checklist: Audio Recording

Voice	• Is the voice quality clear and consistently audible throughout the story?
	• Does the narrator sound natural?
Pronunciation	• Are the articulation and pronunciation clear?
	• Are there words / sounds that are incorrectly enunciated? Give specific examples.
Pacing	• Does the narrator speak too fast or too slow in some parts?
	• Does the narrator engage the listener by using appropriate rhythm and pausing?
Tone	• Is there good modulation of tone to express feelings or emotions?

Appendix B
Reflection Questions

Audio Recording

1. What have you learned about your oral skills in the process of narrating and recording your story?
2. What did you do to improve the narration of your story to engage the audience?

End of Course

Give examples of three things you learned or practiced on the course that you particularly hope to use when you start teaching. Explain why you have chosen these items.

Asian Professional Discourse Communities: Pedagogical Focus on Speech Forms for Oral Performance

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to introduce four areas of pedagogical importance for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in terms of training for oral performances. These are: 1) transitional phrases 2) opening / closing gambits 3) strategic competence in dynamic speech events and 4) academic and formulaic lexical phrases. These four areas were selected after comparing discrete features of both effective and less effective English performances by non-native English-speaking medical professionals observed at international medical conferences held in Asia. The results of this field study suggest that specialist terminology is not an area that demands explicit pedagogical addressing and that absolute formal accuracy in English speech is not a decisive factor in performance efficacy for professionals within the Asian region. The resulting suggestions should help ESP teachers prioritize lesson contents to enable learners to deliver more effective oral performances within their respective professional and academic discourse communities.

Background

Over the past two decades it has become increasingly widely accepted among ESP researchers that two of the salient features that distinguish ESP from General English are that 1) ESP pedagogy should be based upon perceived learner needs (Belcher 2004; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, Flowerdew, 2012;) and 2) ESP research should be particularly genre-driven (Hyland 2004; Paltridge 2001; Swales 1990). Syllabi and curricula based upon these two features form the basis of a sound ESP pedagogy. As Belcher (2009) and Paltridge (2009) have argued, ESP research and classroom pedagogy are fundamentally interwoven.

The pedagogical importance of an awareness of discursive modes in academic conference English and its central role in helping foster entry to, or participation in, a given professional discourse community is supported by Shalom (2002). Webber (2002) highlighted the importance of the strategic management of post-presentation discussion (and, like this paper, uses medical English as a model). Webber (2005) compared written medical research articles with a spoken conference corpus and noted how discourse markers in particular mark the interactive nature of the spoken versions. Mauranen (2012) also emphasized the need for explicit discourse markers and cohesion in real-time speech, as well as the importance of managing dynamic question and answer sessions.

Rowley-Jolivet (2012) has noted functional features of spoken commentary in text slides in scientific conference presentations, noting in particular the distinct differences between the written text and the accompanying commentary. Heino, Tervonen, & Tommola (2002) likewise emphasized the superstructural features needed to transform a research article into an effective verbal presentation. Thompson (2002) discussed the importance of creating a narrative flow in academic presentations as a manifestation of the interpersonal function of language. All of these studies parallel and support the concerns and emphases presented in this paper as well as indicate the need for a greater pedagogical response to meet the needs of academic conference speakers.

This current discussion reflects these basic considerations. A survey conducted with 56 doctors practicing in a Japanese university hospital (Guest, 2013) indicated that Japanese doctors considered their professional English priorities to be threefold: 1) to maintain international liaisons in medical practice and research, 2) to be able to both read and write for academic publications, and 3) to perform successfully at international medical conferences. In this paper, the third of these priorities, English performance at international medical conferences, has been used to serve as a benchmark for developing suggestions regarding pedagogical priorities for both practicing physicians and medical students. The purpose of this study is to identify those speech form features of effective presentations that can or should be later applied pedagogically.

Although the immediate research focus is limited to the field of medicine and the specific genre of conference English (which includes presentations, poster sessions, participation in symposia, and social interactions at related conference functions), it is believed that results obtained here can also easily be applied to other academic professions that prioritize performance at international conferences.

Furthermore, although the research focus was initially limited to a survey and interviews of Japanese doctors in order to address the cause and nature of performance anxieties (see Guest, 2013), it was subsequently expanded to include the conference performance features of other Asian, non-native English speaking physicians since 1) it was assumed that they faced many of the same difficulties that Japanese doctors faced, and 2) it might be determined to some extent if features were Japan-specific or more widely applicable to the East Asian region. Therefore, it is believed that the application of these research observations into ESP classroom pedagogy may have implications for the entire Asian region and not merely Japan.

Methods

In order to gather qualitative data, the researcher attended 147 presentations given by non-native English speaking Asia-based medical professionals at five international medical conferences (three in Japan, one in South Korea, and one in Thailand). The researcher also observed 21 poster session discussions (6 of in which the researcher participated actively and made notes after), 13 debate-style symposia, and a small number of conference-related interactional functions. Of the 147 presentations attended, 88 were performed by Japanese speakers. The remaining 59 presenters came from South Korea (19), Thailand (10), Taiwan (9), China (8), Vietnam (8), and Indonesia (5), nations in which English holds no official status. The immediate research goal was to distinguish the salient characteristics of speech forms used by more effective performers from those of the less effective ones. During the static speech events (presentations, symposia) notes were taken by the researcher to initially grade (from 1 to 5, with 1 representing *poor* and 5 being *excellent*) overall efficacy based primarily upon the following criteria:

1) Was the speaker able to effectively communicate the points he / she was intending to convey? The inherent quality, innovation, or novelty of the scientific research was not the concern here. Only if the researcher was able to understand what the presenter intended to convey could it be considered effective. This did not mean that the researcher had to fully understand the internal mechanisms of the medical research being presented, but to understand cohesion and rhetorical moves, for example, that Result X was being compared to Result Y, adversatively, or that Procedures A and B exist in a causal, sequential relationship. This criterion corresponds to Lewis' (2003) notion of "retention" as being one of the four main indicators of presentation efficacy (the others being rapport, message, and words / images).

2) Did the performance hold the attention or interest of fellow professionals who comprised the audience? If a large number of audience members were sleeping, texting or viewing cell phones, perusing programs, or otherwise engaged in inattentive behavior, one could immediately assume the non-efficacy of the presentation. Since other factors could account for individual inattentiveness (such as mistaken topical expectations or suitability), it was the general audience response that was observed. This corresponds to Lewis' (2003) notion of presentation "rapport," referring to visible feedback that the audience provides.

3) Was the presenter able to successfully manage interactions in the follow-up question and answer sessions, the dynamic aspect of the presentation speech event? Were queries addressed and resolved? Was the Q&A session robust and illuminating? These criteria were also applied to poster session management.

Although these criteria may be considered somewhat subjective, evaluating the efficacy of dynamic speech events by more "objective" means, is somewhat elusive. Rendle-Short (2006) noted that while academic presentations are essentially monologic, there remains an interactive relation with the collective audience who are "co-authors of talk-in-interaction" (p. 10) wherein the audience should be taking "a particular positional configuration" (p. 9) which includes "being attentive, yet not talking" (p. 9). Eliciting appropriate audience response, thus, may be considered an indicator of presentation efficacy, although it must be noted that Rendle-Short's focus was upon academic presentation analysis, and not evaluation.

During the various conference speech events, notes were taken to highlight the specific features that marked presentations, symposia, or poster session discussions as effective or less effective performances. After judgments were made regarding the relative efficacy of the speakers, speech forms and features common to both more and less effective performances were noted, and their frequencies tabulated. For example, if a particular conclusion section was judged to be highly effective, the researcher made note of any speech features that aided efficacy, such as impactful transitional phrases, the ability to elaborate on presentation slide details, and the ability to deploy succinct phrases suited to the medical discourse community. Likewise, the inability to do so among less effective performers was also duly noted.

Each of the items noted in the results section (below), or at least a slight formal variation thereof, was noted at least five times during the speech events of effective communicators, with at least three of the speakers originating from different first-language sources. The country of origin of each speaker was noted to rule out potential claims of first-language influence, as well as to mark the form as being common to the Asian region as a whole.

Since 90% of the presentations attended were parallel sessions in which attendees could choose from a large number of concurrent presentations divided into minute professional

specialties, variables that are often used to measure presentation efficacy, such as suitability of topic to audience, were not addressed in this study. Nor were most kinetic features, such as the visual quality of the slides, body language, gestures, or facial expressions addressed, although it was noted that intonation was influenced by the choice of language forms. Therefore, the study did not attempt to represent a holistic overview or evaluation of oral presentation skills in general but rather centered upon the language forms employed by the speakers.

The resulting tabulations are not intended to represent a spoken corpus prepared for statistical analysis. Rather, common features and patterns, as opposed to specific tokens or utterances, have been noted for relative frequency. Thus, if the common speaking features of effective communicators are noted and categorized, it is believed that these may ultimately serve to inform future ESP pedagogy. This, then, forms the central purpose of both the original research and this paper.

Results

After compiling and itemizing all the handwritten notes taken from the international conference performances, the researcher was able to identify four speech components that regularly marked effective performances and negatively marked ineffective performances. Two further salient observations were also made regarding non-factors in terms of efficacy. Each of these is listed below in turn, including authentic samples and commonly noted illustrative speech patterns noted from the conferences. It should be noted that there were occasionally slight variations in the verbatim form (such as dropped articles or plurals), with the essential form presented below.

Effective Usage of Transitional Phrases / Discourse Markers

This first measure of efficacy pertains to presentations, symposia, and the management of poster sessions. It was noted that effective speakers utilized a wide range of transitional phrases in performance, with the phrase chosen suited to the function that the speaker wished to express. Among the most common effectively used transitional phrases and markers were:

Following this / that . . .
Let me expand on that . . .
Looking at this in more detail . . .
Getting back to our main point . . .
Okay, so where does that leave us?
As for x,
Additionally / furthermore,
What we learned / found out / don't understand is . . .

Less effective presenters relied almost wholly upon more general connectives, such as *but, then, so, next*, and *and / also*. These were often used as all-purpose connectors with little or no relation to the context in which they were deployed, and without consideration for the actual rhetorical functions implied by the terms.

The more transitional phrases were poorly chosen or appeared ill-considered the greater was the effect of dulling the impact of the speech, nullifying attempts to express cause-effect, elaboration, itemization, or sequential relationships. It was also noted that a lack of versatility in using transitional phrases also had a negative impact on the intonation of the speaker, resulting in a decreased usage of speech dynamics, such as varied pacing and altering the force or intensity of speech (determining the nature of this relationship is an area that suggests further

research but is beyond the immediate scope of this paper).

Six further sub-categories of transitional phrases that were frequently noted as aiding communicative efficacy were identified. These were:

Elaborating / emphasizing
It is important to take note of / consider . . .
The most important point to consider is . . .
What I'd particularly like to point out / emphasize is . . .

Clarifying / defining
. . . that is,
. . . which means,
. . . such as x,
In brief,
Interestingly,
In particular,

Especially was negatively marked as being overused, often employed as a filler without regard to the relationship with the surrounding text, and often ineffective.

Explaining methods
While exposing x / during exposure
For this reason…
The question here is . . .
Initially,
By / in doing so,
Therefore, our aim was to x.
We have followed this protocol.
We explored the x hypothesis. What is the x hypothesis?
So, how did we start / proceed?

Explaining results
Basically,
Despite,
To our surprise,
As a result,
Here are the indicators of X.
So what is the mechanism?
The first possible reason is x.
If x then y.

Anyway was negatively marked as being overused and ineffective.

Referencing (both anaphoric and cataphoric)
As I said / mentioned earlier
As shown previously
If you recall / I earlier noted / said that . . .

Advancing or proceeding to the following section
OK, let's move on to x
Consequently,
Subsequently,

Next was negatively marked as being overused and ineffective.

Speech Event Opening and Closing Gambits

A second area that distinguished effective from less effective performers was the choices of both opening and closing gambits. Less effective performers tended to state their names and affiliations followed by simply reading the titles of their presentations as written on the slides or poster using very static, formalized formulas ("Good morning, My name is x. I work at y. My topic is z. Now I'll start."). Subsequent sections were typically introduced using only the title term of that particular section ("Methods." "Summary." "Conclusion.").

More effective presenters, on the other hand, tended to start with a brief greeting and acknowledgment of thanks. This acknowledgment was often followed by proceeding directly into the presentation topic. This was particularly true of the short presentation parallel sessions, which constituted over ninety percent of the total presentations performed at these conferences. Some common and effective examples noted were:

Thank you Mr. / Ms. Chairman and good morning / afternoon colleagues.
For two years now at x hospital / university, we have been investigating . . .
As you know . . .
It is often believed that . . .
It is well-known that . . .
Recently our institution introduced . . .

Beginning the speech event with a rhetorical research question or surprising conclusion also proved to be an effective strategy:

Why has there been an increase in the number of incidences of x in recent years?
What is the difference between x and y? More to the point, why are they different?
How should we approach the problem of x?
It may be that the main cause of x is not y but in fact z.
We have discovered a new relationship between x and y.

When introducing research protocols or methods, the term *methods* was not always used by effective speakers. In the six noted effective examples listed below, only the first actually uses the term:

First, let me go over our research methods.
The purpose of this study was to . . .
First of all we have / had to consider x.
In order to find out why x occurs,
We'll focus on the question why.
Because it is important to identify x, we . . .

Effective speakers did not always provide formal outlines at the outset but rather tended to frame their emphases as follows:

Today, I'd like to go over x and y.
Today I'd like to focus upon x.
Let me talk about x.
This is how I will be proceeding today.
I'd like to share x with you.

For the introduction of summaries and conclusions, personalized forms such as the following were used effectively in closing sections:

Before ending my presentation, I'd like to . . .
This is the last slide so I'd like to conclude my talk by saying / noting . . .
In conclusion, we feel / believe . . .
So here's a summary of our findings.

Utilizing terms other than *summary* and / or *conclusion* also marked effective performances:

These outcomes / objectives . . .

The following rhetorical questions and cleft structures were also employed effectively in framing closing statements:

Okay. So, what have we discovered / learned?
So, the lesson we learned from this is . . .
So, what we can conclude is . . .
What I can say from my study is . . .
So this is just one example of x.

Deploying Strategic Competence in Dynamic Speech Events

Question and answer sessions are one of the most anxiety-inducing aspects of any conference for professionals whose first language is not English (Guest, 2013). This pertains not only to the interactions typically occurring at the end of formal presentations, but also to the management of interactive poster sessions and open-forum symposia. It was observed that performers deemed less effective suffered the greatest number of total communicative breakdowns in such sessions as they were attempting to manage non-scripted, real-time English.

More effective speakers, it was noted, did not so much produce formulaic expressions as utilize those expressions to employ management strategies, a skill widely known as strategic competence. As it is expected that non-native English speakers might often have to resort to repair / negotiation, or deal with vague or imprecise language, the ability to deploy such strategies proved very effective. Five such strategic categories were identified.

Clarification

So what exactly is your question?
Could you summarize your point / question, please?
What exactly do you mean by x?
Sorry, have I considered *what*? (when a single key word had not been understood)
So could you state your main point or question in one short sentence, please?
So, in short, you're asking / saying . . .
If I understand your question correctly . . .
Do you mean x (or y)?

Avoidance

If you contact me after I can give you more information.
If you'd like more detail I'd be happy to talk with you later.
Perhaps Professor X can say something more about this.
Well, what do _you_ think? (returning the question to the questioner)
Do _you_ have any ideas / opinions on that?

Thanking / appeasement

Thank you for your comment. We'll certainly take that into consideration.
Thank you for your suggestion.
That's a very interesting point.
As you suggest . . .
That's a good question.
I'm glad you asked that question.

Admission of fault or weakness

Sorry, we didn't research that.
That's interesting. We hadn't thought of that.
That's true. We didn't consider that. Thank you.

Reformulation / confirmation

I mean . . . (used as an elaborator)
What I am saying is x.
Let me explain this another way.
Have I answered / understood your question (correctly)?

Formulaic Phrases Related to the Professional / Academic Discourse Community

One feature that readily and consistently distinguished effective from less effective performers was the ability of the former to use formulaic chunks that, while not specifically medical terminology, are nonetheless indicative of academic and professional discourse, particularly in formal speech events. Such formulaic expressions are also hallmarks of written professional and academic discourse (Biber, 2009; Ellis, Simpson-Vlach, & Maynard, 2008; Gledhill, 2011). These formulaic expressions were particularly frequent when the speakers were describing 1) methods, hypotheses and descriptions, and 2) results, discussions, summaries and conclusions. The examples that were frequently noted, listed below with the formulaic phrases underlined, occurred largely within two sections.

Formulaic expressions associated with methods, hypotheses, and descriptions

In the <u>initial trials</u> we <u>investigated</u> x.
In order to <u>determine</u> x we <u>carried out / conducted</u> y.
To <u>prevent x from occurring</u>,
<u>At the time of x</u>,
<u>By reducing</u> the pressure on y,
Z <u>consists of</u> x factors and y factors.
This is the most important factor <u>in determining</u> x.
The visual disturbance was <u>localized</u>.
Usually we expose the tumor <u>within a range of</u> x (and y).
We <u>performed a comparative analysis</u>.
. . . induced by <u>the distribution of</u> x.
X is <u>characteristic of</u> y.
<u>Considering / given</u> the complex state of the patient,
According to a <u>number of risk factors</u>,
This chart <u>demonstrates</u> that . . .
The <u>mechanism occurs as follows</u>.

Formulaic expressions associated with results, discussion, summaries, and conclusions

There is a <u>significant / slight degree of correlation between</u> x and y.
Our database also <u>indicates the probability of</u> x.
Perhaps the <u>most important / significant factor</u> is x.
This <u>excluded</u> any other <u>possible findings</u>.
<u>Essentially</u>, there is no difference between these two groups <u>in terms of outcomes</u>,
<u>Judging from</u> x,
<u>On the basis</u> of x,
From this relationship, it <u>can be estimated that</u>,
There is <u>insufficient evidence to say / regarding</u> x.
X <u>produced no statistically significant difference</u>.
. . . <u>due to the prevalence</u> of x.
A <u>similar finding</u> was observed in x.
X is <u>associated with</u> y, <u>particularly when z occurs</u>.
We found that x was <u>inversely correlated to</u> y.
These <u>findings suggest</u> that x…
The <u>data generated</u> by x <u>indicates a high intake / incidence of</u> y.
To <u>prevent the recurrence</u> of x, y is <u>effective</u>.
X <u>inhibited the production</u> of y.
. . . <u>resulting in long / short-term / positive outcomes</u>
If we <u>follow up long-term</u>, the chances of <u>recurrence</u> . . .
<u>Post-operative findings indicated</u> x.
A <u>substantial number of</u> x's were located.

Spoken English Marked as an Asian Professional Lingua Franca

One salient observation made was the lack of a distinct correlation between polished grammatical accuracy and actual performance efficacy. Performers deemed effective often used forms that would not be considered canonical or "correct" by formal Anglo-American standards of English, but this in no way impeded the speaker's ability to convey meaning.

Below are several such collected examples, with an archetypical utterance displayed on the left and the canonical form indicated in parentheses on the right. Each of these patterns was

uttered by a minimum of five effective presenters, presenters who one could deem fluent in English, and who originated from at least three different first-language backgrounds (again, to rule out the possibility of first language influence or interference). It is believed that the frequency with which these forms were uttered, and the fact that they had no negative impact on the conveyance of expression or meaning, may mark these as representative of English used as a non-standard, localized Asian English as a Lingua Franca (see, for example, Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Among the collected examples of possible ELF patterns were:
    We placed (the) clamp on (the) x.
    Three colonoscopy(ies) were performed during two separate period(s).
    I'd like to show you some (a few) case(s).
    We can well (easily / clearly) observe x.
    There was so (a very) significant difference.
    Why (The reason) we chose x is because . . .
    How to (can / should we do) x?
    First, I (will) present x.
    We want to ask why is this (this is) so.
    How should we do (it)?
    Next I (will) show you.
    Even (though) we had prepared thoroughly.
    Because of (there were) no symptom(s) . . .
    It is not clear about the background of x. (The background of x is not clear)
    In (Using) this technique . . .

Use of Specialist Terminology

During the observations, almost no problematic issues involving the use of professional terminology in any of the speech events were noted. Even the performers marked as less effective displayed full control over the dense, narrow, medical terms used within their specialized research fields.

Evidently, the performers had acquired and absorbed this terminology at some earlier point, with previous research indicating that these items are acquired more as a result of immediate need and regular in-service usage within the specific field rather than prior explicit teaching in ESP classes (Guest, 2013; Wray, 2002) and not via explicit pre-teaching (Spack, 1988).

Conclusions

By comparing the speech form features of effective English-language performers with those of less effective ones at Asia-based international medical conferences, the researcher was able to identify four main areas in which a qualitative difference was salient. Less effective performers were held back by an apparently limited knowledge and / or deployment of transitional phrases, overly formalized and regimented opening and closing gambits, a lack of ability to manage breakdown and repair in open-ended interactions, and a lack of knowledge or ability to deploy formulaic chunks or set phrases common to the medical discourse community. It should once again be noted that this study focused upon presentation speech forms, and not the wider, more kinetic, aspects of oral presentations.

It was also noted that dense and narrow specialist terms did not pose difficulty for even the least effective performers, suggesting that these terms need not be considered a pedagogical priority for ESP teachers. Finally, it was noted that a number of surface "errors" did not impede the

performance of many of the effective performers, but in fact marked their speech as being representative of a non-standard, Asian variety of English. However, it should be emphasized that acceptability of such forms would be limited only to the mode of speech and not written English.

The geographical limitations of this study beg the question as to what degree some of the problems and forms mentioned are Asia-specific or whether they are typical for any English as a second / foreign language learner. It also raises the question as to what degree, if any, the areas suggested in the research have already been incorporated into ESP teaching and learning. More specifically, the relationship between the choice of transition marker and resultant changes in intonation and pacing would benefit from a more detailed analysis.

Implications for ESP Teachers

Discovering the English learning needs of a target group, a hallmark of ESP teaching, can be achieved by looking at actual in-service performance, in this case by noting the presentation performance of physicians at international medical conferences. By comparing the relevant performance aspects of less effective and more effective performers, teachers can gain a sense of what aspects of performance for novice members of these professional and academic discourse communities need to be addressed or upgraded.

Based on the research observations and findings from this study, it is believed that ESP teachers should address these aspects of performance more thoroughly in Asian ESP classrooms, perhaps even explicitly including them in the course syllabus.

Although the professional interactions observed in this study all took place within medical conference contexts, there is no reason to believe that similar features and strategies would not be applicable to other Asian academic and professional discourse communities, particularly by practitioners from countries in which English does not hold any official status.

The findings also indicate that attaining complete accuracy according to Anglo-American standards of English should not be prioritized as a classroom goal, at least in terms of speech, and suggest that both teachers and learners in the region should be both aware and accepting of non-standard forms of English that reflect the innate capacity of the English language utilized across the region as a lingua franca.

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Teaching Practice

Exchange Classes:
A Strategy for Enhancing Student
Communicative Competence and Confidence

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Abstract

Motivating EFL students to improve their language ability is not an easy task. Many times, institutional requirements, classroom settings and students' individual needs do not match, so students have difficulty in learning English and lose their motivation. This action research study examines how domestic-international exchange classes can be used as an effective, interactive strategy which can contribute to improving student attitude and motivation to learn by personalizing the learning process and developing communicative competence. Findings show that students' self-perceived communicative skills and confidence improved through regular conversation activities in exchange classes. The study concludes with suggestions for implementing a similar approach in a different environment and for further research.

Trying to promote and sustain a motivating environment in the language classroom has become a challenging task in an age where instant access to information seems to have created a wider gap than ever between the different needs of learners / users of information. As Bahous, Bacha, and Nabhani (2011) have noted, research in second language motivation by authors such as Dornyei (2001) and Williams (1994) showed the need for a more practical education, through identifying and analyzing classroom specific goals. However, nowadays these goals, more often than not, fail to coincide with the institutional curriculum targets and are so diverse that one can hardly refer to them as classroom goals.

This action research study took place at a private international college in Japan, where the English program goals for standard-track students are to raise students' general proficiency in English so that they may communicate with confidence in a range of real-world contexts, such as interacting with faculty, staff, and students on campus; traveling for work or pleasure; or using English for daily communication and transactions in the workplace. All students whose TOEFL score at placement in their first college year is less than 500 are required to take standard track English courses. The Intermediate English (third level in the standard track) course syllabus states the following as its objectives in terms of student communication ability by the end of the course:

Listening:
1. Make logical inferences when listening to English;
2. Use a range of listening strategies.

Speaking:
1. Show understanding of contextual details;
2. Plan responses to anticipated questions in an interview;
3. Ask clarification questions in a group discussion;
4. Use polite language to agree and disagree.

In reality, on campus, the main language for communication with most of the faculty, staff, and other students is Japanese. Similarly, according to a survey conducted in 2012, few students who take subject classes in English use English in subject classes because they do not have the confidence to do so (no information is available as to how many of the graduates use English at the workplace). As a result, the curriculum goals become unrealistic and irrelevant; and language teachers have to find ways to motivate their students within the constraints of the institutional requirements.

Based on the Dornyei and Csizer (1998) survey of motivational strategies, there are a number of efficient strategies that can be used in the classroom. Among these are "increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence, make the language classes interesting, promote learner autonomy, [and] personalize the learning process" (p. 215). The present study explores how participating in interactive domestic-international exchange classes has contributed to personalizing the learning process and to increasing students' self-confidence, as well as to enhancing communicative competence. Data show student reactions to this experience and their reflections on it, as well as changes in the students' confidence and motivation. The conclusion will offer suggestions for implementing a similar approach in a different environment.

Literature Review

Discussing the role of interaction in second language learning, Lightbown and Spada (1999) quote researchers who argue that conversational interaction is essential for second language acquisition. Among these, Long and Porter (1985) maintain that learners do not require simplified language only, but also a chance to interact with other speakers. Vygotskyan theory supporters like Lantolf (1994) also claim that conversational interaction with more advanced speakers improves the linguistic knowledge of second language learners.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) argue further that experiencing success when communicating in the target language contributes to positive motivation, which in turn leads to greater success. Moreover, they mention that learners at similar levels cannot contribute to error correction. According to Lynch (1996), when teaching speaking in the language classroom, practice and feedback are imperative for quick progress; and compared to activities that involve the class as a whole, group or pair work maximizes the opportunity to speak and reduces the psychological burden of public performance.

In the regular language classroom, the main factor driving student motivation seems to be extrinsic in nature (students' main goal is to get good scores or pass the class for credits). Researchers such as Burden (2004) found that it is important for students to be aware that using the target language is more than an academic goal; it is a tool for more successful communication. Ghaith (2003) also suggests that seeing the functional gains of learning a

language contributes to an increase in learner motivation even when the language is not extensively used in the community.

Based on such research, this study estimates that engaging in dialogue with more advanced or more confident speakers of the target language can provide opportunities for language use and a chance to obtain peer feedback. This, in turn, may contribute to enhancing student confidence and motivation. The study will report on an innovative practice that can lead to both more effective communication and better self-perception in terms of language ability and confidence to use the language, which in turn can have a positive impact on student motivation.

Objectives and Method

Aim

The main objective of the study was to develop and maintain a motivational language classroom environment and to assess learning gains related to it. In order to achieve this goal, a task was created that aimed at improving student communicative ability and confidence through regular topic-related group discussions and presentations. The study focuses on the following research question: Did self-perceived communicative skills and confidence improve through regular conversation / discussion activities in the exchange classes?

Research Context

The research was conducted at an international university in western Japan. The student body comprises approximately 53% domestic students and 47% international students. The institution's primary educational goal is to improve Japanese students' communication skills and to promote intercultural understanding and communication.

Students at this university take a placement TOEFL test in their first semester and are divided into four English language levels according to their scores. They then take six 95-minute English language classes weekly. Each 14-week semester has two quarters, with a week-long quarter break. Four of the mandatory language classes focus on improving speaking, listening, and writing skills. In the intermediate-level classes (requiring placement TOEFL scores between 460 and 480 or that all previous class levels have been completed), students take eight speaking tests (six conversations, one interview, and one group presentation) per semester. Additionally, they take eight listening tests and write three paragraphs and one essay.

Results of a pre-semester survey show that, at the beginning of the semester, all students aim to become better communicators in English. However, once classes start, students express reluctance to talk to each other in English because they do not see the relevance of using English to communicate with fellow Japanese students. When they do use English in class, it is mainly small talk. For this reason, weekly exchange classes were organized. English language learners and international students learning Japanese studied together in the same room for 95 minutes per week, accompanied by one English and one Japanese language teacher. Half of the time in the exchange class students and teachers used English for all communication; in the other half, everybody used Japanese.

Participants

The participants in this study were two teachers (one Japanese language and one English language teacher), 21 international students in an Intermediate Japanese class, and 18 Japanese students in an Intermediate English class who all participated in 10 exchange classes. The researcher met the 18 Japanese students in English class three additional times per week for one

semester. This study is based on the feedback from these 18 Japanese students. In terms of language ability of study participants, the university requires all international students to submit language proficiency documentation that shows a TOEFL score higher than 500 on the paper-based test or equivalent. The domestic students' TOEFL scores ranged between 367 and 480 at the end of the semester, the average being 413.

Classroom Methodology

In the first quarter, the Japanese students were required to find English audio material on any topic of interest, to listen to it, and to fill out a worksheet that they brought to the exchange class held every Friday (see Appendix). The worksheet was designed by the instructor and comprised three sections: a summary of the audio material, the student's opinion regarding the topic of the material, and three discussion questions related to the topic. During the exchange class, students sat in mixed groups of four to five students; and they had 10 minutes to cover the three sections in order, with a focus on the discussion part. For this conversation part, students asked the questions they had prepared in advance to all members of their group and tried to maintain the conversation by adding comments or follow-up questions. After the 10 minutes, students created new groups. The task was repeated three to four times. The two language instructors monitored each group and occasionally joined the conversation by listening or asking questions. The second round of conversations was recorded, and all worksheets were collected at the end of each exchange class.

In line with the curriculum requirement, the type of discourse changed in the second quarter from discussion to presentation and from asking questions to answering questions from the group. Students were encouraged to choose topics requiring them to express an opinion and support it with arguments. This task led to choosing more challenging material compared to the first quarter, in terms of both language and content.

Research Conducted

A pre-semester survey, two post-activity surveys (at the end of each quarter), and a mid-semester class reflection session were conducted for research purposes. The pre-semester survey asked questions related to student attitude and confidence towards communicating in English. On the two post-activity surveys, questions were asked related to the amount of time spent preparing for the exchange classes, the perceived difficulty of tasks, and areas in which students felt they had made progress. The mid-semester class reflection was a round table whole-class discussion conducted in both English and Japanese, to allow students to feel comfortable expressing their opinion.

Findings

First Quarter

Student goals and preparation. According to results from the pre-semester survey, 10 (58.8%) of the 17 subjects who took the survey hoped to improve their English speaking skills, and 7 (41.2%) wanted to improve their English listening skills the most in the new semester. Other answer options were: reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. Students were allowed to choose as many options as they considered necessary.

On the first-quarter post-activity survey, 8 (44.4%) of the 18 students responding answered that they had spent more than 1 hour weekly preparing for exchange classes, while 7 students (38.9%) selected 30 minutes to 1 hour and 3 students (16.7%) chose less than 30 minutes.

Student perceptions of task difficulty. In relation to the tasks students were assigned for the exchange class, 13 students (72.2%) answered that listening to the audio material was not too difficult, while 4 (22.2%) found it difficult, and 1 (5.6%) thought it was extremely difficult. This result can be attributed to the fact that students were allowed to choose their own material at the level of difficulty they deemed most appropriate for themselves. The instructor introduced a variety of resources previous to the beginning of the task, including listening material available on the Internet, and students were encouraged to share information related to other possible resources.

In regard to the item "having the conversation / discussion" during exchange classes, only six students (33.3% of the class total) thought it was not too difficult while nine students (50%) thought it was difficult and two students (11.1%) found it to be extremely difficult. Overall, students found creating discussion questions to be the easiest task of all. To sum up, although most students did not seem to experience much trouble listening to English and they managed to make questions to start the conversation, about 60% found it difficult to have a group conversation based on these materials.

Student perceptions of improved performance. At the same time, however, more than half of students answered that they had made either big (seven students, or 38.9%) or great (four students, or 22.2%) improvement in the listening area and a noted a similar improvement in the conversation / discussion area, eight students (44.4%) citing a big improvement and three (16.7%) a great improvement.

Furthermore, on the question "Overall, which of the following skills do you think you have improved due to exchange class activities?", 15 students (83.3%) answered they had improved their speaking skills due to the exchange class activities, followed by 10 (55.6%) who said that they had improved their listening skills.

Finally, regarding change in other skills necessary for communication, most students thought they had made big or great improvement in the areas of body language (12 students or 66.7%), voice volume (11 students, or 61.1%), and eye contact (10 students, or 55.6%).

Second Quarter

Student perceptions of difficulty. Based on the second quarter post-activity survey, only 5 (29.4%) of the 17 respondents continued to say that listening to the materials was not too difficult; while the majority (12 students, or 70.6%) believed the material was difficult or extremely difficult. In regard to delivering the presentation, only four students (23.6%) thought that the task was not difficult for them, while the others found it difficult or extremely difficult. The highest number of students, six (35.3%), selected extremely difficult for this task compared to all other tasks. Answering questions after the presentation was challenging for nine (52.9%) of students.

Student perceptions of improved performance. The areas in which students felt they had made the greatest progress were doing a presentation and listening. In presentation, six (35.3%) selected big improvement, while seven (41.2%) chose great improvement. In listening, 7 (41.2%) selected big improvement, and six (35.3%) indicated great improvement. At the same time, 12 (70.6%) answered they had made a big improvement in answering questions after the presentation, and 3 (17.6%) said they had made great improvement in the same area.

On the survey's multiple-answer-type question, 15 students (88.2%) answered they had improved their speaking skills, and 8 (47.1%) thought they had developed listening skills due to

the exchange class activities in the second quarter. Overall, 15 (88.2%) thought that the exchange classes had helped them improve not only English speaking and listening skills, but also communication skills in general.

Student perceptions of increased confidence over the semester. In relation to the second part of the research question about student confidence, on the pre-semester survey 5 (29.4%) of 17 students chose grammar and vocabulary as the skill they were most confident with, 4 (23.5%) chose speaking, and 2 (11.8%) chose listening. At the same time, 11 (64.7%) students reported themselves as confident to speak in English in a classroom setting and 9 (52.9%) reported the same confidence in an informal conversation in English outside of the classroom.

Although the students already reported quite a bit of confidence in the pre-semester survey, their level of confidence grew during the semester. On the first-quarter survey, 14 (82.4%) students out of 17 felt their overall level of confidence had somehow improved (a little improvement, 6 students, or 35.3%; big improvement, 6 students, 35.3%; and great improvement, 2 students, or 11.8%). On the second-quarter survey 15 (88.2%) out of 17 students answered that their confidence level had increased (a little improvement, 7 students, or 41.2%; big improvement, 5 students, or 29.4%; and great improvement, 3 students, or 17.6%).

Summary of Findings

To sum up, survey results suggest that the exchange classes promoted increases in both self-perceived communication skills and confidence of study subjects. It is also worth noting that during the reflection session several domestic students reported meeting with the exchange class international students outside of the classroom for study or for socializing, and they also took the initiative to organize an exchange class party which students from both groups attended.

Discussion

This study suggests that the exchange classes are an effective tool for increasing student motivation through developing communicative ability and confidence. Asking students to choose their topic and to control the conversation gave them a chance to make learning and content relevant and contributed to increasing confidence, as well as to enhancing communicative and interpersonal skills.

Survey results show that a majority of students report improvement in communication skills and confidence to communicate. Motivating students should be one of the priorities of the language classroom; and exchange classes are definitely both challenging and motivating, two factors that are essential for marked progress in language learning. This study supports the idea that, as Bahous et al. (2011) suggest, positive language learning experiences can have a big impact on the language learner's confidence and motivation.

Conclusion

Reflections

Although the international campus at this university seems to offer innumerable opportunities for language use, domestic students repeatedly complain about not having real chances or the confidence to interact in English with international students whose main interest is to master the Japanese language. Under such conditions, students stop seeing the benefit of taking English classes and gradually lose interest and motivation.

This study shows that there are ways to incorporate into the present curriculum communicative activities that can make the classroom content relevant and provide opportunities for communication practice while increasing student confidence and motivation. The exchange classes offered domestic students a chance to create a bridge between the all-Japanese-student classroom and the international campus and helped raise their overall confidence level.

Implications for Other Settings

Exchange classes are not difficult to organize (this project was designed and implemented by the two class instructors, without institutional support) and were received with immense enthusiasm by both domestic and international students. Exchange classes, as a formal setting where international students are required to use English for half of the class time, give non-native students the much-sought-for chance to practice and improve their own English skills. At other institutions that do not have the advantage of an international campus, the exchange classes could involve foreign students from other schools or professionals from the community. Online exchange opportunities are also possible.

Limitations of the Study and Suggested Further Research

In order to better determine the effectiveness of this approach, further research needs to analyze differences in gains between a control group, in which domestic students would perform the same task among themselves, and a treatment group, in which domestic and international students work together. Additionally, while students reported large gains in skills and confidence, follow-up interviews with participants might reveal whether these effects lasted after the end of the course. Finally, this study looked at domestic students' performance and attitude only. Collaborative research between the two instructors involved could have shed more light on the effectiveness of such an experiment for both domestic and international subjects. It would also be of interest to conduct a similar project with only domestic students with different language abilities and to compare the results with this study to see whether interaction in English with more advanced students who speak the same L1 produces similar outcomes in terms of learner confidence and motivation.

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Appendix
Exchange Class Handout

Your NAME: _____   Your class _____   Date_____

Group members' names: _____

Material title (if available):

Author:

Source:

Your SUMMARY (> 100 words). Underline 5 key words:

Your OPINION (> 100 words):

Your QUESTIONS for the group:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Teaching EFL Academic Writing Through I-Search

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Abstract

EFL (English as a Foreign Language) graduate students are prepared and expected to be able to write good EFL academic papers. However, previous research and preliminary observation revealed that EFL graduate students still experience difficulties in grammar rules, idea development, referencing skills, and rhetoric. Academic writing problems have become a major challenge for many EFL students of graduate schools in Indonesia. To help graduate students write academic papers in English, the I-Search approach was employed to teach them academic writing. The I-Search approach appeared to help students to select topics, develop ideas, and find concrete support.

Writing papers in English is a challenge for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, and constructing academic papers in English is even more challenging. In general, EFL students, including the EFL graduate students of the master's program of a major university in Indonesia, have similar problems in writing English academic papers: finding ideas, rhetoric, and language (Bloor & Bloor, 1993; Harjanto, 1999, 2001, 2012; Sa'Addedin, 1991). Despite student difficulties in writing academic papers in English, the master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) requires the students to attend the Academic Writing course in the first semester and to submit an academic paper about TEFL as the final project.

Considering that EFL academic writing proficiency is a very difficult skill for many EFL graduate students to master, the master's program in TEFL not only seeks to ensure that academic writing in English is intelligible, but that it is also accepted and, hopefully, acted upon. One of the teachers of the Academic Writing course attempted to motivate the students to write an academic paper by assigning an I-Search paper for their mid-semester project. This paper reports how the I-Search approach was integrated in the teaching of academic writing.

What Is I-Search?

Experiences in teaching English academic writing have shown that students undergo cyclical revision activities. This is in line with the idea that writing is not an instant skill but is gained through a process consisting of a series of sequenced stages (Clark, 2012). The I-Search approach is a process that includes four general parts: (1) selecting a topic (What I Already Know), (2) finding

information (What I Want To Find Out), (3) using information (The Search), and (4) developing a final product (What I Learned). The stages of the I-Search approach are parallel to the "planning, drafting, and revising" sequence of the writing process (Clark, 2012, p. 7). According to Macrorie (1988), an I-Search paper is an alternative to the traditional research paper. Instead of working with topics of others (e.g., the teacher's topics), students select their own topics and work on meaningful projects of their own. They focus on their personal needs. The students' personal voices, including their own experiences on a certain topic, are usually the topic of an I-Search paper. The topic that they choose to write about could be one that they know or have experienced but want more deeply to understand, so the topic should not always be one that they are thoroughly familiar with. To understand deeply about the topic, the students have to browse the Internet, read written resources, discuss it with their friends, and interview experts.

Why I-Search?

Considering students' difficulties in writing academic papers in English, teachers need to seek a teaching approach that may motivate the students to learn academic writing. Indeed, students entering graduate school are faced with a range of adjustments to the ways they are expected to write academic papers in English (Hyland, 2009). Adjusting their prior rules and expectations in academic writing to the new ones requires a process of experience and is not always easy to do. Many students of the master's program graduating from non-English departments may be worried when dealing with academic writing. As argued by Friedrich (2008, p. 1), "writing is hard work," and academic English writing is quite possibly very hard for EFL students. To lessen the feeling of alienation (Hyland, 2009) in learning English academic writing, EFL students' personal experiences should be well considered. Thus, before writing on a serious academic topic, students are required to write about their own topic. A model of teaching English academic papers which deals with a personal need and requires students to take an active role of inquiry is the I-Search approach to writing.

A criticism of I-Search projects is that the assignments may not help students think critically (Luther, 2006). However, for EFL students, I-Search projects could be beneficial. As previously described, most students taking Academic Writing, especially those graduating from non-English departments, could be classified as novices. Novice students of EFL need to write meaningful papers for themselves before writing for others. This is in line with Macrorie's argument (1988) that the key to I-Search is that students work on meaningful projects, i.e., papers about topics they want to know more deeply.

Course Context and Curriculum

The master's program in TEFL admits multidisciplinary undergraduates. The students' English writing proficiency levels varied from intermediate to upper intermediate; those graduating from the English department (i.e., college level) had studied how to write academic paragraphs and papers, while those graduating from non-English departments practiced much less systematically writing academic papers in English. As a result, by the time the 23 students took the Academic Writing course, they came with their insufficient English writing experience and competence. Considering the students' background of writing papers in English, the course was designed to help the students to be able to write academic papers in English, such as final papers for courses, papers for journals and seminars, and a master's thesis. The course met once a week for 14 weeks: seven meetings for the first half of the semester and seven for the second.

Implementation of the I-Search: Tasks and Instructions

The I-Search approach was not taught independently but integrated in the course of Academic Writing. The topics of the course were organized according to the syllabus, and an I-Search project was an integrated assignment in the first half of the semester. For seven meetings, the students learned theories of writing and practiced writing an I-Search paper.

In the first meeting, Part 1, What I Already Know, was introduced. The students started to learn how to find a topic from a broad theme (education). They explored topics which they might not be thoroughly familiar with but were interesting to them. To find a topic, the students were guided to think about something within the theme that they wanted to know more about. They were encouraged to search for ideas applicable to their lives in some way that they genuinely wanted to research. The guiding questions used to search for the topic were as follows:

1. Why is the issue important to my life?
2. What do I already know about my subject (theme / topic)?

In the second meeting, the students learned how to write a good academic paragraph as described by Oshima and Hogue (2006). They wrote a complete paragraph consisting of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Applying the structure of a paragraph, the students were assigned to write about the chosen I-Search topic (i.e., Part 2, What I Want To Find Out) outside of class. The students were also instructed to include reasons for writing about the chosen topic; they were ready to do this through using the guiding questions.

At the same time, in preparation for gathering the needed information, the students developed plans. In other words, in the third meeting, the students kept a journal of their research process, in addition to learning to write a good paragraph, containing values of unity, coherence, development, and completeness. In the classroom, the students learned and practiced writing a good paragraph, and outside the classroom they searched for sources by reading journals, books, and research reports and by browsing the Internet. They had to have a minimum of five written sources for their I-Search papers.

Part 3 of I-Search (The Search) was integrated in the fourth and fifth meetings. While learning to support a topic sentence with concrete details in the fourth meeting, the students searched for information. They learned to take notes from written sources to support their curiosity about their I-Search chosen topic and learned to quote and paraphrase from the original written texts.

In the fifth meeting, the students learned how to write a data commentary on the data displayed in a table, graph, or figure (Swales & Feak, 2009). The students wrote summary statements, highlighting statements, and discussions of implications. The exercises done in the classroom were practiced and reinforced outside the classroom. As homework, in addition to taking notes, the students were assigned to write a data commentary.

In the sixth and seventh meetings, the students learned to develop a paragraph into a paper (Arnaudet & Barrett, 1990). At the same time, they kept writing about The Search and practicing Part 4, What I Learned. Outside the classroom, the students were assigned to write paragraphs of What I Learned, including paragraphs reflecting upon the entire search experience. The What I Learned paragraphs could be about the process of searching or what they learned about the topic.

Results and Discussion

The theme of the I-Search papers was about education, which could be broadly divided into two topics: ELT and non-ELT. Examples of ELT topics were Translation in ELT, Learning English Vocabulary, and English Grammatical Errors; the non-ELT topics were Classroom Atmosphere to Enhance the Learning Quality, Edmodo (an online learning community) as Blended Learning, and The Effective Punishment: Types, Procedures, and Effects.

In general, the students' knowledge and experiences of the topics were written about well. The introduction to the topic was presented in Part 1 of the I-Search paper. Most of the students (18), were able to elaborate reasons for the topic with little difficulty; the rest (5) wrote a brief introduction with less clear reasons for choosing the topic. However, even those who might have experienced more difficulties in writing aspects of the topic wanted to know more than just how to write the background of the topic.

The topic and the controlling ideas of the I-Search paper were stated in the objective statements in Part 2. As with the introduction, 18 students did not have any difficulties in stating the objective of the I-Search paper. The following are examples of objective statements:

> What is the effective non-physical punishment I can use in my classroom?
>
> Can I teach English to the elementary and pre-intermediate EFL learners effectively by applying storytelling technique?
>
> What kind of classroom management techniques should be implied in my formal and informal classroom? What is the teacher's role in managing the classroom? How can I understand ideal classroom for students?

With such clear objective statements, the writers were able to develop a plan for their research. Some students wrote their plans of research with few details, while more students wrote their plans with the steps of research, such as reading books, browsing the Internet, and interviewing experts.

Five students, including two students who did not provide clear reasons for choosing the topic, wrote unclear objective statements, such as, (1) "I will briefly summarize some of the ways RPGs [role-playing games] have been effectively employed in language classroom at different levels" and (2) "What should adults do in order to give the best nutrition and stimulation?" Objective Statement 1 did not tell about the topic learned, including the reasons for learning about the topic. Objective Statement 2 did not express the writer's curiosity about the topic. These objective statements did not contain personal questions and interest and could not guide the writers to investigate the topic.

Discussion of the topic was much influenced by the objective statement, the plan of research, and the number of sources. A clear objective statement with a clear plan of research was usually followed with a deeper discussion of the topic searched. Students who discussed almost all of the aspects of the topic read at least five sources, students who discussed many aspects of the topic read three to five sources, and students who discussed few aspects of the topic read less than three sources.

The searched topic was presented with relevant concrete support taken from written sources, interviews with experts, or discussions with friends or teachers. Written sources mostly cited were books, followed by articles from the Internet. Journals and research reports were rarely cited. Usage of written sources was mostly done in paraphrases and quotations. Interviews with experts and discussions with friends and teachers were presented in quotations.

Regarding text citations, many students did it incorrectly and improperly. Twenty students experienced difficulties in citing written resources, although they felt that writing Part 3 was very easy. Incorrect citations could be related to (a) repetition of author's name for the same citation, (b) wrong writing of author's name and reference's title, (c) mistakes in the dates or pages (when necessary) of the source, or (d) date missing. The following are examples (errors shown in italics):

(a) Mamiq, in his book, explained that basically punishment is not for changing the characteristic of students but rather it focuses on the seen behavior which can be increased, reduced or modified (*Mamiq*, 2012).

(b) Stories are excellent opportunity for integrated skills practice including listening to stories which is based on "a positive attitude to not understanding everything" and "the skills of searching for meaning, predicting and guessing" (*Wright A. 1995. Storytelling with Children)*.

(c) Kamil (*2004*) said, "Cooperative or collaborative learning can be considered both a strategy and a social organization that fosters learning. Many effective approaches to strategy instruction feature having students work on comprehension-related activities in small groups or pairs."

(d) According to *Gardner*, . . . an intelligence includes the ability to relate and solve problems, create products or provide services that are valued within a culture or society.

Students who did not credit their sources and missed the dates and the pages of their written sources could be seen as plagiarizing. As was described by Hyland (2009), many students in this project seemed to experience difficulties in doing in-text citation.

Previous research (Harjanto, 1999, 2001, 2012) showed that serious problems in academic writing experienced by Indonesian students were idea development and rhetoric. In the case of idea development in this study, however, students might not have serious problems in developing their thesis / objective statements and topic sentences. The I-Search papers showed that the students developed their topic with relevant concrete support. Regarding rhetorical problems in this study, to some extent, most of them could be overcome. Such problems were partly solved because I-Search paper writing provided clear steps and text organization.

Both responses to a questionnaire (see Appendix) and Part 4 of the I-Search papers showed that most of the students thought that the I-Search approach was very helpful to develop ideas, present arguments, write standard academic papers, and review references. Almost 71% opined that they benefited greatly, almost 21% said they benefited moderately, and over 8% said they benefited slightly from writing I-Search paper exercises. None thought the exercises useless. Indeed, the

students thought that they spent their time in a highly valuable way writing I-Search papers. Although the quality of the I-Search papers varied, none of the students thought they had wasted time writing them.

Conclusion

To help the students write English academic papers, the I-Search approach was introduced and integrated in the teaching of the course, Academic Writing. I-Search exercises were supplements to Academic Writing topics, which were not changed but enriched by the I-Search assignments. The students learned theories of writing and practiced them in the I-Search paper writing done outside the classroom.

In general, the students positively responded to the I-Search exercises. To some extent, they could solve their academic writing problems in terms of topic selection, idea development, referencing skills, and rhetoric. Of these four skills in the teaching of academic writing, more serious attention should be addressed to referencing skills. Rhetorical and idea development problems related to critical thinking should be further carefully identified and solved as well. This is imperative, for academic writing requires that students think critically.

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Appendix
The Impact of I-Search on Academic Writing Skills

Indicate the extent or degree of agreement to the following statements by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

1. How do you feel about writing your own topic in your I-Search paper?
   ☐ Very easy
   ☐ Moderately easy
   ☐ Slightly easy
   ☐ Less easy
   ☐ Not at all easy

2. How do you feel about writing a topic you want to know more?
   ☐ Very easy
   ☐ Moderately easy
   ☐ Slightly easy
   ☐ Less easy
   ☐ Not at all easy

3. How helpful is the application of I-Search paper in developing your own ideas?
   ☐ Very helpful
   ☐ Moderately helpful
   ☐ Slightly helpful
   ☐ Less easy
   ☐ Not at all helpful

4. How helpful is the application of I-Search paper in synthesizing others' ideas to support your own idea?
   ☐ Very easy
   ☐ Moderately easy
   ☐ Slightly easy
   ☐ Less easy
   ☐ Not at all easy

5. How helpful is the application of I-Search paper in presenting your argument in a coherent manner?
   ☐ Very helpful
   ☐ Moderately helpful
   ☐ Slightly helpful
   ☐ Less helpful
   ☐ Not at all helpful

6. How helpful is the application of I-Search paper in writing a standard academic paper?
    ☐ Very helpful
    ☐ Moderately helpful
    ☐ Slightly helpful
    ☐ Less helpful
    ☐ Not at all helpful

7. How helpful is the application of I-Search paper review references related to your topic?
    ☐ Very helpful
    ☐ Moderately helpful
    ☐ Slightly helpful
    ☐ Less helpful
    ☐ Not at all helpful

8. Of the four parts of I-Search paper, which one do you feel difficult to do?
    ☐ Part 1 – What I Already Know About My Topic
    ☐ Part 2 – What I Want to Find Out
    ☐ Part 3 – The Search
    ☐ Part 4 – What I Learned

9. How do you benefit from I-Search paper writing exercises?
    ☐ Very beneficial
    ☐ Moderately beneficial
    ☐ Slightly beneficial
    ☐ Less beneficial
    ☐ Not at all beneficial

10. What is your opinion on I-Search paper writing?
    ☐ Extremely needed for academic writing
    ☐ Very important for academic writing
    ☐ Important for academic writing
    ☐ Less important for academic writing

Using Dictation to Measure Language Proficiency

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Abstract

Many teachers are faced with mixed-ability classes and have little information on the proficiency of their students. With group work being central to most pedagogies in second language acquisition, teachers may want to construct groups for specific purposes; knowledge of the relative proficiency of students is therefore very important. Although tools such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) are available, they may be expensive to implement, or results may be unavailable to the teacher. This paper discusses dictation tests as a possible way of measuring the relative proficiency of students and highlights the results of a study conducted in a university in Japan that used dictation as a test of proficiency and compared results with the TOEIC test. The authors explain how to design and conduct dictation in the classroom and demonstrate how dictation is a cheap, simple, and effective means of measuring language proficiency.

Group Work in the Classroom

A large number of language teachers regularly assign group work in the classroom. The various reasons for assigning small-group tasks may include adding interest, maximizing student talk-time (Long & Porter, 1985), encouraging and fostering a collaborative work ethic among peers, and demonstrating how learners can learn from each other through co-constructed scaffolding (Leeming, 2011). One possible problem with the use of small groups in the language classroom is that language teachers frequently have mixed-ability classes and so must consider the English proficiency of students when deliberately constructing groups. Often teachers do not have information regarding the relative proficiency of students within a given class, and in large educational contexts it is quite common to have students spanning a wide range of language proficiencies which therefore requires more deliberate consideration when attempting to create well-balanced groups. Factors such as linguistic ability and personality can affect the performance of the group as a whole, and often the aim is to achieve a balance within each group. Lantolf (2006) has described how peers can learn within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). His research, based on the work of Vygotsky (1986), shows that the scaffolding that results from negotiating meaning can contribute to the language development of more proficient language learners. At the same time, less proficient learners can benefit by learning from their more able peers. As such, a well-balanced group consists of learners of

varying language proficiencies. Jacobs (2006) recommends deliberately constructing groups to achieve a balance of proficiency within each group, but this may prove difficult if the level of students is unknown.

One only has to glance at any of the major textbooks used within English language teaching to see that group work is used extensively in the classroom, and indeed is central to most pedagogies in second language acquisition (SLA), including communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based learning (TBL). With groups playing such a central role, the method of group construction can be considered a central issue in the language classroom. In order for teachers to construct groups for specific purposes they need to know the relative proficiency of students in each class; however, standardized test scores such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) may be unavailable due to privacy concerns or budgetary limitations. Although there are many standardized tests such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the Versant test, they all cost money. Even free online tests require a large number of computers and reliable internet access. With this in mind, how then can teachers quickly and effectively determine the relative proficiency levels of their students? It is not the authors' purpose here to compare the range of standardized tests. Rather, the authors will propose that dictation is a free alternative to standardized testing that is easy to administer and score, and assesses multiple dimensions of language proficiency. This paper discusses how to use dictation as a measure of English language proficiency and dictation's practicality in determining students' relative English levels as an aid in group construction. The aim of this paper is to provide a guide to the construction, implementation, and marking of a dictation test. The authors will also provide data supporting the fact that dictation is a test of overall English proficiency.

Why Dictation?

Upon first consideration, dictation might not appear to be a reliable, accurate, or sufficiently comprehensive method to measure a learner's language proficiency. The test itself is very simple. The words and the word order are given, so it would appear that very little is tested. Indeed, it would seem that dictation is limited to testing spelling and, perhaps, working memory. It seems reasonable to assume that listening comprehension and concentration are being assessed as well. However, Oller (1971) noted that the words and word order are only known to the person giving the dictation. This means that dictation actually requires the listener to produce the words and complete the sentences with the correct syntax and structure. Without understanding the context of the language, grammatical errors are inevitable. Oller (1971) was claiming that dictation includes knowledge of English grammar and syntax, and that by comparing the student-generated sequence with the original dictation, the differences observed can allow researchers to estimate the student's general language proficiency.

In his 1971 study, Oller conducted an evaluation of the English as a Second Language Placement Examination (ESLPE) for the University of California at Los Angeles. Oller (1971) found that dictation correlated most strongly with each part of the test, suggesting that dictation alone, more than any other part of the ESLPE, was the single strongest predictor of English-language proficiency (significant at the .001 level of confidence).

In a follow-up study by Oller and Streiff (1975) which addressed criticisms of the 1971 paper, they showed that dictation seemed to be "tapping an underlying competence" (p. 33) due to the consistently high correlations between dictation and the ESLPE. In light of these findings, they reasonably concluded that dictation is "a useful instrument for testing short-term instructional goals as well as integrated language-achievement over the long-term [sic]" (p. 34).

Tests such as TOEIC are designed to measure a wide range of English proficiency and are lengthy and comprehensive. Dictation is comparatively short, and it is difficult to construct a dictation test that will measure students from beginner to advanced level. However, dictation does appear to tap into what Oller (1979, p. 24) calls "expectancy grammar," which is described as "the combined knowledge of the phonological, syntactic, semantic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic rules of a language" (Fouly & Cziko, 1985, p. 556). Furthermore, dictation as a measure of language proficiency is "grounded in the similar types of knowledge and psychological processes believed to underlie both language use and dictation test performance" (Fouly & Cziko, 1985, p. 556).

As such, despite its obvious shortcomings, a well-designed dictation can yield useful measures of second language proficiency and aid in constructing well-balanced groups in the language classroom. The remainder of this paper will describe how the authors constructed a dictation test to differentiate between the relative proficiencies of students in their classes, and finally, present data supporting the fact that their dictation was an effective measure of English proficiency.

The Study

The authors were interested in the use of dictation and aimed to determine its feasibility and applicability in a Japanese context. In the following section, they briefly describe the context where the test was administered before going on to discuss the points to consider when making a dictation test, how to administer it, and the scoring method used. Following on from this, results of a correlation analysis are presented.

Context

The test was administered to 138 students majoring in science at a private university in western Japan. The students were in six intact classes that were streamed according to major within the department and not English proficiency. English classes are compulsory, with three 90-minute classes each week focusing on speaking, reading, and writing. All of the students had passed the English section of the entrance exam to the university, so English proficiency ranges could be hypothesized to be small. However within a given class there was a wider range of English proficiency, with the most extreme case being in a class where one student's TOEIC score was 895, while in the same class the lowest score was 220.

The dictation tests were administered in the speaking classes which were all taught by the same teacher. The data were collected over a 2-year period, and in the first year, three classes took the TOEIC test (see https://www.ets.org/toeic for details) and the data were made available to the teacher. Due to privacy issues, in the second year of the study, the university decided that the teachers were no longer permitted to have access to the TOEIC scores for students, and therefore the SLEP test was administered by the teacher to the three classes in that year. The SLEP test is no longer in use but was used in American middle and high schools for students whose first language was not English, and has since been replaced by the TOEFL Junior test.

Procedure

Making the Dictation

In order to avoid floor and ceiling effects (a dictation that is too easy or too difficult), the difficulty of the dictation should encompass the range of student abilities. Ideally the dictation should be generally understood by all the students, but there will be sections which may be considered slightly beyond most students' current level of proficiency (equivalent to Krashen's i+1 [1981]). Most reasonably experienced teachers can typically gauge the approximate level

of a class after 1 or 2 weeks of instruction, and although specific information may not be available for a class, teachers are often aware of the general level of students within the institution where they teach. Once the approximate level of the students in the class has been determined, the teacher should compose a dictation passage approximately 100 words in length (see Appendix A for the dictation passage used in this study). It is advisable for teachers of limited experience to have co-workers check the dictation to make sure that the vocabulary and general level of English are appropriate for the students. For the students in the current study (average TOEIC = 390), a simple narrative using mainly the simple past tense was considered appropriate. The teacher who created the dictation had been teaching at the university for approximately 18 months when it was made and had over 5 years' experience teaching in Japanese schools.

After writing the dictation passage, it is then necessary to record it. Although the dictation can be read aloud, it is easier and safer for the teacher to make a prerecording of the dictation so that during administration, the teacher is free to monitor students and ensure they are all attempting the test. Recording also ensures uniformity between classes should the classes be mixed subsequently. One recording (A) should be at normal speaking speed with no pauses, and the second (B) should be at normal speed with pauses at phrasal boundaries (e.g., I had a really nice time this summer [pause] relaxing with my family) to allow time for students to write down what they hear. When making the second recording, it is advisable for the speaker to actually write down what was just said to ensure that there is sufficient time for students to complete the task; this was done for the dictation test used in this study.

Administering the Dictation

When administering the dictation, the students should be informed that they will listen to the dictation three times and that they must write down exactly what they hear. With lower-level students, it is worth explaining this in their first language, and for this study, the directions were written in Japanese to ensure that students understood the task. The following procedure was on the board for students in English or the first language, depending on the level of the students:

1. Play Recording A (natural speed). Students listen (can make notes).
2. Play Recording B (with natural pauses at phrasal boundaries). Students write down what they hear.
3. Play Recording A (natural speed). Students check their work.

It is important to emphasize that students should not attempt to copy down what is said when first listening, and that they will be given a chance to listen again when pauses are added. Writing directions on the board is advisable to ensure that all students understand.

Scoring

After successfully administering the test, teachers must then mark answer papers. In this study, two raters checked all the answer papers. Depending on how many students take the dictation, scoring can be done by one or several raters. Similarly, depending on the stakes of the test, an individual can mark the papers, although to ensure consistency, it is preferable to have at least two people mark the tests. If there is a relatively small number of students (up to 50), then two raters can mark all the papers. If there are a large number of students, then it may be necessary to have more raters and have some overlap between individual raters. However, involving several raters would necessitate the establishment of some basic guidelines for marking. Factors to consider include spelling, tenses, missing words, extra words, correctly spelled but wrong words, misspelled but phonetically accurate words, points for partial knowledge, and the

number of points that can be awarded for each word. For example, in this study, the decision was made to accept both *l* and *r* for spelling, as these sounds are hard to differentiate for Japanese learners of English. This meant that *relax* and *rerax* were considered acceptable.

The researchers used a dichotomous scoring scale with no partial points awarded (words can be given a score of 1 or 0). Words that were misspelled but still phonetically accurate and recognizable were given 1 point. In addition, words that were in the wrong order but written correctly (orthographically or phonetically) were also given one point. No points were awarded or deducted for extraneous words. Copies of the students' answer papers were made for both raters to mark independently.

To ensure that each rater gives the same points for the same answers (inter-rater reliability), it is important to have a norming session. For this study, the first few students' answer papers were marked, followed by discussions regarding any differences in grading. Once the norming session was complete, the raters individually graded each answer paper and input the scores on a shared scoring sheet made using Microsoft Excel (see Appendix B for a section of the scoring sheet used). Using a macro (a collection of commands to automate a procedure) for Excel, any word which was not awarded the same score by both raters was highlighted. After all of the papers were marked, the raters then met to discuss any discrepancies in their marking and decided upon a final score for each student. While marking, the raters also kept in regular contact to ensure that any issues that arose could be dealt with. It is also important to regularly compare papers marked by the same rater as a single person's grading consistency may change over time (intra-rater reliability). Overall, the raters' inter-rater reliability was 0.98, which is considered to be very high agreement, and the marking was time-consuming but not difficult. If the purpose of administering a dictation is relatively low stakes such as for the formation of groups, a single rater can mark all the answer sheets for a particular class. This would remove the need for marking guidelines or a norming session and would reduce the overall marking burden.

Correlation Analysis

To convert the scores from the dictation to a true scale as needed in correlation analysis, the researchers conducted a Rasch analysis of the dictation test using Winsteps (Linacre & Wright, 2007), and used the subsequent logit scores for the correlation (a description of Rasch analysis is beyond the scope of this paper but see Bond and Fox [2007] for a comprehensive introduction to the Rasch model). The Rasch model also allows researchers to see how well the test used is able to differentiate between the relative proficiency of the students. The results for the dictation showed a person separation of 2.91, well above the benchmark value of 2 (Linacre, 2007), indicating that the dictation is effective in separating students by proficiency level.

In order to ensure that the dictation was a test of English, the researchers conducted a correlation analysis with the student scores for the TOEIC and SLEP tests. The results are shown below in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Correlations for the Dictation and TOEIC Test

	1. DICT	2. T-LIST	3. T-READ	4. T-TOTAL
1. DICT	—			
2. T-LIST	.78	—		
3. T-READ	.72	.69	—	
4. T-TOTAL	.81	.92	.92	—

Note. DICT = Dictation test; T-LIST = TOEIC listening; T-READ = TOEIC reading; T-TOTAL is total TOEIC SCORE. All correlations significant at $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Table 2

Correlation for the Dictation and SLEP Test

	1. DICT	2. SLEP
1. DICT	—	
2. SLEP	.60	—

Note. DICT = Dictation test; SLEP = SLEP Test. All correlations significant at $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

As can be seen from Table 1, the dictation test correlates strongly with the listening and reading parts of the TOEIC test, and the strongest correlation is with the overall score for TOEIC. This suggests that the dictation is measuring general English proficiency including grammar and vocabulary, and not just listening skills. From the strong and highly significant correlations, the researchers can conclude that the test is a good measure of English proficiency. Table 2 shows that the correlation with the SLEP test is moderate, although still significant. The SLEP test used was a short form of only 30 minutes and failed to achieve a strong distribution of scores, which may account for the weaker correlations here.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study are in line with others that have shown a high correlation with other standardized tests (Oller, 1971), and it can be reasonably concluded that dictation is an accurate measure of English language proficiency. In this paper the researchers have provided detailed instructions on how to create, administer, and mark a dictation test. The test was easy to create and administer, and although marking was somewhat time consuming, it was a simple process. From this simple test constructed in-house after little more than a year teaching at the university, the researchers were able to gain proficiency scores for the students in their class. These scores can aid in constructing balanced groups in the language classroom, which is central to most SLA pedagogies. The results of the Rasch analysis showed that the dictation was effective in separating the students into different levels based on proficiency. Dictation itself is cheap and easy to conduct and is a viable alternative when standardized proficiency scores for students are unavailable. It should be noted that dictation does have its own limitations and may be limited in measuring all aspects of an individual's language proficiency. However, for the purposes of group construction, dictation is an appropriate alternative.

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Appendix A
Dictation Passage for Students with an Approximate TOEIC Score of 400

I had a really nice time this summer relaxing with my family. We stayed in Japan and spent time with other family members. I was working for most of the summer but did take about one week off. I went to the beach with my wife and daughter and it was great fun. My daughter enjoyed playing in the sand and paddling in the sea. We also went to a zoo and saw a panda, lions and other animals. There was a dolphin show which was really amazing. I had a great summer.

Total word count: 93 words

Appendix B
Example Scoring Sheet

Student ID	I	had	a	really	nice	time	this	summer	relaxing	with	my	family
1024	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1025	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
1026	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
1027	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
1028	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
1029	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1030	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1031	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
1032	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1033	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1034	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
1035	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
1036	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1037	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
1038	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1039	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
1040	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
1041	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1042	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
1043	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
1044	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
1045	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
1046	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1

Book Review

Critical ELT in Action:
Foundations, Promises, Praxis
by Graham V. Crookes

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Crookes, G. V. (2013). *Critical ELT in action: Foundations, promises, praxis*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The word "critical" has been around in linguistics and education since at least the 1970s, with terms such as "critical linguistics" and "critical pedagogy" being used. *Critical ELT in Action* offers an example-rich explanation of how "critical" might be applied to English Language Teaching. The author, Graham Crookes, wastes no time, as the first paragraph of the introduction offers a definition of "critical" as applied to education as:

> [A] perspective on teaching, learning, and curriculum that doesn't take for granted the status quo, but subjects it to critique, creates alternative forms of practice, and does so on the basis of radical theories of language, the individual, and society that take seriously our hopes for improvement in the direction of goals such as liberty, equality, and justice for all. (p. 1)

The three goals that Crookes highlights—liberty, equality, and justice—are appropriate in any context at any time. However, the book is particularly timely, as these goals are receiving increased attention, especially in the developing world, including Asia. For instance, social justice is now highlighted in UNESCO campaigns for education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2012). Similarly, campaigns for environmental protection now speak of "green justice" (Asian Development Bank, 2012).

Even with this international momentum for social change, Crookes appreciates that many of his readers may be reluctant to embrace a critical perspective in their work in ELT. Thus, he recommends small steps, even very small steps. To guide readers in taking these steps, the book raises many important points to consider when attempting critical ELT. This review is organized around a presentation of some of those points in the order in which they appear in the book.

Points To Consider in Implementing Critical ELT

The main section of this review addresses points that ELT practitioners may wish to consider when attempting to utilize a critical perspective on their teaching. A first point involves whether and to what extent to use prepared materials or instead to use materials created ad hoc by students and teachers as issues emerge from the lives of those in the classroom (Chapter 1). The impetus for ad hoc materials follows in the footsteps of Freire's (1973) groundbreaking literacy work with poor adults in Brazil. Freire did not use previously prepared teaching materials; instead, he used drawings based on students' lives as a means of working with students to generate language learning materials.

A second point raised by Crookes asks to what extent should language-focused topics, such as grammar, text types, and reading strategies, be used, rather than confining the class to social issues topics, such as work, health, education, family, culture, anti-racism, gender equality, and utopia and how to move toward it (Chapter 1). The hope is that language learning goals can be achieved while discussing social issues topics. In fact, student motivation to learn language may increase via the use of such topics.

When exploring critical ELT, practitioners might also want to consider if the internet, including social media, can be a tool for comprehensible student-generated materials and for students to share and develop their knowledge and views. One example might be petition sites (e.g., The Petition Site, n.d.) that allow anyone to create and promote a petition on issues of his or her choice As access to technology expands, Web 2.0 tools are coming within the reach of even students from average income families in poor countries (Chapters 1 and 7).

Crookes explains that critical ELT is not just about content; how to teach is also important. For instance, students may be uncomfortable with more participatory classroom structures and activities (Chapter 2). Should teachers start slowly with one small pedagogic change at a time? That seems to be the approach advocated by Auerbach and Wallerstein (1987, p. 46): "[S]tudents naturally expect a hierarchical style of education, similar to their previous learning experiences. It is important, therefore, to start with structured activities at the same time that you are creating an environment for student-directed learning."

An oft-raised issue in ELT, an issue which links to critical pedagogy, is the extent to which students' first languages be used, especially in EFL contexts, with students currently at low proficiency levels, and with students whose first language may be endangered (Endangered Languages, n.d.) (Chapter 2). From both a justice perspective and from a general pedagogic perspective, some first language use may make sense (Jacobs & Kimura, 2013; Norton, 2000).

Regardless of the language students use, spoken and written dialogue is highly valued in critical pedagogy (Chapter 2). Crookes (p. 64) highlights the importance of critical dialogue and defines it as taking place when "one person's language, whether statement or question, encourages or presses another to consider the basis for their thinking." This definition brings to mind a different but related meaning of "critical," the meaning from the literature on critical and creative thinking (Kuhn & Crowell, 2011). For instance, here is one rather long definition from two well known names in critical and creative thinking (Scriven & Paul, 1987, cited in The Critical Thinking Community, 2013, para. 3):

> . . . the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and / or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.

In the reviewers' experience, too often dialogue between teachers and students and among students remains at a rather superficial level, challenging neither the intellect nor the emotions, and failing to connect with the interlocutors' lives on a deep level.

Dialogue provides an important element in democracy, and critical pedagogy advocates forms of democratic practices in and out of the class. This advocacy raises the issue of the extent to which classrooms can be democratic (Chapter 3). For instance, what happens if students can vote, and their decisions go against their teacher's view and school policy? What happens if students vote to have no exams or grades or if students vote in favor of unjust policies?

Critical pedagogy draws ideas from many sources, including critical linguistics. Critical linguists believe that language is not neutral and, in some cases, may support the status quo (Chapter 3 and 5). For example, in English, use of "generic he," i.e., using the masculine pronoun or masculine nouns to represent all people, e.g., "Man should live in harmony with nature," is said to reinforce the inferior position of females in society (Rubin, Greene, & Schneider, 1994). Crookes (pp. 88-89) quotes Fowler (1991), "The prevailing orthodoxy of linguistics is that it is a *descriptive* discipline which has no business passing comments on materials which it analyses; neither *prescribing* usage nor negatively evaluating the substance of its enquiries" [italics in original]. Critical linguistics finds inspiration in various theories of language (Chapter 5). In particular, Crookes reports work in critical teaching that utilized Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1973). Indeed, linguists inspired by that theory have done a great deal of work with disadvantaged populations in Australia and elsewhere (e.g., Christie, et al., 1991).

When attempting something different, such as critical ELT, past examples can serve as models and provide inspiration. Fortunately, Crookes (Chapter 4) offers examples of, as the book's title promises, "critical ELT in action." Furthermore, interested readers can find other sources, such as the Peace as a Global Language Conference (Peace as a Global Language, n.d.). Additionally, topics such as justice and equity seem to be increasingly common in discourse on education.

Critical pedagogy encourages education stakeholders to cooperate to increase their skills and power (Chapter 5). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) describe such collaborations of teachers as groupings in which members share goals, interact to further those goals, negotiate how and on what they will cooperate, learn together, and develop a shared culture, including the terms they use and the ways that they go about achieving their goals.

Conscientization, which is a kind of ongoing reflection on their actions for social improvement, constitutes a key goal and teaching tool in critical pedagogy (Chapter 5). This conscientization involves thoughtful study of the world and students' roles in it, rather than students being confined to emotional responses and impulsive actions. While Crookes highlights the need for action, it must be thoughtful action in order to succeed on social and educational fronts.

One way of taking action to improve society can be to link with ongoing social movements (Chapter 6). Some of those social movements suggested by Crookes are feminism, workers' rights, anti-racism, equal rights regardless of sexual identity, environmental protection, peace, and multiculturalism. Such movements often have specially designed programs for use with students. Also, they may welcome visits by students and offer opportunities for internships. Depending on the teachers' backgrounds, teachers differ in how they raise the issues championed by various social movements? For instance, how might homosexual and heterosexual teachers differently raise issues related to sexual identity?

Crookes includes many tasks to encourage readers to reflect, explore, share experiences and opinions, exemplify, share materials, search, correspond, explore resources, compare, plan, and inquire. For instance, one task (Chapter 6) asks readers to reflect on whether inclusion in course materials on environmental destruction necessarily constitutes promotion of critical perspectives. Readers are then asked to find such environmental content in teaching materials and to consider how this content provides opportunities for encouraging critical perspectives.

Teachers work in many different educational contexts; for instance, while most teachers work in mainstream schools, others teach in alternative education settings (Chapter 7). Examples of alternative education settings include online education systems, community schools, private language schools, and charter schools. Readers who teach in such alternative contexts or who are considering shifting to them will welcome that Crookes cites examples of some critical ELT in those settings.

Teachers who seek to implement critical perspectives on education are not confined to their classrooms or even their school. Critical ELT teachers can step outside their classrooms and advocate to the public and policy makers for programs and on policy issues (Chapter 7). Here, Crookes explores areas such as fund raising, developing networks of organizations, and promoting effective forms of leadership. Similarly, students can move from classroom learning on social justice issues to out-of-class activism on those issues (Chapter 8). Crookes (p. 188) highlights the need to take that step:

> [M]erely being informed about injustice or inequity, even affecting oneself, does not necessarily lead to any form of action even when conditions are relatively favorable. Rather, it is through being socialized into forms of active citizenship that a disposition and an understanding of what is involved comes into being; there is a change in identity, one might say.

Of course, teachers are not the only educators who can try out critical pedagogy. Administrators, too, can promote critical pedagogy (Chapter 7), and, thus, provide a new vision of educational leadership. In this regard, Crookes offers ideas, such as replacing top-down leadership, encouraging all stakeholders to make their voices heard, and developing democratic practices throughout the school.

One of the most frequently heard criticisms of critical pedagogy is that critical teachers are attempting to impose their views on students and others (Chapter 8). "Indoctrination" is an even stronger word than "imposition," and both are used to condemn critical pedagogy. In response, Crookes (p. 179) favorably quotes Nagai (1976) as stating, "What determines whether teaching becomes indoctrination is not so much the points of view a teacher wants to stress as the ways in which he expresses his views."

A related concern involves what teachers should do if students do not seem interested in topics that the teachers might feel are life and death matters of social justice, such as preventing the use of children as soldiers (Chapter 8). Indeed, the authors of this review have heard many colleagues state that students' main interests involve personal interests, such as travel, food, personal relationships, and other matters relating to how to individualistically enjoy life. Students may well not want to spend time on such "depressing" topics as the doom that humans, especially those in the middle and upper classes, are bringing down upon the world via human-induced climate change (Steffen et al., 2011). For instance, Crookes cites Shor (1992), a leading figure in critical pedagogy, who recounted raising an anti-individualist topic in his class. Upon finding students unwilling to discuss the topic, Shor dropped it, as for him as teacher to insist on the topic would have contradicted critical pedagogy's emphasis on democracy.

Finally, understanding and action require imagination (Chapter 9). Crookes argues that imagination can play a powerful role in inspiring students to work toward bringing into being their imagined, more just, world. For instance, to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of the more than 40 billion chickens trapped in the hell that is life on factory farms, students need to deploy their imaginations. Similarly, imagination plays a role in visualizing how to alleviate the chickens' plight and what our world might be like when humans no longer view chickens as sources of food.

Conclusion

In ELT, international organizations such as IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) and TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) have for many years had special interest groups that deal with social justice issues (IATEFL Global Issues SIG, 2013; TESOL International Association, 2014). Similar subgroups can be found in other ELT organizations, e.g., the Japan Association for Language Teaching's Global Issues in Language Education group (Japan Association for Language Teaching, 2008). For ELT practitioners keen to pursue similar efforts, *Critical ELT in Action* is a valuable book, as it builds on a wide range of past experience and offers guidance for the future.

Books are of a finite length and need to address multiple audiences. Thus, no one book is likely to completely please every reader. With that in mind, two areas that would have made the reviewers even more pleased with the book are greater comprehensibility for novice readers and inclusion of an additional social justice domain. As to comprehensibility, in general, Crookes does a good job of scaffolding important terms and concepts. However, at times, especially when quoting others, Crookes might have either summarized rather than quoted or provided additional glossing. For instance, many readers may feel lost several times in the quote from Peters (1995) on page 115, including when encountering "non-reductive way" and "essentialist readings."

As to adding a social justice concern, one issue that is receiving increased attention, especially in the developed world, is the plight of non-human animals, in particular, the animals whom humans eat. The United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization estimates put at over 60 billion the number of land animals killed annually to be eaten by humans, and this does not include similarly huge numbers of marine animals (Worldwatch Institute, 2013). Many of these sentient beings, even the marine animals, suffer short, horrid, unnatural lives on what have come to be called factory farms, due to the fact that on what the meat industry calls Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, these thinking, feeling beings are treated as though they were so many objects on a factory's assembly line.

To conclude, the status quo does not work for many humans and other sentient beings. Two cold numbers drive this home: (1) someone, often a child less than five years old, dies of malnutrition every 3.6 seconds (UNESCO, n.d.); (2) the statistic from the previous paragraph about 60 billion land animals (not to mention marine animals) being killed each year for food for humans. Should these and other social justice issues be some part, however small, of English teaching? Readers who believe they should may well want to put into practice some of the many ideas shared in *Critical ELT in Action*.

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About *Language Education in Asia*

Background Information

Language Education in Asia (LEiA) is a publication that presents well-researched aspects of language education and learning, innovative, practical approaches to classroom practice, discussion on language education issues in Asia, and reviews of books on research, practice, or issues in language education relevant to the region. Papers can be submitted by researchers, educators, educational leaders, and other language education professionals. All papers are blind-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board. Accepted papers are published on a biannual basis. The first issue of each volume will highlight exceptional papers presented at the annual CamTESOL Conference Series during that publication year. Each volume is online for public viewing and downloading at: http://www.camtesol.org/publication

The *Language Education in Asia* Advisory Board

Since 2011, IDP Education has invited a number of eminent ELT professionals, including several recent CamTESOL plenary speakers, to join an Advisory Board for the *Language Education in Asia* publication. The Advisory Board will offer advice as the publication is developed and expanded.

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Notes to Prospective Contributors

The readership of *Language Education in Asia* is comprised of Asian and expatriate educators as well as those from international institutions. *Language Education in Asia* encourages the submission of papers presenting innovative approaches of interest to both local and international audiences. The development context of Asian TESOL should be considered; most schools have limited resources and teachers often have to contend with large numbers of students in their classrooms. The Editorial Board takes into account the regional context as well as areas of interest for international participants when selecting papers for publication.

The *Language Education in Asia* online publication includes four sections:

- **Research** highlighting ongoing projects in the Asian region, based on and emphasising a practical focus in the discussion and conclusion sections. Maximum 5,000 words.

- **Teaching Practice** focusing on classroom-based and action research more directly related to the realities of language teaching in the region. Maximum 3,500 words.

- **Commentary** focusing on well-researched, balanced reports and discussions of current or emerging issues in the Asian region. Maximum 2,000 words.

- **Book Reviews** of books focusing on research, practice, or current issues relevant to language education in Asia. By invitation.

For more details concerning specific guidelines, formatting, and submission, please refer to the *Language Education in Asia* page on the CamTESOL website at http://www.camtesol.org/ For any questions, please contact the Editor-in-Chief, Ms. Kelly Kimura, at leia@idp.com. Papers for consideration for Volume 6, Issue 1 should be submitted to leia@idp.com by 8 March 2015, and those for Issue 2 should be submitted by 7 June 2015.

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The language learning and teaching context in the Asian region is as varied and complex as the countries encompassed in this part of the world. Each context is defined by the history and culture of each specific country and the region as a whole and the language policies and languages involved, including a myriad of local, indigenous, colonial, and "global" languages.

In 2010, in response to the ever-changing and challenging linguistic landscape in this area, IDP Education (Cambodia) established the fully peer-reviewed online journal *Language Education in Asia* as a forum to highlight and exchange research and insights into language education in this dynamic region.

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