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Foreword

This issue again illustrates the eclecticism that is inherent in the Asian EFL Journal system. We purpose an interesting and varied array of papers from a wide variety of settings and cultures. I hope you will learn as much as we have when reading them.

In this summary of a recent keynote in Malaysia, *Disciplines of English and disciplining by English*, Robert Phillipson emphasized the importance of seeing English in context, warning against thinking that a language of global importance can be ideologically neutral. Phillipson recommends a multidisciplinary approach to studies into 'global English' and underlines the need to consider the marginalization of other languages. He points out that bilingual education is recommended by UNESCO and is increasingly institutionalised in many parts of the world.

In *The Applicability of Principles for Instructed Second Language Learning: A South Korean Perspective* Jocelyn Howard and Susan Millar examine South Korean teachers' perceptions of the applicability to their contexts of the general principles for effective instructed second language learning proposed by Ellis (2005). They suggest that the principles provide a common point of international reference in spite of the fact that some of them would be subject to socio-cultural constraints. They argue that they help to give EFL teachers a sense of agency by helping them engage in self-reflection, and provide common points of reference for language teachers and researchers in the international community.

Yuri Kim and Eleni Petraki (*Students' and Teachers' Use of and Attitudes to L1 in the EFL Classroom*) examine the attitudes of students and teachers' attitudes to the use of L1 in EFL classrooms in multilevel language classrooms. They conclude that L1 plays a supportive role in the language classroom in certain types of activity, especially in the early stages of reading and writing. As Kim and Petraki suggest, more research is clearly required investigate further under what conditions L1 use is useful and successful.

In *A Comparison of the Effects of Corrections on Definite/Indefinite Articles and Regular/Irregular Past Tense Forms: A Case of Iranian EFL Learners* Azizollah Dabaghi and Mansoor Tavakoli investigate the effect of error correction on EFL learners' acquisition of definite and indefinite articles as well as errors on regular and irregular past tense verb forms.

They find that the irregular past tense form is learnt before the regular past tense and the definite article 'the' is learned before indefinite articles 'a' and 'an' when corrective feedback is given. While further research of a longitudinal nature would be needed to confirm these results, they suggest that this initial study points to the importance of negotiation, saliency and individualized attention in language learning.

In *Chinese Phonotactic Patterns and the Pronunciation Difficulties of Mandarin-Speaking EFL Learners* Hui-Ling Huang, & James Radant investigate difficulties resulting from L1 phonotactic constraints. Using a 145-word reading passage with a total of 30 target sounds, their findings suggest that the successful pronunciation of individual sounds does not automatically transfer to successful pronunciation at word level. They also confirm the commonly encountered situation across borders in which segmental problems are far more easily identified and remedied than suprasegmental problems, such as syllable structures and prosody.

In a historical investigation (*Impacts of Vietnam's Social Context on Learners' Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages and English Language Learning: Implications for Teaching and Learning*) Phan Thi Thanh Hang discusses the changes in Vietnamese learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning. Phan finds that political, economic and socio-cultural changes have led to a change in Vietnamese learners' attitudes from resentment to appreciation and motivation. Nevertheless, she argues that only a minority are fully aware of the importance of English competence. She emphasizes importance of this awareness for policy makers and educators and for the motivation of students.

In *The Effect of Assisted RR on Fluency and Comprehension in Chinese FL Classrooms*, Huifen Chen examines the effectiveness of Assisted Repeated Reading in improving the reading fluency and comprehension of Chinese College English students. He compares the Assisted RR treatment altered for a Chinese College English classroom context with the extensive reading treatment widely currently practiced and finds that it has significantly increased the learners' reading rate and comprehension.

Sheu Hsiu-Chinh (*EFL Children's Views on English Picture Story Books*) investigates the views of a group of primary school students in Taiwan on reading English picture story books. The findings indicate that the majority of the students considered them helpful in enhancing their language learning, motivating their reading and stimulating their imagination. Vocabulary was perceived to be the main challenge encountered. Sheu identifies three educational values that

emerged from the data: (1) the linguistic value, (2) the value of the story, and (3) the value of the pictures.

In *Interaction Between Processing and Maintenance in Online L2 Sentence Comprehension: Implication for Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis*, Shigeo Kato examines the L2 reading threshold phenomenon. Kato focuses on the relationship between processing and maintenance efficiency in self-paced reading performance. The results revealed a ‘trace-decay’ mechanism, but for the better performers there was also a ‘trade-off’ possibility. When the impact of the presence of irrelevant speech was introduced using the same experimental paradigm, improvement, rather than deterioration, was evidenced, particularly by the poor performers. Kato suggests that this provides evidence of strategy-switching from phonological to direct-visual word-recognition process.

Kenneth David Strang (*How Multicultural Learning Approach Impacts Grade for International University Students in a Business Course*) uses a survey approach to investigate the ways in which cultural background and learning approach may influence grades. Using a multicultural learning model, four of eight factors identified were found to be very predictive of grade. Strang’s study proposes an original interdisciplinary model of culture and learning and employs rigorous multiple research methods to measure the impact of his multicultural learning approach on academic grade. Nonetheless he underlines the difficulty of his undertaking with the modest claim that his study ‘merely scratches the surface on integrating culture and learning style theories to measure academic performance’.



Disciplines of English and disciplining by English

Robert Phillipson

Professor Emeritus, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Bio Data:

Robert Phillipson is a Professor Emeritus at Copenhagen Business School. His books on language learning, linguistic human rights, and language policy have been published in ten countries. Published in 2009 are *Linguistic imperialism continued* (Routledge; and Orient Blackswan for seven South Asian countries), an anthology of recent articles and reviews; and *Social justice through multilingual education*, an anthology edited with Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Ajit Mohanty, and Minati Panda (Multilingual Matters, and also, in a slightly different form, Orient Blackswan). For details of CV and publications, some for downloading, see: <http://www.cbs.dk/staff/phillipson>.

Abstract

The article stresses the importance of seeing English in context, both in terms of its global importance and how we refer to it: labels such as ‘lingua franca’ are misleading. The fact that there is a standard form of written English of global relevance should not beguile one into thinking that the language is ideologically neutral. Academic freedom in universities is constrained in various ways, language policy being of central importance. Efforts in the Nordic countries to simultaneously strengthen national languages and English are reported on. English Studies should ideally serve the entire society, and contribute to promoting multilingualism, but academic specialisation is suspect if it lacks a holistic perspective and political awareness. The study of the international role of English needs to engage with US history, the consolidation of the language nationally, and with its promotion worldwide as a constituent of American empire. This necessitates a multidisciplinary approach. It is helpful to see regional integration, European or Asian, and ‘global English’ as projects, entailing certain products and processes. The monolingual UK-US approach to English learning, of major importance for the British economy, is increasingly under attack. The export business of campuses in Malaysia and China needs careful scrutiny. Bilingual education, as recommended by UNESCO, is becoming more institutionalised in many parts of the world. Developments in the way the use of English is increasing in different parts of the world are of universal language policy relevance. The complexity of English as medium of instruction and a societal language in Malaysia has been insightfully analysed. The integration of higher education and research across Europe structurally favours English. In any given context, it is important to assess how far other languages are being disciplined and marginalised by English or not.

Keywords: English Studies, university language policy, lingua franca, academic freedom, American empire, imperial English, linguistic diversity

This article began life as a keynote lecture at the conference *MICOLLAC 2009: Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Universals, Distinctions and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, held at the Universiti Putra Malaysia Serdang, Malaysia, in April 2009, where I assumed that I share much in common with participants. I lead a multilingual everyday life in a multi-ethnic society. I live in a country with a strong national language, in my case Danish; as an immigrant, I have needed to develop fluency in the language. Denmark is a country in which there are tensions, real or manufactured, between Christianity, Islam, and consumerist secularism. I have a primary professional identification with English, but academic competence in several other languages too. I am deeply involved in the ambiguities of English as an expanding language, and what the implications of this are for the rights of speakers of other languages and for non-anglophone cultures. My professional life started with training to be an English teacher in what I consider was a form of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) with little awareness of the wider ecology of languages, even if I had learned several. In my research, I consider that the learning or teaching of English needs to be linked to a commitment to linguistic diversity and linguistic human rights. In my view, the English teaching profession needs to be seen in the light of an understanding of linguistic neoimperialism, its global and local impact, and how a more just balance between languages can be promoted.

Functions and myths of English

It is therefore salutary to consider whether the role and disciplines of English Studies are merely servicing global empire, as servants of what the brilliant Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (in *Wizard of the crowd*, 2006) wittily refers to as corporonialism, the corporate world's variant of colonialism. Or alternatively, do we live up to the classic ideals of the university, committed to an unflinching principle of intellectual honesty and a profound search for truth? To cite Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o again (1998, p. 131): 'paving the ways of seeing and willing a moral universe of freedom, equality, and social justice within and among the nations of the earth is surely the special mission of art. Art is dreams of freedom and creativity.' Ngũgĩ works of 'art' have been concerned as much with non-fiction scholarship (for instance his classic *Decolonising the mind*, 1981) and teaching as with creative writing. One of the joys of the extensive use of English in

many cultures worldwide is that those proficient in the written language have access to creative writing and to high quality scholarship and journalism that may be produced in a plethora of Asian or African or other contexts. This makes it incumbent on practitioners of English Studies to be alert to local and global linguistic ecologies, to the causes of some languages being privileged, and to what the implications are for linguistic diversity and equality.

The context where I work is continental Europe, where the use of English is increasing. English is now the corporate language of many of the larger continental European companies, partially replacing German, Swedish, and other languages. Youth is consumerist, Coca-colonised, and more familiar with US products and norms than those of other European countries. 70-80% of films on TV and in cinemas in Europe are Hollywood products - whereas in the USA, foreign films represent only 1% of the market, which is indicative of the asymmetrical nature of cultural relations worldwide. English is the most widely learned 'foreign' language in continental Europe, and other foreign languages, like French, German and Russian, are mostly in retreat. Research is increasingly published in English rather than national and international scholarly languages, which affects career prospects for the individual and the role of the national language.

Is English then merely a '*lingua franca*', a neutral instrument, for inter-lingual, 'international' communication ... or should it rather be seen as

- a *lingua economica*: the language of corporate neoliberalism and Americanisation
- a *lingua emotiva*: the language of Hollywood myth-making, of youth culture and pop music
- a *lingua cultura*, when English is taught as a subject in general education, linked to the study of national cultures and literatures
- a *lingua bellica* in wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in the arms trade that the permanent members of the UN Security Council profit from
- a *lingua academica*, when it serves as the dominant language of publications, international conferences, and increasingly as a medium for content learning in secondary and higher education?

The language is seen by some as God's gift to humanity, a *lingua divina*, by others, the victims of genocide (Churchill, 1997) and linguicide, as a *lingua diabolica*. This is captured brilliantly by an Indian who was at the receiving end of injustice at the hands of elites who privilege proficient

users of English and stigmatize those less proficient:

It wasn't until he was 18 that Kanchedia Chamaar realized that God spoke and understood English and nothing else. Because unfamiliarity with the *lingua divina* was a matter of intense shame at Delhi School of Economics in the 1970s, he started learning English on the sly, and continues to be consumed by the process to this day. Over a period of three years after his master's degree, no fewer than one hundred and eight Indian firms found him unfit for gainful employment. While doing his PhD in the 1980s, he found that at Universities in the US, even those not fluent in English were treated as human beings, a dignity that not everybody seemed willing to accord him in Delhi. He has been hiding in the US ever since. (Chamaar, 2007)

English as a diabolical language, a *lingua frankensteinia*, is captured by such terms as Louis-Jean Calvet's 'glottophagie', linguistic cannibalism (1974) to cover the way 'big' languages gobble up small ones; by John Swales (1996) seeing English as a *lingua tyrannosaura*, when some languages of scholarship are on the way to extinction because of a shift into English; and by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), who refers to *killer languages* and language murder because extinguishing minority languages has often been state policy, with the agents behind such policies identifiable. She also uses the term *linguistic genocide* in the international law sense, in order to determine when state policies fail to respect linguistic human rights, and can be seen as constituting crimes against humanity (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar forthcoming). I have asked the question 'English, a cuckoo in the European higher education nest of languages?', a *lingua cucula* (2006) when assessing whether university policy for more English entails the rejection of other languages.

In my view (elaborated in Phillipson, 2009), the term *lingua franca* is a *pernicious, invidious* term if the language in question is a first language for some people – or has been their primary language of learning - but for others a foreign language. This is asymmetrical communication. It is a *misleading* term if the language is supposed to be neutral and disconnected from culture, such as the 'special purposes' that English serves, exemplified above. Similarly, it is a *false* term for a language that is taught as a subject in general education, since then the language is learned in symbiosis with familiarity with the cultures in question, English originating in England and then its speakers moving elsewhere. Ironically there is a historical continuity in that the term *lingua franca* was originally used by speakers of Arabic and Persian to refer to the language of the Crusaders, whom they assumed were all Franks, whose task was to re-impose Christianity in

Palestine and push out the infidel from the 'Holy Land'. Whereas in the contemporary world, English is seen as integral to the crusade of global corporatisation, which is marketed as betokening freedom and democracy, the rhetoric that accompanied the unravelling of Communist Europe and wars of aggression in Iraq.

The fact that English was not an unmixed blessing for colonised people was seen clearly by Mahatma Gandhi: 'To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave us. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us' (1908); 'English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother tongues' (1921, both cited in Naik, 2004, p. 255). And specifically in relation to universities, he noted that there were problems of quality both in what was attempted and in what was ignored (1942, cited in Gandhi, 2008, p. 463): 'I am afraid our universities are the blotting-sheets of the West. We have borrowed the superficial features of the Western universities, and flattered ourselves that we have founded living universities here. Do they reflect or respond to the needs of the masses?'

We need therefore to be cautious and precise in our use of sociolinguistic concepts (like *lingua franca*) and when assessing the issues of quality, appropriateness of content, and medium of instruction in higher education. Such issues are relevant in relation to English both in countries traditionally seen as multilingual (e.g. Malaysia) and in those with a strong monolingual tradition (most European countries). The multiple purposes which English now serves both in the postcolonial world and in contemporary Europe raise the question of whether the language can be seen as post-imperial (Fishman et al, 1996). As Asmah Haji Omar sees matters, when asked whether English is a linguistically imperialist language in Malaysia (1996, p. 532): 'English is now looked at as an entity which can be separated from English culture. This is evident in the urging "to learn English but not to ape the Western [meaning Anglo-American] culture" '. At one level this is a factually correct statement. On the other hand, there are many challenges so far as both the forms and functions of English are concerned. The relationship between 'Global English' and local Englishes needs unpicking, as do the sociocultural forms and functions, written and spoken, that characterize English as an Asian/Malaysian language, or English as a European/Scandinavian language, and the myths and realities of 'global' English. The historical roots of the norms of the language, its disciplining into standardized semantic, syntactic and lexical conventions, cannot be totally ignored.

The Polish-Australian linguist Anna Wierzbicka warns against an assumption that English can

be detached from its original roots (2006, pp.13, 14): ‘Publications on “global English”, “international English”, “world English”, “standard English” and “English as a lingua franca” ... neglect the Anglo cultural heritage ... the semantics embedded in the words and grammar.[...] In the present-day world it is Anglo English that remains the touchstone and guarantor of English-based global communication’. Probal Dasgupta (1993, pp. 203, 215-6) makes a similar point:

English is not a space. It is a piece of real estate. Its owners – whose biological identities keep changing, as in the case of any real estate, - enforce normative spelling, punctuation, grammar, and phonological and lexical limits (within which accents and dictions may vary) throughout the domains of English discourse. Indian use of English will forever remain a tolerated, degenerate variant of the norm in the eyes of the owners. Hence the striving by Indians to attain near-native command, to count as individuals who may be co-opted into the metropolitan *Herrenvolk*. (...) The forces that keep this fact in place have not been and are not being contested. You and I may coin a new expression for our private games in the language: but our coinage will not be part of the language unless the Anglo-American mint canonizes our doings in standard reference works.

It is this variant of English that English learning in general education in Europe aims at, even if receptive competence may be built up in relation to the diversity of ways in which English is used worldwide: the weighting is more towards Quirkian standard English than Kachruvian liberation linguistics (for analysis see the contributions to Sharifian, 2009). In international communication there are modifications in ‘world Englishes’ of a minor type in lexis, syntax, and discourse patterns, and more major ones in pronunciation. There is substantial variation in the use of English within and across countries, but especially in writing, there is a standardised *product* that ensures intelligibility (Rajadurai, 2007). There are serious theoretical and empirical weaknesses in the way ‘world’ Englishes are classified and analysed, since the reification involved in any standardisation is not faithful to the variety and complexity of sociolinguistic realities (Bruthiaux, 2003). Analyses of ‘postcolonial’ Englishes tend to ignore the constraints that affect the way languages are experienced and used: decolonisation ‘has become another convenient term used to legitimise world Englishes without problematising its political, economic, educational and ideological significations [...] world Englishes are played out across such structures and determinations of inequality’ (Ruanni Tupas, 2001, 87, 93).

Thiru Kandiah of Sri Lanka (2001) insightfully notes these complexities:

... the written English prose medium which, in some ‘standard’ form, is the staple of the global medium is hardly a neutral or innocent instrument. It defines a discourse whose conventions of grammar and use are heavily vested ideologically, affirming and

legitimising particular ways of seeing the world, particular forms of knowledge and particular relations of power, all of which work decidedly against the best interests of the disadvantaged countries.

To ‘countries’ I would add *classes, languages, and marginalised peoples*. This does not mean that I am in any way arguing against using English. Whether English has functioned as an imperialist language in any given context, in the colonial or postcolonial periods, and currently in the neoliberal age of US-dominated corporate empire, is an empirical question: what is at issue is whether there is an inequitable structural and ideological favouring of one language – in this case, English - and the interests behind it, at the expense of (speakers of) other languages. As I see it, the challenge for the English teaching profession is to strike a balance between promoting maximal competence in English while being deeply aware of the issues of the appropriateness and consequences of its use in diverse cultural contexts and multilingual ecologies, and of the purposes that English serves in any society. For universities, this means addressing the question of academic freedom, a fundamental principle.

Academic freedom and university language policy

‘Free’ universities in *The Netherlands* and *Belgium* are so designated because the particular institution is free of religious ties, affiliated neither with Roman Catholicism nor Protestantism, unlike many universities. How free is *an ‘American’ university* in the Arab world or a ‘*Christian’ university* in Japan? How freedom is understood is flagged openly at the *Margaret Thatcher Center For Freedom*, based at the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC: the Center’s goal is to ensure that the US and UK can ‘lead and change the world’ⁱ? The ‘free’ of the *Freie Universität Berlin* means free of communism, so named because the university was established, with US funding, in the non-Soviet Union sector of Berlinⁱⁱ. Ironically the unfree university in communist east Berlin, the *Humboldt University*ⁱⁱⁱ, is named after the polymath scholar of the early 19th century whose higher education principles underpin the modern university ideal: university teaching should be delivered by active researchers; academic freedom and the search for knowledge and truth should not be constrained by any orthodoxy. The search for truth is encouraged in the People’s Republic of *China*, but not its dissemination: an ‘unwritten rule for academics is that there is no taboo for research but there are regulations governing what can be published and what cannot be published’ (Zhou and Ross, 2004, p.10). Freedom is evidently a

semantic chameleon, adapting to a range of historical and ideological constraints.

The magnificent chapels of *Cambridge* colleges, like the names of many of them (Christ's, Trinity) signify the close bond between the Church of England and scholarship in earlier centuries, others laud the state (King's, Queens') or mammon (Churchill, Wolfson) and occasionally science (Darwin). *Christianity* has been integral to the spread of Euro-American values and languages worldwide, and is at the heart of the Myth of America, the sense that the USA sees itself as having a Christian God-given right to spread its values worldwide by military and economic force, a warfare society, initially national, now global (Hixson 2008). *Economic gospels* underpin higher education activities in our more secular times, making it unlikely that universities are committed to the needs of the masses (Gandhi), or to cultural diversity or multilingualism. What then of the '*English-medium university*' – is it purely utilitarian, a practical necessity, a productive panacea (Phillipson, 2009, chapter 9)? Or is English so imbued with the values and senses of an unjust world order that it needs to be controlled vigorously by well qualified people like any other infectious disease or pandemic^{iv}? Are the language policies of universities disciplining English, or is academic freedom being disciplined by the way English is used?

A number of European universities now have explicit language policies. The University of Helsinki, Finland, for instance, states that its Language Policy (promulgated in Finnish, Swedish, and English, 14 March 2007) is based on key strategic precepts, in particular that

Languages are a resource within the academic community. The University's bilingual and multilingual environment and internationalisation are sources of enrichment for all and are a necessity for the international comparability of its research performance. Language skills are a means to understanding foreign cultures and for making Finnish culture known to others. The university promotes the language proficiency of its students and staff as well as supports their knowledge of different cultures. Multilingual and multicultural communities promote creative thinking.

There are bilingual universities in Europe in several countries, among them Italy and Switzerland. Helsinki University is explicitly bilingual in Finnish and Swedish because both languages are official in Finland. Many other universities in the country, and in Scandinavia, have become bilingual in recent years – without ever being designated as bilingual - in the sense that a large number of course books are in English, with Danish, Norwegian or Swedish as the language of instruction^v. In addition 'internationalisation' leads to more degrees and courses being offered in English, especially at MA level and in specific subjects, such as business studies. Some

universities have encouraged the use of many languages of scholarship. Thus at the University of Helsinki, doctoral theses have been written in Finnish, Swedish, English, German, and French (Haarman and Holman, 2001)^{vi}. The current trend, especially in the natural sciences, is for most to be in English. But even if a European university offers a large number of MA courses and degrees in English, the students on the courses will predominantly be foreigners, whereas for many Finnish postgraduate students, or Dutch postgraduates in The Netherlands, the medium of instruction will still be the local language.

The very considerable expansion of the use of English in demographically small continental European countries has led to concern about whether national languages are being marginalized and might risk losing their status as the nationally unifying language. The governments of the Nordic countries have commissioned study of the issue, as a result of which a Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy was approved in 2006 by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and promulgated in Danish, Faeroese, Greenlandic, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Saami, Swedish, and English^{vii}. The document specifies the language rights of all residents in a Nordic country, sets out goals for language policy, and specifies four issues to work with: Language comprehension and language skills; the parallel use of languages; multilingualism; the Nordic countries as a linguistic pioneering region.

Choice of language in higher education and research is a central concern of the governments. The Declaration declares as goals for ‘The parallel use of English and the languages of the Nordic countries,

that it be possible to use both the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society and English as languages of science,

that the presentation of scientific results in the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society be rewarded

that instruction in scientific technical language, especially in written form, be given in both English and the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society

that universities, colleges, and other scientific institutions can develop long-range strategies for the choice of language, the parallel use of languages, language instruction, and translation grants within their fields ...’.

In effect what the policy aims at is to ensure that the vitality of national languages is maintained, while education should aim at achieving equivalent proficiency in English. Quite

how ‘parallel competence’ in the two languages should be understood has yet to be clarified, just as implementation of the many recommendations has yet to be undertaken. However, since this is the first time that government-level language policy in this area has been made explicit, it is positive that language policy is not merely being left to market forces. The underlying thinking is both/and rather than either/or: not a focus on a single medium of instruction (an English-medium or local language-medium school or university) but a combination. This is the way language policy is understood by representatives of Copenhagen University, in chemistry, mathematics, and life sciences, see Harder, 2009.

A contribution to a recent survey of the future of French worldwide by a Mexican scholar, Rainer Enrique Hamel (2008) makes related points of general relevance. While pleading for multilingual strategies in higher education, he stresses the importance of ensuring the priority of the national language in the *production* of knowledge, whereas knowledge can be *disseminated* in English and other languages. He also stresses the importance of ensuring that French remains attractive as an international language. This presupposes the use of the national language in higher education in all key scholarly fields.

English Studies

Specifically so far as ‘English Studies’ is concerned, we need to consider what the implications are of scholarly specialisation, the fact that since the 1970s, English Studies has expanded in countless directions. Syllabuses, publications, and conference papers reveal few efforts to integrate the study of ‘Literature’, ‘society’ and ‘language’. Absence of a holistic perspective is aggravated by scholarly specialisation, the ‘subdivision of knowledge into an ever-multiplying profusion of mutually incomprehensible and inward-looking academic disciplines’, to quote Collini’s study of intellectuals in Britain (2006, p. 461). Sub-specialisations (e.g. on the language side, between theoretical and applied linguistics, language pedagogy, sociolinguistics, grammar, phonetics, translation, ‘composition’ et al) run the risk of failing to form a coherent whole, of not seeing the societal wood for the academic trees. We suffer from the Humpty Dumpty syndrome^{viii}, the problem of being more knowledgeable about less and less: our professionalism makes us good at segmenting knowledge, at working with isolated bits of language or text, but not at reassembling it and maintaining holistic thinking.

Simultaneously, external pressures, accountability to the ‘knowledge society’, marketisation,

and competition for research funding, are transforming communities of learning, independent scholarship and truth-seeking. We run the risk of English Studies not living up to the ideals of the intellectual:

Academic intellectuals will have to continue to foster the rigour, the respect for evidence, the disinterestedness, and the wider perspective which are among the animating ideals of academic scholarship while at the same time managing to break out from its increasingly self-referring hermeticism to bring these qualities to bear in wider public debate. (Collini, 2006, p. 504)

There is a tension between a legitimate requirement that our research time can be shown to produce results, and academic freedom. This presupposes no undue influence from funding bodies. Bertrand Russell (1960, pp. 166-8) expressed concern 80 years ago about the academic being limited by utilitarian constraints and an excessive influence on universities by business.

As I see it, the macro-level challenge for English Studies is to ask how English Studies can aim at generating truth, wisdom, peace, and justice, with critical students in ethically based societies, in a world that is characterised by marketisation, economic rationales, consumerism, militarism, ecological disasters, and glaring inequalities between Haves and Have-nots internationally and nationally. English is a primary carrier and constituent of both sets of values. The central themes of my paper are therefore how we can continue to ensure that universities should seek truth (Ngũgĩ) and serve the entire society (Gandhi), with universities that are seen as a public good, enjoying academic freedom and university autonomy, and promoting cultural diversity (see UNESCO's *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel*, 11 November 1997^{ix}), universities that actively promote multilingualism (Finland); the use of English reflects and constitutes particular interests, and is inherently problematical (Kandiah); academic specialisation is suspect, especially when it is politically detached (Collini); and to constrain scholarly disciplines within their own internal logic entails grave risks.

There are several traditions of critical scholarship in *sociolinguistics* that live up to these ideals. They have mostly evolved within English Studies in its broadest sense, the study of the forms and functions of language. There is solid empirical evidence and theorisation of the key role of language in diagnosing inequality based on race (Labov), gender (Cameron), class (Bernstein), capitalism (Halliday), and language (Skutnabb-Kangas). Such analysis permits the study of respectively racism, sexism, classism, growthism, and linguicism. The latter in particular can lead to proactive strategies and action in minority education, linguistic human rights, resisting

linguistic genocide, and counteracting linguistic imperialism and neo-imperialism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Phillipson, 2009).

Imperial English and its advocates

It is imperative to see English in historical, socio-political, and cultural context. The powerful forces behind the expansion of English in many parts of the world are identifiable. The following representative quotations are drawn from more detailed studies (Phillipson 1992, 2009):

- In 1838 the ‘Board of Foreign Missions of the USA’, propounded ‘a belief in the manifest destiny of Anglo-Saxon culture to spread around the world’ (Spring, 1996).
- ‘The whole world should adopt the American system. The American system can survive in America only if it becomes a world system’, President Harry Truman, 1947 (cited in Pieterse, 2004, p. 131).
- ‘Teaching the world English may appear not unlike an extension of the task which America faced in establishing English as a common national language among its own immigrant population’ (Annual Report of the British Council, 1960-61).
- The process of European integration might never have come about had it not been imposed on Europe by the Americans. (Holm, 2001).

US involvement in creating what became the European Union is narrated in detail in Winand 1993. There are annual summit meetings between the EU and the USA. The 2007 summit endorsed the Transatlantic Economic Integration Plan and the coordination of foreign policy globally, essentially implementing what the corporate world had plotted in many fora, the European Round Table of Industrialists, the Transatlantic Business Dialogue, the Transatlantic Economic Partnership, etc.

English has been a central constituent of the US strategy for global dominance. The hierarchy of languages established on the North American continent is being extended worldwide. British governments and politicians have advocated the promotion of English consistently since the 1950s, with Gordon Brown continuing in this tradition. Prior to his first visit as Prime Minister to China and India, on 17 January 2008, Gordon Brown announced a scheme to consolidate the teaching of English worldwide: ‘English is our heritage, but it is also becoming the common

future of human commerce and communication.... the bold task of making our language the world's common language of choice.' This 'bold task', which has a massive importance for the British economy and for British influence, dovetails with US bodies in the same business of promoting English. For instance, Educational Testing Services of Princeton, New Jersey, responsible for the TOEFL test of language proficiency, declares on its website: 'Our global mission goes far beyond testing. Our products and services enable opportunity worldwide by measuring knowledge and skills, promoting learning and performance, and supporting education and professional development for all people worldwide.' A global mission indeed, but stressed by a rhetoric of 'choice'. Governments and scholars who stress freedom of choice, or the provision of education or English 'for all', tend to ignore such determinants as class, cost, gender, urban/rural access, and, in many multilingual contexts, the significance of the mother tongue: for a study of the myth of the neutrality of English and 'choice', and how the 'demand' for English has been orchestrated in Cambodia, see Clayton 2008.

The study of the international use of English and demand for it is complex and demands a multi-disciplinary approach (Phillipson, 2009). It needs to draw on the literature on language planning and policy, macro-sociolinguistics, language 'spread', linguistic imperialism, the sociology of language, and language in education; critical theory and critical discourse analysis; nationalism, language, nation and state in political science; comparable to global financial and economic capital, the study of linguistic capital accumulation and dispossession; linguistic human rights in national and international law; language and language rights in globalisation and regional integration (ASEAN, European Union) and the management of multilingualism in supranational institutions and in administering citizenship; the economics of language, North-South relations, foreign 'aid', *laissez faire* and US empire. There is in fact a flood of books and articles on English and other languages worldwide. Research needs to engage with language policy both as multi-disciplinary theory and as practice, in application and implementation. Language policy is at the interface between scholarship and ongoing social policy and politics, national and international. Language policy is even more important in a technological age than earlier.

What is happening currently in Europe demonstrates this clearly. The EU is a new type of polity, with sovereignty and decision-making shared between the member states (currently 27) and the supranational, inter-governmental level. There is uncertainty as to whether the EU is

moving towards what de Gaulle envisioned, a ‘Europe des patries’, international partnership, or Jean Monnet’s ‘United States of Europe’, federalism. There are currently 23 official and working languages, and some recognition of the rights of other languages, but de facto a hierarchy of languages with English now at the top. Just as it is helpful to see the construction of Europe in terms of a project, with specific products and processes, one can also see ‘global English’ as a project that powerful forces wish to bring about, visible in certain products (functions, forms, texts), and promoted through a range of processes (Phillipson, 2009, chapter 7). The projection of ‘Global English’ as the default language of *international* communication can be seen in the administration of EU and ASEAN affairs (projects), which dovetails with the use of English increasingly *intranationally* in business, the media, and education (projects). There is a great deal of political and academic discourse that seeks to legitimate the privileged position through describing it as ‘neutral’, a ‘*lingua franca*’ (processes). In force are Anglo-US linguistic norms, with local variation in a rich diversity of texts (products). Making this triad normative entails disciplining, ranking, excluding and including.

I A Richards was one of the most influential figures in English Studies in the 20th century, with attachments to Cambridge and Harvard. He is primarily known for an approach to literature^x and saw English as God’s gift to humanity. His book *So much nearer. Essays toward a world English* (1968, pp. 240-1) is an apologia for global linguistic hegemony:

... acquisition is not merely for ‘wealth and prestige’, but because ‘new levels of mental capacity are induced ... the development of those concepts and sentiments: methodic, economic, moral, political, on which the continuance of man’s venture depends. We of the West have somehow – out of a strangely unself-regardful, indeed a regardless impulse of benevolence – committed ourselves to universal education as well as to universal participation in government, nominal though this last can be. There is an analogy between the conception of a world order and the design of a language which may serve man best. The choice of words for that language and the assignment of priorities among their duties can parallel the statesman’s true tasks. And it is through what language can offer him that every man has to consider what should concern him most. If rightly ordered, and developed through a due sequence, the study of English can become truly a humane education. May not such a language justly be named “EVERY MAN’S ENGLISH”?

This was the English exported worldwide in the postcolonial age, as described in the Malaysian case by Shirley Geok-Lin Lim (1996). Comparable academic ‘legitimation’ of global English and of English language learning continues in the writings of such influential people as David Crystal,

David Graddol, Bernard Spolsky, and Henry Widdowson (for detailed critiques, see Phillipson, 2009). A monolingual approach to English learning lies at the heart of approaches to English as promulgated in the UK and USA. The efficacy and ethics of this variant of the disciplines of English are increasingly being challenged, in relation to language pedagogy and ‘native speakerism’ (Holliday 2005), to wider issues of political agendas (Edge, 2006), to ELT being harnessed to a Christian missionary calling (Wong and Canagarajah, 2009), and to the export of British ELT know-how in projects worldwide (Alderson, 2009, analysed in a review article, Phillipson forthcoming).

One wonders how it can be that monolinguals are seen as experts in second language acquisition. I fear that this foundational principle is carried over into the export of English-medium universities worldwide. Thus the University of Nottingham’s subsidiaries – its campuses in Malaysia and at Ningbo, China - give the clear impression that what is being exported, even in degrees in such subjects as Education, English, Applied Linguistics, and Content and Language Integrated Learning, is not only the British English medium but also British content. The Ningbo website proclaims: ‘All undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are conducted entirely in English with the same teaching and evaluation standards as at the University of Nottingham, UK.’ Can this really be considered culturally, linguistically or pedagogically appropriate in Asia, with teachers either from Nottingham or controlled by Nottingham? If such campuses are a meeting-place for UK expertise and Asian needs and realities, is the interaction uni-directional, or open and reciprocal, and how is the project being implemented and perceived?

Managing linguistic diversity

Creating a balance between languages for national and for international purposes, while simultaneously ensuring that all language groups can exercise their linguistic human rights, is a major challenge for education systems at all levels. There is massive agreement in the research literature on the value of mother-tongue based bilingual education. UNESCO’s Guidelines on Language and Education state (2003, pp. 30-33):

- UNESCO supports *mother tongue instruction* as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.

- UNESCO supports *bilingual* and/or *multilingual education* at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
- UNESCO supports language as an essential component of *inter-cultural education* in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

Education is moving in this direction in many parts of the world, with previously marginalized languages playing a central role in achieving success in education in both the mother tongue and state languages. ‘Tribal’ languages are now being used in basic education in Nepal, and in the Indian states, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009). Similar developments are occurring in Africa (Rubagumya, 2009, Heugh, 2009) and being promoted at the political level (declarations from the ‘Forum International de Bamako sur le multilinguisme’, 19-21 January 2009, African Academy of Languages, www.acalan.org). The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is addressing the suppression of Indigenous people’s cultures and languages, so as to achieve more just forms of education (see papers by Dunbar and Skutnabb-Kangas, and others on <http://www.tove-skutnabb-kangas.org/>).

In countries like Malaysia, research confirms that the use of (spoken) English is context-dependent, reflecting and constituting multiple self- and other-identificational variables, is in flux in relation to Malay and other languages, and is negotiable (Kim, 2003). And while English permits a reflective and critical attitude towards one’s own culture and self, a form of double vision, open-mindedness, and access to information and inspiration from diverse sources, using English can be seen as individualist showing off, elitist, a relic of colonialism, associated with religion, and being ‘White’ or Westernised, from which the conclusion is drawn that the teaching of English is connected to questions of power, inequality, resistance and struggle (ibid.). These variables obviously influence what happens in classrooms, whether explicitly or implicitly.

Study of what actually takes place in classrooms can clarify some of the ‘Tensions between language policy and practice in Malaysia’ (Martin, 2005). Classroom activity in English lessons in two schools in rural Sarawak, in a totally different context from urban Malaysia, was observed: a primary school class in which English and Malay were used, but not the mother tongue of

learners, Sa'ben, and a secondary school class that was conducted mainly in English, with some use of Malay and Kelabit for lexical glossing. In both classes the learners were passive, with teachers using 'safe' practices and with no recourse to local cultures and languages. The unsound educational practice and poor results are remote from national educational goals. Such work raises serious questions about how education and multilingualism in Malaysia is being managed and implemented.

Language policy analysts should be able to draw lessons from the way English is impacting on different countries worldwide. The prestige attributed to English and structural favouring of it entail the risk of downgrading other languages. English is being transformed from a colonising language (North America, Australasia) and a language of empire (Asia, Africa) into the neoliberal (world) language. The disciplining of marginalised languages of colonial times is being rearticulated in the neoimperial world, but outcomes are unpredictable due to changes in the global economy and *de facto* diversity worldwide. What is happening in Europe is relevant for Asia and vice versa.

European Union member states (currently 27) are in principle committed to maintaining linguistic diversity, but there is a great deal of fluidity in language policies in Europe (Phillipson, 2003, 2008):

- an unresolved tension between linguistic nationalism (monolingualism), EU institutional multilingualism, and English becoming dominant in the EU,
- competing agendas at the European, state (national), and sub-statal levels,
- increasing grassroots and elite bi- and multilingualism, except among the older generation in demographically large EU countries, and in the UK in particular,
- a rhetoric of language rights, some national and supranational implementation, and advocacy of linguistic diversity,
- a largely uncritical adoption of Englishisation, of English as the *lingua economica/americana/academica/bellica*.

The uncertainty is compounded by the fact that the EU is pursuing language policies that negate each other. On the one hand it proclaims a commitment to multilingualism and linguistic diversity. On the other, many of its working practices and policies strengthen English at the expense of (speakers of) other languages. This is, for instance, the case with the Bologna process,

a key EU project with the very ambitious goal of integrating the research and higher education systems of 46 European countries (with Australia and the USA as observers, since higher education is big business for them) into a single, unified 'area', i.e. market. This 'internationalisation' is in theory committed, by the original Bologna declaration of 1999 'within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy - to consolidate a European Higher Education Area at the latest by 2010'. At the bi-annual ministerial meetings (most recently in Bergen in 2005, London in 2007, Leuven in 2009), the main focus has been on structural uniformity (a single BA, MA and PhD system), on quality control (nationally and internationally), student mobility, recognition of qualifications, and joint degrees – all of which are demanding tasks for most countries - and making European universities attractive enough to compete with the USA and Australia. What is striking and shocking is that in the long communiqués from each meeting, there is not one word on language policy, on bilingual degrees or multilingualism in higher education. On the contrary, the impression is created that what internationalisation means is English-medium higher education.

Prior to the 2007 London meeting (and before the global finance and economic crisis), EU Commissioner Figel stated (press release IP/07/656):

Bologna reforms are important but Europe should now go beyond them, as universities should also modernise the content of their curricula, create virtual campuses and reform their governance. They should also professionalize their management, diversify their funding and open up to new types of learners, businesses and society at large, in Europe and beyond. [...]The Commission supports the global strategy in concrete terms through its policies and programmes.

In other words, universities should no longer be seen as a public good but should be run like businesses, should privatise, and let industry set the agenda. Education is no longer to be seen as a public good. This is a direct result of education being increasingly considered a service that can be traded, under the aegis of the World Trade Organization, and more specifically of GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services. The global market in 'international' students encourages a shift into English away from national languages. University management imposes systems of ranking of research productivity (bibliometric quantification, A and B journals) as one means of disciplining scholarship and scholars. Publication in English is privileged above publication in all other languages, and rewarded accordingly (as is currently the case in the

Nordic countries, though governments are supposed to reverse this process). Ideally, academics in the ‘knowledge society’ are self-disciplined, keeping to ‘safe’ research topics. Freedoms of research and expression are under threat as a result of university management structures, evaluation procedures, commercially-driven English-medium universities, corporate research funding, top-down control of research topics and methods.

Ensuring balanced cohabitation with additive (as opposed to subtractive) English is a real challenge for higher education worldwide. Policies for strengthening competence in English must be one dimension of maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity, locally and globally, and resisting an unsustainable and undisciplined capitalist world ‘order’. The disciplines of English Studies must ensure that the disciplining that English exercises over other languages is restrained maximally. There are a number of heuristic questions that one can seek answers to in any given context so as to clarify whether English is functioning locally and globally as a neutral, additive *lingua franca* or as an intrusive, subtractive *lingua frankensteinia*: is the expansion and/or learning of English in any given context additive or subtractive? Is linguistic capital dispossession of national languages taking place? Is there a strengthening or a weakening of a balanced local language ecology? Where are our political and corporate leaders taking us in language policy? Is English serving local needs or merely subordinating its users to the American empire project? There are many possible answers to such questions, many unresolved issues, many challenges for national language policy and for research. The disciplines of English, which thrive in academic freedom, should be contributing to this.

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ⁱ The website (<http://www.thatchercenter.org/>) states that it was established in 2005, following a substantial donation from the Margaret Thatcher Foundation to the Heritage Foundation. It claims to be the only public policy centre in the world dedicated to advancing the vision and ideals of Lady Thatcher. Its key aims are to focus on how the United States and Great Britain can lead and change the world, to strengthen the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, and link conservatives in the USA, UK and Europe who are committed to the transatlantic alliance

and the cause of freedom across the world.

ⁱⁱ The university was founded in 1948. Its website states that in the first decade the primary academic focus was on political science, sociology, Eastern European Studies and American Studies, a clear statement of its priorities. The website has photos of the Henry Ford building (I recently also saw one at Koc University, Istanbul), and of John F. Kennedy, see http://web.fu-berlin.de/chronik/chronik_Home.html.

ⁱⁱⁱ The university was founded in Berlin in 1810, inspired by Wilhelm von Humboldt's concept of a "Universitas litterarum" which would achieve a unity of teaching and research and provide students with an all-round humanist education. This concept spread throughout the world and gave rise to the foundation of many universities of the same type over the following 150 years. See http://www.hu-berlin.de/ueberblick-en/history/huben_html.

^{iv} I wrote an article with Tove Skutnabb-Kangas in 1994 entitled 'English, panacea or pandemic' (*Sociolinguistica* 8. English only? in Europa/in Europe/en Europe, 73-87). It expressed scepticism at the hubris of the way English was being marketed as a panacea in the post-communist world, along with the free market and human rights. English was conflated with democracy and all things good, backed up by fraudulent claims for what the language would achieve.

^v There will be a conference in Luxembourg in March 2010 (www.multilingualuniversities.net), at which one concern will be how far certain criteria need to be observed for a university to call itself bilingual. The theme is 'Professionalising Multilingualism in Higher Education : Developing Plurilingual Individuals and Multilingual Institutions'.

^{vi} Cf. data on Malaysia in Asmah Haji Omar 1996.

^{vii} <http://www.norden.org/>.

^{viii} This British children's nursery rhyme runs:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses,
And all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

For visualisations and historical analysis, Google is a good starting-point.

^{ix} This is a 13-page document, that elaborates many points, among them:

- the right to education, teaching and research can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom and autonomy for institutions of higher education ...
- Recognizing the diversity of cultures in the world ...
- Teaching in higher education is a profession: it is a form of public service.

^x See Raymond Williams' critique in Phillipson 2009.

The Applicability of Principles for Instructed Second Language Learning: A South Korean Perspective

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Abstract

Communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches in second language (L2) education have been central to recent curricula innovations in a number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, including South Korea. Research indicates that teachers can face challenges in implementing these initiatives and feel frustrated by constraints perceived to be outside their locus of control. A variety of alternative approaches which take into account specific contexts are therefore proposed in the literature. General principles and frameworks for guiding L2 acquisition have also been considered in terms of their applicability in a variety of language learning and teaching settings. This study examines South Korean teachers' perceptions of the applicability to their contexts of the general principles for effective instructed second language learning proposed by Ellis (2005). The findings indicate that contextual constraints would impede the application of some of the principles, but that an awareness of them may give EFL teachers a sense of agency, despite wider socio-cultural constraints. The authors suggest that an understanding of research-informed principles, such as those proposed by Ellis, will assist teachers to engage in self-reflection and praxis, and provide common points of reference for language teachers and researchers in the international community.

Key Words: Ellis, principles for effective instructed second language learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), curriculum innovation

1. Introduction

Recent curricula innovations in several countries where English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL), including South Korea, have included communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches that are commonly used in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. These changes have resulted in English teachers from many EFL contexts attending short-term second language (L2) teacher education programs in English-speaking countries. Participants have reported challenges implementing CLT in their classrooms, and these challenges are also widely reported in EFL literature (Breen, 2006; Butler, 2005; Chowdhury, 2003; Hu, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Li, 1998; Savignon & Wang, 2003; Wu & Fang, 2002). Researchers have explored alternatives to CLT for EFL instruction, and continue to examine the usefulness of the construct of “method” in second language teaching and learning contexts (Bax, 1997, 2003; Brown, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006; Richards, 2001).

Proposed solutions to reported challenges include moves towards L2 teaching approaches that are context-specific, and which align more closely to existing practices as well as to the needs and realities of specific EFL settings (Bax, 2003; Bjorning-Gyde & Doogan, 2004; Bjorning-Gyde, Doogan, & East, 2008; Breen, 2006; Fenton & Terasawa, 2006; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006). Frameworks for second language teaching along with general principles underpinning language teaching and learning have also been proposed as guidelines for teachers to apply as appropriate to their specific settings (Allwright, 2003; Brown, 2001, 2002; Ellis, 2005; Kumaravadevelu, 2003, 2006; Lightbown, 2000).

The case study reported in this paper was motivated by feedback from several groups of Asian EFL teachers undertaking professional development programs in New Zealand, who expressed frustration at their inability to implement CLT. The study explores South Korean EFL teachers’ perceptions of the applicability of Ellis’s (2005) principles for effective instructed second language learning in their specific EFL contexts.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

CLT describes an approach to language education that focuses on developing learners' communicative competence (Brown, 2001; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Both a weak and a strong version of CLT have been described (Howatt, 1984). In the weak version, activities that promote communication are incorporated into a wider language program that allows for the pre-selection of target language forms and functions. In contrast, learners' use of the target language drives learning in the strong version of CLT, and creates opportunities for incidental 'noticing' of formal features in the target language (Richards, 2006).

CLT is a "learner-centered and experience-based view of teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 69), which promotes learner independence and requires classroom cultures with more equal relationships between teachers and learners than those in many EFL contexts (Canh, 1999; Chowdhury, 2003; Stapleton, 1995). In a CLT approach, the teacher functions as a facilitator or guide, supporting learners as they try out new language and giving feedback on errors as a necessary step in the language learning process (Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2001). Using an integrated skills approach, many CLT activities are done in pairs or small groups, so learners have opportunities to use the target language in a variety of roles and contexts that aim to approximate authentic situations to develop learners' situationally appropriate use of the L2 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

2.2 Differences between ESL and EFL

EFL usually refers to contexts where English is not an official language but is part of the school curriculum. In such settings, English often performs a gate-keeping role for advancement within education or careers (Richards, 1985). Most EFL students do not require English outside their classrooms, and the learners' shared language is frequently the medium of instruction in EFL lessons. In contrast, ESL is generally used to refer to the study of English as a second or additional language in an English-speaking country, where English is the medium of instruction,

and is used by learners both inside and outside the classroom. In an ESL situation, the teachers are often native speakers of English, and learners commonly have different first languages.

2.3 Challenges Implementing CLT in an EFL Environment

Researchers have identified common challenges that teachers face when endeavoring to implement CLT in a range of Asian countries, including Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Japan, China, and South Korea (Canh, 1999; Chowdhury, 2003; Li, 1998; Nishino, 2008; Stapleton, 1995; Wu & Fang, 2002). Reports of challenges frequently refer to differences between what a CLT approach requires and the transmission-style educational practices of many of these countries (Biggs, 1996; Butler, 2005; Campbell & Zhao, 1993). Learners' traditional passivity in many Asian cultures, and their reservations about the need for communicative competence, are frequently reported to underpin students' unwillingness to do small-group and pair activities, which are central to a communicative approach (Hu, 2002; Hui, 1997; Insull, 2001; Sun & Cheng, 2000).

The washback effect of examinations is another widely reported constraint on the implementation of CLT in EFL contexts, with many researchers and teachers questioning the need to teach communicative competence in situations where the main purpose for learning English is for competitive national examinations that primarily test grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension (Li, 1998; Reed, 2002; Wu & Fang, 2002). Teachers in a number of EFL countries also report challenges developing and assessing their students' communicative skills in English, due to their own lack of communicative competence, large classes, and the lack of effective and efficient oral testing tools (Canagarajah, 1999; Dash, 2002; Hasegawa, 2003; Kim, 2003; Reed, 2002).

Further challenges are reported to derive from a lack of institutional support for communicative approaches, and from evaluating teachers according to their students' examination pass rates, with the latter in particular seen as disadvantaging teachers who implement CLT and discouraging others from trying it (Canh, 1999; Hui, 1997). Lack of support is also described in terms of insufficient resourcing, and classroom conditions that make it more challenging to implement

interactive activities (Deckert, 2004; Hu, 2002; Hui, 1997; Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Pham, 2005; Sun & Cheng, 2000).

In addition to cultural and contextual constraints, researchers note that challenges associated with implementing communicative strategies can also result from teachers' lack of understanding of CLT (Li, 1998; Sun & Cheng, 2000; Wu & Fang, 2002). Other researchers, including Kumaravadivelu (1993) and Canh (1999), suggest that this problem may stem from teacher training programs that do not provide sufficient grounding in second language acquisition theories, or the necessary skills and practical experience that teachers need in order to confidently and competently implement communicative approaches.

2.4 Post-method and Located Approaches to L2 Education

The pivotal role of teachers in deciding what is most appropriate for their contexts has been the focus of recent L2 teacher education literature, which shows a trend towards critical perspectives on teaching approaches, and a move towards socio-cultural considerations in teacher training (Bax, 1997; Crandall, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Lamie, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The need to take account of socio-cultural and political factors, including historical influences, has also been widely discussed in relation to classroom practice (Breen, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Kumaravadevelu, 2006; Li, 1998), with researchers reporting the development of a range of local approaches that are more compatible with existing methodologies in many EFL settings (Bjorning-Gyde & Doogan, 2004; Bjorning-Gyde et al., 2008; Breen, 2006; Fenton & Terasawa, 2006; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006).

There has also been a shift in focus in EFL literature from method-based to post-method pedagogies, with the latter emphasizing teachers' observations of their own teaching and their students' learning in order to better understand the underlying principles of effective teaching and the circumstances that enable these (Breen, 2006; Brown, 2001, 2002; Ellis, 2005; Kumaravadevelu, 2006; Lightbown, 2000; Richards, 2001). Different frameworks and guiding principles also have been proposed to provide support for teachers as they determine the microstrategies and classroom activities that are most appropriate for their individual contexts

(Allwright, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2003, 2006; Lightbown, 2000; Richards, 2001). Among these is a set of general principles that Ellis (2005) proposed as the result of a review of a range of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies of instructed L2 acquisition that he undertook for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

2.5 Ellis’s General Principles for Successful Instructed Learning

Ellis’s (2005) principles address the nature of L2 competence and the foci of instruction, and are offered to language curricula developers and L2 teachers as a guide for a learning-centered pedagogy. Table 1 presents an outline of Ellis’s 10 principles. Ellis (2005) not only provides a full explanation of the rationale for each principle but also valuable guidance for operationalizing some of these (pp. 33–42). It is important to note, however, that Ellis draws attention to the inconclusive and sometimes conflicting results of L2 acquisition studies to date, and stresses that L2 research does not yet provide “a definitive account of how to ensure that instructed language learning is successful” (p. 33). Because Ellis’s principles have had a significant impact on recent L2 teaching and teacher education in New Zealand (Erlam, 2008; Litwin, 2008), these were selected as the focus for the current study.

Table 1: Summary of Ellis’s (2005) general principles for successful instructed learning

Principle 1	Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence
Principle 2	Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning
Principle 3	Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form
Principle 4	Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 while not neglecting explicit

	knowledge
Principle 5	Instruction needs to take into account learners' "built-in syllabus"
Principle 6	Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input
Principle 7	Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output
Principle 8	The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency
Principle 9	Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners: a. teachers need to cater to students' different learning styles b. teachers are responsible for students' intrinsic motivation ^a
Principle 10	In assessing learners' L2 proficiency, it is important to examine free as well as controlled production

^a The wording of this principle was expanded in the questionnaire to elicit teachers' perceptions of two key learner differences identified by Ellis (2005, p. 41).

2.6 Research Aims

To explore whether Ellis's (2005) principles would provide useful guidelines for English language teachers in South Korea as they attempt to implement the "communicative curriculum", the study reported here investigated teachers' perceptions of the applicability of these principles in their individual EFL contexts. The specific research questions guiding the study were:

1. How do South Korean EFL teachers perceive the applicability of Ellis's (2005) principles for successful instructed second language learning in South Korean classrooms?
2. Which of Ellis's (2005) principles for successful instructed second language learning do South Korean EFL teachers consider to be the most important to try to use in their classrooms?
3. What constraints do South Korean EFL teachers perceive are likely to impede attempts to

implement Ellis's (2005) principles for successful instructed second language learning?

3. The Study

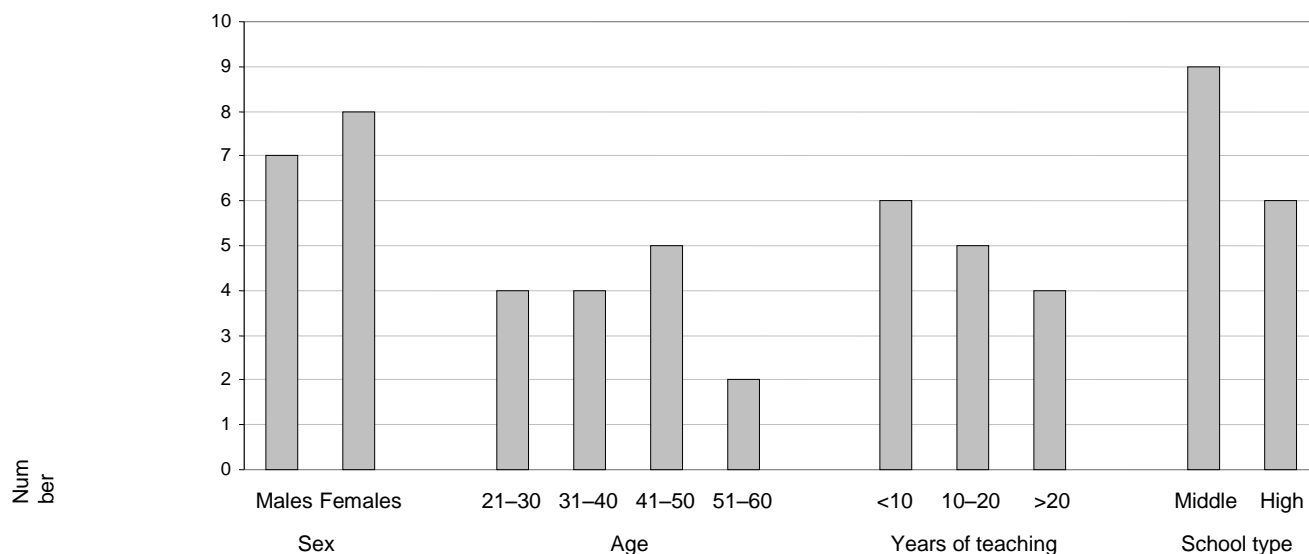
3.1 Method

The study used a qualitative case study approach to investigate the research questions. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Burns (2000) attest to the value of such an approach for this type of investigation, that is, into “a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context” (Burns, 2000, p. 460). More particularly, they cite the value of multiple methods and subjects to increase a study's credibility and broaden its applicability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution that the transferability of the results of such a study may be limited, and stress the need for readers to exercise caution when assessing the degree and extent to which the results can be applied to other contexts.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study were a convenience sample, comprising an intact class of 15 South Korean English language teachers (seven male, eight female) undertaking a four-week professional development program in New Zealand. The ages of participants ranged from 25 to 52 ($M = 40.5$), and their teaching experience ranged from 2.5 to 27 years ($M = 12.8$). All participants were teaching in urban middle or high schools in South Korea at the time of the study (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Participant demographics



3.3 Data Collection Materials and Procedures

In the week prior to data-gathering, participants investigated a range of approaches to EFL teaching and learning as part of their professional development program. This included an introduction to Ellis's (2005) principles for instructed second language acquisition conducted by one of the researchers. Consideration was given throughout the study to the processes and procedures utilized to ensure that ethical requirements were fully met, that the research was conducted in a culturally appropriate manner and that the researchers' use of L2 did not impede participants' understanding or contributions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Dörnyei, 2003). A bilingual information sheet was distributed as part of the process of gaining informed consent, and a translator was present at the briefing session to confirm that all teachers understood that participation in the study was voluntary and formed no part of their program or assessment.

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were employed for data collection. A self-completion questionnaire was used to gather demographic and qualitative data from all 15 participants. This was earlier piloted with a non-participant group of South Korean teachers to ensure clarity in both the instructions and the questions. The questionnaire elicited information

about the participants' present and preferred methods of teaching English, and the difficulties they experienced. Participants indicated which of Ellis's (2005) principles they were currently applying in their English teaching, and which they were not applying but would like to try. During their consideration of each principle, participants also gave further explanations regarding potential impediments, and specified the resources or training they would require to apply that principle in their current teaching contexts. The questionnaire was administered and completed in English, with a bilingual glossary of key terms and an academic interpreter present.

After coding and preliminary analysis of the questionnaire responses, individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken to give participants an opportunity to expand on their questionnaire responses, and to enable the researchers to probe, where appropriate, for a deeper understanding of the emergent findings (Burns, 2000). Fourteen of the 15 questionnaire respondents agreed to be interviewed. To ensure the interviews were conducted in a systematic order, and to minimize limitations associated with using two interviewers, our interview schedule followed guidelines proposed by Kvale (1996). Researcher-participant power relationships were also given consideration, and the researchers endeavoured to maintain objectivity in framing prompts and responding to participants' answers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Before being interviewed, the participants received a copy of the key questions. These explored the perceived benefits and challenges of applying Ellis's (2005) principles and asked participants to rank the principles in an order that indicated which they considered most important to try to use with their own classes. All participants declined the option of having a translator present, electing to conduct the interviews fully in English. The recorded interviews (from 40 to 53 minutes' duration) were professionally transcribed, and participants were offered an opportunity to review their responses and make changes.

3.4 Data Analysis

Because the variable-related groups within the sample were small, the quantitative data were not subjected to statistical testing. The qualitative component of the questionnaires and data from the interviews were analysed using a grounded constant comparative approach, with similarities and dissonances noted as themes were identified and categorized (Merriam, 1998). Throughout the

data analysis process, the researchers were also mindful of the possibility of interpretive biases resulting from differences in their own and the participants' personal biographies and cultural frames of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

4. Results

In the following presentation of the results, direct quotations are used where possible to give voice to the research participants, with “I” and “Q” used to indicate whether the quotations are from interview or questionnaire responses. Pseudonyms have been assigned to all participants to ensure confidentiality.

4.1 Current and Preferred Methods of Teaching English

All 15 participants reported using a variety of approaches to teach English. Grammar-translation was the primary method used by all six high school teachers, and both grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods were employed by the nine middle school teachers. All participants reported being aware of CLT, and all had tried to implement communicative strategies. Four participants indicated that they used CLT in specific time slots or for teaching certain topics or skills to complement their use of grammar-translation or audio-lingual methods.

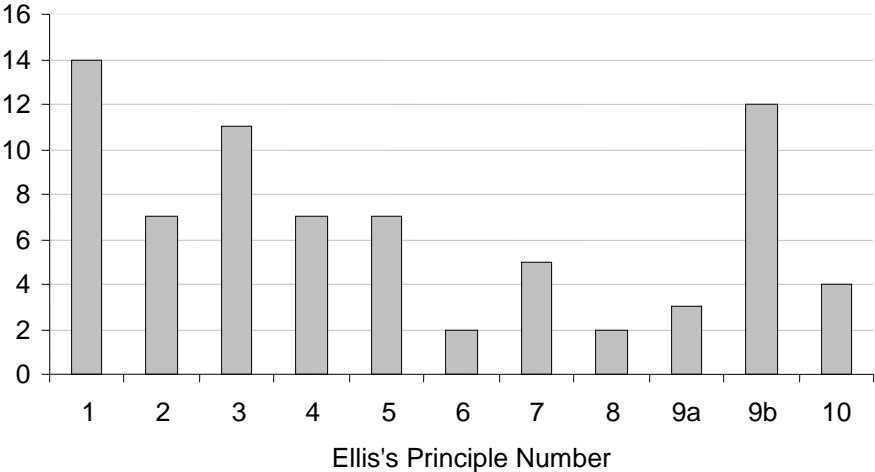
Actually it depends on the part of each lesson. When I teach dialogue and conversation, I use CLT. But for the textbook, I just use the grammar-translation method. (Jin Woo, Q)

Participants who favored the audio-lingual method over CLT cited its efficiency, both in preparation time prior to classes and the shorter time required within classes for task completion and administration (such as giving explanations and organizing students into groups). Grammar-translation was perceived to be the most appropriate method to use when preparing high school students for university entrance examinations, and was favored by all high school teacher participants for this reason. Teachers also cited challenges they experienced implementing CLT, along with student and parental expectations, as influencing the methods they employed.

4.2 Application of Ellis's Principles

In the questionnaire, participants indicated which of Ellis’s general principles of instructed L2 learning they were currently implementing in their English teaching (see Figure 2). A number of perceived difficulties in implementing some of the principles were reported in the qualitative questionnaire responses; some of these related to specific principles, and others applied to groups of principles. Participants also reported on resources and training they would require to implement the principles successfully. These, and the perceived difficulties, are reported below alongside related themes that emerged during analysis of the full interview data.

Figure 2: Participants’ reports of which of Ellis’s principles they were currently applying in their teaching



Number

During the interviews, participants were first asked to expand on their questionnaire responses, and then to identify and rank the three principles they believed were most important to try to apply in their own classes. Each participants’ top ranking was assigned a value of 3, their second a value of 2, and their third a value of 1. Table 2 shows the aggregated results and the total number of mentions for each principle, regardless of place in the rankings. These item rankings are discussed in further detail below.

Table 2: Aggregated rankings of the principles that participants considered the most important to try to apply in their teaching

Principle	Aggregate score	Overall mentions
Principle 1	0	0
Principle 2	7	4
Principle 3	6	3
Principle 4	15	6
Principle 5	0	0
Principle 6	12	5
Principle 7	8	5
Principle 8	12	7
Principle 9	14	6
Principle 10	9	4

Note: The maximum number of overall mentions for each principle is 14 (the number of interview participants).

4.3 Benefits and Barriers

Twelve out of the 14 interviewees were positive about the applicability of some of Ellis’s principles in their individual EFL teaching contexts, and six teachers said that their awareness of the principles gave them a sense of achievement in relation to the approaches they were using. The specificity of the principles, in particular, was cited as helpful by six teachers, and over half of the participants stated that learning about the principles had made them reflect more deeply on their own teaching methods. However, all interviewees pointed out that applying at least some of Ellis’s principles required the same classroom culture and dynamics as demanded by CLT and so would be constrained by some of the same impediments that presently limit implementation of CLT in South Korea. Participants also referred to wider societal factors that impacted on their ability to implement some of the principles.

4.3.1 Principle 1

Fourteen of the 15 questionnaire respondents reported that their students were already learning formulaic expressions, or “chunks” of language, in addition to developing rule-based knowledge. None of the interview participants ranked this as an important principle to try to apply, primarily because “all the teachers already teach formulaic expressions” (Eun Ji, I), and “common phrases are already emphasized in bold in the text books” (Mi Sun, I).

4.3.2 Principle 2

Seven respondents reported that their students focused more on pragmatic meaning than on semantic meaning, and only four ranked this principle in the three most important ones to try to apply. One third of the teachers reported feeling well supported in regard to this principle by the textbooks they were required to use, and five stated that the software accompanying their textbooks provided valuable examples of contextualized usage. However, three participants reported that a focus on pragmatic meaning was only practicable in English conversation clubs, which they were operating in addition to scheduled classes, and seven interviewees suggested their own English competency constrained their ability to engage fully with more proficient students, thus limiting some students’ pragmatic development.

4.3.3 Principle 3

Over two thirds of the questionnaire respondents stated their students were already focusing on the relationship between grammatical forms and functions, and the aggregated rankings confirmed that this principle was not a priority for participants to try to apply. Again, many teachers commented favorably on the support provided by textbooks, explaining that “one part has the grammatical forms and sentences about them, and another part has the functions they perform” (Yong Moon, I).

4.3.4 Principle 4

Seven participants reported they attempt to develop their students' implicit knowledge using communicative activities. With the highest aggregated ranking and the second highest overall number of mentions, developing implicit (as well as explicit) knowledge was prioritized by interviewees as the most important principle for them to try to apply. However, four respondents reported that their efforts to engage students in communicative activities to assist the development of implicit knowledge and fluency were hampered by student resistance and off-task behavior: "I can't control them They think this is not testable, so the students don't pay attention" (Young Ah, I).

4.3.5 Principle 5

Seven questionnaire respondents reported using classroom instruction that supports the natural "built-in" order in which language is acquired. None of the interviewees cited this principle as an important one to try to apply, as, according to four participants, "the textbook is already organized in that order" (Eun Ji, I). However, three teachers stated they lacked sufficient knowledge about learners' "built-in syllabus" to make informed decisions about the order of presentation, and four reported that pre-service and in-service training needs to provide more information about language acquisition theories to help teachers evaluate what is best for their students at different stages of their L2 development.

4.3.6 Principle 6

This was ranked the equal third most important principle to try to apply, with over three quarters of the participants reporting that their students did not have extensive opportunities to read or hear English during and outside of class time. However, over half the interviewees expressed frustration about students failing to make use of input already available in the form of English newspapers and magazines, software and internet resources, and radio and television broadcasts: "I recommend these to my students, but they won't do it" (Seo Yun, I). Perceived barriers

included low student motivation, lack of support from parents, and examination washback. One teacher reflected the comments of over half the participants when she said, “Students are not interested in English as a language they will use for communication. For them, it is just another ‘subject’ for the examinations” (Kyung Min, Q). The emphasis on the predominantly reading and grammar focused examinations also underpinned the teachers’ view that “reading is more important than hearing because we must help our students get good grades” (Yong Moon, Q).

Teachers’ own perceived lack of English proficiency, and anxiety about criticism from more fluent students who had studied overseas were reported to restrict teachers’ use of English in the classroom, further limiting students’ L2 input. Participants reported using between 5% and 30% English during their lessons, with variations sometimes reflecting the teachers’ confidence and the level of their students’ proficiency. Just over half of the interviewees recommended additional English lessons or fluency training for teachers.

4.3.7 Principle 7

Two thirds of the questionnaire respondents reported their English lessons provided students with few opportunities for extensive oral or written output, citing large classes, lack of student motivation, and “not enough time for covering all the work for exams” (Myung Hee, Q). This principle was ranked as the sixth most important one to try to apply, although participants suggested that “students will not be interested, because they only want to do something if it is related to their high school or university examinations” (Young Jae, I).

4.3.8 Principle 8

Only two participants reported providing many opportunities for students to interact in English during class time, and, with the highest number of total mentions, this ranked as the equal third most important principle to try to apply. Just over half the interviewees referred to potential L2 learning benefits from extended interaction, but lack of teacher training, low student proficiency, large multi-level classes, learners’ use of their first language, and lack of time for teaching English were all reported to impede pair or group work. Additionally, participants stated that

textbooks did not provide adequate support for communicative activities, while behavior management concerns further deterred some teachers: “I want to do group work, but I fear there will be problems. I can’t control the students” (Eun Ji, I). One third of the participants also feared repercussions from principals and colleagues if their classes became noisy while engaging in interactive tasks.

A general lack of support for communicative methods also discouraged some participants from facilitating student interaction: “The principal and parents don’t think it’s a good method. They even think it is a waste of time” (Young Jae, Q). Many of the reported barriers were linked by participants to the washback effect of the high school and university examinations, and resulted in them prioritizing content and skills that would be examined: “In Korea, people think your whole life depends on your KSAT [Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test] grade. This is mostly true” (Hyun Soo, I).

Participants also reported that high levels of administration and other school responsibilities limited the level of teacher input into English conversation clubs and English-only zones established by some schools to increase L2 interaction.

4.3.9 Principle 9

Although only three teachers reported using a variety of activities to cater for students’ different learning styles, over three-quarters of the participants agreed that teachers are responsible for students’ intrinsic motivation. This was perceived as the second most important principle to try to apply. Reported barriers included large classes, lack of knowledge about different learning strategies, and time and testing constraints. One teacher commented that “The teacher should prepare lots of materials and use dynamic teaching ways, but we also have lots of administration to do” (Hyun Soo, Q). Another said, “A variety of teaching activities is helpful to improve [students’] English” (Eun Ji, I).

4.3.10 Principle 10

Four respondents reported assessing “free” as well as controlled oral production, and this ranked

as the fifth most important principle to try to implement. However, over half of the participants referred to challenges with oral assessments, for controlled as well as free production, citing teachers' lack of proficiency, the lack of suitable assessment instruments, and the subjective nature of oral assessment as potentially problematic: "I know oral assessment is important, but I can't do it" (Sun Hwa, I). "It's difficult to make exact criteria, and parents argue that we have not judged the students correctly" (Kyung Min, Q). One third of the participants also stated that the wide variation in students' proficiency and the time taken for individual testing were hampering oral assessments.

4.4 Suitability for South Korean Schools

All participants in this study referred to barriers that would impede or attenuate efforts to apply a number of Ellis's principles in South Korean schools. Three barriers, in particular, were mentioned repeatedly: the emphasis on preparation for predominantly grammar-based examinations; teachers' lack of oral L2 proficiency; and large, multi-level classes. Many teachers expressed frustration that "after studying for six or eight or ten years, our students still can't speak English" (Sun Hwa, I), and claimed that, as "the world is getting closer and closer" (Young Jae, I), English proficiency is becoming a more important skill. Over half the participants reported that teachers who focus on overall English competence rather than on examination preparation are regarded as poor teachers. One participant summed up the opinion of the majority of teachers when she said:

Ellis's principles are useful, but first we must solve the problems: the examination, the classroom, and teachers' deficiency in spoken English. Then we can use the principles in Korea. (Jae Sung, I)

5. Discussion

The intent of this study was to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of the applicability of Ellis's (2005) research-informed general principles for effective instructed second language learning,

and to identify constraints that may impede the implementation of these principles in a specific EFL context. The results present a complex picture, indicating that, overall, the South Korean teacher-participants felt well supported by existing systems and resources in applying some of the principles, but constrained in their ability to operationalize and implement other principles by a number of personal, pedagogical, and systemic barriers perceived to be beyond their individual loci of control. The discrete and specific nature of the principles assisted participants in identifying aspects of their own practice that contributed to effective language learning, and gave some teachers a sense of agency in regard to the potential for implementing some of the principles they did not currently apply.

Participants regarded the following four principles as the most important principles to try to implement: developing students' implicit knowledge of the L2 (Principle 4); taking account of individual differences (Principle 9); providing opportunities for extensive L2 input (Principle 6); and providing opportunities for interaction (Principle 8). However, many of the constraints reported in relation to applying these principles in the participants' South Korea middle and high schools aligned closely with those described earlier in this report in relation to the implementation of CLT in a range of EFL contexts. Additionally, teachers in this study reported that their lack of understanding of language acquisition theories, and their lack of training for managing group work and catering for individual differences also constrained their ability to successfully apply all of Ellis's principles.

The results of this study suggest that what and how the participants teach is not determined by the goals of the South Korean communicative curriculum, or by the findings of language acquisition research. Rather, it appears that classroom practice is driven primarily by the washback effect of the high school and university placement examinations, and by what teachers consider manageable given perceived personal and contextual constraints. Participants indicated that the goal of communicative competence and the teaching approaches required for this remain incompatible with the deep-rooted socio-cultural values that contextualize contemporary teaching practices in South Korea, and counter the current expectations of many students, parents, and school administrators. It seems likely, therefore, that the tensions reported by participants in this

study, as they navigate what Ellis (2008, p. 285) refers to as “the gap between the curriculum-on-paper and the curriculum-in-action”, will continue to frustrate and hamper L2 teachers in South Korea and similar EFL settings, until the relationship between what is assessed and what is taught is recognized by language curricula developers, and at least some of the reported constraints are acknowledged and addressed.

Ellis (2005) concedes that the results of most language acquisition studies are still contested, and advises that the proposed principles are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather should be regarded as guidelines to be trialed by teachers when appropriate to their own specific work contexts and local conditions. This view is supported by researchers such as Kumaravadevelu (2006) and Johnson (2006), who stress the need for a transformative approach to L2 teacher education that develops teachers’ reflective skills, thereby allowing them to interpret and apply theoretical principles in situationally appropriate ways. Such an approach acts as a check against sets of general principles, such as those proposed by Ellis, being imposed or adopted in their entirety as a replacement “method” with which teachers’ and learners’ classroom behaviors must align (Richards, 2001).

5.1 Limitations

The findings of this exploratory investigation should be regarded as indicative rather than definitive, as the study has a number of limitations. The first of these relates to the size and demographics of the participant group. However, while the perceptions of the 15 participants in this study are unlikely to be representative of all teachers, it is not unreasonable, given the alignment of the findings with earlier studies, to consider that they represent the views of a large number of comparable South Korean EFL teachers.

Efforts were made throughout this study to conduct the research ethically and to minimize or remediate recognized limitations. The possible impact of an interviewer effect and researcher subjectivity on the process and findings of this study have been acknowledged earlier in this report, as has the researchers’ sensitivity throughout the study to limitations associated with working with participants from a different cultural background to their own. Additionally,

limitations associated with one of the researchers operating in the dual role of researcher and lecturer are acknowledged.

Issues relating to the reliability of self-reported data also impact on the ability to generalize the findings of this study. A reluctance to report personal difficulties due to “face” concerns is a recognized limitation in research of this nature (Lee & Renzetti, 1993), and may have resulted in discrepancies between participants’ reporting of perceived challenges and classroom or school realities.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

Replications of this study with larger, more diverse groups from a range of EFL backgrounds would allow for confirmation or refutation of the findings of this study, and would increase the knowledge base on factors impacting on successful second language learning in EFL settings. Follow-up studies could explore the influence on participants’ classroom practices of teachers’ awareness of Ellis’s principles and the research that informed them. Further research is required to explore the relative significance of the barriers identified in this study, and to determine whether addressing specific impediments may mitigate the impact of a number of other barriers. Future studies could also usefully examine EFL teachers’ views on appropriate professional development to assist them in their implementation of current curriculum innovations.

6. Conclusion

This study was undertaken in response to ongoing frustrations reported by groups of Asian EFL teachers experiencing difficulties implementing communicative curriculum innovations in their respective countries and institutions. The study explored the extent to which one group of South Korean teachers perceived Ellis’s (2005) principles for effective second language learning to be applicable in their EFL contexts, with a focus on factors affecting their operationalization and implementation. The results indicate a high degree of overlap in the barriers reported in earlier studies as impeding teachers’ implementation of communicative curricula, and those that

compromise teachers' ability to apply many of Ellis's principles.

The wider relevance of this research lies in the contribution it makes to the ongoing debate about EFL curriculum innovation, and about what is achievable and effective in different EFL contexts. As researchers continue to explore the pedagogical and practical strategies that best promote instructed L2 acquisition, teachers must ultimately make their own decisions about the most appropriate approaches for specific groups of learners in specific contexts. An understanding of research-based principles, such as those central to this study, can serve as a useful guide to effective classroom practices as these decisions are made, and as a platform from which teachers can critically evaluate their own language teaching. In addition, it can contribute to teachers' development of a cohesive approach while drawing on strategies from a range of methodologies. Individual critical praxis, such as this, may facilitate collaborative teacher development and dialogic praxis among language teachers and researchers in the wider international community.

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Students' and Teachers' Use of and Attitudes to L1 in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This study examines the students' and teachers' attitudes to the use of L1 in EFL classrooms at a Korean School in Vietnam. Little research has been done on English language teaching in multilevel language classrooms in the Asian context. The study employed questionnaires, interviews and observations to obtain the participants' attitudes to L1 use in three different settings, beginners, intermediate and advanced students. The findings suggest that L1 plays a supportive role in the language classroom, especially in the early stages, and more significantly in reading and writing. Korean students agreed with Korean teachers about the usefulness of L1 while native speaker English language teachers emphasized the importance of using L1 exclusively. L1 was found useful for explaining the meaning of words and grammar explanations but inappropriate in pairwork and groupwork activities. The paper provides recommendations for successful L1 use in multilevel classrooms and suggests that more research is required to shed light on the success of L1 use in multilingual and multilevel language classrooms.

Keywords: mother tongue, teacher attitudes, student attitudes, classroom language

I. Introduction and justification

The use of L1 in the EFL classroom has been heavily debated in ELT all over the world. There has been an issue between many language teachers as to whether L1 should or should not be used, and to what extent L1 can be employed in L2 classes to facilitate communication. L1 use

was seen to hinder language learning but recent research has suggested L1 use provides support and appropriate scaffolding in language learning. English schools all over the world have introduced an English only policy when teaching English while others have developed the immersion method in public schools to promote L1 use.

The issue of using L1 has been raised several times and has divided teachers and learners not only in this school but in many English language schools in Vietnam and all over the world. Facing the same dilemmas, a Korean school in Vietnam, has included 2 English subjects in accordance with those requirements, a Korean-English subject, and an English only subject (EFL) divided into three levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced) in the secondary school. The Korean- English curriculum includes teaching by Korean English teachers as part of the national curriculum and the EFL curriculum is mainly taught by English native speakers. The students who enroll in the secondary school are all Korean natives with diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds, some of whom have graduated from the primary's bilingual (co-teaching- English-Korean) program, some have spent some time in English-speaking countries, and still others have not had a great amount of exposure to the target language. In accordance with the Korean curriculum that the school offers, an additional foreign language is compulsory with a choice in Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, or Japanese.

The researchers' observations suggest that there are some tensions in the school between the teachers employed in the two curricula. Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTSs) tend to believe that an English only policy benefits the language learners the most, but the Korean English teachers (Non NESTSs) have a tendency to use too much Korean and depend on the grammar translation method. Due to the different beliefs and expectations from each side, the curriculum lacks consistent development, resulting in movements towards entirely opposite directions. Therefore, it is essential that a consistent approach be adopted that draws on current research and teachers' and students' preferences. This research aims to examine students' and teachers' attitudes to the use and effectiveness of L1 in the classroom and propose recommendations. This research will offer a better understanding of teachers' and students' preferences in L1 use and help coordinate the teachers' activities and attitudes to teaching. It will provide some positive guidelines as to how NESTSs and Non NESTSs can employ L1 use effectively in the classroom, and offer insight into how the students can apply L1 in language learning, not only in this Korean school but other schools that face similar dilemmas.

II. Background research on L1 use in the ELT classroom

There is abundant research that discusses the two directions, which have often been discussed with the terms of “using English to learn it” or “learning to use English” (Howatt, 1984 cited in Richards & Rogers 2001, pp.155). The former is talking about the avoidance of L1 use, whereas the latter refers to incorporating its use.

There is some research that supports the former viewpoint, especially with regards to the excessive use of L1. Specifically, Selinker pointed out that “too much reliance on the first language will result in the fossilization of an interlanguage” (1992, cited in Weschler 1997: online). Modica shared similar views suggesting “[t]he use of the first language wastes too much valuable class time that would be better spent on the target language” (1994, cited in Weschler 1997, online). Gabrielatos also criticised language learners and teachers for their “unprincipled use of L1 [which] can have long-lasting negative effects on the learners’ awareness and production of the target language” (2001, online). Nation contended that use of the “mother tongue has harmful psychological effects on learners” (1990, cited in Tang 2002, p.37)

Other and more recent research contradicted the exclusion of L1 in the classroom, especially after the introduction of CLT. It was suggested that L1 use helps students understand and learn more effectively. Finocchiaro and Brumfit supported the idea that “[judicious] use of native language is accepted where feasible” (1983 cited in Brown 2001, p.45 and Richards & Rogers 2000, p.156). Moreover, Swan suggested that there are numerous correspondences between L1 and L2: “When we set out to learn a new language, we automatically assume that meanings and structures are going to be broadly similar to those in our own language” (1985, p.85).

In one research study on ESP students in Lithuania, Janulevicienė and Kavaliauskienė (2002) found out 86% of the teachers and 83% of the students surveyed agree that native language should be used in university EFL classes. Furthermore, 86% of the teachers thought that L1 does help learners learn a foreign language, while an even higher number of students hold the same idea (95%). Similarly, Tang (2002) also reported that 91% of the surveyed university students in Beijing claim to have benefited from the use of L1 in class. He also showed that “limited and judicious use of mother tongue in the English classroom does not reduce students’ exposure to English, but rather can assist in the teaching and learning processes” (2002, p.41) and that the prohibition of L1 use in a low-level monolingual EFL class is just, according to Nunan and Lamb

(1996), “practically impossible” (cited in Tang, 2002). Schweers also found that “using Spanish has led to positive attitudes towards the process of learning English and better yet, encourage students to learn more English” (1999, online).

In sum, previous research has discussed the effectiveness of judicious L1 use but has also warned about its excessive use. However, little, if any, research is available on the effective use of L1 in minority schools and schools with mixed ability students and multilingual backgrounds. In addition, there has been little discussion regarding L1’s appropriateness in different level classes and various skills and activities. Few suggestions have been made as to how L1 and L2 use can be incorporated efficiently in the classroom that promote increased L2 use and incorporate optimal L1 use. Within this context, this research will examine students’ and teachers’ attitudes to L1 use in the classroom and their opinions about the extent to which it could be used. In addition, the research combines and contrasts views and opinions from three different groups, EFL learners, Korean native speaker teachers and English native speaker teachers. Although the research examines the students’ attitudes to learning English in a Korean school in Vietnam, the results can be applicable to other schools confronting similar dilemmas.

III. Research aims

Based on the lack of research on effective L1 use for students of various linguistic levels, this project aimed at investigating students’ and teachers’ opinions about and attitudes to how and to what extent they should be allowed to apply L1 in the classroom. The second aim was to examine to what extent L1 is beneficial in the classroom, broken down by proficiency levels and macro-skills.

The central research questions in the study were:

- ✓ What are the NEST and non NEST teachers’ views on the appropriate use of L1 in the classroom and its perceived contribution to the students’ learning?
- ✓ What are the EFL learners’ opinions about the appropriate use of L1 in the classroom and its perceived contribution to their learning?
- ✓ Are there any similarities and differences between those opinions?
- ✓ What are the EFL teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of L1 in the 4 macroskills and three different English proficiency levels?

It is hoped that based on the results, practical and valuable recommendations to the language teachers will be offered on how L1 should be employed in the classroom.

IV. Methodology

1. Subjects

For the questionnaires, the participants were 6 Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and 6 Korean native speakers (Non-NESTs) and 30 secondary students from 3 different levels, each level represented by 10 students. The NESTs and Non-NESTs will be named Group A and Group B respectively in the discussion of results for the purpose of enhancing clarity. For the interviews, 6 teachers and 9 students were interviewed which were chosen randomly.

2. Methods

Three methods of data collection were employed, questionnaires, interviews and observation. It is suggested that the method of triangulation can improve the validity and reliability of the findings (McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Researcher triangulation was also used to maintain consistency and validity in the interpretation of the findings.

a. Questionnaires: Two different versions of questionnaires were developed; the teacher version (Appendix I) provided to 12 teachers, and the student version (Appendix II) responded to by 30 students, a sample, which, as McDonough suggests, provides “a good deal of precision and clarity” (1997, p.171). They included a variety of questions that were open-ended, yes/no, ranked, multiple-choice, scaled and short answer questions. The questions were designed to encourage responses regarding the use of Korean in the variety of contexts in which the participants are placed. They were also given questions that encourage responses that reflect on their colleagues’ L1 use (for teachers), and on their peers’ use of Korean (for students). The student questionnaire was given in Korean, the students’ mother tongue to ensure efficiency in communication. The native-speaking teacher version was given in English.

b. Interviews (Appendix III): After the questionnaires were collected and analysed, semi-structured, group interviews were held with six teachers (three from Group A and three from Group B separately) and nine students (three students from each group separately). Group

interviews were used with both teachers and learners because “the data collected from a group is far richer than that collected from individuals as the various members of the group can trigger additional, and more productive, responses from each other” (Burns 1999, p.119). Moreover, the semi-structured interview “gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of the interview [and] it gives the interviewer a great deal of flexibility” (Nunan 1992, p.150). The questions (Appendix III) were designed to encourage reflection on their responses, so that a frank and elaborate discussion about L1 use could be achieved. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and summarized in the findings section.

c. Observations (Appendix IV): To support the findings from the questionnaires and interviews, 6 classes were observed in total, 3 different level classes from English-only and 3 from the Korean-English curricula to compare the classroom environment and interactions focusing on “ourselves as teachers, our students [and] the context” (Wallace 1998, p.105). Observation notes were kept by one of the researchers using an observation sheet that aimed to record information about the degree of L1 used in different activities and the effectiveness of the lessons (Appendix IV). This information was used to validate the participants’ views drawn from the questionnaires about the appropriateness of L1 use. It was also used to inform the researchers about how much L1 is actually used in the classroom and its possible contribution to a successful learning environment as perceived by the researcher.

The results from the questionnaires were entered in a spreadsheet, and frequencies and relative frequencies were calculated. The interviews and observations were transcribed and summarized in the findings section. The results are presented first based on the data collection method used and then a discussion follows combining results from all three methods. Both quantitative and qualitative information is provided, using tables and figures for quantitative data. In the quantitative section, even though the sample of NESTs and Non-NESTs is a statistically small number (6 for each category), a percentage is presented for consistency purposes.

V. Findings

1. Questionnaires and interviews (Appendices I, II & III)

The following is a summary of the data collected as a result of the research. The first three tables present the data regarding the three groups’ prescriptive viewpoints on the usefulness, ideal

frequency, and maximum benefit of L1 use in Tables 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The remaining four tables demonstrate the opinions towards L1 use, opinions of disadvantages of L1 broken down by level, and benefits of L1 use broken down by macro-skill. In the interest of emphasizing the different viewpoints between teachers and students, the latter group of tables are presented with the teacher's group combined into one category.

Range of usefulness of L1	Native English Teacher (Group A) %	Korean English Teacher (Group B) %	Students (Group C) %
Very useful 1	0/6	0/6	10
Useful 2	0/6	1/6 17%	20
Often useful 3	0/6	1/6 17%	40
Sometimes useful 4	1/6 17%	4/6 67%	13
Very small use 5	4/6 67%	0/6	17
Not at all 6	1/6 17%	0/6	0

Table 1: Teachers' and students' general attitude towards usefulness of L1 use

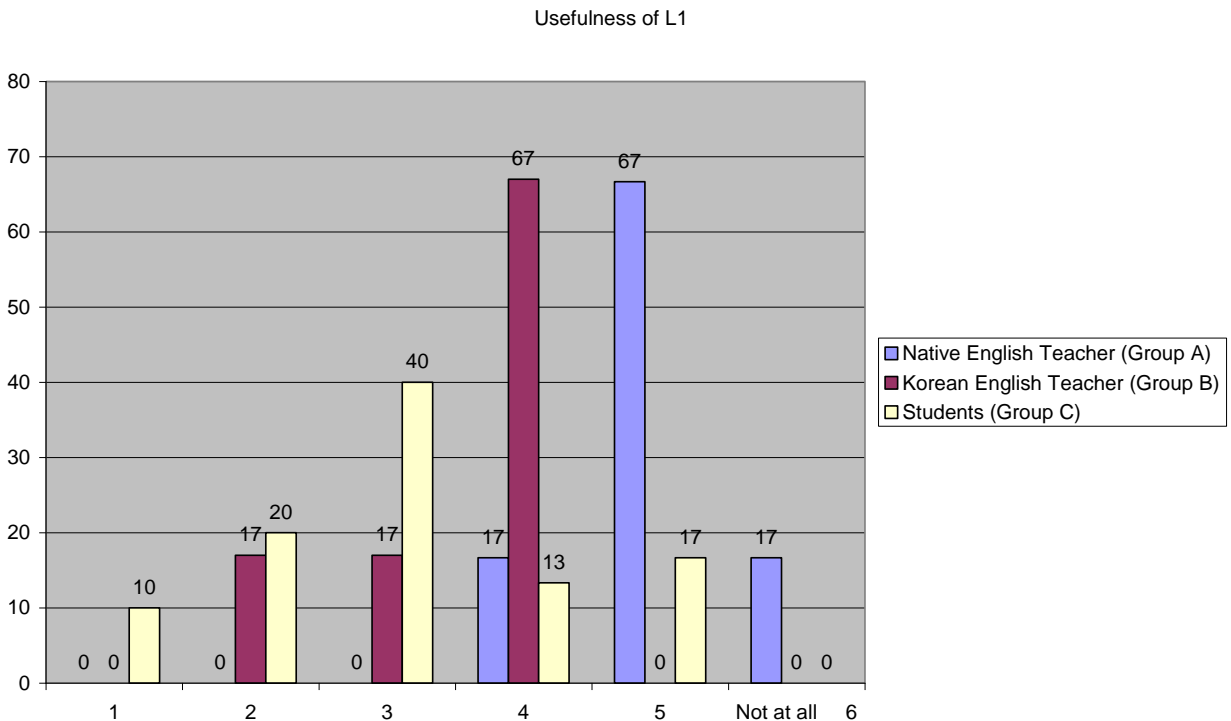


Table 1 and Figure 1 show the general attitude of native English teachers, non-native teachers, and students, Group A, Group B and Group C respectively, towards the use of Korean in helping

students learn English. The two groups of teachers have substantially different opinions, the former believing that the use of Korean should be avoided as much as possible as 5 teachers out of 6 chose a number at the bottom of the scale. Group B has a more balanced viewpoint, believing that Korean is rather helpful since 5 out of 6 chose a number at the middle of the scale. 30% of the students think Korean is quite helpful, choosing numbers 1 and 2, 53% students feel that Korean is somewhat helpful, selecting numbers 3 and 4 and only 17% chose Korean to have a very small contribution to their learning.

Range of frequency of L1	Native English Teacher (Group A) %	Non-native English Teacher (Group B) %	Students %
all the time	0/ 6	0/ 6	0
frequently	0/ 6	2/ 6 33%	14
sometimes	0/ 6	4/ 6 67%	40
a little	5/ 6 83%	0/ 6	43
Not at all	1/ 6 17%	0/ 6	3

Table 2: Teachers’ and students’ general opinions about how much teachers should use L1

Teachers and students were asked about their general opinions with regards to what extent teachers should use L1 (table 2). This question divided NESTs and Non-NESTs; group A, were the most conservative of the groups, suggesting they would use Korean only “a little” (5 out of 6) to “not at all” (1 out of 6). On the other hand, in Group B, four out of 6 supported that L1 should be used “sometimes” and two said “frequently.” The students’ opinions could be positioned somewhere in the middle; 54% of the students wanted a frequency of “frequently and sometimes” while 43% chose a little and only 3% (1 student) rejected L1 use completely. The students’ answers were reflected in the interviews.

	Group A/ out of 6 and %	Group B/ out of 6	Students / %
<i>Beginner to pre-intermediate</i>			
All the time	0/6	0/6	10
Frequently	0/6	5/6 83%	57
Sometimes	1/6 17%	1/6 17%	23
A little	3/6 50%	0/6	10
Not at all	2/6 33%	0/6	0
<i>Intermediate</i>			
All the time	0/6	0/6	0
Frequently	0/6	0/6	7
Sometimes	1/6 17%	6/6 100%	60

A little	3/6 50%	0/6	30
Not at all	2/6 33%	0/6	3
<i>Upper-intermediate to advanced</i>			
All the time	0/6	0/6	0
Frequently	0/6	0/6	0
Sometimes	0/6	0/6	10
A little	2/6 33%	4/6 67%	67
Not at all	4/6 67%	2/6 33%	23

Table 3: Teachers' and students' opinions as to how much Korean should be used by students for maximum benefit, broken down by level

The research also sought teachers' and students' views of how much L1 students should be allowed to use, broken down into different proficiency levels (table 3). Group A thought beginner students should not be allowed to use L1 more than "sometimes," with most choosing at the bottom of the scale. The results were identical for the intermediate level, while four out of 6 (67%) of those at the advanced level chose "not at all." 83% (5 out of 6) of Group B think that beginner students should use L1 "frequently," 100% chose "sometimes" for intermediate levels, 67% chose "a little," (4 out of 6), and 33% (2) chose "not at all" for more proficient students. Students were asked to express their views about L1 use for all levels in general and the results showed decreasing L1 use from beginning to advanced stages. More specifically, for beginner students, 57% chose that L1 should be used 'frequently' and 23% chose "sometimes".

A beginner student stated (translated):

We think using Korean is very useful especially in reading, it helps us clarify the meaning of the words and expressions. Also when I don't remember the words in English, we can ask teachers how to say them. When we study with native speakers, we depend too much on stronger students or even don't pay attention to the lessons because we don't understand most of the time and feel discouraged.

60% of the intermediate students prefer Korean use "sometimes", while 30% selected 'a little' and 10% 'not at all', while 67% of advanced students chose 'a little' and 23% 'not at all'. The students interviewed thought more English use benefits listening and speaking skills and advanced students thought Korean should be avoided as much as possible except in situations in which they struggle to understand.

	Teachers (Group A & B) %			Students (Group C) %		
	Level 1 Beginner to pre- intermedia te	Level 2 Intermediate	Level 3 Upper- intermediate to advanced	Level 1 Beginner to pre- intermediate	Level 2 Intermediate	Level 3 Upper- intermediate to advanced
Classroom Management & Students' discipline	27	26	25	14	6	28
Clarifying the meaning of the words & expressions	27	42	50	33	44	44
Explaining grammar rules	21	26	25	24	39	11
Giving instructions to the students	18	0	0	10	6	0
Asking questions to teachers	6	5	0	14	6	17
Carrying out pair or group activities	0	0	0	5	0	0

Table 4: Teachers' and students' opinions towards usefulness of L1

Participants were also asked to identify advantages of L1 use in various activities. Table 4 displays the relative frequency for each activity as chosen by teachers and students. Candidates were allowed to choose more than one answer for each level. The relative frequency is calculated on the basis of the number of votes given for each level. In general, low-level students saw more advantages of L1 use than those at higher levels since they selected more functions for L1 use than those at upper intermediate to advanced level. For both teachers and students, regardless of the level, it is believed that Korean is the most useful 'via medium' when clarifying the meaning of words and expressions. Teachers thought that it was equally important for classroom management as this activity received 27% of the answers, 26% and 25% for each of the three levels. The third most useful contribution of L1 use from the teachers' point of view is in explaining grammar rules. From the students' point of view, explaining grammar rules is the second most important activity for L1 use for level 1 and 2, while level 3 students pointed out

that classroom management is the second biggest advantage. These results were further confirmed in the interviews. Students saw the importance of L1 in clarification of words and grammar rules while NESTs expressed dissatisfaction with the classroom management. This is demonstrated in student B view below:

“The most useful part of using Korean in English learning is to learn grammar. When Korean teacher explain the grammar, it is much clearer to understand. Also, in reading, it is easy to understand the text by clarifying and translating into Korean. I hope both L1 and L2 can be balanced together”.

	Teacher (Group A & B) %			Students (Group C) %		
	Level 1 Beginner to pre- intermedi ate	Level 2 Intermedia te	Level 3 Upper- intermediate to advanced	Level 1 Beginner to pre- intermedi ate	Level 2 Interme diate	Level 3 Upper- intermediate to advanced
Classroom Management & Students' discipline	8	9	9	33	21	9
Clarifying the meaning of the words & expressions	8	6	11	0	7	9
Explaining grammar rules	12	12	17	0	0	4
Giving instructions to the students	16	27	19	22	7	30
Asking questions to teachers	16	15	17	11	14	17
Carrying out pair or group activities	40	30	26	33	50	30

Table 5: Teachers' and student's opinions towards disadvantages of using Korean

Participants reported on the activities where L1 was least useful in the classroom. The answers were calculated in the same way as the previous table. As seen in table 5, teachers and students both agreed that the tasks where L1 should not be used were pairwork and groupwork activities, which is logical as students are involved in practicing the language and L1 would hinder this. The

next activities where L1 was seen as inappropriate were teachers' giving instructions and students asking questions. Moreover, students thought that L1 use in classroom management was less useful. Interestingly, the activity that received contradictory results was 'teachers' explaining grammar rules'; some teachers thought L1 use was unsuitable in this case while students disagreed.

	Teachers (Group A and B) %				Students %			
	Listening	Speak.	Read.	Writing	Listening	Speak.	Read.	Writing
0-10%	33	42	33	25	0	0	0	0
10-40%	67	58	33	50	57	67	33	30
40-60%	0	0	25	17	30	23	43	43
60-100%	0	0	8	8	13	10	23	27

Table 6: Teachers' and students' opinions on the benefit of L1 use in macro-skills

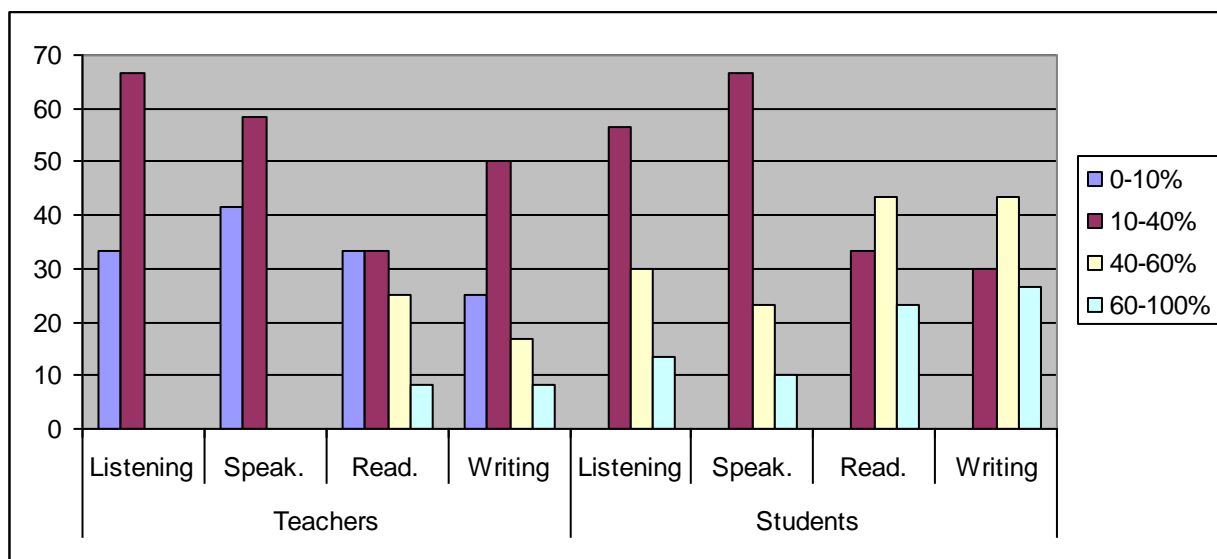


Table 6 and Figure 6 demonstrate the extent to which participants think students can benefit by using Korean in each macroskill. All teachers thought that using Korean provided no more than a 40% benefit for speaking and listening whereas for reading and writing skills, some teachers considered Korean even more beneficial, although a 10-40% benefit seemed to be favoured. Moreover, the students showed a similar opinion to that of the teachers in listening and speaking. In those skills, 10-40% was seen as the maximum benefit for Korean use; however 10% of the students thought the percent of benefit was higher, 60-100%. For reading and writing, the

majority of students saw a 40-60% benefit in the use of Korean. A minority of students thought using Korean provides a 60-100% benefit in all four macro-skills. In general, participants seemed to agree that there is at least a 10-40% benefit from using L1 in all macroskills, with a higher benefit for writing and reading.

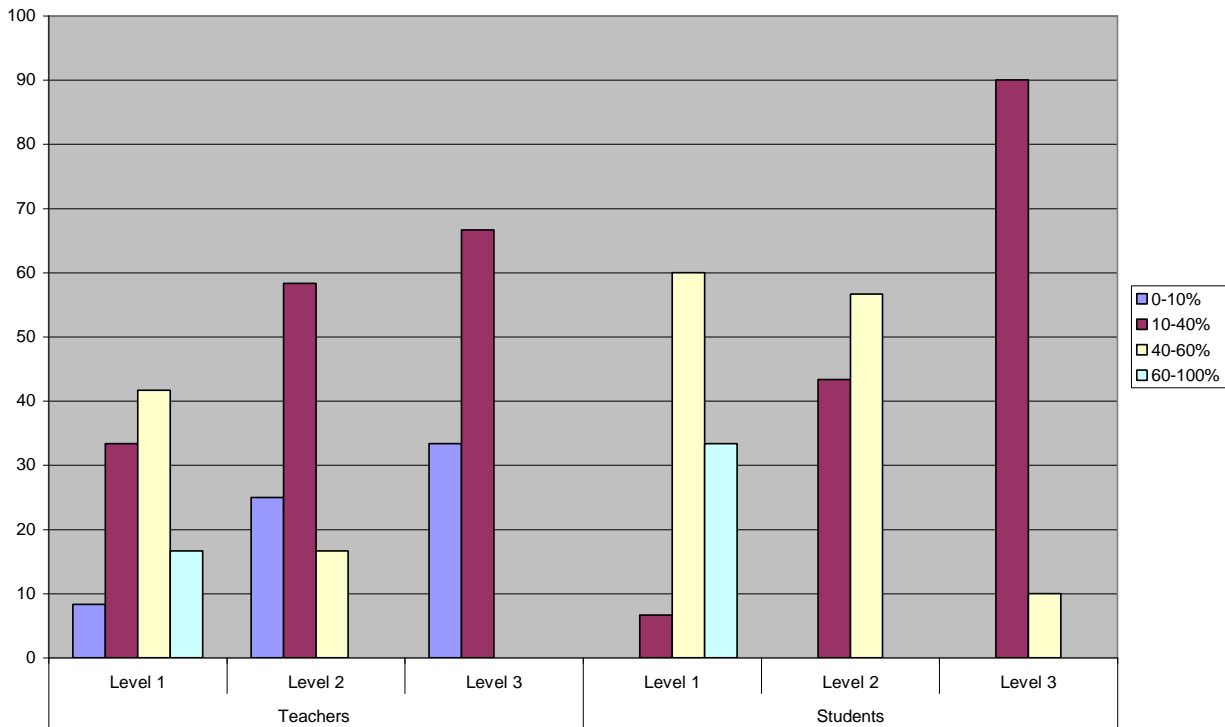


Figure7: Teachers' and students' opinions on the benefit of Korean use in each level

Another important question asked participants about the perceived maximum benefit in L1 use for different levels. Teachers and students expressed different opinions although there was some agreement. The students generally saw a greater benefit in L1 use than the teachers, for example in level 1 where the vast majority of students said there is a 40-100% benefit, while the teachers believe there is only a 10-60% benefit. Notably, students for each level saw no less than a 10% benefit, while teachers disagreed. Nonetheless, both groups agreed that in Level 2 there is about a 10-60% benefit and in Level 3 only a 10-40% benefit.

The results were supported in the interviews. Moreover, it was revealed that Korean teachers do not feel comfortable with using English because of perceived deficiencies in their language ability, although they understand English should be used most of the time. They also suggested Korean can advance the students confidence, and provide support, especially by providing explanations in reading, writing and grammar and word clarifications. A Korean teacher pointed

out:

A lot of low-level students complain about the EFL class because they don't understand anything. Therefore, using Korean can support students to open the door to the learning environment. Even if students are exposed to the English environment all the time, I don't think they can learn English. For example, if someone listens to CNN for one year without any guidelines, they still don't understand what is said on the news.

3. Classroom observations (Appendix IV)

Classroom observations had two basic aims. The primary aim was to examine the extent to which students and Korean-English teachers were actually using English to validate their responses in the questionnaires and interviews. Second, there was an attempt to find out whether the language used in the classroom had any effect -positive or negative- on the classroom interaction and on successful completion of tasks.

The beginner level classrooms seemed to fare far better with the benefit of extended L1 use than in the English only (EFL) curriculum, both in terms of effectiveness and in terms of how much English was actually used. In the English only classroom, the tasks were confusing to the students and did not involve much student participation. Some problems occurred due to student-teacher lack of understanding and difficulties in classroom management. The students' English use was limited to "yes," "no," or number responses with the EFL teachers, while in the Korean-English classroom they used English about 10-40% of the time, yielding much more detailed responses.

The intermediate levels showed a similar pattern. The tasks in the EFL classroom were not carried out as successfully as the ones in the Korean-English curriculum where there was a clear understanding of expectations. However, the percentage of English used in both curricula was of a similar frequency.

The upper level classes observed, for both English only and Korean English classes, showed clear examples of effective teaching with a high amount of English being used throughout. The classes were effective in terms of student participation and L2 use, the only exception being for a task that specifically used translation. This confirmed initial observations and hypotheses about the ineffective use of L1 for more advanced learners in the classroom.

In summary, observations suggest that beginner students depend on L1 for effective learning of

L2, whereas advanced students depend on high L2 use. For intermediate students, there seemed to be a more delicate balance being used, and there seems to be a benefit to at least some L1 use.

VI. Discussion

First of all, despite literature that discusses the disadvantages of L1, there is overwhelming agreement and evidence about the use and benefit of L1 in the classroom by both teachers and students, although students wanted more L1 use than teachers. This supports Tang and Schweer's research, which state that L1 can have a "supportive and facilitating role" (Tang 2002, p. 41) in EFL classrooms although English should be "the primary vehicle of communication" (Schweer, 1999, online).

However, there is a division between the teachers about the extent of the benefit of L1 use. NESTSs see very little benefit in its use and avoid L1 use in the classroom, even though it affects their classroom management and can lead to student confusion. Non-NESTs on the other hand, recognize the importance of L1 and L2 use, although they acknowledge their excessive use of L1 due to their lack of confidence. This can have detrimental effects in both classes as noted in the observations and as perceived by the students. The lack of the L1 option, especially with mixed ability students, can lead to cultural misunderstanding and can create an unsupportive environment where there is a lack of sympathy and negotiation on both sides. Piasecka sees "negotiation of the lesson, cross-cultural issues and classroom management at times as better discussed in L1 (198, p.99, cited in Dash 2002, online). Furthermore, for beginner to intermediate students, L1 provides for a more comfortable and motivating environment. Gardner and Lambert's research have found that "motivation is very strongly related to achievement in language learning" (Gardner and Lambert's 1972; Gardner 1980, cited in Ur 199, p.274) and early motivation can lead to successful language development and can build confidence and be supportive.

It was also found that both teachers and students recognized the importance of L1 use more in beginner stages, less in intermediate and even less in the advanced levels. Moreover, students saw a greater benefit of L1 use than teachers, with level 1 students seeing 40%-100% of benefit while the teachers' opinions varied. Moreover, both groups agreed that level 2 students benefited 10-60% and level 3 students had a 10-40% benefit. This clearly shows the importance of L1 use in an EFL classroom and suggests that teachers should consider its use to the students' advantage.

These results comply with Cole's research who suggested that "L1 may be used from introductory to upper-intermediate levels on a decreasing scale" (1998, online). It should be stressed at this point that the students' suggestions can be ascribed to the fact that they had different competence levels in English, although assigned in one level and may have been influenced by their knowledge of L3.

The results also shed some light onto the activities and macro skills teachers and students thought L1 should be used. Teachers saw 10-40% benefit of L1 use in listening and speaking while some students saw even greater benefit. This is understandable as the aim in speaking and listening is practice and development of fluency, which can be achieved, with use of L1. There was a greater perceived benefit in reading and writing, especially when giving instructions and for explanation of words and clarification of answers perhaps because the students find it harder to understand in L2. However, Owen points out that the use of translation actually compounds the difficulty in the learning process, "as it brought transference errors to language production" (2003, online). Yet from the students' perspective, they are more satisfied with Korean explanations for abstract ideas and ambiguous meanings than English explanations. After all, in his research on the most successful reading strategies in reading comprehension, Chamot demonstrated that "teachers found it easier to teach strategies in the native language and students who were more able to verbalize their thinking processes in L1 displayed greater comprehension of the L2 text than those unable to describe their thoughts" (2005, p.120). In addition to this, "L1 translation is the most effective" among "a demonstration, a picture or a diagram, a real object, L2 context clues or an L1 translation" (Lado, Baldwin and Lobo 1967; Mishima 1967; Laufer and Shmueli 1997, cited in Nation 2003).

Moreover, the second most-cited advantage of L1 is explaining grammar rules. This supports research that suggests both explicit and implicit grammar teaching is important to satisfy learners' needs and styles (Thornbury, 1999). Sometimes it is necessary to remind the language learners of important rules and L2 usage by distinguishing it from their L1, thus the explicit knowledge will enable learners to notice the 'gap' between their inner grammars and the target language. In addition to this, explicit instruction using L1 can assist the writing skills for beginner to intermediate group of students since writing is more focused on simple language structures, which require explicit grammar rules.

On the contrary, there are circumstances where L1 is less useful; for example both teachers and

students are more willing to use English voluntarily in pair and group work, or games for communicative language activities. Cole supported the inappropriateness of L1 in those activities: “L1 is largely inappropriate unless the instructions lead to frustration” (1998, online). Similarly, L1 has limited use in speaking and listening as a vast majority people said maximum benefit of L1 use is less than 40%. To improve these component communication skills, students need to build-up their confidence and fluency by responding in English such as when “asking for clarification, checking for comprehension, and paraphrasing, rather than ... reverting to the L1” (Chamot, 2005, p.119).

VII. Conclusion and recommendations

This research has investigated the attitudes and usage of L1 in a secondary minority school context divided into the different proficiency levels and macro-skills. It was pointed out that L1 plays a supportive role in the language classroom, especially in the early stages, and more significantly in reading and writing. A bigger sample of students and teachers could be employed in the future. It is also important to acknowledge the influence of the Vietnamese learning environment and other L3 linguistic and cultural environments the Korean learners have been exposed to, on their preference for L1 use.

The findings discussed in the previous section have important implications for the L1 policy in multilingual and minority schools. The following recommendations are important steps that schools can take to improve the teaching environment and ensure students’ success.

First, students, teachers and administrators should work collaboratively towards the improvement of the curriculum and teaching. Research into students’ and teachers’ attitudes in every school can contribute to everyone’s awareness and can assist in identifying a consistent approach to L1 use. This research has uncovered a need for cooperation between NESTs and Non-NESTs. The evidence shows that L1 use can be useful especially for beginner levels and in general for reading tasks. An English-only policy is more useful when employed in the upper levels where the percentage of English used by both teachers and students is high. Both Non-NESTs and NESTs should work closely together on teaching strategies and policies that will lead to students’ effective learning. They should also be actively involved in the decision making about a policy that is appropriate for each school.

As Non NESTs were found to lack confidence in language proficiency, which led to their

increased and inappropriate L1 use, seminars should be offered to improve their confidence and promote L2 use among the teachers. Effective collaboration between Non-NESTs and NESTs can also work towards this goal by increasing their opportunities for language practice and updating their English language skills.

As the findings have indicated the importance of judicious L1 use and increase of L2 use, classroom activities promoting L2 use should be developed. For example, a merit system could be implemented where rewards are given to students who try to communicate in English. The points are accumulated at the end of month and those who receive the most get an award, which will motivate students to do likewise.

Future research could focus on evaluating the environment and progress of students in the two units in the Korean school. In addition, a bigger population sample from teachers and students from other minority groups in Vietnam and other countries, using more qualitative methods could offer a more comprehensive picture of the preferences on L1 use. Researchers could also investigate L1 use in early year groups since younger age learners tend to learn foreign languages in an identical fashion to the acquisition of their mother tongue. Furthermore, multilingual language classrooms in international schools would be worth investigating, in particular how the students' approach to L1 differs from students with the same background.

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Appendix I

Questionnaire / for teachers

The purpose of the questionnaire is to discover the use and attitude of using native language (Korean) in ELT classrooms. Your answers will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

I am a native/ non-native English teacher (Please circle the appropriate answer).

1. Which level do you teach? (Please circle the appropriate answer)
Beginner to pre-intermediate / Intermediate / Upper-intermediate to advanced
2. Do you think the use of Korean helps students learn English? (Circle number)
Very useful/ useful/ often useful/sometimes useful/very small / Not at all
1 2 3 4 5 6
3. Assuming you can speak Korean, to what extent should you use Korean? (Circle the preference)
all the time / frequently / sometimes / a little / not at all
4. To what extent should students use Korean? (Circle the preference from the each item)
A) Beginners to pre-intermediate:
all the time / frequently / sometimes / a little / not at all
B) Intermediate:
all the time / frequently / sometimes / a little / not at all
C) Upper-Intermediate to advanced:
all the time / frequently / sometimes / a little / not at all
5. When do you think it is useful to use Korean in English classrooms? (You can circle more than one answer. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them in next to the item).
(1) Beginner to pre-intermediate
 - A. to give instructions
 - B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
 - C. to explain grammar rules

- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

(2) Intermediate

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

(3) Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

6. When do you think it is not useful to use Korean in English classrooms? (You can choose more than one answers and circle alphabet. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them in next to the item).

(1) Beginner to pre-intermediate

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

(2) Intermediate

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

(3) Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

7. (*native English teachers only*) What is the most challenging aspect when you teach monolingual classrooms like Korean school?

8. (*Korean English teachers only*) What is the most challenging aspect when you encourage your students to speak English as much as possible?

9. What do you usually do when your students do not understand what you say in English? (You can choose more than one answer and circle alphabet. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them next to the item).

- A. ask classmates to translate for you
- B. use Korean to explain again
- C. write down the words which students don't understand and ask them look up the dictionary

- D. use English to explain again until students get the idea
- E. ignore it
- F. other, please specify_____

10. In those skill(s) how much can your students benefit from by using Korean? (Please choose a percentage from each item and explain your reasoning).

A. Speaking 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

B. Listening 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

C. Reading 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

D. Writing 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

11. How much can your students benefit from by using Korean in each level?(Please choose a percentage from each item and explain your reasoning).

A. Beginner to Pre-Intermediate 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

B. Intermediate 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

C. Upper-Intermediate to Advanced 0-10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

-The End-

Questionnaire for students (translated from Korean)

The purpose of the questionnaire is to discover the use and attitude of using native language (Korean) in classrooms. Yours answers will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Which level do you belong to?

Level 1 (Beginner to pre-intermediate)/ Level 2 (Intermediate) / Level 3 (Upper intermediate to Advanced)

2. Do you think native language (Korean) should be used in English classes? Yes / No

3. Do you think the use of Korean helps you learn English? (Circle number)

Very useful/ useful / often useful/ sometimes useful/ very small use/ Not at all

1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Do you think what extend teachers should use Korean? (Circle the preference)

all the time / frequently / sometimes/ a little / not all

5. When do you think it is useful to use Korean in English classrooms? (You can circle more than one answer. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them in next to the item).

(1) Beginner to pre-intermediate

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

(2) Intermediate

- A. to give instructions
- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)

F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline

G. other, please specify _____

(3) Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

A. to give instructions

B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences

C. to explain grammar rules

D. to ask questions to teachers

E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)

F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline

G. other, please specify _____

6. When do you think it is not useful to use Korean in English classrooms? (You can choose more than one answers and circle alphabet. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them in next to the item).

(1) Beginner to pre-intermediate

A. to give instructions

B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences

C. to explain grammar rules

D. to ask questions to teachers

E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)

F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline

G. other, please specify _____

(2) Intermediate

A. to give instructions

B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences

C. to explain grammar rules

D. to ask questions to teachers

E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)

F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline

G. other, please specify _____

(3) Upper-Intermediate to Advanced

A. to give instructions

- B. to clarify the meaning of the words, expressions or sentences
- C. to explain grammar rules
- D. to ask questions to teachers
- E. to carry out pair and group work (communicative activities)
- F. classroom management/ to give students' discipline
- G. other, please specify _____

7. Please describe advantages and disadvantages in studying with native English teachers.

8. Please describe advantages and disadvantages in studying with Korean English teachers.

9. What do you usually do when you do not understand what the teacher says in English? (You can choose more than one answers and circle alphabet. If you choose more than one answer, please rank them in next to the item).

- A. ask classmates to translate
- B. write down the words which you don't understand and look up the dictionary
- C. ask the teacher for clarification
- D. ignore it
- E. other, please specify _____

10. In those skill(s) how much can your students benefit from by using Korean? (Please choose a percentage from each item and explain your reasoning).

A. Speaking 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

B. Listening 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

C. Reading 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

D. Writing 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

11. How much can your students benefit from by using Korean in each level?(Please choose a percentage from each item and explain your reasoning).

A. Beginner to Pre-Intermediate 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

B. Intermediate 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

C. Upper-Intermediate to Advanced 0- 10% 10-40% 40-60% 60-100%

-The End-

Appendix III (Interviews)

Interview Questions (to students)

1. Why and when is L1 use (Korean) useful or not useful?
2. Why are students more willing to use Korean even though most candidates have answered that L1 should be used in the range of “sometimes” to a “little”?
3. What kind of difficulties and frustrations do the students encounter when they are learning English?

Interview Questions (to teachers)

1. Why and when is L1 use (Korean) useful or not useful?
2. Why do Korean English teachers prefer to use Korean even though most teachers have answered that L1 should be used in the range of “sometimes” to a “little”?
3. What kind of difficulties and frustrations do the teachers encounter in teaching English?

The interview results are summarised as follows:

(1) Students

No matter which levels they belonged to, students had similar opinions in general. They thought using Korean is useful especially for reading comprehension and grammar. The clarification helps them understand but they expressed frustration with using too much Korean in Korean-English classes. They suggested Korean teachers should try to communicate in English, even outside of the classrooms, and encourage students to speak English in class. They also thought more English use benefits listening and speaking skills.

Although they expressed similar opinions, each level pointed out their own issues. Beginner group students said they often depend on the strongest students or give up paying attention in the class. On the other hand, advanced students mentioned Korean should be avoided as much as possible except in situations in which they struggle to understand.

(2) Teachers

Native English speakers think using L1 is not really helpful since it distracts from the objectives and the target language. Even for beginner groups, the target language is

easy and can be achieved without any L1 support. Moreover, it is important to think directly in English rather than translating first. They also expressed their frustration in terms of classroom management, so group or pair work is generally avoided, and in that situation, speaking Korean would be a big advantage.

Korean English teachers think the use of Korean is very useful especially for low-level students and pointed out that students become demotivated if they don't understand English most of the time. Moreover, Korean can be used to provide guidelines for students to learn English more effectively, especially in reading comprehension, in explaining and clarifying the meanings. They understand English should be used most of the time, however, they feel uncomfortable in using it because of their perceived deficiencies in their language ability.

Appendix IV (Classroom Observation)

(1) Beginner to pre-intermediate (Level 1)

Effectiveness	Korean English			EFL		
	Good	Decent	Poor	Good	Decent	Poor
Students' Participation / Confidence	x					x
Giving instructions	x					x
Clarifying the words, expressions or grammar		x				
Students asking questions to the teacher		x				x
Pair or group work / speaking activities		x				
Classroom management	x					x
Achieving objectives / target language			x			x
Percentage of using English	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%
Students using English	x				x	
Korean teacher using English	x					

(2) Intermediate (Level 2)

Effectiveness	Korean English			EFL		
	Good	Decent	Poor	Good	Decent	Poor
Students' Participation / Confidence	x				x	
Giving instructions	x				x	
Clarifying the words, expressions or grammar	x					x
Students asking questions to the teacher	x				x	
Pair or group work / speaking activities		x				
Classroom management	x				x	
Achieving objectives / target language		x			x	
Percentage of using English	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%
Students using English		x			x	
Korean teacher using English	x					

(3) Upper-intermediate to advanced

Effectiveness	Korean English			EFL		
	Good	Decent	Poor	Good	Decent	Poor
Students' Participation / Confidence						
Giving instructions	x			x		
Clarifying the words, expressions or grammar	x			x		
Students asking questions to the teacher	x			x		
Pair or group work / speaking activities	x			x		
Classroom management	x			x		
Achieving objectives / target language		x		x		
Percentage of using Korean	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%	10-40%	40-70%	70-100%
Students using English		x				x
Korean teacher using English	x					

Comments: Classroom observations focused on how effectively lessons were carried out in different contexts and how much students and Korean-English teachers were using English in reality. See Appendix III for a detailed table.

The beginner levels seemed to fair far better with L1 use than with exclusive use of English, both in terms of effectiveness and in terms of how much English was actually used. In most of the tasks, there was confusion due to the students' limited knowledge of L1 and due to a lack of classroom management. The students' English use was limited to "yes," "no," or a number responses with the EFL teachers, yet with the Korean English teachers they used English about 10-40% of the time.

The intermediate levels showed a similar pattern. The tasks in the EFL classroom were much less successful than the ones with the Korean teachers, with the majority, 5 out of 7, receiving a "good" mark for EFL teachers. In addition, the percentage of English used was much higher or equal to that of the Korean English teacher, at 40-70%.

The upper level classes observed, for both EFL and Korean English, showed clear examples of effective teaching with a high amount of English being used throughout. All the tasks were organized and performed successfully except for one "decent" due to the heavy use of translation.

A Comparison of the Effects of Corrections on Definite/Indefinite Articles and Regular/Irregular Past Tense Forms: A Case of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of error correction on EFL learners' acquisition of some grammatical features. More specifically, the study looked at the learning effects of correcting learners' errors on definite and indefinite articles as well as errors on regular and irregular past tense verb forms. Data for the study were collected from 56 intermediate level students of English as a Foreign Language in Iranian private language school settings. Through an oral interview, each participant was required to read and then retell a written text in their own words. During or following the interview the examiner provided the participants with immediate explicit, delayed explicit and immediate implicit corrective oral feedback on their grammatical errors. Individualized multiple-choice tests focusing on the errors that had been corrected were constructed for each participant and administered. A comparison was made between the learners' scores on the test items that measured definite and indefinite articles as well as regular and irregular past tense forms in order to assess the impact of corrective feedback on these linguistic features. This comparison was made by post-hoc analysis of the final tailor-made tests. The results show that when corrective feedback is given, the irregular past tense form is learnt before the regular past tense and the definite article 'the' is learned before indefinite articles 'a' and 'an'. This finding lends support to the arguments put forth by of Krashen, (1977), Andersen (1978), and Dietrich, Klein and Noyau, (1995) that confirmed the role of negotiation as well as to the role of saliency and individualized

attention in language learning. The results of the study also have some implications for both second language acquisition and language pedagogy.

Key Words: Definite/Indefinite Articles; EFL Learner; immediate explicit, delayed explicit and immediate implicit corrective feedback; Regular/Irregular Past Tense Forms; Second Language Acquisition; error correction.

1. Introduction

With the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT), the attention of most teachers and learners shifted from accuracy to fluency in attempting to learn a second language. In other words, because of the tendency of both learners and teachers, especially in recent years, towards fluency over accuracy, attention to the development of grammar in L2 has been neglected. However, this has caused a number of problems in terms of students learning some grammatical features correctly, such as definite and indefinite articles and regular and irregular past tense forms. For instance, although learners have explicit knowledge of grammatical features, they still make errors in their use. The presence of such grammatical inaccuracies in learners' production of language makes the provision of corrective feedback essential, since it helps learners notice the incorrectness of the form(s) they have used. This, as a result, enables them to modify their hypotheses about the target language (Oliver, 1995). The present study attempts to investigate the effect of immediate explicit, delayed explicit and immediate implicit corrective feedback on the English article system as well as regular and irregular past tense forms as demonstrated by Iranian EFL learners who are at the intermediate level of proficiency.

2. Theoretical Background

One of the central points of interest for teachers and researchers has always been errors made by language learners. In fact, according to the cognitive view of language learning, errors made by L2 learners are signs of progress and not impediments (Dulay & Burt, 1975). If students commit errors, teachers should give them corrective feedback; and this would promote authentic interaction between them.

According to Polio et al. (2006), the role of corrective feedback in second language acquisition (SLA) has long been an issue, especially in the interactionist approach, which claims that the feedback through interaction is a driving force for learning. Mackey & Gass (2006) state that in Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis of SLA,

interaction, (particularly with a more competent interlocutor), facilitates L2 development because it connects input, internal learner capacities (e.g. selective attention) and output efficiently. It stands to reason, therefore, that corrective feedback (both its interpretation and its role in L2 development) plays a crucial role in interaction-based research.

N. Ellis (2005) argues that both conscious and unconscious processes are involved in every learning sequence. In his connectionist model, in order for explicit learning to take place, some degree of attention is needed. The explicit learning can then be turned into an implicit one and enters implicit memory (Ellis, 2005). R. Ellis et al. (2006) suggest that providing students with corrective feedback constitutes an ideal context in which both conscious and unconscious learning are involved together in SLA. Moreover, in such a learning situation, the targeted structure (the one that is supposed to be learnt) will enter implicit memory.

Conscious attention is crucially important in learning and does not take place unless features are made noticeable. Perceptual salience is the term used for when learners' attention is drawn to language forms. It is one of the main contributing factors for drawing learners' attention to grammatical features. There are several factors involved in salience: irregularity, stress, and frequency of input (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Let us now turn our attention to the variables under investigation such as the role of immediate explicit, delayed explicit and immediate implicit corrective feedback in learning some grammatical features in English. These features are definite and indefinite articles and regular and irregular past tense forms, which will be fully described and delineated in the following sections.

2.1 Regular Past Form vs. Irregular Past Form

Previous research has shown different findings with respect to these two features. Some studies found that the regular past tense form is learned before the irregular (Dulay and Burt, 1975; Larsen-Freeman, 1975; Hakuta 1974). Some other research shows that the irregular past form is learned first (Krashen, 1977). Still some other research using group scores (scores obtained by a group of learners) shows that the irregular past form is learned before the regular, but learners' individual scores showed that there is no order between these two features (Andersen, 1978). Finally, the fact that the irregular past tense form precedes the regular form was confirmed in a longitudinal study of (largely untutored) adult learners of five target languages

(Dietrich, Klein and Noyau, 1995).

A possible factor in learning language features may be the degree of novelty that a form holds for a learner. The proponents of contrastive theory believe that similarities between the features in learners' native language and the target language lead to learning ease, whereas differences lead to learning difficulty (Brooks, 1960). This theory was subsequently rejected and proved to be invalid (Corder, 1975). In contrast, Kleinmann, (1977) suggested that the difference between the forms in the learners' native language and the target language may cause a novelty effect, which promotes SLA.

2.2 Definite vs. Indefinite Articles

Research in the domain of article acquisition comes from two different areas. Some research is not specifically on article acquisition, but is primarily concerned with morpheme acquisition (Dulay and Burt, 1973; Brown, 1973; Hakuta, 1976; Huebner, 1979, 1983; Tarone 1985; Master, 1995). Most of these studies show that the acquisition of the definite article takes place later than the indefinite. There is also research that has been exclusively designed to study article acquisition (Master, 1987; Parish, 1987; Tarone and Parish, 1988; Thomas, 1989; Liu and Gleason, 2002). These findings are mixed depending on whether the overuse assumption or the accuracy assumption is used. Despite discrepancies of the findings of Parish, Master, and Thomas, they concur that 'a' is acquired later than 'the'. Chaudron and Parker (1990) also provide evidence that Japanese learners acquire 'a' later than 'the'.

It has generally been observed that children possess an innate tendency to distinguish specificity from non-specificity. Presumably, this tendency emerges from a very early age as part of their L1 cognitive linguistic development (Brown, 1973; Maratsos, 1971, 1976; Cziko, 1986 cited in Butler, 2000). Furthermore, this semantic notion connects somehow with the external attributes ('the' and 'a').

This hypothesis can be extended to the acquisition of articles among adult second language learners. The ability to distinguish specificity from non-specificity already exists among adult second language learners due to early childhood cognitive linguistic development in their L1. Also, as Huebner (1985) and Master (1988) suggested, L2 learners initially might associate specificity (SR=specific referent) with hearer knowledge [HK], in contrast to children acquiring the English article system as part of their L1. In other words, the semantic concepts of definiteness and

indefiniteness already exist, what learning does is to connect these semantic concepts to the new external attributes (the article forms, ‘the’ and ‘a’).

According to the COBUILD frequency count, in a corpus of 20 million English words, the definite article ‘the’ is by far the most frequent word, with a frequency rate of 25.1% (Sinclair, 1991). The indefinite article, however, is the fifth most frequent item with a frequency rate of 10.1%. Frequency has been proposed by some research as one of the features that causes learners to notice forms (Bardovi- Harlig, 1987; Day & Shapson, 1991; Trahey and White, 1993; N. Ellis, 2002). These studies show the benefits of instruction that focuses on the frequency of troublesome features (Doughty and Williams, 1998).

Concerning the theoretical backgrounds of the issue under study, the major question is to examine the effect of immediate explicit, delayed explicit and immediate implicit on the learning and use of frequent grammatical features. This will be further separated into minor questions below.

2.3 Research questions

In relation to the major purpose of the study, which was to investigate the effect of corrective feedback on learning and using the article system and regular/irregular past tense forms in English, two research questions were addressed. They are as follows:

- 1). Is the correction of indefinite articles, ‘a’ and ‘an’ more effective in Learning than the definite article ‘the’?
- 2). Is the correction of the regular past tense form ‘ed’ more effective in language learning than the irregular forms?

In order to provide plausible answers for the aforementioned questions, a meaning-based study was conducted which will be described and explained in the next section.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

A total of 56 learners (from among a population of 300 students) from seven language institutes with 12 upper-intermediate classes participated in this study. The reason for choosing these classes was because the numbers of learners who could talk well were naturally higher in such classes. To determine the general proficiency band in the study, a standard test of grammar was used. This 40-item test was selected from

Section 2 (Structure and Written Expression) of the TOEFL test. Those scoring between 50 and 70 were called on to participate in the research. The reason for choosing this test was that, (according to the information provided by TOEFL) the reliability is relatively high (0.88).

The research was conducted at seven private language institutes in Isfahan, Iran. These research sites were chosen because, in general, this research was initially intended to investigate error correction among EFL learners (that is, those who learn English as a foreign language in an environment where English is not spoken as a first language).

The demographic information of the learners showed that they averaged about 22 years of age (with some as young as 17 and others as old as 33). The female students accounted for 66% of the sample population, while males were 34%. Forty percent of the students in these classes planned or hoped to continue their education at universities abroad, and for this reason, they pursued their language learning very seriously. 90% of the learners believed English was important for their higher education in Iran.

3.2 Materials

In the current research, for the purpose of eliciting errors, two passages were designed. They both have general topics; namely: 'Diamonds Are forever' and 'Britain's Unluckiest Criminal'. 'Diamonds Are forever' is more of a factual type of passage containing information on figures, dates, and names of some relatively known geographical places. 'Britain's Unluckiest Criminal' is a narrative about the course of events in a man's life. Each one of the two comprehension passages contains 240 frequently occurring words, 20% of which are function words and the rest consist of lexical items and proper nouns. These two passages are structurally and lexically of the same intermediate difficulty level. The difficulty levels of these passages were calculated by using the SMOG Readability Formula and the Smog Conversion Table. The levels were appropriate for the participants for a number of reasons. Firstly, the participants were upper-intermediate learners whose reading comprehension and speaking ability was not high enough to be able to understand and talk easily about passages containing higher levels of difficulty with relative ease. Thus, the passages were easier than the levels at which the learners were currently working. Secondly,

they were learners at private schools and not at universities. Therefore, they had not been previously exposed to passages with higher degrees of difficulty.

A number of individualized tailor-made tests were constructed based on the errors typically made by the learners. Every learner did two tailor-made tests, each consisting of a number of test items. The number ranged from 3 to 13 depending on the errors made by the learners in their task reconstructions and also on the instructor's ability to identify the relevant errors. All test items were multiple choice questions that included a correct answer and three distractors. The main reasons for choosing multiple choice item tests were that multiple choice item tests have the advantages of ease, objectivity and reliability of scoring. However, the tailor-made tests had a weakness arising from different weightings of the test items. This situation occurred because each item in each tailor-made test was based on one error correction episode the learner had. So, if a learner had three error correction episodes in the reconstruction task, that learner had three items in his or her tailor-made test. If a learner had five error correction episodes in the reconstruction task, that learner had five items in his or her tailor-made test. A possibility would have been to increase the number of test items in the tailor-made test (for example, to provide two or more items on each type of error and in this way have the tests contain the same number of items). However, this was not practical, since the tests were individualised and the items had to be prepared very soon after the error correction sessions. There would not have been enough time to produce a large number of tests items.

Below, we will fully delineate the experiment that was conducted in this study.

3.3. Task Procedures

Recordings of sessions were made from the very beginning, so that the instructions given to the learners, the learners' talk and the instructor's corrections would be recorded for further analysis and testing. For this purpose, a wireless cassette recorder with an in-built microphone was used. As soon as interactions between the learner and the instructor began, the cassette recorder was switched on by the researcher to record the reconstructions and error correction episodes.

3.3.1 Immediate Explicit Correction

With this type of error correction method, as soon as learners makes an error, the teacher immediately steps in to correct them and to provide the learners with the correct form as well as an explicit metalinguistic explanation of the rule related to this form (Lyster, 1998) For example:

Learner: He **buy** a ticket of airplane.

Teacher: OK He *bought* an air ticket, an airplane ticket. You should use the past tense form here. The past tense is ‘bought’. OK?

L: He went and bought an airplane ticket.

3.3.2 Immediate Implicit Correction

Implicit correction refers to the process of providing the learner with indirect forms of feedback. After an error is made by a learner, again the teacher immediately steps in to correct them, but implicitly (Lyster, 1998). The implicit feedback provided to the learner in the present research was in the form of recast – the correct reformulation of the learners’ erroneous utterances. The following error correction episode is an example of immediate implicit correction:

Learner: Carson was a man and a local businessman and everybody thought he was honest man, but suddenly he *invest* and he fell in difficulty.

T: He *invested* his money in a business.

Learner: Yes, he invested his money in a business.

T: What kind of business was it?

Learner: I don’t know...

3.3.3 Delayed Explicit Correction

With this type of error correction, when learners make an error, the researcher waits till the learners’ attempt to reconstruct the text has finished (Lysre, 2004). In fact in this study, the teacher avoided correcting the error while the learners were still talking about the content of the passage. He only made rough notes of the errors made by the learners. Later, the correction was carried out explicitly using explicit corrective moves; that is, by providing the learner with the correct form together with a metalingual explanation of the rule for the correct form. The error correction in the following episode took place 15 minutes after the error was made.

T: Thank you very much for your talk about the passage. If you allow me, I would like to draw your attention to some of the mistakes you made during our conversation. Is it OK?

L: Yea, ok.

T: For instance you said, ‘He *feeled* depressed’.

L: Yes.

T: You should say, ‘He *felt* depressed.’ OK? The past tense of feel is ‘felt’ not *feeled*.

L: Right.

3.3.4 Test-Item Construction

A few words about how the construction of the tailor-made tests used in this study were made seems warranted. Errors made by learners included many cases of regular and irregular tense forms as well as definite and indefinite article forms. Multiple choice test items were constructed based on error correction episodes. The following examples of test items were constructed on the basis of such error types:

(Immediate / Implicit)

Error Correction Episode	Test Item
<p>L: Mostly between 1885 and 1907, one Russian jeweler <u>has made</u> several ()</p> <p>T: Easter eggs. Between 1885 and 1917,he <u>made</u> a number of Easter eggs for -</p> <p>L: For the Tsars and their families...</p>	<p>Between 1885 and 1917, a Russian jeweler... a number of Easter eggs for the Tsars and their families.</p> <p>(a) has made</p> <p>(b) makes</p> <p>(c) made</p> <p>(d) making</p>

Table 1: Irregular Past Tense

Options used for such items needed to be of the same class of grammatical features to make sure that the test item would measure one particular aspect of the error corrected by the teacher. For example, errors in the use of tenses can often be confused with errors in voice which is represented by active/passive forms of verbs. However, it was also important for the items to include developmental features as distracters. Therefore, the distracters used in these items could include active or

passive forms. Furthermore, it was decided that other distracters be chosen from the tenses that are generally within the active production of learners at the intermediate level.

(Immediate/Explicit)

Error Correction Episode	Test Item
<p>L: This is about Ø local businessman in (the) England, in (the) one of the town of England. He is really an unlucky businessman.</p> <p>T: Excuse me, this is story is about a local businessman because you should use an indefinite article before a noun or a modifier.</p> <p>L: It...is about a local businessman in one of the town of England. He is really....</p>	<p>This story is about....local businessman called Edward Carson.</p> <p>(a) ...</p> <p>(b) the</p> <p>(c) a</p> <p>(d) an</p>

Table 2: Articles

Every test item that was constructed to measure the correction of article errors, generally consisted of the same four options throughout the study. These four options, as indicated in Table 2, are: ‘a’ ‘the’, ‘an’, and ‘blank’.

3.4 Analysis

Overall, there were 112 tailor-made tests, for both passage reconstruction tasks, administered to the learners. They included a total of 675 test items measuring 675 error correction episodes. Of this total number, there were 175 items measuring error correction episodes related to errors of definite/indefinite articles and regular/irregular tense forms. The following table shows the number of such errors related to immediate explicit, immediate implicit and delayed explicit types of feedback:

Error Types	Imm./Exp.	Imm./Imp.	Del./Exp.	Total
Definite	13	21	22	56

Article (the)				
Indefinite Article (a, an)	11	9	24	44
Regular Past Tense(ed)	10	11	22	43
Irregular Past Tense	8	9	15	32

Table 3: Number of Errors in Each Type

3.4.1 Identification of Error Correction Episodes

Similar to Ellis et al., (2001), an error correction episode is defined as an interlude between the learner and the teacher in an interaction. It is triggered by an error made by the learner and corrected by the teacher. The error correction ends when the interaction returns to the topic of discussion. In addition to the criteria mentioned in this definition, the following two points were considered in identification of episodes:

1. Error correction episodes included only teacher-corrected errors and not self-corrections.
2. Each error correction episode included only a single error that was addressed by the teacher.

3.4.2 Detailed Transcription of Error Correction Episodes

After the reconstruction and error correction episodes, the recorded sessions were copied onto a computer program that enabled the researcher to listen repeatedly to the recordings. Detailed transcriptions of the error correction episodes took place at this time.

3.4.3 Reliability of Identification of Error Correction Episodes

To determine the reliability of the researcher's identification of error correction episodes, a sample of 23% of the recorded sessions was evaluated by a second rater. The second rater was asked to check whether: (1) the error was corrected by the researcher and not by the learners themselves; (2) an error had actually been committed; (3) the error was corrected using one of the three error correction

methods; (4) the episode ended with a topic change; and (5) only one error was corrected in each episode.

The absence of any one of the above criteria in the learners' utterances would disqualify them from being considered as an error correction episodes. The resulting agreement rate between raters was 88.3%.

3.4.4 Reliability and Validity of the Tailor-made Tests

In the present study, it was not possible to establish reliability using the test-retest method, since every participant had his/her own specific items arising from his/her own errors. It did not seem logical to trial the items from a tailor-made test (i.e. belonging to one person) on other individuals or a different sample group, since every participant had his/her own specific items arising from his/her own errors.

Therefore, a different approach than the one mentioned above needed to be taken in order to establish the reliability of the tailor-made tests. Basically, all potential threats to the reliability of the tests were addressed. Following Loewen (2002), Brown's (1996) checklist of potential sources of error variance or measurement error was used. The checklist points to different potential sources of errors such as environment, administration procedures, examinees, scoring procedures, and test items. For example, in dealing with the environmental variance, it was obvious that allocating all the learners to a specific and pre-arranged place where they could read and reconstruct the texts, was very difficult, because several schools were involved in the study and the participants in each school preferred to be interviewed and tested in their own school. However, the researcher was given a room by each school to carry out the interviews. The rooms had standard facilities like heating and lighting, as well as being quiet the learners were interviewed and tested individually in the rooms. In this study, ways of reducing error variance due to these factors were considered and accommodations to ensure validity were made.

3.5 Procedures

Individualised tailor-made test items, based on the corrected errors in the learners' reconstructions of the text passages, were administered to the learners individually five to eight days after the time of reconstruction. For the administration of the tests, learners were withdrawn individually to a quiet room where the researcher

administered the tailor-made tests (one at a time) to them. They were allowed sufficient time to answer all of the questions.

3.5.1 Scoring Procedures for Definite and Indefinite Article Features

Each learner's final scores on definite and indefinite article features were a fraction of the correctly answered definite and indefinite test items over the total number of such test items (which varied in every tailor-made test). This fraction was then multiplied by 100 to obtain the percentage of the learner's score. Since each learner had two tailor-made tests, and therefore, had two scores on the definite item and two scores on indefinite items, the average mean of these two scores was considered to be his/her final score on the definite and indefinite article features.

3.5.2 Scoring Procedures for Regular and Irregular Past Tense Forms

As in the case of definite and indefinite past tense features, the learner's final scores on regular and irregular past tense forms in his/her two tailor-made tests would be a fraction of the correctly answered regular and irregular test items over the total number of such test items (which were included in every tailor-made test). By multiplying the fraction by 100, the percentage of the learner's score was obtained. The average mean of the two scores from both of the tailor-made tests was considered to be the mean of learner's final score on the regular and irregular past tense forms. After the data were collected they were organized and categorized in order to be put into SPSS software for further analysis and the results of which will appear in the following part.

4. Data Analysis and Results

As to the purpose of this study which was to investigate the effect of corrective feedback on the learning and use of the article system and regular and irregular past tense forms in English, two questions were posed. The research questions were formulated as null hypotheses such as: (1) there is no difference between the regular and irregular past tense verb forms in terms of learning and use as a result of corrective feedback; and (2) corrective feedback does not cause any difference between the definite and indefinite articles in terms of learning and use. In order to investigate the above-mentioned null hypotheses, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used; the results of which will be fully described and delineated in the

following sections.

4.1. Findings about the Regular and Irregular Past Tense Items

In order to summarize the group characteristics of the scores obtained, first of all, descriptive statistics were computed. As shown in Table 4, the mean score is 78.93 for the scores on the regular tense test items and 85.73 for the scores on the irregular tense test items. The standard deviations for the regular tense and the irregular tense items are 19.64 and 17.04, respectively. Both sets of scores range from 25 to 100.

	Total Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regular Past	43	25	100.00	78.33	19.64
Irregular Past	32	25	100.00	87.73	17.04

Table 4: Group Statistics for the Scores on the Regular and Irregular Tense Items

In order to investigate the first null hypothesis, a paired sample t-test was performed to compare the scores on the regular tense items and the scores on the irregular tense items (see Table 5). The output indicated that there was a significant difference in the score means of the regular and irregular test items ($t = -2.038$, $df = 55$, $p = .046$, $p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that the learners performed more accurately on the irregular past items.

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Regular and	3.12500	21.87906	2.92371	11.5118	.09529	-2.038	55	.046

	Irregular								
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Table 5: Paired- Sample t-Test for the Regular and Irregular Tense Items

Thus, as a consequence of running a t-test, the first null hypothesis was rejected. That is, corrective feedback affected the learning of the irregular forms more than the regular past tense form. It is important to know that this finding can only be true for the overall effect of corrective feedback regardless of the effects of each individual treatment on learning. However, as seen in Table 6, the type of treatment that shows to have the most impact on the results is the delayed explicit treatment of irregular form with the mean percentage of 100 (MP= 100%) which is much higher than the mean percentage of the delayed explicit treatment of regular form (M= 72%).

Form	Imm./Exp.	Imm./Imp.	Del./Exp.	Total
1. Irregular Past Tense	TC=8 MS= 7/8 MP= 87%	TC=9 MS= 7/9 MP= 78%	TC=15 MS= 15/15 MP= 100%	TC= 32 MS= 29/32 MP= 88%
2. Regular Past Tense(ed)	TC= 10 MS= 8/10 MP= 80%	TC= 11 MS= 9/11 MP= 83%	TC= 22 MS= 16/22 MP= 72%	TC= 43 MS= 33/43 MP=78%

TC= Total Corrections MS= Mean Score MP= Mean Percentage

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for the Reg/irreg Past Tense Forms

4.2 Findings about Definite and Indefinite Articles

The total valid cases for the definite article test items and indefinite article test items are 56 and 74, respectively. The mean score is 70.53 for the definite article items and 53.57 for the indefinite article items. The standard deviations for the definite article items and the indefinite article items are 17.99 and 16.80, respectively. Scores of both groups of items range from 25 to 100 (See Table 7).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Definite	56	70.53	17.99	25	100
Indefinite	44	53.57	16.80	25	100

Table 7: Group Statistics for Definite and Indefinite Items

4.3 Tests of Difference in Mean Scores on Items

The distribution of scores meets the normality assumption, and therefore, a paired sample t-test was performed. The mean of the scores on the definite article test items was significantly higher than the mean of the indefinite article test items ($t = 4.97$, $df = 55$, $p = .010$, $p < .050$). Therefore, the learners performed more accurately on definite than indefinite articles.

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	def - indef	16.96	25.50	3.40	10.13	23.79	4.97	55	.010

Table 8: Paired Samples t-Test for Definite and Indefinite Article Scores

The results indicate that the correction of the definite article was more effective than the correction of the indefinite article (Refer to Table 8).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Overall there were 32 error corrections directed at the irregular past tense verb errors and 43 directed at the regular past tense errors. However, the test score for the irregular was 88% while for the regular past tense it was 78%. A question arises as to why irregular past tense forms are learned before regular past tense forms despite the fact that the regular form rule applies to more items than does the irregular form (i.e. it has a higher scope); and that, the regular form rule has more reliability. Additionally, the frequency of input is considerably higher for regular than for irregular forms. There may be a number of reasons given as to why irregular verb

use precedes regular verb use. Perhaps irregular forms are easier to acquire than the regular form. First, irregular forms occur very frequently in the input because they are among the most commonly used verbs in English [(9 out of 12 of the most common verbs are irregular, according to the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Biber, Conrad, and Reppen, 1999, p. 375)]. Also, whereas irregular forms involve item learning, a relatively undemanding cognitive process, the acquisition of regular verbs requires the development of the abstract underlying rule (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

Some other reasons for learners' better performance on irregular tense verb forms may be such notions as syntactic complexity, perceptual salience, and the novelty of the form in the target language. These are now discussed in order. It is widely established that there are two different processes that account for learning regular and irregular past tense verb forms: (i) A rule-governed process is accountable for appending the tense affix to the verb; (ii) Memorized listing (rote memory) facilitates irregular tense production. This common mental listing capacity, according to Beck (1998), forms the basis for initial performance. Learners initially memorize both regular and irregular tense forms (both regular and irregular are listed in memory). Later on, they abstract out (i.e. make a system) the 'ed' affixation rule which enables them to form the past tense. This stage is accompanied with the overgeneralization of rules (not of concern here). In this period, hypothesis formation and testing take place and learners continually restructure their interlanguage. Finally, learners' productions of regular past tense verb forms become native speakers like because constraints for 'ed' affixation are 'ready'. However, irregular past tense verb forms continue to stay in memory listing. Klein (1993) argues that this process characterizes the learning of individual lexical items rather than the learning of rules.

Learners are continuously making and testing hypotheses in their language learning. Testing a hypothesis against irregular forms is possibly easier than testing against regular forms, because the abstraction of 'ed' takes place after the regular form is listed in memory. Thus, it may take longer for learners to 'understand' the form (discussed above) in order to restructure their interlanguage. On the other hand, irregular forms are easier to understand, when reorganizing the interlanguage, than regular forms because learners do not have to abstract out (i.e. make an abstract system) any affixes.

One reason for the better performance on the irregular forms may be the fact that

irregular forms are easier to hear and to perceive than regular forms. Perhaps it is their irregularity that makes them salient. Furthermore, the regular form (ed) is usually unstressed. This also makes the irregular form more salient because it is stressed. However, the case is not straightforward: both regular and irregular forms gain perceptual salience, doing so in different ways. For example, frequency of input for the regular form is higher than it is for the irregular form; this means that the regular forms are also perceptually salient. Therefore, this factor can not be treated as significant. However, a possible consideration to make is, as Gass and Selinker (2001) mention, highly infrequent items can also lead to salience because when an item is infrequent it might get more attention by learners. The number of irregular forms is considerably less than regular forms, thus making them more salient. Moreover, focus on form in the current study might have increased salience. Thus, correction of irregular forms may have given them a double salient status, which made them more noticeable than regular forms.

Novelty effect may be another source of the difference between the correction on regular and irregular form use. The native language of the learners in this study was Persian (Farsi); Farsi is an inflectional language. The verbal inflectional system is quite regular and can be obtained by combining prefixes, stems, inflections and auxiliaries. This very complex rule-governed system accounts for regular tense formation, and it does not permit irregular tense forms. Therefore, irregular past tense form in English is considered very different for Iranian English learners. It may be that the presence of the irregular past tense form in English along with salience leads Iranian English learners to notice irregular forms more easily than regular forms.

Overall, there were 56 corrections directed at definite article errors and 74 directed at indefinite article errors. In other words, learners made more errors with the indefinite article. The overall accuracy score on the tailor-made tests was 72% for the definite article and 56.6% for the indefinite article. The findings in this research show that the correction of errors on the definite article is much more effective than the correction of errors on the indefinite article.

One reason for the better scores for the definite article may lie in the fact that article systems for definiteness and indefiniteness vary among learners' native languages; thus, second language learners are more likely to be unfamiliar with the article system in English on a cognitive level because the English article system is novel to them. This is especially true when they are not at an advanced level. The novelty of articles

can cause the novelty effect, which leads the learner to notice articles more easily (Gass and Selinker, 2001). Perhaps learners in the present study were able to notice the definite article more easily because their native language (Farsi) requires a different system for definite articles. However, the indefinite article system in Farsi is probably closer to English and this may not have caused novelty effect or stimulated their awareness of this linguistic feature.

Although the forms and rules of the definite and indefinite articles are uncomplicated, there are certain components of salience that may affect the acquisition of articles. These include frequency, stress, and homonymy. Some of these components are advantageous and some are disadvantageous. The only component of salience that is disadvantageous to the acquisition of the indefinite article is its homonymy with other morphemes. The indefinite article (a) is taken both as a marker for showing singularity of a noun and as an article for showing non-specificity of a noun. Learners may not be able to distinguish these two roles from each other. This homonymy may be why 'a' is not as noticed as 'the' and, consequently, why correction is not as effective for 'a'.

A possible explanation for the fact that the correction of definite article errors was more effective than the correction of indefinite article errors is that the corrective feedback was more effective in helping learners use 'the' in noun phrases that had specific reference and were part of the hearer's knowledge than in helping them use 'a' in noun phrases that were non-specific and not part of the hearer's knowledge. The learners in this study produced article errors associated with mainly two classes of noun phrase contexts. These are:

- (i) the context in which the noun phrase is referred to specifically and about which the hearer has some knowledge [+ SR + HK], and
- (ii) the context in which the noun phrase is referred to non-specifically (by a speaker) and about which the hearer has no knowledge [- SR -HK].

The correction of errors on [+ SR + HK] class of noun phrase contexts is more effective than the correction of errors on [- SR - HK] class of noun phrase. In other words, the learners may have wrongly associated a different article form ('a', 'an' or 'zero') rather than 'the' to [+ SR + HK] class of noun phrase contexts. In which case, providing feedback to help learners associate the right form (the) to [+ SR + HK] is

very effective. Conversely, correction of errors on [- SR - HK] noun phrase contexts is less effective than [+ SR + HK]. Correction may not be able to help learners associate [- SR - HK] class of noun phrase contexts to the right article form (a, an).

A number of other possible explanations can be suggested for this finding. It is possible that definite articles are more perceptually salient than indefinite articles (i.e. 'a' may be less salient to learners than 'the'). It is possible that the findings simply reflect the fact that the definite article is learnt at an earlier stage of development and thus the intermediate level learners in the present study were not fully ready to acquire this feature even when feedback was given on it. It is also possible L1 transfer compounded the learners' lack of readiness to learn this feature. Also, the indefinite article in Farsi has a very different function from its function in English, whereas the definite article in Farsi has a similar function to its function in English. Therefore, L1 transfer may help explain why lower scores were obtained for items testing the indefinite article.

6. Implications

The findings of this study may carry implications that could be of interest to practitioners in language pedagogy. The most tangible clues of this sort are discussed below.

As indicated in the finding obtained concerning the learning of the irregular and regular forms, the first implication is that, the same reasons underlying the better learning of irregular forms should perhaps be considered in the teaching of regular forms. In the present study, one reason for better learning of irregular forms was the possibility that learners learned the irregular forms as 'items learning': they most likely internalized such forms by memorizing them. The teacher should perhaps make attempts to avoid linguistic descriptions of regular forms (which involves abstract notions). The teacher could probably try to contextualise the regular forms that are in need of correction by presenting them in unanalyzed chunks so that they can be learned more optimally through memorization. This would enable the teacher not to interfere so much with the process of abstraction taking place in the learner's interlanguage system.

In the present study, one reason for less success in learning of the regular forms was the role learners played in abstracting out rules. This would perhaps direct our attention to the second implication from learners' perspectives; in the sense that,

instead of using teachers' correction, self-correction is perhaps, in addition to teacher correction, a better alternative for focusing on the correction of regular forms. That is, by doing this, the teacher could involve the learner with the process of hypothesis forming and testing of the correct form.

Also this study showed that the saliency of linguistic elements makes them more learnable. Teachers in the course of their instruction should perhaps make the target features salient enough to direct the learners' attention to them. The more prominent a language form at input, the greater the chance it will be noticed.

In the present study, the sequence of learning followed by learners seems to be the definite article first and indefinite articles next. We must take this sequence into consideration in both classroom teaching practices such as error correction and instructional material writing.

One possible explanation for the fact that the definite article was learned better than the indefinite article was that the latter is taken both as a marker for showing singularity of a noun and as an article for showing non-specificity of a noun. Teachers must try to clarify the double function of the indefinite article as well as the different semantic functions of the English article system for second language learners.

7. Suggestion for Further Research

This study was cross-sectional in nature, affording only a very static view of second language acquisition. No attempt was made to see the effect of correction on errors made by learners at different stages of development. The article issue is so broad and complex that they can not be explained comprehensively and inclusively by a limited study such as the present one. A longitudinal study to investigate error correction on different semantic functions is necessary to further clarify the issue.

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Chinese Phonotactic Patterns and the Pronunciation Difficulties of Mandarin-Speaking EFL Learners

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Abstract

To draw EFL teachers' attention to pronunciation difficulties resulting from L1 phonotactic constraints, this study examined the hypothesis that certain syllable structures could cause more mispronunciation than segmental sounds for Mandarin-speaking EFL learners. A 145-word reading passage was developed with a total of 30 target sounds, which included the problematic syllable structures that exhibited Mandarin phonotactic constraints and the most troublesome segmental sounds identified in other studies. 146 college students were tested and the results validated the hypothesis, which demonstrated that the successful pronunciation of individual sounds does not automatically transfer to successful pronunciation at the word level. It is suggested that apart from the teaching of segmental sounds and word stress, teachers need to be informed of the relation between L1 phonotactic constraints and English mispronunciation. Mandarin speaking non-native EFL teachers' cross-linguistic ability may allow them to implement unique pedagogical tactics that address the particular needs of their students to enable them to cope with such aspects of non-segmental pronunciation difficulties.

Key words: phonotactic constraints, pronunciation difficulties, suprasegmental sounds, syllable structures, Mandarin,

Introduction

The test-driven English instruction in Taiwan does not give much attention to learners' speaking ability let alone their pronunciation. Although good pronunciation is not equal to good speaking ability, it contributes to the intelligibility of oral

communication since listeners rely on distinguishable vowels and consonants and appropriate intonation contours to understand speakers' talking (Brown, 1989; Munro & Derwing, 1997). The trend of language proficiency testing has been moving toward a more communicative and practical direction and now often includes speaking proficiency testing, which has long been included in the IELTS. Testing speaking proficiency is gradually being integrated into almost all of the standardized language tests today, such as TOFEL and TOEIC, even the most test-driven learners now realize the need for good or at least intelligible pronunciation. Knowing that poor or unintelligible pronunciation might influence their speaking performance, language learners may start to pursue a higher level of intelligibility in order to better express themselves. Accordingly, the teaching of English pronunciation has moved beyond the teaching of segmental sounds; suprasegmental parts of English pronunciation have been included in some of the more recent textbooks (Gilbert, 2005; Miller, 2006; Zerna, 1999). However, while tackling pronunciation difficulties, mispronunciation stemming from L1 phonotactic constraints (sound combinations that may not happen in a language) is still an important missing piece in much pronunciation instruction. This part of suprasegmental instruction in fact may rely on non-native EFL teachers' cross-linguistic ability to make pedagogical changes. In order to draw teacher's attention to this point, this study tested a hypothesis that certain English syllable structures that violated Chinese phonotactic rules could cause more pronunciation difficulties than segmental sounds for Mandarin-speaking EFL learners.

Literature Review

From an interlinguistic point of view, EFL language learners are likely to encounter difficulties when pronouncing sounds that do not exist in their first language. A number of studies (Chang, 2001; Wolfram & Johnson, 1982) have indicated that both inherent and structural pronunciation difficulties mainly result from the differences between the languages. For Mandarin-speaking EFL learners, certain pronunciation difficulties are specified based on error and contrastive analysis approaches. For instance, Tzwe (1987) identified eight inherently difficult English consonants, /ʒ, ŋ, θ, z, s, v, tʃ, f¹, while Chang (2001) found that /e, æ, ʒ, s, z, v / are more likely to cause pronunciation problems for Taiwanese EFL learners. Huang (2001) concluded that /r,

¹ The phonetic symbols presented in this paper are Kenyon & Knott (K.K.) phonetic symbols.

w, l, ŋ, tʃ, dʒ, ʒ/ might trouble learners more than the other sounds. It has also been noted that minimal pairs that feature tense and lax vowels such as /i/ and /ɪ/ or /U/ and /u/ cannot be discerned by some learners (Baker, 1982), while vowel length poses another difficulty for Taiwanese EFL learners (for vowel length is not phonemically distinctive in their mother tongue) (Swan & Smith, 1990; Chang, 2001).

The above studies center their discussions in particular on the problems of segmental sounds; however, difficulties resulting from structural differences at the syllable level are rarely addressed. Moreover, based on the researchers' teaching experiences, we find that although individual sounds do cause pronunciation difficulties, certain syllable structures seem to be more difficult to tackle than segmental sounds. For instance, we have found that some of our students seem to have no problem pronouncing /p/ and /l/ when they are separated; yet, when they articulate the word *please* with /p/ and /l/ adjoined as a consonant cluster, it is often mispronounced as *prease*. Another slightly different example can be found in the word *fun*, which is often pronounced as /faɪ/. Given that /ʌ/ and /n/ can be correctly pronounced independently, to interpret the mispronunciation merely from the segments of English phonology is not sufficient to explain these kinds of pronunciation problems. As this sort of mispronunciation may result from structural differences of phonological sequencing, the influences of Chinese phonotactic constraints seem to be an appropriate approach to look into learners' English pronunciation difficulties since it goes beyond the realm of segmental sounds.

Unfortunately, studies that comparatively investigate levels of pronunciation difficulties in both segmental and phonotactic aspects are rare. Learners' mispronunciation is still interpreted mostly by measuring segmental mistakes. Nakashima (2002), for instance, reanalyzed Japanese English learners' segmental mistakes [pointed out by Jenkins (2000)] and argued that it was the syllable structures rather than the segmental sounds that caused the pronunciation difficulties evidenced.

Phonotactic Differences and Pronunciation Problems

Before Nakashima's argument, Wolfram and Johnson (1982) had already indicated in their book that phonotactic differences between languages may cause learning problems for L2 learners. Differences such as distribution patterns of segments, CV (C=consonant, V=vowel) sequences regarding syllable types and segment clusters,

and particular phonetic sequences are reflected in learners' modified production, which reveals the interference of L1 phonotactic constraints on L2 output (p.192). Several contrastive studies (Huang, 2001; Hansen, 2001; Tarone, 1987; Trammell, 1993) also drew our attention to L2 learners' deviant pronunciations resulting from L2 sound sequences that violate the rules of L1 phonotactic constraints. For instance, we know that the syllable structures of Chinese are V, VC, CV, and CVC, while in English the syllable structures are far more complicated with various extended consonant clusters that consist of up to three consonants before and after a vowel as in the word *splurged* (CCCVCCC) or four consonants after the sounded vowel as with the words *glimpsed* (CCVCCCC) or *scrambles* (CCCVCCCC). Since Chinese phonotactic constraints do not permit consonant clusters, learners are more likely to encounter difficulties in pronouncing them. In some other cases, though the researchers did not specify the influence of phonotactic differences, the deletion or devoicing of consonant clusters or obstruents and inflected -ed at word finals can also be explained by phonotactic differences since these sound sequences are not permissible or do not exist in Chinese (Broselow, Chen, & Wang, 1998; Flege 1989; Flege & Wang 1989).

Although this observation derived from the contrastive analysis of permissible phonological sequences in languages gives us another perspective to analyze and explain some mispronunciations, it is seldom the focus of pronunciation instruction. That is, unlike those limited segmental sounds that are systematically listed and incorporated into the practice of minimal pairs in many textbooks, problematic phonotactic patterns or syllable structures are still trying to find their way into pronunciation instructions to raise teachers' and learners' awareness of these aspects of speaking difficulties.

Nevertheless, in the research of accented speech and its influence on intelligibility, a consensus has been reached that suprasegmental errors affect the overall comprehensibility of L2 speech more than segmental ones (Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler, 1992; Gilbert, 1995; Morley, 1994, Burgess and Spencer, 2000). In Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe's study (1998), experimental evidence was provided to prove that instruction on suprasegmental features of English phonology such as word stress, sentence stress, speaking rate, intonation, and rhythm significantly improved the comprehensibility and fluency of the subjects' speaking. Thereby, the inclusion of suprasegmental features such as word stress and sentence focus in instructional

materials is burgeoning (Gilbert, 2005). Apart from the teaching of English prosody, in Miller's book (2006), practices for final sounds, consonant clusters, and /r/ and /l/ are included, which to some extent reflect the research literature by using a newer approach to tackle the common phenomenon of word final consonant deletion and the notorious /r/ to /l/ confusion. As the instruction of English pronunciation has been crossing the boundary from the segmental area, there is no reason that L1 phonotactic constraints should be ignored since the learning of L2 syllable structure fundamentally affects the learning of the prosody and rhythm of a language.

In the hope of contributing to the experimental study of L1 phonotactic constraints and English pronunciation difficulties, this study will test the proposed hypothesis to see whether certain phonotactic patterns may cause more difficulties than segmental sounds in the learning of English pronunciation for Taiwanese EFL learners. A quantitative measure and a descriptive analysis will be taken to investigate learners' mispronunciation; the distribution of mistakes made in segmental sounds and those resulting from phonotactic constraints will be ranked. However, the main purpose is to draw attention to the teaching of English phonology at the syllable level rather than to differentiate the levels of pronunciation difficulties between segmental sounds and phonotactic patterns.

Problematic Syllable Structures for Mandarin Speakers

Since not many specific consonant clusters or problematic syllable structures are well recognized in the study of Taiwanese EFL students' mispronunciation, it is not surprising that some mispronunciations stemming from phonotactic differences could be mistreated as problems with segmental sounds. For instance, a number of studies indicate that Mandarin-speaking learners have a problem pronouncing the vowel /e/, which is quite perplexing for the teacher because this particular sound does exist in Mandarin. Taiwanese EFL students can articulate /e/ correctly in the words such as *play* and *bay*; strangely, it is quite common that they pronounce *lake* as /lɛk/ or *tape* as /tɛp/. Though these words comply with Chinese syllable structure of CVC, it seems to violate another phonotactic rule in Chinese, which we surmise is the combination of /e/ and a final consonant. In Chinese, /e/ is always positioned in the syllable final of CV or CVV structures; any final consonant attached to it seems to lead to distortion of the vowel quality and thus the diphthong /e/ is shortened to /ɛ/ and words such as

lame is pronounced /lɛm/; *safe* is /sɛf/; *sale* is /sɛl/, *sane* is /sɛn/, and so forth.

Similarly, we also find that a large portion of mispronunciation in our students' speaking involves nasal /n/ and liquid /l/ and their adjacency with certain vowels and consonants. The /n/ trouble, as we call it, is three fold. First, when considering the syllable structure of the vowel sounds /au/ or /ʌ/ with /n/ as in /aun/ in *found* and *town*, or /ʌn/ in *sun* and *fun*, the vowels /au/ and /ʌ/ are usually changed into /a/ and the alveolar /n/ is replaced with /ŋ/. Thus, *town* is pronounced /taŋ/, and *sun* is pronounced /saŋ/. No similar situation is found in the adjacency of /i/ or /u/ in the words *mean* or *soon*. In Chinese, there are /au/ and /ʌ/ sounds; yet, they are always word finals. Hence, /n/ adjoined next to /au/ and /ʌ/ sounds may cause pronunciation problems. Second, the syllable structure of /e/ and /n/ poses as another problem. When pronouncing /en/ such as *paint*, *train*, or *complain*, /e/ is often changed to /ɛ/ and the words are mispronounced as /pɛnt/, /trɛn/, and /kʌmplɛn/. The abovementioned L1 constraint of /e/ + consonant is also a possible explanation of this phenomenon. However, students who can successfully pronounce /e/ + consonant may still have problems due to this syllable structure. Third, students are found to insert a /n/ when encountering the combination of /i/ or /l/ with a stop or affricative, which is not permissible in Chinese. Thus, *city* becomes *cinty*, *leak* is pronounced *leank*, *itchy* turns to *intchy* and *stick*, *stink*, and so on.

For liquid /l/, it is found that /l/ causes different pronunciation difficulties based on positional differences or the context in which the sound occurs (Huang, 2001; Hide & Van de Poel, 2002). As Young-Scholten and Archibald (2000) indicate, an obstruent +/l/ is not allowed in Chinese and thus will cause pronunciation difficulty in words such as *please* (/pl/) or *green* (/gr/). We find that light /l/ at the onset of a word or a syllable such as *light* or *allow* is not usually as troublesome as dark /l/ when positioned post-vocally or at word-end such as in *cult* or *little*, which does not exist in Chinese. For example, the positional differences of dark /l/ may result in different strategies to deal with the difficulties. Deletion of dark /l/ is found as a common strategy used when pronouncing dark /l/ as positioned in word internals such as *world*, *sold*, *silver*, and the like, while the substitution of dark /l/ with /ɔ/ is found in words such as *girl* and *tell*, where /l/ is at the word-final. In addition, a very interesting phenomenon is found with the word *learn*. Although /l/ is the onset and is supposed to be less difficult, a good number of students pronounce the word *learn* as /nɜ:n/. It seems that they assimilate the /l/ sound with the /n/ sound and it is possible

that the articulation positions are similar in Mandarin.

From the above-observed phenomena, in light of phonotactic constraints, one can narrow down the phonotactic patterns to a few specific syllable structure pronunciation problems that Taiwanese EFL learners are more likely to encounter. These syllable structures are:

1. /e/+ consonant: /e/ is shortened to /ɛ/;
2. /au/ or /ʌ/ + /n/ as in -own and -un/-on, which are pronounced /aŋ/.
/e/+/n/ in -aine/-ane is pronounced /ɛn/, and;
3. Dark /l/, particularly the postvocalic /l/ such as /ɜl/, /ɔl/, /ʌl/, and /el/, the /l/ is deleted or changed to /ɔ/.

We hypothesize that these syllable structures are more difficult to pronounce than most of the segmental sounds usually addressed in the study of Taiwanese EFL students' mispronunciation (see Table 1). If our hypothesis is confirmed, the influence of Chinese phonotactic constraints may need to be included as an indispensable perspective to examine learners' errors in English pronunciation. Some learners' errors previously found in the segmental area may need to be reanalyzed under the L1 phonotactic constraints paradigm rather than be treated as inherent difficulties or an inability of articulation. By doing so, the teaching of English pronunciation would be more comprehensive once teachers are informed of these particular syllable structures and include them in their teaching practice to raise students' awareness of these sorts of difficulties.

Method

Instrument

To test the hypothesis that /e/, /n/, and /l/ related syllable structures are more likely to cause pronunciation difficulties compared to segmental sounds, a reading passage was developed (Appendix 1) which includes the troublesome syllable structures previously mentioned and the segment sounds addressed in other studies. The test was inspired by Prator and Robinett's (1985) diagnostic passage; their passage was designed for segmental sounds and the lexical and syntactic complexity was quite difficult for some students as they often stumbled on polysyllabic words when trying to locate the stresses, and sometimes they paused inappropriately, due to their lack of comprehension when reading longer sentences. Thus, their test might have to some

extent drawn on the students' linguistic knowledge, rather than accurately reflect the students' pronunciation ability. To avoid the influence of linguistic ability on the test results, the passage used for this study was written like a short story and used high frequency words to embed the target sounds.

The testing points and the target words on segmental sounds are presented in Table 1, while /e/, /n/ and /l/ related phonotactic patterns are categorized according their positional differences in syllable structures as seen in Table 2. For instance, liquid /l/ was divided into four different target sounds due to learners' various modified outputs possibly related to the positional differences of /l/. For dark /l/, deletion is observed when it is in word initial positions while substitution is more common when it is in word final positions. The 145-word passage includes: 11 vowels, 10 consonants, 2 /e/ related sounds, 4 /l/ related sounds, and 3 /n/ related sounds. A total of 30 target sounds and syllable structures were tested.

Although each segmental sound and syllable structure does not have an equal number of words, the counting of mispronunciation is based on the sounds present instead of the words. Thus, a student might mispronounce more than one word of a particular sound; the mistakes are still counted as one.

Table 1: Target Segmental Sounds and Words in the Reading Passage

/ɪ/	/i/	/ɔ/	/o/	/ε/	
live, fish, little, river, big	sleep	claw fall	follow	red pleasure	
/æ/	/ʊ/	/u/	/ɜ/	/ɒ/	/ʌ/
cat, natural, catch, ran	look wood	food	world were learned	toy	just
/ʒ/	/v/	/f/	/s/	/z/	
pleasure	Live giving	food fault follow fang	small snore mice said	was	

/θ/	/ ð /	/tʃ/	/ŋ/	/w/
<i>thank</i>	<i>mother</i> <i>father</i>	<i>catch</i>	<i>fang</i> <i>long</i>	<i>wood</i>

Table 2: /e/, /n/ and /l/ Related Syllable Structures in the Reading Passage

/e/ related	/e/ at word finals		/e/ + consonant	
	Play day		lake wake came	
/l/ related	Light /l/	Dark /l/ (post-vocalic)	Dark /l/ (word finals)	Obstruent +/l/
	<i>learned</i> <i>lord</i> <i>long</i> <i>loudly</i> <i>luckily</i> <i>little</i>	<i>world</i> <i>fault</i>	<i>small</i> <i>little</i> <i>natural</i> <i>call</i> <i>owl</i>	<i>play</i> <i>claw</i> <i>sleeping</i> <i>pleasure</i>
/n/ related	/aʊn/		/ʌn/	/en/
	<i>town</i> <i>sound</i> <i>found</i>		<i>fun</i> <i>sun</i> <i>run</i>	<i>painted</i>

Subjects

A pilot study was conducted involving 25 English major freshmen in the 2004 academic year to evaluate the test items and testing procedures. The current study was conducted in the summer of 2005. The subjects were 34 graduate and 112 undergraduate non-English major students who voluntarily attended a summer English course offered by the Department of Applied Foreign Languages at National

Yunlin University of Science and Technology. Considering that their English proficiency levels might not correspond to their academic levels, these students were placed in different levels based on Yang's (2004) reading diagnostic test, which was developed particularly for college students in Taiwan based on their previous learning content and thus was suitable for the subjects of this study. The subjects were put into five different classes according to their levels. Level 1 represents the pre-beginning level and Level 5 is the advanced level. The distribution of the students according to level is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The Distribution of the Subjects by Five Levels

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Total
Graduate Students	8	2	2	5	17	34
Undergraduate	25	35	15	21	16	112
Total	33	37	17	26	33	146

Four teaching assistants who were recruited to teach the speaking and pronunciation classes were trained to help with the testing and marking. These assistants were considered highly successful language learners whose English pronunciation and ability to identify mispronunciations were tested and evaluated by the author and the second author (a native speaker of Northern American English) to ensure the accuracy needed to detect mispronunciations in the subjects' oral reading.

Procedures

To rule out the influence of unfamiliar lexical items and performance anxiety, the students were given sufficient time to look up unknown words and practice their pronunciation before taking the test. When the practice was finished and the students indicated their readiness to read the passage out loud, the test proceeded individually and the reading was recorded for later evaluation. Each recording lasted a little longer than one minute.

The teaching assistants and researchers listened to the tapes and marked the mispronounced words. Each tape was played at least twice to ensure that all mispronounced words were detected. When encountering uncertainty in deciding

whether a sound was mispronounced or not, agreement was sought by at least two assistants and one of the authors. After marking the pronunciation errors, each target sound was counted for its frequency of mispronunciation and statistical analysis was applied to see the frequency distribution of all the target sounds. The target sounds were then ranked from the most mispronounced sounds to the least.

Findings and Discussion

The results are presented in Table 4. A total of 25 sounds are ranked from the most mispronounced to the least, which does not include the sounds that had a mispronunciation rate lower than 13%, which are /o, u, ʌ, v, f, s, z, tʃ/ and /e/ at word finals. Four non-target sounds, /ɔr/, inflected -ed, /ar/ and / ɪəst/(as in in the word *happiest*), are also included due to their high frequency of mispronunciation. Of the 25 ranked sounds, six target syllable structures (from 9 in total) fall into the top 15 most mispronounced sounds; five segmental sounds (from 21 in total) are among the top 15, which are /ʒ/, /ɔ/, /ŋ/, /θ/, and /ʒ/. The final 2 sounds in the top 15 are /ɔr/ and inflected -ed, which could also be described as phonotactic patterns. The results of this study confirm what had been hypothesized, that the subjects encountered more pronunciation problems with certain syllable structures related to Chinese phonotactic constraints than with segmental sounds.

The most mispronounced sound was the fricative /ʒ/ in the word *pleasure*. Almost 90% of the students could not articulate this consonant correctly. As indicated by Tzwei (1987) and Huang (2001), this consonant is inherently difficult and the reason for it being difficult for Chinese and Taiwanese speakers is that it is not found in Chinese. The second most mispronounced sound was dark /l/ positioned after a vowel. In this study, it was the words *world* and *fault*; with 87% of the subjects deleting the /l/ sound. Compared to light /l/ at word initials, this phonotactic pattern was tenaciously difficult.

Even though the light /l/ at word initials was not as a troublesome as dark /l/ at word internals or word final positions, there were still more than 50% of the subjects who made mistakes with the onset /l/, which was exclusively found in the word *learned*. The mispronunciation resulted in the replacement of the onset /l/ with /n/. Interestingly, this finding seems to contradict the study of Hide and Van de Poel (2002), who found that Chinese learners of English tend to substitute initial /n/ with /l/. The relationship between /n/ and /l/ in mispronunciation may need detailed

scrutiny before any conclusion on this aspect of error can be equivocally drawn.

The sound /ɔ/, which has not been discussed much in the literature on pronunciation study, surfaced in this study as the third most mispronounced sound. 81.5% of the subjects mispronounced the word *claws* as /kloz/ or /klauz/. Although this sound exists in Chinese, it is always preceded by the consonant /w/ as in the Chinese words /hwɔ/ (fire), or /dwɔ/ (hide). Nevertheless, the combination of /l/ and /o/ found in the Chinese words /Lou/ (stairs) may have seemed similar to *claw* for the subjects and this might explain why they morphed *claw* into /klo/.

**Table 4: Ranking of Target Sounds Based on Frequency of Mispronunciation
(target sounds are bolded)**

Rank	Sound	Number of Mispronunciations in Different Levels						Percentage of Mispronunciation
		Level 1 (33)	L. 2 (37)	L. 3 (17)	L. 4 (26)	L. 5 (33)	Total (146)	
1	/ɜ/	31	37	17	23	23	131	89.7
2	Dark /l/ (post-vocalic)	23	34	16	25	29	127	87.0
3	/ɔ/	29	29	17	22	22	119	81.5
4	/aun/	21	30	16	20	30	117	80.1
5	/ɔr/	29	31	11	20	24	115	78.8
6	-ed	30	29	11	16	27	113	77.4
7	/en/	23	32	16	14	23	108	74.0
8	/e/+ consonant	30	31	16	12	18	107	73.3
9	/ŋ/	16	30	15	18	24	103	70.5
10	/θ/	33	34	13	12	11	103	70.5
11	/ɜ/	22	26	9	25	18	100	68.5
12	Dark /l/ at word finals	28	23	12	14	16	93	63.7
13	/ʌn/	16	34	15	8	17	90	61.6
14	Onset /l/ in learn	22	16	9	10	19	76	52.1
15	/u/	20	22	12	7	9	70	47.9

16	/ɑr/	11	17	6	18	17	69	47.3
17	/ɪəst/	11	18	0	22	17	68	46.6
18	/w/	19	20	12	7	9	67	45.9
19	/ð/	25	24	6	6	6	67	45.9
20	/æ/	15	30	16	2	3	66	45.2
21	/i/	15	21	15	5	4	60	41.1
22	/ɛ/	13	18	2	7	11	51	34.9
23	Obstruent +/l/	21	9	0	2	3	35	24.0
24	/ɔɪ/	7	10	2	0	3	22	15.1
25	/i/	8	7	0	2	2	19	13.0

The fourth most mispronounced sound combination was /aun/; more than 80% of the subjects could not correctly pronounce the sound when reading *town*, *sound*, and *found*. It is assumed that these words violate the phonotactic rule in Chinese that does not allow nasal /n/ to be attached to /au/. Thus, even though the subjects could pronounce /tau/, similar to the way they would pronounce *peaches* in Chinese, it was difficult for them to pronounce /taun/. Most of them changed it to /taŋ/, which is a sound similar to another Chinese word, *sugar*. However, this does not mean that /n/ is always changed into /ŋ/. In fact, 70% of the subjects had problems with the nasal sound /ŋ/; the word *fang* was often mispronounced as /fɛŋ/. Interestingly, the same mistake was not found in the word *long*. Next, we surmised that the /æ/ and /ŋ/ combination was another case of a phonotactic pattern difference since /æ/ is absent in Chinese and /ŋ/ in Chinese can only be adjoined with two vowels, /i/ and /u/. Thus, to pronounce /æ/ and /ŋ/ together could result in pronunciation difficulty.

Unexpectedly, the words *lord* and *snored* were mispronounced by 79% of the subjects and /ɔr/ ranked as the fifth most mispronounced sound. Though these words were not meant to be target words, they were mispronounced so often that their significance to this study should not be ignored. The unexpected /ɔr/ sound may reflect the difficulty of R-controlled vowels to Taiwanese EFL students since /r/ is an absent phoneme in Taiwanese (though not in Mandarin Chinese). The deletion of /r/ and the change of /ɔ/ to /o/ when pronouncing *lord* or *snored* seemed a predictable outcome when facing the double jeopardy of /ɔ/ and /r/ in these words. Similarly, the

/r/ in /ar/ as in the word *sharp* was also deleted by almost half of the students (47.3%).

Inflected words with -ed endings ranked as the sixth most mispronounced sound. Although it was not included as a target sound, it might be caused by phonotactic constraints with voiceless consonant clusters at word finals. However, it could also be from the influence of grammar problems. The change of verb tenses for inflected words in English is absent in Chinese; despite conscious learning and practice, Taiwanese EFL learners tend to use uninflected forms of verbs. In this study, only 22% of the subjects could correctly pronounce the inflected -ed form. Of these, the most mispronounced word was *thanked*. The majority of the subjects deleted the -ed part; for those who remembered to maintain the inflected form but mispronounced it, an insertion of /ə/ after the voiceless /k/ to form an extra syllable as /θænkət/ was commonly found. Other variations such as /θænkɪd/, /θænkəd/ might also indicate an unfamiliarity with the inflected rule. In any case, the vowel epenthesis suggested an avoidance of the consonant cluster, which is not allowed in Chinese.

Another unexpected common mistake found was with the word *happiest*, which was predominantly mispronounced as *happinist*, with a few cases of *happist*. Again, the insertion of /n/ was found. However, it seems that the phonotactic pattern /i/ or /ɪ/ + stop or affricative we have suspected from the students' mispronunciation is not sufficient to explain the /n/ insertion between *I* and *est*, which may indicate another Chinese phonotactic constraint that rejects the adjoining of the two vowels /i/ and /ə/ and thus is syllabicated by the inserted /n/ to form an extra syllable. For the same reason, as with the subjects who mispronounced *happiest* as *happist*, the deleting of /ə/ might be a strategy of syllable simplification that makes the articulation easier.

We calculated the mean percentage of all the mispronounced sounds ranked in Table 4 for each level and found that that the higher level students made fewer mistakes in this test, as shown in Table 5. This could indicate that proficiency level might play a role in overall pronunciation performance. However, the factors that influence performance differences across different levels may need further investigation.

Table 5: Mean Percentage of Mispronunciations for Each Level

Total	N	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
	Mean %	62.8	66.2	62.1	48.8	46.7

	N of sounds	25	25	25	25	25
	Std. Deviation	22.8	22.8	34.6	30.4	26.6

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study presents another aspect of learners' mispronunciations influenced by Chinese phonotactic constraints found in certain English syllable structures. The three syllable structures (/e/+ consonant, /aun/, /ʌn/, /en/ and dark /l/) are proven to be more troublesome for Taiwanese learners than most of the individual sounds addressed in other studies. The fact that successful pronunciation of segmental sounds did not automatically transfer to the same success at the syllable level is demonstrated in this study; the learning of pronunciation at the lexical level may somehow be more complicated than the learning of individual sounds.

The results of this study indicate a need to revise the learning and instruction of English pronunciation in Taiwan (and maybe in any EFL context). Apart from the learning of segmental sounds, language learners may need to practice certain phonotactic patterns that differ from L1 sound sequences in order to correctly articulate troublesome words similar to those presented in this study. In their study of remedial pronunciation instruction for Chinese learners, Hide and Van de Poel (2002) also suggest that pronunciation teaching should take care of structural and lexical problems. As new approaches to pronunciation teaching have integrated suprasegmental features of English phonology, problematic syllable structures stemming from the influence of L1 phonotactic constraints should be also included.

However, the textbooks used for the teaching of English pronunciation in Taiwan, at least at the college level, are mostly generic imported books that are made for ESL students around the world; the phonotactic issues specific to Taiwanese EFL students thus remain unattended. The reason syllable structure pronunciation practice cannot be found in current textbooks could be because phonotactic constraints between different languages are varied. Thus, the study of English mispronunciation within the domain of phonotactic patterns in one language may not be able to transfer to another one, so the possibility of including all the various phonotactic patterns in one instruction book is slim.

It is therefore important for EFL teachers, particularly those with cross-linguistic ability, to supplement their teaching with extra attention paid toward the influence of L1 phonotactic constraints. The design of new syllabi that integrates the teaching of problematic syllable structures due to language differences may sound overwhelming, but in fact, the influence of phonotactic constraints can be systematically introduced – starting with high frequency words, since the clusters or syllable structures that are more likely to cause pronunciation problems should be limited in number and can be specified based on the phonotactic rules of the L1. A couple of suggestions are made below that apply the findings from this study to classroom practice.

A fundamental step to tackle problematic syllable structures is to raise teachers' and students' awareness of pronunciation difficulties that go beyond segmental problems. For people who have only received pronunciation instruction on segmental sounds and/or those who are not conscious of their suprasegmental pronunciation problems, diagnostic tests may be an explicit intervention tool that can direct their attention to such problems that have not yet been noticed. In this study, many students were surprised to discover that they had made mistakes with words that they had been mispronouncing for years. The diagnostic test developed in this study can be used to serve such an awareness-raising purpose. Similar diagnostic tests on other aspects of suprasegmental features could also be developed to focus on the same concerns.

After raising learners' awareness of pronunciation problems, approaches to teaching English pronunciation may need to shift as well. The traditional ways of teaching English phonology through phonetic symbols may not be sufficient to tackle syllable structure problems as discussed in this paper. ESL/EFL instructors may consider utilizing the instruction of English phonics to supplement classroom pedagogy. Although the teaching of phonics was not originally designed for the teaching of English pronunciation, it does teach the association between letter patterns and sounds, which includes some syllable structures that do not follow Chinese phonotactic rules. For instance, two consonant blends such as *bl-*, *fl-*, and *gl-*, the pattern of obstruent + /l/ that troubles some Chinese students, and consonant clusters such as *scr-*, *spr-*, or *scr-* at word initial, or *-lb*, *-lk*, and *-mp* at word finals could be integrated into the pronunciation teaching to familiarize students with these spelling patterns and strengthen their psychomotor skills when pronouncing them.

Nevertheless, English phonics does not highlight phonotactic patterns such as those found in this study, although how Phonics organizes English spelling patterns is an

easy way for teachers to locate syllable structures that are not permissible in Chinese. From their teaching experiences and an understanding of their students' learning, teachers should be encouraged to develop their inventory of troublesome syllable structures and integrate them into their Phonics pronunciation instruction. In our pronunciation class, for example, students were required to expand the word family of the particular syllable structures they had problems with and practiced them until they could master the structures. If a student had trouble pronouncing *world*, then he or she had to look for other words with a similar syllable structure, such as *swirled* or *twirled*, and make a silly sentence such as *My world swirled and twirled after a sleepless night* for practice.

The last suggestion, which could be a long-term concern for English teaching in Taiwan, is to promote the qualification of the teachers who are trained to teach English phonology. A study done by the first author in 2005 revealed that only 38% of the teachers had ever been trained to teach English pronunciation or Phonics; yet, 72% of them had taught the subject, based on 122 questionnaires collected from in-service training workshops held in two counties in southern Taiwan for elementary and middle school English teachers. Most of the teachers were able to identify segmental problems they had encountered in English pronunciation; however, they had relatively little awareness of suprasegmental problems, such as syllable structures and prosody. Since teachers are one main source for students to emulate English pronunciation, the teacher should be well trained and informed about integrative teaching approaches that target both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation problems.

Besides being trained in the training of English pronunciation and phonics, teachers should be informed about L1 constraints on L2 pronunciation, so that they can be more attentive to this aspect of pronunciation difficulty and supplement their teaching with syllable structures similar to those discussed in this study. Researchers and teachers of English pronunciation from different L1 backgrounds need to explore more in this area, and hopefully develop handbooks (or the like) that address the particular needs of their students when coping with non-segmental pronunciation difficulties.

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Appendix 1

A Reading Passage for Pronunciation Assessment

In a small town by a lake, there lived three little mice. They were the happiest mice in the world. They learned to fish in the river and play with natural toys and had fun every day. They painted their house red like the sun, and thanked the Lord for giving them food. One day, a big cat with long fangs and sharp claws came into the woods to look for three little mice, who were sleeping by the lake. They snored so loudly that the cat just followed the sound and soon found them. When the cat was about to catch the mice, an owl called out, "Wake up! Run for your lives!" The mice woke up and ran. Luckily, they got away. "It's my fault!" cried Mother Mouse, "we shouldn't have fallen asleep." Father Mouse thanked the owl, who just said, "My pleasure."

Impacts of Vietnam's Social Context on Learners' Attitudes Towards Foreign Languages and English Language Learning: Implications for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

This paper discusses the changes in Vietnamese learners' attitudes towards foreign language learning based on an investigation into the history of foreign languages in Vietnam. Most of this paper will focus on English language learning because it is currently the most important foreign language in Vietnam. The paper argues that due to the political, economic and socio-cultural changes, Vietnamese learners' attitudes have shifted from resentment against foreign languages toward appreciation of, and motivation in, learning them. However, despite these changes, only a group of Vietnamese who have benefited from their English competence are fully aware of its importance. Consequently, first, this paper emphasizes that it is important for policy makers, educators and other responsible people in Vietnam to be aware of the changes in learners' attitudes. Then, it suggests that appropriate measures be taken to make learners aware of the importance of English, so that their motivation will be enhanced.

Key words: attitudes of learners, history of foreign languages, role of English, motivation

Introduction

Wright (2002) corroborated that the Chinese, French and American interventions brought the tradition of foreign language learning to Vietnam. In that sense, either because of the rule of foreign countries or the leading role of the Vietnamese communist party, foreign language learning has always been connected to the political, economic, and socio-cultural situation in Vietnam. Denham (1992) notably asserted that "Vietnam's linguistic history exemplifies the close relationship between languages and politics, with the latter influencing not only the choice of medium of

instruction but also the foreign languages studies in Vietnam's schools and tertiary institutions" (p. 61). Accordingly, an investigation into Vietnamese learners' foreign language learning needs to be positioned within the complexity of the context of Vietnam. Through this investigation, this paper attempts to analyze the changes in the attitudes of Vietnamese learners towards foreign languages. As such, this paper examines what role foreign language learning has played in the past and present-day Vietnam, with the year 1986 as the critical point separating the past from present. The foreign languages that have had an impact on Vietnam's education are Chinese, French, Russian and most importantly, English.

Foreign languages in the past and their impacts

Vietnam's history witnessed the blooming of each foreign language in its own era, with different reasons for prominence and slightly different effects on Vietnam. Each foreign language was either accepted or rejected by the Vietnamese. The first two foreign languages in Vietnam were Mandarin Chinese and French, both of which were accessible to only a small number of people. These were the mandarins, middle and upper classes who learned the languages in order to work for the rulers and their ruling parties. Thus, both Mandarin and French used to be primarily connected to political purposes. Mandarin was brought into Vietnam during one thousand years of the Chinese domination when China attempted to integrate Vietnam into its territory (The National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007). From this time, Mandarin played an important role in Vietnamese education (Brick & Louie, 1984; Wright, 2002). Many dynasties adopted Mandarin as the official language in administration, ritual activities, academic activities and literature (The National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007). "Nom", the first form of Vietnamese written language, was developed very late, around the 9th century¹. It was developed based on Mandarin and used to record Vietnamese literature and historical events from the 13th century (Nguyen Tai Can, cited in Nguyen Thien Giap, 2007; The National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007; Woods, 2002; Wright, 2002). When the French invaded Vietnam in 1859, 80 % of the Vietnamese population were able to read 'Nom' (Karnow, 1983). Despite the latter's formation, Mandarin continued to be the official language. Examinations held to select the mandarins who were excellent in using Mandarin took place every year and were not

stopped until 1924. However, the formation of Nom in the 13th century already demonstrated the desire of the Vietnamese to assert their cultural freedom from the Chinese invaders. As a result, a lot of literary works were written in Nom parallel with the continuing use of Mandarin in Vietnamese written literature. A lot of Mandarin vocabulary was also adapted for Vietnamese usage (The National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007). Taken together, on the one hand, it is undeniable that Mandarin had important connections with the political and socio-cultural context of Vietnamese society. On the other hand, it may be inferred that Mandarin was not favoured by the Vietnamese populace. However, the Vietnamese did not overtly reject learning Mandarin during that length of time mostly because of the top-down adoption of Mandarin as the official written language under almost all Vietnamese feudal dynasties (Woods, 2002). Other reasons for the reluctant continuation of Mandarin might be Chinese ideological and linguistic influences.

Meanwhile, the attempt to popularize French was strongly rejected by the Vietnamese though French colonialism in Vietnam from 1859 to 1954 had considerable influences on Vietnam's education. In fact, to form a French-civilized colony, French education was duplicated in Vietnam, and French and '*quoc ngu*', Romanized Vietnamese, were taught at school and universities (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005; Dang, in Denham, 1992). However, like the case of Mandarin, elite education brought by the French was available to only a few Vietnamese intellectuals, who were expected to assist the French administration. It was estimated that only 2% of the populace benefited from the French-based educational system (Woods, 2002). Some of these intellectuals were even sent to France to enjoy French culture. As soon as they came back, they established newspapers that were full of articles written in French and *quoc ngu* to compliment France and its culture. The admiration of French culture and its technological development even led some intellectuals to reject Vietnamese history. These intellectuals believed that the appropriation of French culture and ideologies would result in a modern Vietnam. Despite the fact that some reformists supported the rejection of Mandarin and Chinese influences to appropriate French ideologies, the majority did not. The main reason was derived from the brutality of the French colonizers reflected in taxation policies, racial discrimination and exploitation of natural resources. For example, Vietnamese, even the most educated ones, were paid much lower, but had to pay much higher tax rates than

uneducated French (Jamieson, 1993). This brutality might have induced the resentment of the Vietnamese toward learning French at the time. The attitudes of the Vietnamese towards French were similar to those of Indian people towards English because French for Vietnamese and English for the Indians were the languages of the colonizers. What is more, the languages of the colonizers, as Kachru (1986) emphasized, only brought prestige for those who were competent in it. In Vietnam, these beneficiaries came from only the upper-class. Nevertheless, though the learning of French was politically imposed by the French, it contributed to the introduction of Vietnam's literature to foreigners, at least the French-speaking people. Many intellectuals, including the reformists, translated Vietnamese literary works into French. (Jamieson, 1993). Therefore, the teaching and learning of French at that time was believed to "[leave] a reserve of French language skills in Vietnam"(Wright, 2002, p. 231). Moreover, through contact with French people and culture, Vietnamese vocabulary started to adopt some French words, and Vietnamese media written in Vietnamese and modern Vietnamese literature came into being (Jamieson, 1993; Nguyen Thien Giap, 2007; The National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007).

Different from Chinese and French, which were the languages of colonizers, Russian was introduced for the furthering of political friendship and alliance. Indeed, it was closely related to the forming of political, economic, and socio-cultural connections with the USSR. During the war with America, the USSR was Vietnam's main ally who supplied almost all the necessary resources. After the war, Vietnam followed the centralized economy model used in the USSR, and its education was also affected by Soviet education. "The USSR now is the major, and, in some instances only, source of advanced and specialized training for Vietnamese learners. Increasingly, educational institutions in Vietnam rely on Soviet sources for everything, from textbooks to school buildings" (Pike, 1987, p. 154). The USSR also continued to support Vietnam with technical assistance in many fields like energy, agriculture, transport and communications, and even finance. Most of Vietnam's trade at this time was with the USSR and Eastern European countries (Russia Embassy; SarDesai, 1992). As a result, from 1975, Russian became the most important foreign language taught at schools and universities. The Vietnamese government even aimed to provide the teaching of Russian to 60 % of learners at high school (Denham, 1992).

Moreover, hundreds of Vietnamese were sent to the USSR and Eastern European countries to study, mainly science and technology. Vietnamese culture also came into contact with Soviet culture. Russian books were available at very cheap prices, and Soviet films were shown at cinemas because Vietnam could produce only a few films every year. The Hanoi Television station also showed one hour of Soviet programs out of its only two-hour broadcast (Pike, 1987). Taken together, Russian played political as well as economic and socio-cultural roles in Vietnam.

Compared with Mandarin, French and Russian, English originally had a totally different influence in Vietnam. Unlike the language of a colonizer or an ally, it was not imposed on school curricula. The history of English originated in South Vietnam upon the American invasion. English became popular because many southern people worked for the American administration, or provided services for American soldiers (Brown, 1991; Duiker, 1983). It is clear that the need to learn English in the South was derived from a socio-economic demand. English was the most popular foreign language in South Vietnam from 1958 to 1968 in schools and universities (Wright, 2002). Meanwhile, English was offered at some universities in the North from 1958 and was incorporated in the formal school curriculum in 1971 (Denham, 1992). Yet, Russian, as the language of Vietnam's biggest ally, was, doubtlessly, much more important in the North. After the withdrawal of the American forces, English and French became much less popular than other languages as they were believed to destroy the local culture (Wright, 2002) by bringing with them the cultures of these enemies. Learning these two languages and Chinese was not encouraged because at the time, Vietnam had no diplomatic relations with France, America and China (Wright, 2002).

Conclusively, despite the fact that most of the foreign languages in Vietnam served as a communication vehicle for colonizers, it is undeniable that these languages left important linguistic and cultural imprints in Vietnam. These imprints would influence future motivation of Vietnamese learners in foreign language learning.

Foreign languages in Vietnam after the implementation of doi moi (renovation) process

However, the situation has remarkably changed since the time of the invaders and allies. Foreign language learning, especially English, has gained prominence as a consequence of the decision of the Vietnamese government to implement the *doi*

moi' (renovation process) in 1986. One main purpose of the renovation process was to promote human development, and emphasize human resources as most important in contributing to the national development process (Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee, 1986). As such, the Communist Party has made education and training the focus of the developmental process. In addition, the government has issued two strategic plans, one for the period 1991-2000, the other for 2001-2010, specifying how Vietnam would aim for the targets of integration and globalization. In these plans, learning foreign languages, especially English, has been recommended as a means to achieve the aims of industrialization and integration. In 1998, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) recognized the potentials of developing learners' foreign language competence and the need to innovate teaching methods. Consequently, MoET has issued a series of official documents regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Vietnam. Notably, English, French, Chinese and Russian were emphasized as the four compulsory foreign languages at school (MoET, Document No 9893/BGDĐT-GDTrH, 2006a). Another noticeable change is that learners may start learning foreign languages from primary education. They are also encouraged to learn at least one foreign language throughout their schooling, so that they can use these languages after finishing high school. It is also worth pointing out here that learners at high school may be granted complimentary points towards their study results if they achieve high results in a second foreign language (Prime Minister, Decision No 201/2001/QĐ-TTg, 2001; MoET, Document No 8706/BGDĐT-GDTrH, 2007). That is, learners who get marks higher than 5 in a second foreign language will be granted from 0.1 to 0.3 point for their general point average (GPA).

In order to understand why MoET has appreciated foreign language learning, it is necessary to examine the role of foreign languages. Despite the continuing good relationship between Vietnam and Russia, Russia has not influenced Vietnam as much politically, economically and socio-culturally recently. Though Russian investment in Vietnam remained very high, it has not been as great as that by China (General Statistics Office of Vietnam-GSO, 2006). Meanwhile, given that Vietnam's diplomatic relations with China and France have improved, trade and investment have also increased (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2006). Therefore, the Chinese and French have regained their prominence as a result of economic influences.

Competence in these languages would help Vietnamese graduates to find a good job in either a Chinese, Russian, or French company. In addition, scientific and technological exchanges between Vietnam and these countries also require learners and scholars to gain higher levels of competence in these languages, so that they can learn new technologies. In particular, the International Organization of Francophony, has helped to make French more attractive to Vietnamese learners by bringing French culture into Vietnam (Pham Trung Kien & Hoang Thi Bich Hanh, 2006). It is estimated that approximately 0.7% of Vietnamese population use French either on a necessary basis or casually. The number of learners studying French formally at school is around 120,000. Many universities also offer training programs in French (Pham Trung Kien & Hoang Thi Bich Hanh, 2006). Moreover, hundreds of Vietnamese learners and scholars who are proficient in Mandarin, French or Russian have also been granted thousands of scholarship opportunities to study in China, France, and Russia (Pham Trung Kien & Hoang Thi Bich Hanh, 2006). It must be noted that the number of book titles published in foreign languages rose dramatically in the years from 2000 to 2006 to meet the social demand of learning foreign languages (GSO, 2006). It is evident then that these languages have become more attractive to the general population.

Yet, English has become the most popular since 1989 (Denham, 1992) in political, economic and socio-cultural aspects of Vietnam. This has happened without resistance because present Vietnamese do not harbour any hatred or hostility toward the USA. “For...[those] born after 1975, the war belongs to the past” (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005. P. 44). English for Vietnam, has enabled it to conduct diplomatic and economic negotiations with many countries around the world since it established relations with 174 countries, and economic and trade ties with almost every country and territory in the world (Vietnam Communist Party, 2007a). For example, two of the most noticeable diplomatic achievements were the normalization of diplomatic relations and signing trade agreements with America (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005). Furthermore, Vietnam joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1995, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in November 1998, the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2006 and became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in 2007. Evidently, English competence would enhance Vietnam’s presence because English is used as a means of communication within these organizations. In addition, the current popularity of

English in Vietnam arises from a common demand since English is “the key to science, technology and commerce” (Denham, 1992, p. 64). In terms of cultural influences, it is believed that English will bring Vietnam into the world and bring the world to Vietnam. It is noticeable that 14 out of 34 channels broadcast by cable television, and 20 channels by direct to home (DTH) television service are in English and only sometimes have partial Vietnamese subtitles (Vietnam Television Station). Vietnam radio stations also have channels broadcast in foreign languages including English. Furthermore, the Internet is more widely used in Vietnam, with a total of about 18 million users by October, 2007 (Vietnam Internet Network Information Center, 2007). Though blogging is not very popular yet, most bloggers post in English (OpenNet Initiative, 2006). Most online newspapers have both Vietnamese and English versions, and nearly twenty journals and newspapers are published in English (Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism). English newspapers imported from other countries and English textbooks are available everywhere. These suggest that English has affected nearly all aspects of life and the Vietnamese are aware of its importance.

It is clear that foreign language learning has already gained an important position in Vietnam’s development. Accordingly, Vietnamese learners’ attitudes towards learning foreign languages have changed. Thanks to the cultural and linguistic influences that these languages have had on Vietnam, learners have left resentment behind and started to appreciate them. In the case of English, though it experienced two different reactions from southern Vietnamese and northern Vietnamese, it has regained and demonstrated its power throughout Vietnam as shown in the following discussion.

The impacts of Vietnam’s integration and globalization process on English language learning

The process of modernization, industrialization, integration and globalization provides the Vietnamese with more opportunity to improve their study, work and living conditions. However, it also forces them to work harder to be better prepared for social demands. In particular, this process will require Vietnamese to be able to communicate in English and even be fluent in it for work and study in an international

environment. This section investigates the valuable opportunity that English will bring to such an international environment, particularly regarding employment and study.

English for employment

English has exerted its influence on employment opportunities, both in the domestic and international labour markets, and in the sectors that provide high-paying jobs. The Vietnamese government asserts that exporting labour, as a socio-economic activity, promotes Vietnamese human resources. As such, workers can earn good salaries and update their work skills. Moreover, exporting labour can attract foreign currency into Vietnam and strengthen diplomatic relations (Political Bureau of Vietnam Party Central Committee, Direction No 41-CT/TW, 1999). In fact, working in another country has been attractive to a lot of Vietnamese because the pay is much higher (Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MoFA, 2005). Currently, there are approximately 400,000 overseas workers in over 40 countries and territories. In 2006, 67,447 Vietnamese workers abroad sent home 1.5 billion USD. The traditional labour markets for Vietnamese workers are Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia and Korea (MoFA, 2005a). These countries have recently passed some laws that may create better working conditions for foreign workers, thereby becoming more promising destinations for Vietnamese (MoFA, 2005b; Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs-MoLISA, 2007). Vietnam has also started to export workers to Libya, Saudi Arabia, France, Canada, Britain and Greece where the workers can earn much higher salaries than in traditional markets (MoFA, 2005). It is expected that by joining the WTO, the international labour market will become even more promising for Vietnam. In 2010, it is projected that Vietnam will export 100,000 workers overseas (Ministry of Finance, 2007). However, all these labour markets need workers with the ability to communicate in another language such as English. For example, to obtain an Australian visa entry, workers need to obtain 4.5 IELTS points (Nguyen Luong Trao, 2007). Foreign workers in Korea are required to be proficient in either Korean or English. In November, 2005, Malaysia promulgated a law stipulating that foreign workers would need to obtain a certificate of proficiency in either English or Malay (MoFA, 2005b). Workers exported to Middle Eastern countries are required to be able to communicate in English and know a little Arabic (Vietnam Association of

Manpower Supply, 2006; 2007). Therefore, the Vietnamese workforce-supplies businesses will select workers with advanced skills and good language proficiency to increase their competitiveness in the international labour market (Nguyen Luong Trao, 2007). Being aware of the importance of foreign languages, the Vietnamese government has required labour-exporting businesses to provide overseas workers with language training and encouraged these workers to learn by themselves the language of their destinations (Political Bureau of Vietnam Party Central Committee, Direction No 41-CT/TW, 1999; National Assembly of Vietnam, Laws No 72/2006/QH11, 2006).

In addition to the demand of proficiency in foreign languages to work abroad, English is also important for seeking jobs in the domestic labour market, especially good jobs and jobs in foreign businesses and joint ventures. In 1987, Vietnam began to open the door to foreign investment, and the first Foreign Investment Law was issued in 1988 together with a multitude of regulations on investment. From 1988 to October 2006, 76 countries and territories invested 36 billion USD in Vietnam. Most of this has gone into either foreign companies or joint ventures (MPI, 2006). Consequently, the number of jobs in these enterprises has also soared. During the period between 2001 and 2005, the number of employees tripled from 364, 300 to 1,028, 400 in foreign enterprises, and increased considerably from 125,000 to 192, 100 in joint ventures. The total number of employees in these two kinds of enterprises accounted for nearly 20% of the number of Vietnamese employees in all active enterprises (GSO, 2006). Evidently, foreign direct investment (FDI) has gone into the industries that require employees with high job skills, and, therefore, their income is now double that of employees in other enterprises (Nguyen Thi Tue Anh et al., 2006). As a result, there is harsh competition for employment in these foreign businesses and joint ventures. Beside good skills, one important requirement to work in these companies is English proficiency, especially for positions like secretaries, assistants, or engineers. These employees are required to do research, attend meetings, and do other clerical work in which English is an important vehicle. Therefore, mastering English is a requirement. Additionally, given that industry has become increasingly important in Vietnam, it has attracted the most foreign investment and technical assistance (GSO, 2006). Hence, the number of jobs has increased considerably (MPI, 2007). As a result, Vietnam now needs more English-competent engineers to learn modern techniques and more skilled labour with high levels of English proficiency to

work in this sector.

Tourism is also another growing industry that requires employees with good English proficiency. In 2006, Vietnam welcomed 3.6 million tourists, gaining a three-per cent increase compared with the previous year. The number of tourists from the US, Australia and Singapore each reached 100,000 (GSO, 2006). This increase has, as a result, brought more opportunities for employment. By 2007, 783,400 people were employed in hotels and restaurants, and this excludes the number of employees in other tourist services (MoF, 2007). It is clear that after joining the WTO, the number of tourists to Vietnam would increase quickly. It has been forecasted that jobs in tourism will increase considerably between 2007 and 2016 (The World Economic Forum, 2007). Therefore, there is an urgent need to train staff who can communicate well in English to meet this increasing demand.

English for studying and training

In addition to the importance of English competence in seeking employment, English has become an essential requirement for Vietnamese learners and professionals in their study, either overseas or at home. To study abroad, on either a self-funded or sponsored program, the prerequisite is English competence to obtain an entry visa, and university entrance. English also plays a very important role in the potential for being granted a scholarship. Despite this requirement, approximately 20,000 Vietnamese had studied in the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK by 2005 (Ashwill & Thai Ngoc Diep, 2005). When studying in Vietnam, English, or occasionally another foreign language like Chinese or French, is a requirement of the curriculum at all educational levels.

In fact, there have been more Vietnamese going abroad to study in English-speaking countries like Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, where the entry visa and university entrance will be granted to the applicant provided he or she meets the requirement for English proficiency. For example, to study at the University of Otago, New Zealand, the English requirement is IELTS 6.0 for undergraduate and 6.5 for postgraduate level on an academic module (University of Otago). Despite this high requirement, the number of Vietnamese learners studying overseas has increased steadily. For example, in New Zealand, the number of Vietnamese learners at high school increased nine-fold between 1999 and 2004, and that of tertiary learners increased ten-fold. In 2006, the number decreased

slightly, but remained very high (International Division & Data Management and Analysis-New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005; 2007). Between 2002 and 2005, the number of Vietnamese learners applying for visas to study higher education in Australia increased considerably (IDP Education Australia, 2005; 2007).

Furthermore, with education and training as a priority, the government, based on annual agreements and cooperation programs with other governments, or by spending the state budget, provides Vietnamese learners and professionals hundreds of overseas scholarships to study a bachelor, master and/or doctorate degree or to gain short-term training. In order to obtain these precious scholarships, the most difficult requirement is achieving good proficiency in a foreign language such as English. For example, to study a master or doctorate degree in India, based on the Vietnamese-Indian cultural exchange program, the English proficiency level for admission is IELTS 6.0 or TOEFL 500. Petronas Malaysian scholarships will be granted for candidates with fluent written and spoken English (MoET). Another annual valuable source of scholarships is from foreign universities, organizations and/or governments. For instance, the Australian and New Zealand governments, and some organizations from the United States and the United Kingdom grant outstanding Vietnamese learners such prestigious scholarships as ADS, NZAIDS, Fulbright and Humphrey, and Chevening. These are more competitive and require very high proficiency levels of English.

On the whole, English has demonstrated its political, economic and socio-cultural power in Vietnam. Presumably, only some Vietnamese beneficiaries such as scholarship recipients, employees in foreign companies, to name but a few, have been conscious of its power. As Kachru (1986) stated, English competence will bring prestige in the domains that require its proficiency. Therefore, it is important that other Vietnamese, especially learners, become aware of the power of English before they are affected by that power. As a result, they will not be left out of the industrialization, modernization and globalization process in Vietnam.

Vietnamese government's policies towards the encouragement of English language learning

As a result of foreseeing the importance of English in Vietnam, MoET has made Vietnamese learners aware of its power. First and the foremost, English has been

introduced into primary schools. The method of teaching English at this level emphasizes freedom for teachers, so that they can give interesting lessons without worrying about time frames and material loads. An emphasis has also been put on teaching speaking and listening skills for young beginners (MoET, Decision No 50/2003/QĐ-BGD&ĐT, 2003b). MoET has also attempted to improve the English language-learning situation at higher educational levels. For instance, learners at professional high schools are required to learn English so that they can communicate and do simple research in their fields (MoET, Decision No 06/2003/QĐ-BGDĐT, 2003a).

However, the situation is much more complicated at tertiary level. A sample curriculum has been constructed, specifying that foreign languages will be taught within 10 credits out of approximately 200 of the whole curriculum (MoET, 2006-2007). However, after completing 10 credits within the first and second year, very few training branches are allowed to provide further English training for learners. Most universities do not have any policies or regulations to encourage their learners to continue learning a foreign language. Consequently, it is questionable whether learners can use their English in the workplace and for communication as Decision No 201/2001/QĐ-TTg (Prime Minister, 2001) stated. In reality, Vietnamese graduates' inability to communicate in English has been open to criticism. Meanwhile, even after joining the WTO, a lack of English proficiency may lower the competitiveness of Vietnamese graduates compared with that of foreigners who come to Vietnam to find work (Ho Chi Minh City Labour League, 2006). Given their English proficiency is better, these foreigners will definitely have more opportunities. It is necessary that there be some policies to encourage learners to study foreign languages by themselves and achieve high levels of communicative ability. Under such circumstances, it may well be that increased learner motivation will stand as one of the means to inspiring Vietnamese to continue to learn English even after their university graduation. Last, it is necessary that being able to communicate in a foreign language, especially English, should be counted as one of the graduation requirements.

In addition to the sample curriculum, advanced programs taught in English have recently been piloted in nine universities since 2005. In these programs, the content, methods, management and evaluation used by United States universities have been applied. The number of universities applying such advanced programs as this will be

27 by 2010 (Nguyen Thien Nhan, 2007). As far as the highest educational level is concerned, MoET stipulates that the doctoral candidate should be proficient in a foreign language, mainly English, to do research and attend international conferences. This proficiency should be equivalent to TOEFL 450 (paper-based), IELTS 5.0 or certificates gained from domestic institutions offering training in English, or bachelor or master degrees obtained in English-speaking countries (MoET, 2006b). Most importantly, MoET has already promulgated a project on how to plan the development of educational socialization in the period of 2005-2010. Based on this, all Vietnamese universities, colleges and professional high schools are encouraged to cooperate with international high-quality educational institutions to provide joint educational programs. Foreign experts, managers and talented people will be invited to work in Vietnamese educational institutions. Furthermore, foreign universities and international educational institutions will be allowed to open branches in Vietnam (MoET, Decision No 20/2005/QD-BGD&DT, 2005). In short, the Vietnamese government hopes to establish more internationally recognized universities and colleges. This implies that English will be crucial in Vietnam when education and training enters an international context.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that foreign languages have had very important political, socio-cultural and economic impacts in Vietnam. Among these influences, it must be noted that the cultural and linguistic values of these languages mingled with Vietnamese values to form contemporary Vietnamese culture. Therefore, despite the fact that most of the foreign languages in Vietnam used to be the languages of colonialists or invaders, Vietnamese learners have willingly learned these languages and enjoyed the benefits they bring.

In the case of English, it came to Vietnam as the language of a powerful invader that brought with it turmoil and bloodshed. Consequently, though it was very popular in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War, it experienced rejection by the post-war Vietnamese. In addition, between 1975 and 1989, the Vietnamese government only established diplomatic relations with communist countries and 23 noncommunist countries (Morley & Nishihara, 1997; Thayer, 1999). Therefore, English was not as important as Russian in establishing economic and political relations with other countries. In 1986, facing a national economic crisis, the government issued the *'doi*

moi' policy to attract more foreign investment. The foreign policy was changed from "maintain[ing] peace, tak[ing] advantage of favourable world conditions" to "be[ing] friends with all countries" (Thayer, 1999, p. 5). Since then, English has become the passport for Vietnam to join the world after many years of neglect.

Given that Vietnam has joined the world, Vietnamese learners and professionals will definitely need English for their employment and study, for both short-term and long-term purposes. Most importantly, judging the fact that currently Vietnamese do not reject any foreign languages, it may well be that they will be motivated to study them. It is important that language educators and teachers in Vietnam acknowledge these changes in the attitudes of Vietnamese learners so that they can choose appropriate methods to encourage them to learn.

¹ Vietnamese spoken language appeared long before the Chinese invasion, but the written form was just created in the 9th century (National Centre of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2007).

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The Effect of Assisted RR on Fluency and Comprehension in Chinese FL Classrooms

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Abstract

Assisted Repeated Reading has been found effective for enhancing reading fluency in FL classrooms elsewhere outside China. The present study attempts to look into the effectiveness of the newly introduced treatment in improving the reading fluency and comprehension of Chinese College English students. We compared the Assisted RR treatment altered according to the Chinese College English classroom background with the ER (extensive reading) treatment widely practiced in Chinese FL classroom on a 25-session-experiment basis. The results show it has significantly increased our learners' reading rate and comprehension.

Key word: assisted repeated reading; extensive reading; fluency; comprehension

Introduction

Though there is no general consensus as to the definition of reading fluency, fluency is often referred to as learners' ability to automatically recognize an increasing number of words and phrases, which is a necessary step to comprehension of texts (Grabe, 1991; Paran, 1996; Perfetti, Van Dyke, and Hart, 2001). Likewise, Worthy & Broaddus (2001) suggests that fluency should involve such competencies as reading rate; accuracy and automaticity of word recognition (effortless identification of

words). As reading rate and automaticity of word recognition are two most important components of reading fluency, we often use reading rate for reading fluency in this article.

Educators and researchers (Allington, 1983; Keehn, 2003) point out that the development of reading fluency is a critical aspect of learning to read, and that reading fluency plays a vital role in developing effective and efficient readers. Furthermore, studies (Samuels, 1988; Johns, 1993) have shown that reading fluency and comprehension are strongly correlated.

However, in the past decades, reading fluency has not received proper attention from teachers and learners in Chinese FL classroom, perhaps because of the belief that comprehension is the main aim of reading, not realizing that good comprehension calls for appropriate reading rate. It is often the case in Chinese FL classrooms that whenever they read, many learners would read word for word slowly. As a result, they not only fail to achieve appropriate comprehension but also fail to develop interest in reading in English. Recently Chinese FL learners' reading rate has drawn concern in the field of FL teaching and learning, which is best reflected in the newly published "College English Curriculum Requirements" and the nation-wide College English test, in which fast reading is first required.

Therefore, more efficient ways of improving learners' reading fluency need to be developed in Chinese FL classroom. While Extensive Reading (ER) which is quite popular in Chinese College English classrooms has long been thought to be a useful approach to increasing L2/FL learners' reading fluency, assisted Repeated Reading(RR) is rather a new instructional approach in FL reading contexts in China. The main objective of the present study is to find out whether and how an assisted repeated reading model enhances Chinese College English learners' reading fluency and consequently improve their reading comprehension.

Literature review

On automaticity, fluency and comprehension

Automaticity is often described as being able to recognize printed words without attention or with little effort (Samuels, 1979.). According Automaticity Theory (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974;Samuels, 2006), the importance of automatic identifying of words lies in the fact that our attentional resources are limited, and that reading involves the process of recognizing printed words and constructing meaning from the

text, which is “slow, effortful, and hard on memory” (Samuels, 2006, p. 9). Therefore, in performing the complex task of reading, part of the reading process has to be automatized. If the lower-level processes of reading can be automatized, a considerable amount of attentional resources can be freed for higher-level comprehension processes such as accessing schemata and monitoring comprehension. As a result, successful understanding of the text can be achieved (Reynolds, 2000; Kuhn and Stahl, 2003; Pikulski and Chard, 2005).

Undoubtedly, fluency rests to a great extent on automaticity as the latter is an indispensable element of fluency. Though there is no consensus as to how to define fluency, it is often referred to as being composed by accuracy in decoding, automaticity in word recognition, and the appropriate use of prosodic features such as stress, pitch and juncture (Kuhn and Stahl, 2003).

The relationship between automaticity, fluency and comprehension is best embodied in Chall’s model of reading development. Chall (1996b) proposed six stages: the stage of prereading in which concepts about print, phoneme awareness and bookhandling knowledge are built; the stage of conventional literacy which aims at the development of learners’ recognition of basic sound-symbol association; the stage of confirmation and fluency where learners should develop their automaticity with print and prosody in terms of phrasing, stress and intonation; the stage of reading for learning the new which is focused on the understanding of context area text; the stage of multiple viewpoints where learners are expected to be able to critically evaluate a variety of viewpoints and finally the stage of construction and reconstruction in which learners begin to synthesize various viewpoints in the texts in order to form their own perspectives on a given subject.

Stanovich (1980, 1984), Adams (1990) emphasize that the stage of confirmation and fluency is a critical transition because without such automatic processing, learners will continue to spend a large percentage of their attention on decoding, leaving inadequate amount for comprehension. Likewise, Schreiber (1980), Allington (1983) and Samuels (1988) point out that fluency is the prerequisite if learners are to succeed at the construction of meaning from text. Also disfluent reading has an effect on the student’s comprehension (O’Shea & Sindelar, 1983; Lefly & Pennington, 1991; Levy, Abello, & Lysynchuk, 1997).

On strong and weak readers

Researchers have tried to find out what is involved in being good readers by contrasting their reading process and product with readers known to be poor. Many of them have suggested that good readers tend to be strong in recognizing words or competent in microlinguistic skills while poor readers are not (Devine et al. 1987; Eskey, 1988; Grabe, 1991). The reason is that reading is an interactive process in which knowledge of lower order such as syntactical, semantic, lexical and orthographic knowledge interact with knowledge of higher order like topic knowledge, background knowledge simultaneously (Rumellhart, 1977, 1980).

Poor readers who have deficient skills in recognizing words have to rely on contextual knowledge to a great degree (Stanovich, 1980). Further, in FL reading, there exists a threshold level, that is a level of proficiency in the target language, below which a deficit in one skill cannot be compensated for by strength in other skills (Mohanned & Swales, 1984).

According to Alderson (2001), what makes good readers distinct from poor readers is the speed of fixation, or in other words, the automaticity of word recognition and the processes that take place during fixation. After initial word recognition, good readers can continue higher-order prediction, monitoring and planning of subsequent fixations because they use less attentional resources to analyse visual stimulus, therefore they have more resources for other sorts of processing.

On assisted/unassisted RR models and their effects on fluency and comprehension

According to Dowhower (1989), unassisted RR models refer to independent repeated reading which rely on learners' ability to improve their accuracy, rate and prosody on their own, whereas assisted readings provide a direct model of fluent reading for the learner in the form of a tutor, a taped recording of the text or another form of speech feedback.

Samuels (1979) was the first to describe the repeated reading method which consists of (1) selecting a short passage at the student's instructional level, (2) setting a rate criterion, and (3) having the student read and reread the passage over time until the rate criterion is reached. The silent reading rate is determined by timing the student and then counting how many words are read. Charting of the rate is recommended as a means of record keeping and of maintaining motivation with the student.

RR models are attempted to develop fluent word recognition skills. It is hypothesized that the method can develop automatic, effortless word recognition, and consequently, free readers' cognitive resources and allow them to pay more attention to higher order comprehension processes (Gorsuch and Taguchi, 2008).

It has been found that after RR treatments, there are significant progress in reading speed for the practiced text (Carver & Hoffman, 1981; O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985; Taguchi, 1997). Similar findings have been reported for non-fluent readers (Faulkner & Levy, 1994; Herman, 1985) and children with reading disabilities (Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985; Allan D. Ensor, II and James R. Koller, 1997).

According to LeVasseur, Macaruso & Shankweiler (2008), reports on how RR treatments improve comprehension have been inconsistent. Some studies report that RR training with text improves comprehension (Bourassa, Levy, Dowin & Casey, 1998; Herman, 1985; O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1985, 1987) while others report no benefits (Conte & Humphreys, 1989). Dowhower (1987) reported mixed results, who found comprehension benefits after assisted RR training but not after unassisted RR training.

In general, the effects of RR training on fluency have proved stronger than on comprehension (NRP, 2000).

On repeated reading in L2/FL settings

Relatively less attention has been paid to research on RR in L2 or FL settings as in L1 settings for years because of "a limited understanding of the role of rapid and automatic word recognition processes" (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p. 21) in comprehension and because it seems that many L2/FL educators perceive that fluency will develop by itself as learners' overall proficiency grows (Grabe, 2004).

But recently the focus seems to have switched to L2/FL settings. For one thing, some L2/FL educators and researchers are aware that students' fluency need to be improved with practice, rather than instruction of word recognition (Allington, 1983; Kuhn and Stahl, 2003). For another, fluency practice is particularly needed for L2/FL reading classroom because reading in a foreign or second language is usually a slow, laborious process (Jensen, 1986; Segalowitz, Poulsen, and Komoda, 1991; Anderson, 1999).

For example, Blum et. al (1995) investigated whether RR with an auditory model is an effective supplement to an L2 literacy program. They concluded that RR improved

the readers' ability to read books of increasing difficulty fluently and accurately. More recently, Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass and Gorsuch (2004) studied some Japanese university students to investigate whether and how assisted repeated reading with an auditory reading model facilitate fluency development and comprehension. They compared two reading development methods: extensive reading and assisted repeated reading, which shows that RR is as promising a method as ER for enhancing second and foreign language readers' fluency and that it can potentially develop weak ESL/EFL readers' fluency and help them become independent readers. Gorsuch and Taguchi (2008) carried out an 11-week quasi-experimental RR study with university level Vietnamese learners, the results of which suggest that RR improve the learners' fluency and comprehension significantly.

Present study

So far as we know, hardly any study has been made on the effect of RR in Chinese College English reading classrooms, where the size of class is much bigger and the source of FL reading material is much more limited. Therefore using an experimental design, the present study compared the assisted RR model with the traditional extensive reading model, attempting to answer the following five research questions:

1. Is RR effective for developing reading fluency of Chinese college students?
2. Is RR also effective for improving reading comprehension of Chinese college students?
3. Is RR model more effective than the traditional ER model in developing reading fluency and comprehension of Chinese college students?
4. Is RR model as helpful to the weaker readers as to the stronger readers?
5. How do Chinese college students perceive the effectiveness of RR?

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 90 first-year Chinese students in Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, who were from 3 classes from the school of Food Science and Engineering. We called the 3 classes Group 1(G1), Group 2(G2) and Group 3(G3). As part of their academic program, they had four 45-minute English lessons a week designed to improve reading, writing, speaking and listening, and grammar. The

participants ranged in age from 18-20 years old; in each group, there are 18, 17, 15 females and 12, 13, 15 males.

The experimental groups and the control group were chosen based on the results of a pretest, which shows that G1 and G3 were comparable, because their mean scores on the pretest total were 55.32 and 56.35 respectively, while on the pretest reading subtest (the reading comprehension parts of the test) were 56.53 and 56.80 and their WPM averages 147.29 and 159.82 respectively. To ensure that G1 and G3 participants were not statistically different at the outset of the treatments, the Independent-Samples T tests were applied to their scores on the pretest total, pretest reading subtest, as well as to their pretest WPM averages. There were no significant differences between G1 and G3 on any of the measures at $p = 0.665, 0.937, 0.288 > 0.05$. Therefore, we considered G1 as the experimental group, G3 the control group. The results also indicate that G2 had lower scores than the other two groups in the pretest, with the mean score of the pretest total being 51.13, the pretest reading subtest 49.50 and the WPM average 130.94. A comparison of the scores on the pretest total, pretest reading subtest and the pretest WPM between G2 and G3, we found a significant difference at $p = 0.018, 0.016, 0.006 < 0.05$. Therefore we regard G2 as comparatively weaker readers.

To find out if RR is similarly beneficial to weaker learners, and because students in G2 have been found to be relatively weaker than the other two groups, we take G2 as another experimental group to see whether through the RR treatment, the comparatively weak readers gain significant progress in fluency and comprehension.

Materials for treatment

The materials for both the RR program and the traditional ER program were two new editions of graded College English fast reading textbooks by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. Each textbook is comprised of eight units, while each unit has four passages (A-1, A-2, B-1, and B-2.). The whole book 1 and the first five units of book 2 were used. The texts vary in number of words (from 400 words to 1000 words each), topics (e.g. “Johnny the Explorer”, “Making Friends”, “The Scientific Method”) and types (e.g. narrative texts, argumentative texts and expository texts). There are several multiple choices or True or False Questions attached to each passage to test reading comprehension.

The audiotapes used to assist the experimental groups' reading were produced by two English teachers from the department of foreign languages of Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, who read the passages in turns at a moderate speed.

Instruments:

Pretest and posttest

The pretest and the post-test respectively comprise two sections, Section 1 and Section 2. Both Section 1s include: Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary and Structure, and Cloze. And Section 2s comprise one passage for fast reading as well as four passages for careful reading comprehension. The Flesch Reading Ease Test has been applied to all the texts for reading comprehension to make sure they are relatively balanced in ease in the two test papers (a readability mean of 55.2 and 54.8 respectively). And the results of pilot testing prove that the two test papers are paralleled ($p < 0.01$; $r = 0.71$).

Before the experiment, all the participants took a pre-test aimed at assessing their English level, their reading ability as well as their reading speed. After the reading treatment, a post-test was also taken by all the participants. In both of the tests the students first finish the other parts, and then finish a passage for fast reading. They are required to read the passage for fast reading three times, and record the time they spend in reading each time.

Double and blind marking (because the markers did not know which were experimental or control groups) was adopted and key to the answers clearly agreed between the markers so that marking reliability could be guaranteed.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed mainly to investigate the two experimental groups' interest in the RR method and how they had been influenced by their assigned reading process. For example, "Do you agree that RR helps to increase your reading rate?", "Do you think that the audio-tape plays an important role in improving your reading comprehension?". A Likert scale is adopted to invite students' response to the questions. Finally, some informal interviews were conducted to find out some advantages and disadvantages of the RR method.

Statistical tools

In this study, SPSS13.0 was used to analyze the data statistically, including Independent-Samples T Test, Paired-Samples T Test.

Procedures

The two programs were conducted from October, 2005 to the end of May, 2006, with one-month interval of winter holidays between two semesters, totally twenty-five sessions.

As part of their academic program, the freshmen had four regularly scheduled periods of English class a week (totally three hours). Every week, about one hour was spent on the program for all the groups.

Before the RR and the ER treatments began, the author introduced the program in details to the students, and some reading skills and positive reading habits, especially for fast reading were also introduced to the students of all groups. Both of the RR program and the ER program were carried out by the same teacher in the hope that the procedures are observed consistently.

RR treatment

The experimental groups followed the procedure described below for the twenty-five treatment sessions. In each session students were required to read two passages:

1. Students read the first passage silently for the first time.
2. Students timed their first reading of the passage with watch and record it on the record sheet.
3. Students read the same passage for the second time while listening to the audio-taped version .
4. Students read the same passage silently one more time and timed with a watch. Record it on the record sheet again.
5. The original passages were handed in.
6. Without referring to the passage, students are required to finish a couple of questions according to what they had read in the passage.
7. The teacher checked and corrected the students' answers.
8. Then students read the second passage, and the above process was repeated.

Traditional ER treatment

The control group was engaged in a traditional extensive reading program within the same time frame as the RR sessions were held (25 sessions).

The control group was required to read at least three passages from the same extensive reading textbook each session and do the same after-reading comprehension in class to maintain time equivalence with the experimental groups. The control group is not required to repeat the passage or to read along with the audio-tape or record their reading time.

1. Students read the first passage silently and complete the related comprehension questions.
2. Students read the second and then the third passage, and the above process was repeated.
3. The teacher checked and corrected the students' answers.

Results

Results for Research Question 1

In order to answer research question 1: Whether RR is effective for developing reading fluency of Chinese college students, the WPM of the two RR groups (G1 and G2) based on their first reading of the 1st session and that of the 25th session, as well as the WPM of both the RR groups and the ER group, based on their fast reading section of the pretest and the post-test, were processed by both the descriptive statistics and Paired-samples T tests.

Table 2: WPM of the 1st and 25th RR sessions by Paired-samples T tests

Variables	Within-group	Mean	SD	t	p
G1(N=30)	1 st session	117.92	36.34	-4.428	.000
	25 th session	164.6	44.02		
G2(N=30)	1 st session	112.29	29.35	-2.935	.007
	25 th session	134.25	21.6		

Table 3: Comparison of WPM between pretest and posttest within each group

Within-group	(WPM)		Paired Differences	
Group 1	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)

Pretest	147.29	42.95	6.552	.000
Post-test	206.77	47.90		
Group 2	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pre – test	130.94	28.04	4.873	.000
Post-test	176.77	45.22		
Group 3	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pretest	159.82	47.44	1.311	.200
Post-test	174.67	56.13		

When we respectively compared the two RR groups' WPM between the first reading of the first session and that of the 25th session (the last session) by paired-sample T test, an overall increase from the first to the 25th session is apparent. Table 2 shows both G1's and G2's WPM gain is significant at $p=0.000$, $0.007 < .05$.

Table 3 also shows an increase in reading rate of the two RR groups. During the pretest, students of G1 and G2 respectively read at 147.29 and 130.94 words per minute on average, while during the post-test, the average becomes 206.77 and 176.77 words per minute. And the result of Paired-Sample T Test ($p = .000$.) shows both RR groups have achieved a significant gain in WPM over the RR treatment .

As for the ER group or the control group, slight advance is seen but no significant difference ($P=.200$.) is shown by a comparison of the group's WPM on the pretest with that on the post-test.

Results for Research Question 2

In order to answer research question 2: Whether RR is effective for improving reading comprehension of Chinese college students, we compared within the three groups the scores on the sub-reading comprehension section between the pretest and the post-test by paired-sample T test.

Table 4: Comparison of the sub-reading comprehension scores between pretest and post-test

Within-group	Measures	Mean	SD	t	p
G1 (N=30)	Pretest	56.53	11.14	-2.4177	0.0221
	post-test	63.90	12.57		

G2 (N=30)	Pretest	49.50	10.7	-3.5949	0.0012
	post-test	59.07	11.66		
G3 (N=30)	Pretest	56.80	14.55	-1.3255	0.1954
	post-test	60.23	10.92		

From Table 4, we can clearly see that from pretest to post-test, the average comprehension scores of the two RR groups have increased and the difference between the pretest and the post-test is statistically significant by using paired-sample T test at $p = .0221$; $.0012 < .05$ respectively, while the progress made by the control group does not seem to be significantly important at $p = 0.1954 > 0.05$.

Results for Research Question 3 and 4

In order to answer research question 3 and 4: Whether RR treatment is more effective than the traditional ER treatment in developing both reading fluency and comprehension or whether the RR model is as helpful to the weaker readers as to the stronger readers, first the average WPM of all the 3 groups on both the pretest and the post-test were compared between each of the experimental group and the control group as well as between the two experimental groups by Independent-Samples T tests .

Table 5: Comparison of the WPM averages on the pretest and post-test between groups

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	p
G1 vs G3	30 vs 30	147.29 vs 159.82	42.95 vs 47.44	-1.072	.288
G2 vs G3	30 vs 30	130.94 vs 159.82	28.04 vs 47.44	-2.870	.006
G1 vs G2	30 vs 30	147.29 vs 130.94	42.95 vs 28.04	2.054	.059
Post-test	N	Mean	SD	t	p
G1 vs G3	30 vs 30	206.77 vs 174.67	47.90 vs 56.13	2.405	0.017
G2 vs G3	30 vs 30	176.77 vs 174.67	45.22 vs 56.13	.160	.874
G1 vs G2	30 vs 30	206.77 vs 176.77	47.90 vs 45.22	2.383	.020

From Table 5 we can see in the pretest, students in both G1 and G3 achieved similar WPM averages, and an independent-samples T-test indicates no significant difference between G1 and G3 at $p = .288 > 0.05$. However in the post-test, G1 are much faster than G3, and an independent-samples T test indicates that their difference is

statistically significant at $p= 0.017 < .05$, which means G1 have achieved more fluency gains than G3 through the RR treatment.

Likewise, G2's progress in fluency is greater than G3. While in the pretest, G3 are obviously faster than G2, and an independent-samples T test indicates that their difference is statistically significant at $p=.006 < .05$, in the post-test, no significant difference is seen at $p = .874 >0.05$, which means G2 has caught up with G3 as far as reading rate is concerned or G2 have achieved more fluency gains than G3 over the different treatments.

Although G2 have achieved significant progress in reading rate from the pretest to post-test, their advance is not as great as G1 and statistics shows the difference between them in the post-test WPM average is significant at $p=.020 < .05$, which seems to suggest that the RR treatment helps the relatively stronger readers more than the relatively weaker readers in gaining reading fluency.

Next, based on their comprehension scores on the pretest and post-test sub reading we compared the RR groups respectively with the control group and between the two experimental groups by Independent-Samples T tests.

Table 6: a comparison of comprehension scores on the sub-reading tests between groups

Pretest	N	Mean	SD	t	p
G1 vs G3	30 vs 30	56.53 vs 56.80	11.14 vs 14.55	-.080	.937
G2 vs G3	30 vs 30	49.50 vs 56.80	10.70 vs 14.55	-2.494	.016
G1 vs G2	30 vs 30	56.53 vs 49.50	11.14 vs 10.70	2.214	.031
Post-test	N	Mean	SD	t	p
G1 vs G3	30 vs 30	63.90 vs 60.23	12.57 vs 10.92	1.206	.233
G2 vs G3	30 vs 30	59.07 vs 60.23	11.66 vs 10.92	-.400	.691
G1 vs G2	30 vs 30	63.90 vs 59.07	12.57 vs 11.66	1.544	.307

From table 6, we find that G1 and G3 are not significantly different from each other on both tests though on pretest, G3 outperformed G1 slightly, while on post-test, the situation was just the opposite, which may indicate that G1's progress in comprehension is relatively greater than G3's. Moreover, we find that G2's progress in comprehension is statistically important, because G2's average comprehension

scores on the pretest are much lower than G1 and G3's with a significant difference at $p = .031, .016 < .05$, while on the post-test G2 did as well as G1 and G3 as the difference is no longer statistically significant at $p = .691, .307 > 0.05$.

Results for Research Question 5

In order to answer research question 5: How do Chinese college students perceive the effectiveness of RR treatment, students' perceptions of the effectiveness of RR method were surveyed with a questionnaire (See Appendix.) after finishing the whole treatment. The response to the 12 questions from the two RR groups were analyzed by Frequencies.

Table 7: Frequency of students' response to questionnaire items

Variables	G1			G2			Frequency	
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total	%
Q 1	24	5	1	25	4	1	60	P=82 N1=15 N2=3
Q 2	21	8	1	21	8	1	60	P=70 N1=27 N2=3
Q 3	24	3	3	23	3	4	60	P=78 N1=10 N2=12
Q 4	21	3	6	15	8	7	60	P=60 N1=18 N2=22
Q5	8	21	1	7	17	6	60	P=25 N1=63 N2=12
Q6	24	5	1	27	1	2	60	P=85 N1=10 N2=5
Q7	8	21	1	10	19	1	60	P=30 N1=67 N2=3
Q8	10	19	1	9	20	1	60	P=32 N1=65 N2=3
Q9	19	2	9	17	3	10	60	P=60 N1=8 N2=32
Q10	25	4	1	23	7	0	60	P=80 N1=18 N2=2
Q11	21	9	0	21	7	2	60	P=70 N1= 27 N2=3
Q12	24	3	3	23	4	3	60	P=78 N1=12 N2= 10

*P= Positive N1= Neutral N2= Negative

The students' response to Q1-3 shows that most students (P=82%, 70%, 78%) think RR treatment is conducive to the improvement of their reading rate, comprehension and motivation. Response to Q4-5 seems to tell us that most students (P=60%, N1=63%) think that the reading materials are informative but not appropriate enough in terms of length and difficulty. Response to Q6-8 (P=85%, N1=67%, 65%) shows

most students consider reading while listening to the audio-taped version to be highly beneficial for reading comprehension, but it seems to have less effect on enhancing their reading interest and reading rate. Response to Q9 shows while most of them (P=60%) believe that timing the reading speed raises their awareness of speed and attention, some students (N2=32%) are strongly against timing. Response to Q10-12 convinces us of the majority 's (P=80%,70%,78%) preference for the introduction of RR treatment into reading classroom.

Discussion

About the development of reading fluency

It can be seen from table 2 and 3 that both RR groups' reading speed on the initial reading of the last session (the 25th) and on the post-test is significantly higher than on the initial reading of the first session and on the pretest, which strongly supports the previous findings that RR is effective in increasing fluency gains not only within each session but also over the whole RR treatment. Based on this evidence we believe that the claims (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch, 2004) that RR can facilitate word recognition, vocabulary growth, and hence better comprehension are further proved to be convincing by the present study.

Though the difference in reading speed between G2 and G3 on the post-test is not significant, but if we take their significant difference on the pretest into consideration, we feel justified to believe that the two RR groups' fluency gains over the RR treatment are significantly greater than the control group over the ER treatment, which does not conform with Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass & Gorsuch (2004)'s finding that RR is as effective as ER in developing reading fluency. We think the following factors may contribute to such divergence:

First, in the previous study, the number of books for the ER group to read from and the number of average pages (27books and 205 pages) they covered is far more than that done by the RR group(2 books and 57 pages). But in our study, we have no other choice than the two new editions of graded College English fast reading textbooks because they are available to all the 90 participants and considered to be suitable to their language level. Therefore, our ER group share the same number of books with RR groups and completed a few more pages than the latter (75 vs. 50).

Theory on language learning (Nation 2002) emphasizes the importance of recurrence to long-term memory, which is essential to automatic word recognition.

While RR realizes recurrence by reading the same passage repeatedly, ER may also cause recurrence by reading the same thing in different passages. As far as allowing recurrence is concerned, we think RR and ER is better balanced in the previous experiment than in the present one.

Second, in the previous study, each participant of the ER group has the freedom to read what is interesting and what suits his language level. As interest tends to bring about better learning, their ER group's interest and needs seemed better satisfied, so they could achieve same fluency gains as the RR group. However in the present study, the ER group does not have such choice, for one thing, this is the common practice in many of the Chinese FL reading classrooms, for another we are comparing the effect of the RR treatment with the traditional ER treatment.

Third, in the previous study, the RR group reread only one new passage during each session, but our RR groups did 2 new passages, therefore our RR groups went through more transfer to new passages than theirs and may be able to adjust to reading a new passage better.

Thus we can conclude that the RR treatment designed based on Chinese classroom background is also very effective in improving readers' fluency. And such effect mainly contributes to repetition, audio assistance and transfer to a new passage both within each session and across sessions.

As for repetition, we not only believe it can help to release readers' attention resource for higher order skills, we also suggest that this kind of facilitative effect can be interpreted in two ways: Firstly, repetitive reading allows readers to build schemata of the new passage (including schemata of linguistic forms, topic knowledge, etc.) in the initial reading, and make use of the schemata in the later readings of the same passage. Secondly, repetition can also strengthen the schemata or the facilitative effect, as a result the accumulated and strengthened knowledge and skills might be transferred to the unpracticed passages and play the role of a bridge from where readers step to another reading task.

Reading while listening to the text is important because it can not only help to raise the reader's attention but also ease and interest reading by conveying to the readers the professional's understanding of the passage in appropriate pronunciation, tone and rhythm.

We suggest that the importance of increased transfers in the present study lies in that they not only make the readers more accustomed to or better prepared for the

transfer. They also provide the readers with more opportunities to acquire or promote long memory of linguistic forms relevant to different topics.

About the development of reading comprehension

From the pretest to the post-test, the average comprehension scores of G1 and G2 increased, and the comparison of their comprehension gains on the pre-test with those on the post-test shows great significance, which suggests that RR is effective in improving the reading comprehension of Chinese college students. On the other hand, results seem to suggest that the traditional extensive reading treatment may not have been as effective as the RR treatment to significantly boost the students' reading comprehension, because the control group have not achieved significant reading comprehension gains from the pretest to the post-test.

According to Interactive Theory (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988), reading comprehension is a complex psychological process which involves the interaction of a hierarchy of components including word recognition, lexical, syntactic and semantic knowledge, topic knowledge and world knowledge. Automaticity Theory (LaBerge and Samuels, 1974; Samuels, 1994; Reynolds, 2000) suggests that readers with automated word recognition skills are better at comprehension. Therefore, we believe the RR treatment can efficiently promote automatic word recognition so that the readers can engage more attention in activities of higher order. It can also develop the readers' form and content schemata (knowledge) which facilitate their comprehension of new information. The traditional ER treatment may play the similar role to some extent but its effect is not so efficient as to significantly promote the control group's progress in comprehension development.

However, as our study is more conclusive than Taguchi and Gorsuch's concerning the RR groups' improvement in reading comprehension, at least based on the results of within-group analysis, it is necessary for us to look into some of the possible factors that might have led to the difference in our findings.

First, the word gains that our experimental groups have achieved from pretest to post-test (59.48, 45.83) is two times that achieved by the counterpart (23.67), the reasons for which is discussed in the previous part. As it has already been found that there is a strong relation between word recognition and comprehension, the gaps in word gains may partly contribute to the different results found by the two studies.

Second, the reading materials for RR sessions were different from each others. While research on the effects of RR on L2 or FL's fluency and comprehension to date is limited primarily to using narrative text materials, the materials used in this study include narrative texts (e.g. Johnny the Explorer), argumentative texts (e.g. Making Friends), expository texts (e.g. The Scientific Method). Krashen (1982) pointed out that affect, including motivation, is one of the most important factors influencing L2 learning. The stronger motivation learners have, the more acquisition they will get. We think that the passages varying in topic and type within each session and from session to session may have better promoted participants' motivation to read, because such variety may have given consideration to the readers' differences in reading taste, background knowledge and reading strategies, three most important elements in reading comprehension better than using passages of one topic and one type over the whole RR treatment.

RR for weaker readers

With the precondition that G2 got much lower scores on the pretest WPM and comprehension than G3 did, while on the post-test the difference was not statistically significant, the effects of improving reading fluency and comprehension RR treatment has worked on the relatively weaker group is evident. But based on the results of the present study it is hard to decide how the effect of RR treatment on the stronger readers is different from that on the weaker readers, because although over the RR treatment G1 have achieved better WPM gains than G2, it seems G2's comprehension gains (9.57 marks) slightly exceed G1's (7.37 marks).

About participants' view of the effectiveness of the RR treatment

Our questionnaire is designed to investigate how the two experimental groups perceive the effectiveness of the four main elements that constitutes the RR model: the effectiveness of repetition, audio assistance, timing and input.

As for the effectiveness of repetition, most participants believe that repetition enables them to read faster and comprehend better. Their extemporaneous comments are that reading a familiar passage not only saves their attentional resources so that they can read faster within each session but also facilitates and enhances their understanding of new linguistic forms and unfamiliar content so that they are better equipped for the next session, and consequently they feel more and more motivated

and confident to read.

Most participants' attitude about the effectiveness of audio assistance is partially positive because we find that while they believe that audio assistance is beneficial for the comprehension, they don't think that it is helpful for increasing reading speed. Their extemporaneous comments suggest that the audio assistance can draw their attention closer to the passage. In addition, by the tone, stress and pause the speaker seem to convey his/her understanding of the passage to the listener, which promotes the listener's comprehension of the passage. However, the participants don't think that audio assistance always bring about immediate increase in reading rate.

In terms of the effectiveness of timing, the RR participants' attitude is very contradictory. Their comments reveal that those who have positive attitude about the role of timing can make use of timing to monitor their reading speed but those who have negative attitude suffer anxiety because of this awareness of timing.

As for the input, most participants think the materials used for reading passages over the sessions deal with a variety of topics and are fit for their English level and background knowledge. However they feel the texts are not quite interesting and some of them contain outdated information.

On the whole, the RR participants' response to the questionnaire show an overall positive attitude about the effectiveness of the RR treatment.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the present experiment, it can be concluded that an RR model can play an effective role in developing learners' reading fluency and comprehension in Chinese FL classrooms. Furthermore, we tend to believe that the degree of the effectiveness of RR may be influenced by the elements involved in the RR model such as the times of repetition and transfer to new passages, the kind of input and the number of sessions.

Firstly, the appropriate times of repetition and transfer may be responsible for the possibility that adequate transfers may help the readers to adapt to new passages faster and better while too many repetitions may cause the readers to feel bored. Our belief is based on the following facts: Taguchi (1997) and Taguchi and Gorsuch (2002) allowed repetition for 7 times and transfer to new passages for 28 times, their RR participants increased reading rates significantly within RR sessions, however, they did not significantly transfer their increased reading rates to the new passages.

Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass and Gorsuchm (2004) reduced the repetition to 5 times but increased the transfer to 48 times while the present study allows for 3-time repetition and 50-time transfer. Both found that their RR participants' fluency increased significantly not only within RR sessions, but also over the course of the RR treatment.

Secondly, reading is an interaction between readers and texts, so text factors such as language, rhetorical devices, text types and culture will affect readers' comprehension. All the previous RR models used narrative stories, likely containing some rhetorical devices and specific culture that are unfamiliar to FL learners and thus prevent them from interacting with the texts appropriately. The texts used by the present RR model as input call for general world and rhetorical knowledge. This may partly account for why our RR participants have achieved important comprehension gains while theirs failed. Therefore we suggest that for foreign language readers, especially for college English readers, using different types of texts and texts for reading for general academic purpose may be more effective in developing reading comprehension.

Nevertheless, the present study is not mature enough in that the significant difference of the fluency and comprehension gains between the experimental groups and the control group might not entirely result from the application of different treatments, there may be other factors that we are unaware of. Besides, we do not have other efficient way to record the WPM for each reading.

In all, this study has revealed to us that the Assisted RR model is an efficient solution to our concern that many Chinese College English students cannot read fluently mainly due to poor word recognition. In addition, the RR treatment is applicable because it is convenient for the teachers to design and operate in class. And we suggest that RR treatment is best suitable for first-year College English students, who often complain about their reading speed and tend to follow teachers' direction strictly in the treatment, which is important for the effectiveness of the training.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Personal information

Major: _____ Sex: _____
 Date of birth: _____ Years spent on learning English: _____

2. Direction

This survey is designed to investigate participants' opinions and attitude about the assisted repeated reading treatment. All the data from the survey will be only used for statistics and analysis and kept in confidentiality. You are expected to respond to the statements and questions by ticking one of the five numbers related to the five scales based on what you really think or feel. In the following example, if you tick the number 1, it means you strongly agree the statement.

Strongly agree = 1

Agree = 2

Neither agree nor disagree = 3

Disagree = 4

Strongly disagree = 5

Repeated reading treatment is helpful for me. 1√ 2 3 4 5

Note: If you tick 4 or 5, please give some reasons.

3. Content

3.1 Opinions

Strongly agree = 1

Agree = 2

Neither agree nor disagree = 3

Disagree = 4

Strongly disagree = 5

1. Assisted repeated reading treatment helps to increase my reading rate.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

2. Assisted repeated reading treatment helps to improve my reading comprehension.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

3. Assisted repeated reading treatment has enhanced my confidence in reading.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

4. The texts used for the reading treatment are informative and interesting.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

5. The texts used for the reading treatment are not too easy or difficult for comprehension.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

6. Listening-while-reading-the-texts is beneficial for improving my reading comprehension.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

7. Listening-while-reading-the-texts is beneficial for improving my reading rate.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

8. Listening-while-reading-the-texts helps to enhance my interest in and focus on reading.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

9. Having to record the time spent on reading a text each time helps to focus my attention and raise my awareness of reading rate.

1 2 3 4 5 Reason:

10. How do you think of the amount of reading in each session?

Very suitable = 1

Suitable = 2

Not suitable and not very unsuitable = 3

Unsuitable = 4

Very unsuitable = 5

Reason:

3.2 Attitudes

11. How is your attitude toward the assisted repeated reading treatment?

Very positive = 1

Positive = 2

Not positive not negative = 3

Negative = 4

Very negative = 5

12. How do you like the assisted repeated reading treatment?

Like it very much = 1

Like it = 2

Not like it very much and not dislike it very much = 3

Dislike it = 4

Dislike it very much = 5

EFL Children's Views on English Picture Story Books

Sheu Hsiu-Chinh

Bio Data:

Sheu Hsiu-Chih is currently a visiting fellow at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Her former job was assistant professor in Dayeh University in Taiwan. She has completed a PhD. degree in Educational Studies at the University of York in England and a MA degree in Children's Literature at the University of Reading. Her research interests are in teaching methods, children's literature and reading images.

Abstract

This article reports the results of a study with a group of primary school students in Taiwan to explore their views on reading English picture story books. The study began with eight reading sessions in which the researcher read four English picture story books with a group of 22 children, which was followed by nine semi-structured group interviews with the children. The findings suggest the majority of the students considered that reading English picture story books helped with their language learning, motivated their reading and stimulated their imaginations. However, the data also revealed that the vocabulary in English picture story books were perceived as the primary challenge the students encountered when reading the books, which was followed by the challenge of reading pictures and stories. This study highlights various aspects that the teachers have to attend to when using English picture story books with EFL beginners.

Key words: picture story books; EFL children; imagination; challenge in reading images

Introduction

With the introduction of English to young learners in many countries, research into the use of English picture story books in EFL teaching is gaining its popularity - various educational values are suggested (such as Brewster et al., 1992; Cameron, 2001; Randolph, 2001). Although these studies provide different understandings of reading English picture story books in the EFL context, their perspectives are mainly based on the researchers' points of view, rather than the children's. Research about EFL children's perspectives in reading these books has rarely been discussed. This study attempts to explore EFL children's views on this issue by means of exploring the following research questions:

1. What are EFL children's views on the educational values of reading English picture story books?
2. What are EFL children's views on the challenges of reading English picture story books?

English picture story books in EFL teaching

When using picture story books in ESL/EFL teaching², researchers have reported that the main challenge lies in how to match the books with their readers (Smallwood, 1988; Kuhiwczak, 1999). For example, Smallwood (1988) states that finding appropriate picture story books for limited English proficiency speakers, ages 9-14 is particularly challenging “because the topic, plot and illustrations need to be chronologically age-appropriate, but the language, vocabulary and story complexity need to be educationally age-appropriate” (p.2). Kuhiwczak (1999) comments that when reading these books with EFL young learners, the learners might find themselves working with texts which are linguistically complex but not sufficiently challenging intellectually. Despite these potential challenges, researchers also point out that by carefully selecting picture books that are appropriate to EFL learners, the value of using English picture story books greatly overrides its challenge. An overview of studies and research into the use of these books in EFL teaching suggest that the educational value is generally seen through three areas: (1) the linguistic value, (2) the value of the story, and (3) the value of the illustrations.

The linguistic value

A number of studies have suggested that stories can provide a meaningful context for language learning (Brewster et al., 1992; Kolsawalla, 1999), which ranges from the lexical level such as vocabulary learning to the contextual level such as fruitful discussion about the text. According to Brewster et al. (1992), at the lexical level, stories allow students to review words they have learned previously, or encounter new words and at the contextual level, “the varied, memorable, and familiar contexts” (p. 159) might become integrated into learners' linguistic knowledge and become their output. Cameron (2001) examining this issue from a linguistic point of view, remarks

² A picture story book is defined in this study as a book that conveys its messages through two media, the art of illustrating and the art of writing (Huck et al., 1987).

that there are two features of the written text in a picture story book: narrative and dialogues, and both make an important contribution in EFL learning. For example, stories which offer ready-made dialogues are efficient sources for EFL learners to act out and practise conversation. According to Cameron (2001) even the most artificial dialogues provide a starting point for more improvised talk because they offer situations, characters and events for readers to practice conversation. For the majority of EFL young learners, dialogues in picture story books can serve as a model to demonstrate to them how spoken language works and how vocabulary and grammar practice can be learned naturally (Cameron, 2001).

The value of the story

Research has indicated that picture story books have the power to transfer EFL learners from mechanical language learning to a more personal involvement context (Collie & Slater, 1987) and to provide a motivating meaningful context for EFL children to learn the language in a low-anxiety atmosphere (Ghosn, 2002). Some have found that stories could extend readers' social experience (Johnston, 2001) and stimulate their imagination (Brewster et al., 1992; Cameron, 2001).

Other researchers examine the value of stories from cultural aspects and believe that reading literature provides EFL learners with an opportunity to understand the target culture and to acquire a feel for the codes and preoccupations that structure a society (e.g. Collie & Slater, 1987; Johnston, 2001). However, some report that cultural representation in picture story books might pose some challenges for EFL readers. Kuhlweiczak (1999), when looking into the aspect of a translation and inter-cultural transfer indicates that when literature, such as picture story books, from another country is used as one aspect of teaching languages, teachers should not only pay attention to the linguistic content, but also be aware of the potential difficulties and opportunities offered by its cultural 'strangeness'. She comments that translation will not solve all the questions of meaning for readers who do not share the cultural background of the original audience. For example, she remarks the anti-authoritarian streak in Roald Dahl's books might be one of the reasons that his books have not sold well in Poland since the Polish tradition does not encourage the kind of independence that the children in Dahl's books display.

The value of pictures

In EFL teaching, pictures are considered an efficient tool for limited English proficiency learners to increase their comprehension (Krashen, 1982; Wright, 1989; Liu, 2004). As pointed out by Krashen (1982) the use of non-linguistic means such as pictures is considered an efficient tool to increase comprehension since its use corresponds to the caretaker's use of the 'here and now' and it is something the learners can perceive in the immediate environment.

When using picture story books in an EFL context, the way that pictures can facilitate the comprehension of the story is considered the primary value of pictures (Smallwood, 1988). When reading stories, EFL learners might be constrained by their limited English proficiency from understanding the text completely; pictures, however, might have the potential to increase their understanding of the story.

Some researchers raise our attention to the inseparable relationship between pictures and cultures (Nodelman, 1988; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), for instance, strongly emphasize that visual language is not transparent and universally understood as we assume they should be, but culturally specific:

The place of visual communication in a given society can only be understood in the context of, on the one hand, the range of forms or modes of public communication available in that society, and, on the other hand, their uses and valuations (p. 33).

The meanings of pictures that seem transparent to viewers sharing the same cultural background as the illustrators may not be at all obvious to readers from other cultural backgrounds. Therefore, EFL readers who are reading pictures from other cultures are likely to experience the exotic and mysterious illustrations without fully understanding what kinds of meanings these pictures are attempting to convey. However, this challenge can also be considered a starting point for discussion, since exotic illustrations have the capacity to arouse students' interest in the culture of target language (Malloy, 1999).

THE STUDY

METHOD

Participants

Two classes of primary students in a private language school in the central part of

Taiwan participated in this study: class A (N=12) and class B (N=10). The total number of participants was 22 students, aged between 8 and 11 years old. The students came to the private language school to have extra English tuition every Saturday and Sunday. The only difference between the two classes was that the students in class B had taken English for one year (around 150 hours) while class A had 9 months (around 100 hours). The English proficiency of the students was at the elementary level.

Reading programs and semi-structured interviews

The students involved in this study were given eight reading sessions before the semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this was to provide them with an opportunity to read picture story books. A 20-30 minute reading session was conducted with each class once a week.³ Eight reading sessions were conducted with each class within two months. In each session, the researcher would read picture story books aloud to each class. During the eight reading sessions, four books were introduced to the two classes of students. The selection of books was mainly based on the researcher's previous teaching experience with primary school students. A judgement was made as regards which books might be both of interest and linguistically appropriate to this group of students.⁴

The researcher started each reading session by inviting the students to read carefully the front cover of the book. The students were encouraged to speculate about the possible development of the story by examining the details of the picture on the front cover. With the children eager to verify if their original speculation was correct, this strategy helped arouse their curiosity towards the book and motivated them to follow the story. Afterwards, the researcher read aloud the book slowly, and stopped regularly to discuss the meaning of the pictures and the development of the story with the students. The languages used in the story session were English and Chinese. The researcher spoke English when reading the story or asking the students questions about the meaning of the pictures. When the vocabulary or sentence structures were too complicated for the students, she then shifted to Chinese to explain the story to make sure that all the students understood its progress. The students spoke in simple

³ Each class took 90 minutes and was divided into two periods. In the first one, students studied their textbooks while, in the second period, they read picture story books with the researcher.

⁴ For more details of these books, see appendix A.

English when answering the researcher's questions, and shifted to Chinese when explaining their thoughts or discussing the development of the story with their classmates.

Analysis of the interview

The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. Due to the participants' limited English, the children's mother tongue, Chinese, was used as the main language during the interview; therefore, the transcription also involved translation from Chinese to English. It was first transcribed in Chinese and then translated as well as edited into English. The tape-recordings were listened to twice as a way of double checking on the result of the transcription.

Findings and discussion

The interview results showed that 17 out of the 22 students reported that they were interested in reading English picture story books; a few said that they did not like reading the books because they were too difficult for them. The following section is divided into two main sections. The first one will discuss students' perceptions on the educational values of English picture story books while the second will deal with the challenges they perceived in reading such books.

The perceived educational values

The educational value suggested by the students was broadly classified into three categories: (1) the linguistic value, (2) the value of the story and (3) the value of the pictures, which follows the same categories presented in the literature review.

1. The linguistic value

Nineteen out of the 22 students stated that reading picture story books helped them with their English learning, in particular at the lexical and syntactic level. The following comments are examples of this.

I can learn new vocabulary and new sentences. (S4-A)⁵

I've learned many kinds of English words. (S7-B)

⁵ S4-A refers to student 4 in class A. As has been mentioned, there are two classes participating in this study (A and B).

I've learned some vocabulary. (S8-B)

The above statements suggest that the students were aware that they were learning vocabulary while listening to the teacher read the story aloud. Cameron (2001) raises our awareness of the potential of learning vocabulary through stories when she points out that listening to stories for EFL learners shares some attributes with young children learning their first language through social interaction with adults. The use of stories in the ESL classroom for young learners would provide them with a rich opportunity for learning vocabulary indirectly, or incidentally, while attending to the story. The following comments made by the students seem to reflect this point.

I like Willy the Dreamer the most, because the content of this book is interesting and the illustrations are very funny. I think if we can read English picture books once in a while, it will help us learn more interesting English vocabulary. (S1-A)

Picture story books are funny. I also can learn English words and show off the words I learn from picture story books to my friends. (S7-A)

Although both students could not elaborate what they meant by 'interesting English vocabulary', the context of the story might play a crucial role to make certain words interesting and motivate students to use them when they finished reading the story. The above statement seems to suggest that a word learned in a story is more memorable than a word learned individually (Brewster, et al., 1992).

Some students mentioned that English picture story books are accessible to them. In the ESL and EFL context, Gregory (1996) draws our attention to the importance of story grammar (beginning, middle and end) and how the familiarity with the story grammar can be an asset for ESL learners to facilitate their language learning. This might have some influence on students' perception of the accessibility of the book and how story reading helps EFL students to learn the language in a low-anxiety and non-threatening atmosphere (Johnston, 2001; Ghosn, 2002). Another possible reason might be related to the benefit of reading aloud. Some research studies have suggested that reading aloud by teachers has a positive impact on the reading comprehension of EFL students, in particular for beginners. For example, Amer (1997) reports that beginner readers tend to read word by word as they are anxious to understand each one; whereas "reading aloud helps them read larger semantic units rather than focusing on graphic cues" (p. 43). The way that a teacher can mediate the meaning of the story through reading aloud might have some bearing on increasing students'

comprehension of the story.

The value of the story

Half of the students explicitly reported that they enjoyed reading the stories.

The development of the story attracts me a lot. When you open the first page of the book, you don't know what is going to happen, so you are full of expectations. (S4-A)

The books have such an incredible imagination. I want to hear more till I understand. (S9-A)

It has been reported that stories can provide a meaningful context for communication, and give pleasure by engaging readers' emotions with the text (Hill, 1994). The previous statements not only echo this point of view, but also suggest that students' engagement with the story can be an efficient means to sustain reading, especially when they are driven by the desire to follow the development of the story. Some students specifically mentioned that they were attracted by the creative ideas in these books and expressed their enthusiasm for the story.

I can see something unique like some strange dreams (*Willy the Dreamer*), or strange animals (*Where the Wild Things Are*). I consider myself a bit dull and not a very creative person. I am interested in things that are creative. (S9-B)

Some parts I don't understand, but they are interesting to me. I like *My Dad*. His dad is crazy, but he is very capable. He is superb. He is not very clever, but he is strong. He is very powerful. I have to emphasise that he is crazy enough to make us become crazy. (S10-A)

The way that stories can provide an alternative world to engage the reader was illustrated by both students who were fascinated by the story. When linking the world of the story to her real world, S9-B reflected on how reading stories helped her to expand her perspective of the world. S10-A also indicates how a book can powerfully influence a reader's emotion, and engage him in the story.

One third of the students commented on the cultural issue, in particular the dimension of the behaviour and the imagination. These comments suggest that the students were aware that they were reading picture story books written by 'foreigners', and were amazed at how people from different countries have different imaginations.

Foreigners are full of imagination. They can think of something very strange and write it down. (S1-B)

You also see some behaviour you will never see in Chinese books. (S4-A)

Spradley (1980, cited in McKay, 2002) states that culture involves three fundamental aspects of human experience: what people do (cultural behaviour), what people know (cultural knowledge), and things people make and use (cultural artifacts). Students' responses here suggest that picture story books could be a rich source to help them to understand the behaviour of the target culture.

The value of pictures

Seventeen out of the 22 students reported that they enjoyed reading English picture story books because of the pictures, particularly those which contradicted the norms with which they were familiar. The children reported their pleasure of reading these pictures.

You see something very funny. Look! This man has a big head and a small body. (S1-A)

It is good. The pictures are very odd and strange. (S10-A)

The pictures are very funny, and they are about something impossible, out of expectation. (S12-A)

Nodelman (1988) states that pictures can draw readers' attention immediately and provide pleasure as pictures are "concentrated versions of aspects of physical reality – colour and texture and line that tend to provide pleasure in and for themselves" (p. 4). The above comments suggest that what interested the students here were not just the 'concentrated versions of physical reality', but the anti-conventional representation they encountered in these books and the pleasure of reading the pictures that can challenge their conventional expectations and cultural assumptions. The majority of the students in this study seemed to gain great pleasure from reading pictures that are 'strange', 'odd' and 'impossible', and reported how this kind of picture could have the potential to motivate their learning.

Interesting... because the pictures are very strange. The stranger the pictures are, the more I like them. (S1-B)

I would take the book and ask around what exactly the picture wants to say, because it is interesting to read them. Books I don't quite understand give me room to imagine. (S6-A)

The illustrations in picture story books are very diverse. It makes us more interested in reading story. Illustrations can always draw people's attention. They seem to have a very great attraction. (S9-B)

One might argue whether the strange pictures can directly facilitate children's language learning. Researchers have proposed that when selecting picture books for EFL children, the most important criterion is that the picture should have the function to clarify the text (Smallwood, 1988; Astorga, 1999; Ghosn, 2002). Astorga (1999), for example, in analysing the text-image interaction of picture story books in second language learning, suggests that the more fully the illustrations depict each significant stage in the text, the more support second language learners will have, which not only can help them to draw the connection between the visual and the verbal text, but also enhances their comprehension and recall. These points of view are relevant to the linguistic aspect of language learning. However, one cannot underestimate that students' attitudes towards English also play a significant part in their language learning. The 'strange pictures' seem to provide a great deal of enjoyment for them and this kind of pleasure can serve as a starting point to motivate their learning. Halliwell (2000) raises our attention to the important role that children's natural capacities and instincts play on EFL teaching and learning. It is believed that children's capacity for indirect learning, their instinct for play and fun, and their fascination with imagination and fantasy have significant implications for EFL teaching. A teacher needs to be aware of these qualities and their potential to facilitate language learning. This study does not have sufficient evidence to claim whether 'the strange pictures' facilitate language learning directly; nevertheless, the above comments suggest that pictures might have a positive influence on students' attitudes towards English learning.

The data revealed that more than half of the students indicated that they believed that reading pictures stimulated their imagination and expanded their perspectives.

Pictures stimulate my imagination, because pictures in these books are always out of expectation, not ordinary, nor logical at all. It is about something I've never read before. It is something different. (S5-A)

I like this kind of book (Willy the Dreamer) because he has a lot of imagination and he is very unique. He has a lot of dreams I've never thought of before. The story is good. (S8-B)

Both students were aware that reading pictures from another culture expanded their perspective of the world. As visual language is not universally understood but culturally specific, some images that seem the norm in one culture might appear ‘uncommon’, or ‘illogical’ in other culture. As Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) point out, all objects in the picture are most significantly meaningful in the context of the network of connotations that readers attach to them, and to understand a picture fully involves not just personal associations and experiences but also cultural assumptions. This study suggests that ‘cultural difference’ might be one of the reasons why the students considered pictures could stimulate their imagination.

Because he is a dreamer (Willy the Dreamer), he can dream of playing different kind of roles, such as being a king or a beggar. I think the pictures are excellent. (S3-B)

Look! In this page, the dad has a hairdo that looks like a brush, and in this page, the dad looks like a Teddy Bear. I also like the drawing and I can learn drawing from these books. The dad is very great and strong. (S2-A)

Both statements not only suggest that pictures allow both students to make reference to images – metaphors and similies – to make sense of the pictures, but also raise an issue about the cultural difference between the students’ culture (Taiwan) and the target culture (English-speaking country). When presenting the book, the researcher was aware that students expressed strong amazement to see Willy’s (a small gorilla in Willy the Dreamer) dream of being a ‘beggar’. In the context of Taiwan, children are generally told to study hard so as to have a successful career to glorify the family name. Dreaming of being a ‘beggar’ was such a subversive idea to these children that it immediately generated a sense of disbelief and a great deal of pleasure. Another example is the portrait of a ‘dad’ in Willy the Dreamer. Traditionally, a Taiwanese father would always appear as a respectful figure in a book. Therefore, to see a father with a hairdo that looks like a brush, or one who looks like teddy bear (as in My Dad), seemed to challenge the conventional idea about what a father should be like or how he should behave. Interestingly, these anti-traditional images seem to provide considerable pleasure to this group of children who were greatly amused by a different image of father in other culture. It seems that pictures have the potential to broaden these children’s views of the world and challenge their cultural assumption (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996).

The data also showed that some students did not have sufficient ‘cultural

assumption' of the target culture to understand the meaning of the pictures. Surprisingly, they reported that although the pictures were beyond their comprehension, this did not hinder the majority of them from enjoying them.

Some pictures are difficult to understand, but they make you keep on thinking the meaning of the pictures. (S4-B)

I want to read strange pictures. They make me think about why something is put in the pictures. It makes me think. (S4-A)

Some pictures are strange, but I like strange pictures. They give me a lot of imagination. (S8-A)

It is reported that visual enigmas can challenge readers to exercise their imaginations, to include elements that do not easily fit in with their traditional order, and to tolerate ambiguity (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). The above statements indicate that some students welcomed the challenge of reading “strange pictures”, and were also aware that the visual challenges would contribute to the expansion of their imaginations. However, it has to be pointed out that not all the students showed such positive attitudes towards the visual enigmas. More details about the difficulty of reading pictures will be discussed in the following section.

The perceived challenges

The challenges of reading English picture story books perceived by the students were broadly grouped into three categories: (1) the linguistic challenge, (2) the challenge of reading pictures, and (3) the challenge of reading stories.

The linguistic challenge

Eighteen out of the 22 students pointed out that vocabulary was the biggest challenge they encountered when reading the books.

Some vocabulary are difficult for me because they are new and I don't know what they mean. (S4-A)

There is a lot of new vocabulary I have to check them up in the dictionary. (S8-A)

When comparing the above statements with the linguistic values discussed earlier, in which 19 out of the 22 students commented picture story books helped them with

their English learning, the students involved seemed to have a complex attitude towards the linguistic aspect of picture story books. On one hand, the majority of them involved mentioned that reading picture story books helped them with their English; on the other hand, they also reported the challenge of encountering new vocabulary. In this reading program, the use of pictures and the mother tongue were the primary strategies used to increase students' comprehension. Some students involved were aware of the role that the teacher played in facilitating their comprehension of the story.

There are a lot of words I don't understand. If teacher explains to me, I will know better. (S4-B)

Even though I like to read English picture books, some of the sentences and vocabulary are difficult to me. After teacher finished a story, I can understand most of it. Every story is interesting, vivid and makes me want to read it over and over again. (S5-A)

These statements highlight the role of the teacher to provide appropriate support during storytelling. Without the teacher to read the story aloud and provide the linguistic support, reading a picture story book might be a challenge to these EFL beginners. Some students considered reading aloud to be a big challenge to them, and explicitly indicated that they welcomed the idea that the teacher could read the story aloud to them, which is especially helpful in pronunciation and listening comprehension.

Read it out loud! It will be wonderful if only teacher read it to us. (S1-A)

English in English picture story books is too difficult for me. I like to listen to English story books, but I don't like to read them by myself (S1-A)

If we only talk about listening to picture story books, not reading them by myself, I like it better, because it helps with my listening comprehension. (S4-B)

The issue of the teacher as a mediator of the text to children emerges also here. These statements made by students suggest that they felt less confident about reading the story out loud themselves, which highlights the importance of teachers to help these students to get familiar with the sounds and gain confidence in their pronunciation. Reading a story aloud is an efficient way that teachers can use to develop students' listening and concentrating skills (Brewster et al., 1992).

The challenges of reading pictures

More than half of the students reported that reading pictures was a challenge to them. As discussed earlier, some students perceived the challenge to be an opportunity for them to expand their imagination. It should, however, be pointed out that some students expressed puzzlement.

I think the trees do not look like real ones. I like something real because it gives me a sense of security. People in this book all look very strange, and I don't know what the story is about. (S8-B)

This is not real, and the Wild Things look abnormal. Why do the Wild Things choose a human being to be their king? It is very strange. The ending is not satisfactory. I wonder if it is a dream or a real journey. If it is a real journey, where have all the trees gone? If it is a dream, how can one have such kind of dream? The main reason I don't like this book is because of the ugly appearance of the Wild Things. I have a lot of questions about *Where the Wild Things Are* and I think the ending is very strange. (S9-B)

S8-B and S9-B raise here a series of questions about *Where the Wild Things Are*, as the book seemed to challenge their perceptions of what a story should be like. In the interview, S9-B described herself as a dull person and said she welcomed new ideas. However, the above statement suggests that she was trying to reconcile the conflict between what a story should be like (her perception) and what a story might be like (the new challenge). This, to some extent, also indicates an interest and an imaginative engagement with the text and how the challenges seem to present an opportunity for her to increase her tolerance towards 'otherness' and gain insights into understanding different possibilities of the world. According to Rosenblatt (1970), something in the readers' own background or personality might prevent them from fully understanding all that the work offers; however, literature has the potential to broaden and deepen their insight:

Since he (*the reader*) interprets the book or poem in terms of his fund of past experiences, it is equally possible and necessary that he comes to reinterpret his old sense of things in the light of this new literary experience, in the light of the new ways of thinking and feeling offered by the work of art (Rosenblatt, 1970, p.107).

The concept about how the reader interprets the book and then reinterprets his past experience is echoed by some students in this study. However, not every student involved in this research was able to reinterpret his or her old sense of things. The

data showed that some students were confused by the new experience presented in the books.

Another challenge of reading pictures was how pictures might mislead students' understanding of the target culture. The following examples show students' misconceptions about Americans.

Americans are so crazy. (S8-A)

Some English picture books are very strange. Some have the monsters, which interests me. I think Americans have very crazy and bizarre thinking, which makes me feel that foreigners' thinking is very unique. When I was reading *My Dad*, I think foreigners' thinking is very strange and the illustrations are very strange, which makes me like these books a lot. (S9-A)

The description, 'Americans are so crazy', needs to be clarified here. The books that the students refer to here are actually written by British writer, Anthony Browne. However, as Taiwan is deeply influenced by American culture, the students involved in this study assumed that the English books were written by Americans, and the characters were the representations of Americans. Without sufficient discussion, some students reinforced their stereotype about the target culture. This raises an issue about the importance of discussion during story reading time, especially when children are not familiar with the type of the book they are introduced to.

The challenge of reading stories

Some students reported that they had difficulty understanding some stories. Children's enjoyment of stories, according to Fremantle (1993), lies in two factors. The first is the factual events of the story, the *what happened next* aspect; the second is the recognition of patterns involved. Responses from the student mainly reflect the first factor. This can be seen when the students reported that they enjoy stories that are full of surprise and expectation. As for the second factor – the recognition of patterns, the students involved in the study did not seem to show their familiarity with the pattern of the stories they were introduced to.

The story (*Where the Wild Things Are*) is so strange to me. I don't understand it. I don't understand how Max can sail the boat when he is actually in his room. It is very strange. (S3-B)

The story is about Max, but on the front cover, there is no Max in it, only the Wild Things. I think this picture is very strange (turning to the page in which Max faces the readers in his wolf suit, and in the following

page, he turns his back on the readers) He is a boy on this page. How can he become a wild thing on this page? (S4-B)

Where the Wild Things are, a fantasy about a boy's adventure into an imaginative world appears to confuse some students. Fantasy, according to Hunt (2001), is defined as "text which portrays some obvious deviance from consensus reality, whatever that could possibly be - usually a change in physical laws" (p.271). These children seem unfamiliar with the style of fantasy in what might be a very Western-oriented construction of that term. One might wonder whether an English child would have had the same sense of difficulty in understanding these picture story books. It seems that this unfamiliarity generated a sense of conflict between both students' perceptions of what a story should be like and the story they were introduced to. This widens out the idea of 'culture', and suggests that the students' own culture and prior knowledge of the texts might have an important influence on their understanding of the texts written by writers from other culture. The use of intertextuality is another vivid example.

If the theme is about the dad, why do they draw Little Red Riding Hood and Three Little Pigs, and why is the wolf ordered to walk out of the house? And look! This is a hat (points to a page in *Willy the Dreamer*) but the tag says: "This is not a hat". It is all so strange to me. (S3-A)

Due to the constraints of time, the students in this study were not given time to discuss the stories, and the support they received from the teacher were mainly linguistic based. As literary texts are open to multiple interpretations, it has been pointed out that discussion can serve to bridge various opinions (Duff & Maley, 1990). The comment made by S3-A implies that when students are not familiar with the book they are introduced to, teachers play a crucial role to mediate the story and facilitate their understanding. It is found that explicit modeling was an effective way at developing students' abilities to use the literary patterns as it allows new information to enter the individual's cognitive system (Hanauer, 2007). This calls attention to the role of the teacher in providing the explicit modeling to raise students' awareness of the literary patterns.

Conclusion

This study investigated how a group of EFL children had perceived the educational

value and challenges of reading English picture story books. Three educational values emerged from the data: (1) the linguistic value, (2) the value of the story, and (3) the value of the pictures. In terms of the linguistic value, the majority of the students involved mentioned that reading picture story books helped with their English, in particular at the lexical and syntactic level. With regard to the value of the story, more than half of the students expressed their enthusiasm for the story, which suggests that the story has the potential to motivate EFL children. For EFL beginning learners, their limited reading proficiency might only allow them to operate a bottom-up strategy when it comes to reading (Macaro, 2003); however, this study suggests that with the guidance of the teacher, stories can provide the students with an opportunity to apply a top-down reading model. This finding of this study echoes that literary texts can serve as a powerful motivator as they allow the learners to bring a personal response from their own experience to the texts (Duff and Maley, 1990), and to shift them from the pure language learning to a more contextual learning (Collie and Slater, 1987). With respect to the value of the pictures, most of the students believed that reading pictures stimulated their imagination and expanded their perspectives of the world. The students involved, however, particularly pointed out how some 'strange pictures' stimulated their imaginations as these pictures presented something they were not familiar with in their own culture, which draws our attention to the potential of pictures to encourage discussion and to develop students' creative power. With regard to the challenge of reading picture story books, three issues emerged from the data: (1) the linguistic challenge, (2) the challenge of reading pictures, and (3) the challenge of reading stories. These issues raise our attention to look at the challenge hidden behind the educational values. In the linguistic challenge, on one hand, the students reported that they welcomed the opportunity to learn more vocabulary in an interesting story; on the other hand, they also mentioned that, without the teacher to provide them with support, they would have difficulties comprehending the story. In reading pictures, despite the fact that the majority of the students reported how pictures stimulate their imagination and increase their understanding of the story, some students reported that they were confused by the pictures. As pointed out by Nodelman (1988), to fully understand pictures requires readers to have some understanding of the conventions of a particular culture. This implies that reading pictures is something that readers have to learn in order to have a deeper understanding of the pictures. In reading stories, some mentioned that they did

not understand some part of the story presented in the picture books. These aspects highlight the importance of teachers as mediator in providing the linguistic support, image-reading support and literary support while introducing picture books to EFL beginners. Having emphasized the importance of teachers in guiding EFL beginners reading picture story books, this study does not intend to underestimate the importance of students' autonomy in reading these books. However, for EFL beginners, the results of this study suggest that it is highly recommended for the beginning reader to have a facilitator to provide them with the appropriate modeling so as to enable them to sustain the reading and successfully reach the autonomy.

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Appendix A: Four picture story books used in the reading program

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Browne, A. (2000). *Willy the dreamer*. London: Walker Books.

Kraus, R. and Aruego, J. (2003). *Leo the late bloomer*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.

Sendak, M. (1992). *Where the Wild Things are*. London: Picture Lions.

Appendix B: Interview questions

1. Do you enjoy reading English picture story books?
2. Among the picture story books we read, which book did you like the most?
3. Among the picture story books we read, which book did you like the least?
4. Have you learned something from reading English picture story books?
5. What is the most difficult thing for you when you are reading English picture story books?
6. Despite the challenge do you want to read more English picture story books?

Interaction Between Processing and Maintenance in Online L2 Sentence Comprehension: Implications for Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis

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Abstract

The present study explores the possible mechanism of the L2 reading threshold phenomenon by focusing on the relationship between processing and maintenance efficiency in self-paced reading performance. The subjects were 62 Japanese college-level ESL learners. A series of experiments examined anomaly detection performance for numerical and pronominal disagreements in two types of structural complexity, i.e. centre-embedded subject/object-relative. First, Experiment 1 investigated which principle, trade-off or trace-decay, governs the functioning of the two components. The results revealed that although they may generally operate on the basis of trace-decay, the outcome from the better performers did not exclude the trade-off possibility. This yielded a supposition that the modality of information maintenance may provide explanation to the apparently confounding results. Experiment 2 thus tapped into the impact from the presence of irrelevant speech using the same experimental paradigm. The results were remarkable: *improvement*, rather than deterioration, in anomaly-detection performance was evidenced, particularly from the poor performers in Experiment 1, providing evidence for strategy-switching from phonological to direct-visual word-recognition process. Follow-up correlational analyses including working memory capacity indicated both trace-decay and trade-off were responsible for the reading threshold phenomenon, perhaps depending on which word-recognition strategy readers employ.

Keywords: second language reading, linguistic threshold hypothesis, working memory, word recognition process

Literature Review

The conception of the L2 reading threshold, which postulates that L2 learners - despite already being skilled in L1 reading comprehension - do not show a successful transfer of their reading skills from L1 to L2 until they attain a certain level of L2 proficiency (Clarke, 1980), has been well documented with solid evidence from a range of studies

(Bossers, 1991; Pichette, Segalowitz & Connors, 2003). A body of researchers have maintained the importance of lower-level language processing skills, such as identifying letters, extracting word's phonological information, and accessing word's meaning, in L2 reading instructions (Wang & Koda, 2005). Recent cross-linguistic studies have also provided evidence for a considerable contribution of lower-level processing skills in L2 reading (Koda, 1996); their findings provide further empirical basis for the L2 reading threshold phenomenon. However, very few studies have attempted to identify a possible mechanism of the phenomenon; therefore, why the successful transfer of reading skills from L1 to L2 is impeded due to insufficient L2 proficiency is still unclear.

L1 reading literature has established that efficient lower-level processing skills play crucial roles in fluent reading (e.g. Perfetti, 1985); further, these efficient, basic component linguistic skills enable limited cognitive recourse to contribute to higher-level information processing, such as making inferences, activating background knowledge and integrating propositions (e.g. Stanovich, 1991). The rationalization of this relationship between basic linguistic skills and higher-order reading skills has been reinforced by concepts from cognitive psychology, particularly the theoretical construct of working memory (WM), a workspace with limited attentional resources for ongoing mental processing and information maintenance (e.g. Baddeley, 1986). Numerous L1 studies have indicated that the efficiency of basic processing skills is closely related to successful reading in terms of the balanced availability of resources distributed between various levels of language processing and information maintenance (e.g. Ehri, 1992; Just & Carpenter, 1992).

Following previous L1 reading studies, many L2 reading researchers have focused on the role of the WM capacity in L2 reading and have found it to play an important role in overall L2 reading performance (e.g. Harrington & Sawyer, 1992; Nassaji & Geva, 1999). They maintain that, when the efficiency of lower-level skills in L2 is inadequate, limited WM capacity could affect the successful integration of the overall processing skills in L2 reading. In this context, the notion of the WM can be a key concept to explain the mechanism of the L2 reading threshold, particularly in the sense that the essence of the construct is related to the cost allocation between the basic language processing skills and the information maintenance function as a crucial factor in successful reading.

Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the role of lower-level processing skills

in L2 reading by focusing on the insights of cognitive psychology and L1 reading research. The study particularly attempts to examine the relationship between the efficiency of L2 word recognition skills and information maintenance in relation to the notion of the WM capacity by observing first-pass sentence comprehension performance by Japanese adult ESL learners, and to identify the mechanism responsible for the L2 reading threshold phenomenon.

Interpreting the L2 Reading Threshold from the Trade-off vs. Trace-decay View

L1 reading researchers have examined the functional relationship between the processing and storage components within the construct of the WM capacity and its impact on the overall reading process. An initial and highly influential proposal was provided by Just and Carpenter (1992); their framework of CC (Capacity-Constrained) READER postulates that the processing and storage components share a limited resource pool and hence operate in a trade-off relationship. This view appears to provide a clue for elucidating the phenomenon of the linguistic threshold in L2 reading. In other words, supposedly less automatized L2 processing skills are assumed to place considerably heavier demands on the resources within the WM than the completely automatized L1 processing skills. From this perspective, the concept of the L2 reading threshold should correspond to the level at which the computational demands for less automatized L2 processing skills exploit the resources for the storage function. Consequently, the total demands for both computation and storage eventually surpass the available WM capacity, which eventually lead to overall reading impairment.

Several recent L1 studies have attempted to establish alternative explanations; the task-switching hypothesis, originally proposed by Towse and Hitch (1995), is one such explanation. It assumes that the participants engage in processing and storage activities sequentially by switching their resources, and not simultaneously by sharing the common resource pool. This core assumption entails two basic assumptions. *The processing-storage independence assumption* maintains that the processing and storage components do not share a common resource pool and hence operate independently; *the time-based forgetting assumption* indicates that, during processing activities, the retained information in the storage component is liable to simple forgetting (see Saito & Miyake, 2004, for a review).

For testing this task-switching hypothesis, Towse and Hitch (1995) examined the relationship between processing and storage components in the WM by observing the

performance on counting span with 6- to 11-year old children. The result showed that manipulating the difficulty of the counting span task did not provide evidence for resource-sharing between the processing and storage functions. Towse, Hitch, and Hutton (1998) then investigated whether the same relationship holds not only with the counting span but also with operation- and reading-span tasks, with subjects of approximately the same age. They found that in all three span tasks, the processing speed was the best predictor of a decrement in storage efficiency, whereas the different concurrent storage loads did not affect the processing speed. They consequently postulated that their data resulted from a simple decay in subjects' memory traces over time, rather than being based on the allocation of limited resources in a trade-off manner. They then proposed that a task-switching model is more consistent with their results than that of resource-sharing and noted that their subjects may not have performed two tasks simultaneously. Towse, Hitch, and Hutton (1998) also indicated that there may be developmental changes within the mechanism of the WM, referring to the possibility of a developmental discontinuity in cognitive strategies in the WM, with children and adults using independent and general processes respectively.

Based on these empirical results, the trace-decay view provides an alternative interpretation on the L2 reading threshold phenomenon. That is, costly L2 processing may simply interfere with information maintenance during comprehension; information decay increases with the duration of the interruption. This may in turn impair the maintenance process, eventually leading to a possible disruption of comprehension.

Visual Word-recognition Skills and Information-maintenance Efficiency

The next issue pertains to a deeper understanding of the storage function within the WM capacity. The construct assumes that in speech-based processes, the component of phonological short-term store (STS) is in charge of the maintenance of acoustic information (e.g. Baddeley, 1986). It has been further claimed that, while the phonological information retained in the phonological STS can last for only a couple of seconds (Baddeley & Hitch, 1994), conceptualized information can actually be retained for a considerably longer period in the storage component by accessing to long-term memory (LTM) (Baddeley & Logie, 1999) or the newly established component of episodic buffer (Baddeley, 2000). These arguments are highly suggestive of the existence of two main routes in word recognition processes - phonology-mediated and direct-visual word recognition processes.

The possible dissociation of these two skills has been proposed based on neuropsychological evidence. While the phonological information has been assumed to be crucial to maintain word order and inflectional markers for producing complete syntactic analyses (e.g. Caramazza, Basili, Koller, & Berndt, 1981), some patients, who were impaired on verbatim sentence repetition, have been reported to show normal performance in comprehending even syntactically complex sentences (e.g. Butterworth, Campbell & Howard, 1986; Martin, 1990). These findings have led researchers to propose that while phonological STM plays a critical role in maintaining exact wording of texts as is required in sentence repetition tasks, they are not essential in sentence comprehension itself. This effectively explains the seemingly confounding results in Vallar and Baddeley (1984), whereby a patient with STM deficits showed almost normal levels of performance in visual sentence comprehension.

The aspect of developmental changes between two types of word-recognition skills also supports these arguments. Several studies have indicated that while beginning readers have a tendency to depend more on phonological codes, skilled readers may rely more on the orthographic representations of words (e.g. Ehri, 1992). Several cross-linguistic studies have provided evidence for the role of basic component processes in L2 reading, suggesting that phonological and orthographic processing skills may have different impacts on L2 reading (e.g. Frenck-Mestre, 2002; Nassaji & Geva, 1999). Among the recent studies focusing on this issue are Nassaji and Geva (1999) and Nassaji (2003), which closely examined the separate roles of phonological and orthographic processing skills in college ESL learners whose native language was Farsi. The results showed that both phonological and orthographic processing skills exhibited significant correlations with L2 reading proficiency; more importantly, the magnitude of the contribution of the latter was greater than that of the former. This was interpreted as being partly due to the participants' high L2 proficiency (Nassaji & Geva, 1999, p. 261; Nassaji, 2003, p. 270).

Irrelevant Speech Effects

The WM construct comprises a supervisory component (called a central executive) and three subcomponents, i.e. a phonological loop, a visuospatial sketchpad, and an episodic buffer. The phonological loop manipulates and stores speech-based information and is divided further into a phonological short-term store (STS) and an articulatory control process. The former is in charge of temporarily maintaining

phonological information and the latter takes the role of refreshing the fading phonological information through subvocal rehearsal (e.g. Baddeley, 1986; 2000). One type of experimental evidence for this stems from the phenomenon of irrelevant, or unattended, speech effects, whereby verbal recall performance is impaired when irrelevant verbal material is auditorily presented together with the target stimuli (e.g. Salamé & Baddeley, 1982). Boyle and Coltheart (1996) investigated both reading comprehension and serial recall in the presence of irrelevant speech and music (with/without singing). The effects of irrelevant speech and other vocal sounds on reading comprehension were not significant; neither accuracy nor decision time in sentence evaluation were affected by any type of irrelevant sound. In contrast, all types of irrelevant sounds significantly impaired performance on the serial recall task, resulting in the instrumental music conditions being less dramatic than the vocal sound conditions. This is compatible with the view that comprehending visual materials may not necessarily involve phonological mediation from print to meaning, presumably because of the direct access to the semantic representation of the words. On the other hand, tasks requiring ordered serial-recall may obligatorily involve phonological mediation. The dual-route model of word recognition (e.g. Coltheart, Curtis, Atkins & Haller, 1993) provides a significant implication to this. Readers depending on phonological mediation to access semantic representations are more likely to be affected by irrelevant sounds because of the possible disruption of maintenance function in the phonological STS. Conversely, those employing direct orthographic word-recognition skills are less likely to suffer interference of this type simply because they have no information to be disrupted in their phonological STS.

The present study attempted to investigate the relationship between the processing and storage components in L2 sentence comprehension, particularly focusing on the link between the different forms of word recognition processes and the mode of information maintenance. Experiment 1 attempted to examine how syntactic processing efficiency is related to the effectiveness of information maintenance by using an moving-window, self-paced reading paradigm(Just, Carpenter & Woolley, 1982)¹; the aim was to elucidate which of the two principles (i.e. trade-off or trace-decay) more suitably explained the functional relationship between the processing and storage components. Experiment 2 attempted to investigate which of the two types of word recognition processes (i.e. through phonological or direct-visual route) was more likely to be employed in each participant's task performance evidenced in Experiment 1. This

was undertaken by observing the levels of interference caused by the irrelevant sounds in a self-paced paradigm using the same type of stimuli as in Experiment 1.

Experiment 1

Method

Participants

The participants comprised 62 native Japanese speakers, 48 females and 14 males, who were enrolled in undergraduate/postgraduate courses at a university in the UK. Their mean age was 26.7 years.

Design

Three baseline measures (i.e. a reading comprehension test, a vocabulary test and a reading-span test) and a primary task (i.e. a self-paced reading test) were used. The test of lexical knowledge aimed to compare its level of contribution to the overall reading ability with that of the lower-level processing efficiency (Nassaji & Geva, 1999; Nassaji, 2003). The tests were carried out in two separate sessions. The reading-span and self-paced reading tasks were conducted in the first session and the reading comprehension and vocabulary tests, in the second session. The latter two tests were conducted together with Experiment 2. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. The second session was conducted within three months of the first for all the participants. Each participant was paid £10 for both the sessions.

Reading comprehension test

The reading materials were modeled after the reading section of TOEFL (cf. Harrington & Sawyer, 1992). Five passages were taken from exercises in this section and each passage was followed by six multiple choice questions. The number of correct answers (from 0 to 30) was used as data in the analyses.

Vocabulary test

The Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test (1983) was adopted as a vocabulary measure. The test was divided into five levels and each level contained 36 words, with a total of 180 words to be tested. These words in each level were further divided into 6 groups comprising 6 test words and 3 definitions. The task involved choosing a word that matched each definition.

Reading-span test.

Seventy unrelated sentences—simple declarative sentences having the same structure—were prepared for this task. The participants were instructed to read aloud sets of English sentences one by one as they appeared on a computer screen while simultaneously remembering all the sentence-final words. The span size increased from 2- to 5-sentence sets. Each span level had 5 trials, with a total of 20 trials and 70 sentences. The total number of correctly recalled words was used as the score for this task (Harrington & Sawyer, 1992).

Word-by-word self-paced reading test.

The target structures used as stimuli in this test were two types of mismatch—violation of subject-verb concordance and gender agreement in pronominal references (SV and Gender violation)—with two levels of structural complexity inserted in each type of mismatch; centre-embedded subject-relative clauses (SR) and centre-embedded object-relative clauses (OR).² Table 1 presents the sample sentences.

Table 1. Example sentences in the experimental conditions (Target parts of (dis)agreement are italicized)

Conditions and levels		Example sentences
SV condition:	Subject-relative (SR)	<i>The cook</i> who made that hot chicken soup <i>are</i> famous in Japan. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
	Object-relative (OR)	<i>The ladies</i> who the guy planned to contact <i>is</i> all very rich. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Gender condition:	Subject-relative (SR)	<i>The girl</i> who chose the lovely dress saw <i>himself</i> in the mirror. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
	Object-relative (OR)	<i>The boy</i> who they tried to protect hurt <i>herself</i> with his gun. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Note. Control condition: No violations were set between the two target parts in each of the above conditions.

The self-paced task performance—correct response rates, reaction times for detecting violations (RTs) and total reading times for the embedded clauses (reading times)—was then related to the results of three baseline measures.

All the material sentences comprised of 12 words, which were above the 1000-frequency level in the *British National Corpus*. All the embedded clauses between the subjects and the target parts (verbs in SV condition and reflexive pronouns in Gender condition) were comprised of 6 words, or 7 syllables. Each condition had 5 target

sentences. There were a total of 8 conditions; 4 experimental conditions with disagreements and 4 corresponding control conditions without disagreements. One hundred and ten filler sentences were added to achieve a total of 150 sentence stimuli. Appendix A provides the example sentences.

The stimuli were presented in a randomized order on a Macintosh PowerBook 540c with the experimental package PsyScope© (Cohen, MacWhinney, Flatt & Provost, 1993). The primary task was to read through the sentences as silently and as quickly as possible, and then make a verification judgement for them. At the beginning of each trial, a fixation marker '×' appeared at the centre of the screen for 500 milliseconds, followed by the first word of the sentence in the top left-hand side box. By pressing the '○' key each time, the previous word was removed and the next word was revealed in the neighboring box. Thus, the participants could only view one word at a time. Pressing the key on the last word of the material sentences prompted a short verification sentence. They were then asked to press the '○' key if they considered it to be that the contents, and not the exact expressions, of the verification sentence conformed to the material sentence, and to press the '×' key if they considered it not to be so.

The participants were instructed to simultaneously conduct a secondary task. When reading material sentences, whenever they encountered expressions that they considered to be odd—either syntactically or semantically—they were instructed to press the '×' key (and not the '○' key) as quickly as possible. The experimenter ensured that the participants prioritized the primary task. They were instructed to answer the verification sentences irrespective of whether they considered the material sentences of the primary task to contain odd expressions. This ensured that the participants constantly focused on the contents of the material sentences.

Throughout the data analyses for the self-paced reading test, an adjustment was made for the concept of the 'correct response' to the target words. Reacting to the words that appeared immediately after the target words was also considered as the participants correctly identified the violation. This is because they were accustomed to pressing the '○' key throughout the task, with average intervals of around 400–500 milliseconds, and their responses were frequently delayed although they noticed the violations. Therefore, the RT data of correctly detected trials was the sum of the RTs from both the 9th and 10th words. The correct response rates in each condition ranged from 0 to 5 for each participant, and the mean RTs for each participant in each condition were derived

from the average of all the trials with the correct number of responses out of 5 trials.³ The reliability estimates (Cronbach's Alpha) of RT data for each condition were: SV-SR = .87; SV-OR = .79; Gen-SR = .73 and Gen-OR = .65.

Hypotheses

The following three types of detailed hypotheses were formulated:

- *Complexity effect.* If the processing and storage components in the WM follow a trade-off principle, the information-maintenance performance should be affected by the different processing demands between the SR and OR conditions. In contrast, if they follow the trace-decay principle, maintenance efficiency should not be affected by the processing cost.
- *Reading-time effect.* If the WM operates according to a trace-decay principle, the RT and the reading time data should reveal a significant correlation; because this view postulates that the longer it takes for the participants to read the embedded clauses, the longer it takes to detect violations. If it operates following a trade-off principle, the RT data should not yield a straightforward relationship with reading time data since the principle is supposed to be affected by the processing *cost*, and not by the processing *speed*.
- *Correlations between correct response rates/RTs and WM span.* If the WM construct operates according to a trade-off principle, correct response rates and RTs should also reveal significant correlations with the WM span. Conversely, if the WM operates in a trace-decay principle, the correct response rates and RTs should be independent from the individual differences in the participants' WM capacity.

Analyses

Baseline measures.

The descriptive statistics for the baseline measures were; a) Reading comprehension test: Mean = 15.3 (score range: 6–25 out of a maximum of 0–30), *SD* = 4.81; b) vocabulary test: Mean = 66.9 (score range: 38–83, out of a maximum of 0–90), *SD* = 9.72; and c) reading span test: Mean = 52.2 (score range: 31–66, out of a maximum of 0–70), *SD* = 7.62.

Examining complexity effect.

The mean correct response rates in each condition were: SV-SR: 3.63 (*SD* = 1.15); SV-OR: 3.44 (*SD* = 1.26); Gender-SR: 4.39 (*SD* = 0.80); and Gender-OR: 3.87 (*SD* = 1.27).

A 2(SV and Gender)×2 (SR and OR) ANOVA was conducted, and a main effect of the violation type was observed, with Gender violations being more accurately detected than SV violations: $F(1, 61) = 16.9, p < .001$. The effect of structural complexity was not significant: $F(1, 61) = 1.82, p = .183$. There was a significant effect for overall interaction: $F(1, 61) = 9.9, p < .001$. Follow-up paired-samples t -tests revealed that correct response rates in the SR condition were significantly higher than those in the OR condition for Gender violations: $t(60) = 3.08, p < .01$. No main effect was found for the same pair for SV violations: $t(60) = 1.33, p = .188$.

Figure 1 presents the bar chart for the mean RTs. Figure 2 presents the bar chart for the mean reading times for the embedded clauses. A 2×2 ANOVA was conducted on the RT data. A main effect of the violation condition was observed, with Gender violations being more quickly detected than SV violations: $F(1, 61) = 9.1, p < .01$. The effect size (d) of this difference was .384. There was no main effect of structural complexity levels: $F(1, 61) = 1.209, p = .276$. A significant interaction was observed between the violation condition and structural complexity: $F(1, 61) = 4.1, p < .01$. Follow-up paired-samples t -tests revealed that while no main effect was observed between the RTs in the SR and OR conditions for SV violations: $t(60) = .392, p = .697$, the participants took significantly longer to detect violations in the OR condition than in the SR condition for Gender violations: $t(60) = 2.9, p < .01$ ($d = .46$). A 2×2 ANOVA was also conducted on the reading time data, resulting in a significant main effect of the violation condition, with the reading times in the Gender violation condition taking significantly longer than those in the SV violation condition: $F(1, 61) = 20.86, p < .001$. There was no main effect of structural complexity: $F(1, 61) = 1.125, p = .293$. Follow-up paired-samples t -tests indicated that none of the SR-OR pairs in each violation condition showed main effects: $t(60) = .103, p = .919$ for the SV violation, and $t(60) = 1.45, p = .152$ for the Gender violation.

Figure 1. Bar chart of mean RTs by violation type and structural complexity level.

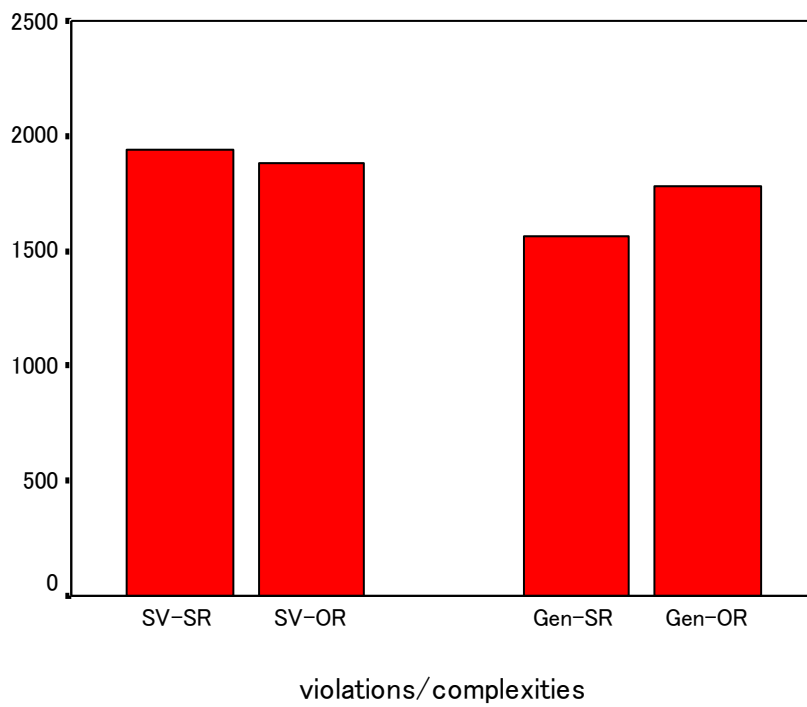
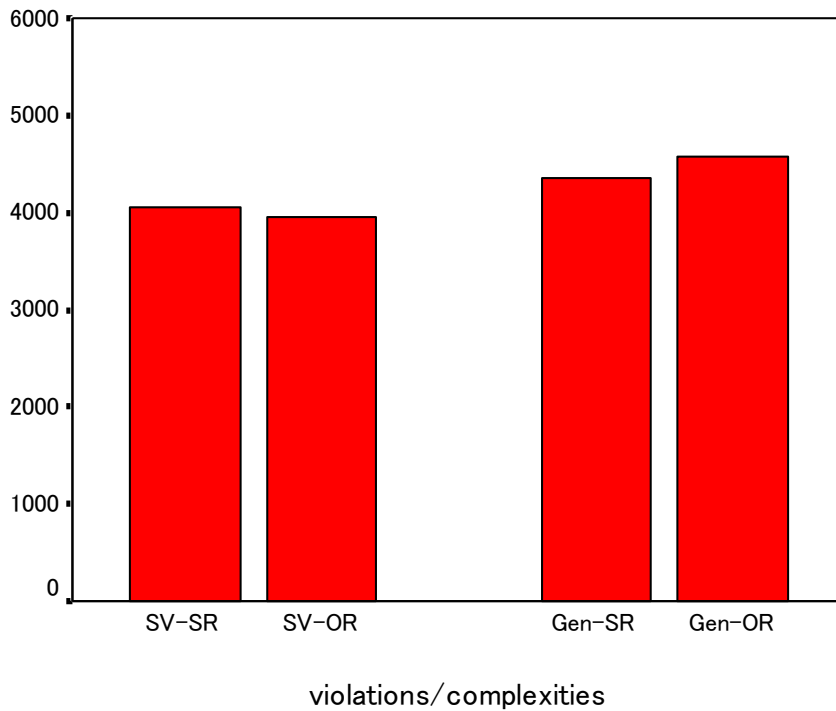


Figure 2. Bar chart of mean reading times by violation type and structural complexity level.



Examining reading-time effect.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the RT and the reading time data were calculated for all the conditions. Figures 3a)–d) present the scatterplots. The dotted reference lines divide the participants into equal halves based on the RT data.

Figure 3a. *Scatterplots between RTs and reading times in all the four (2 violation types × 2 structural complexity levels) conditions: SV-SR (Subject-relative for SV violations).*

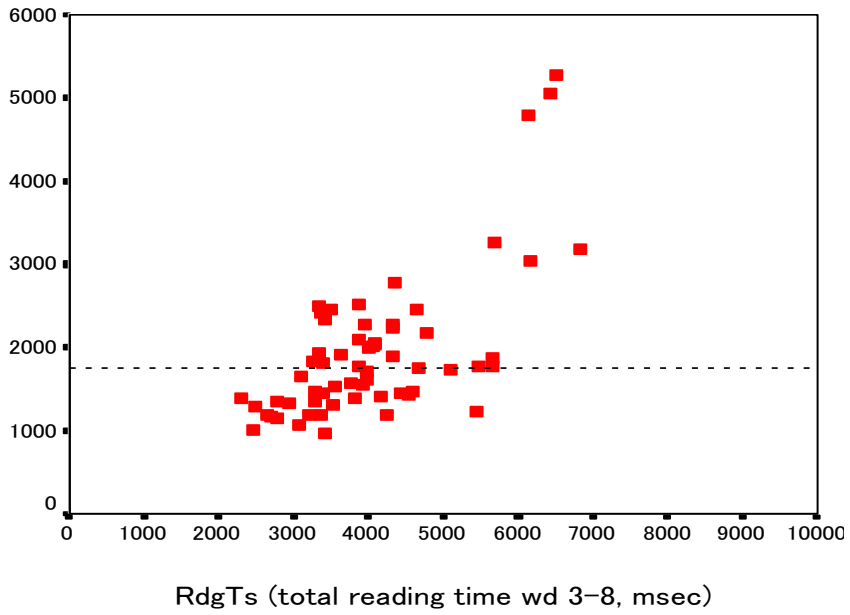


Figure 3b. Scatterplots between RTs and reading times in all the four (2 violation types \times 2 structural complexity levels) conditions: SV-OR (Object-relative for SV violations).

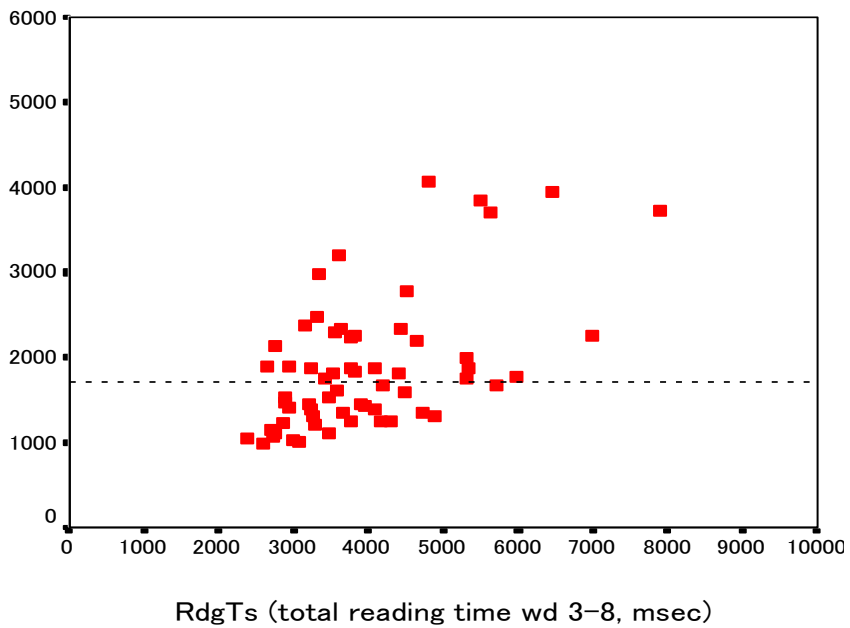


Figure 3c. Scatterplots between RTs and reading times in all the four (2 violation types \times 2 structural complexity levels) conditions: Gen-SR (Subject-relative for Gender violations).

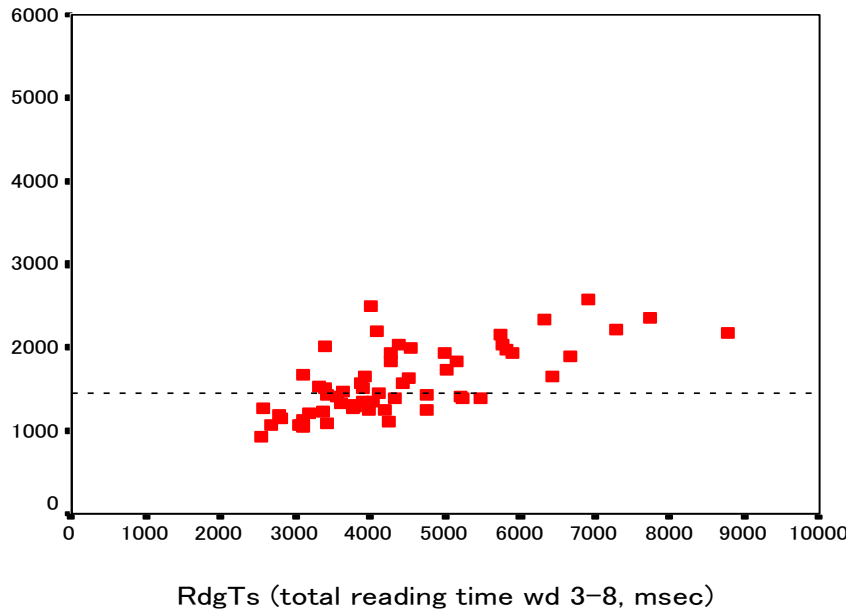


Figure 3d. *Scatterplots between RTs and reading times in all the four (2 violation types \times 2 structural complexity levels) conditions: Gen-OR (Object-relative for Gender violations).*

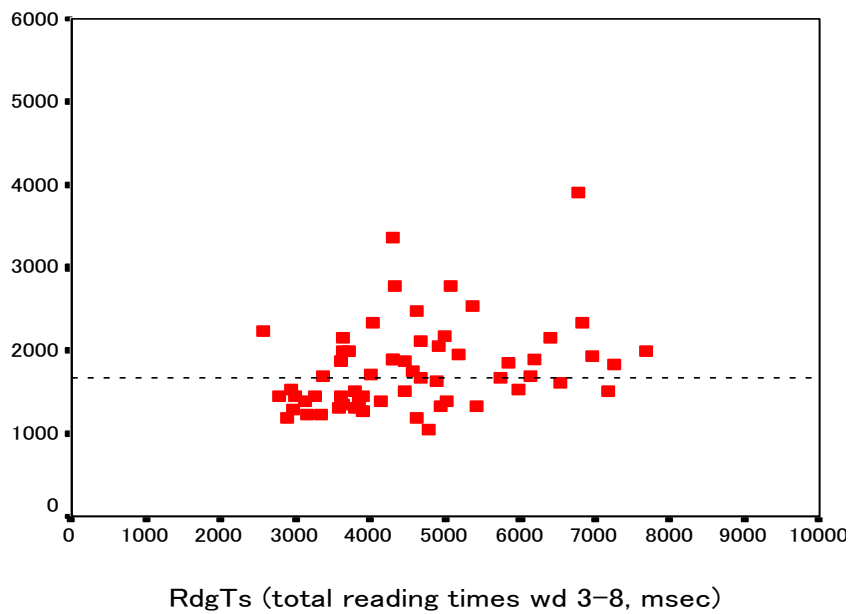


Table 2. Intercorrelations for SV Violations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. RdgComp							
2. Vocab		.58**					
3. RdgSpan		.28*	.27*				
4. RT(SV-SR)		-.38**	-.34**	-.23			
5. RT(SV-OR)		-.47**	-.28*	-.21	.36**		
6. RdgT(SV-SR)		-.42**	-.31*	-.25	.67**	.47**	
7. RdgT(SV-OR)		-.35**	-.19	-.30*	.36**	.55**	.60**

Table 3. Intercorrelations for Gender Violations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. RdgComp							
2. Vocab		.58**					
3. RdgSpan		.28*	.27*				
4. RT(Gen-SR)		-.47**	-.38**	-.22			
5. RT(Gen-OR)		-.43**	-.20	-.04	.28*		
6. RdgT(Gen-SR)		-.33**	-.26*	-.19	.70**	.21	
7. RdgT(Gen-OR)		-.27**	-.17	-.20	.54**	.36**	.53**

Note. n = 62. Correlations above .25 were significant at .05, above .30 were significant at .01, and above .40 were significant at .001 (all two-tailed). RdgComp = reading comprehension test, Vocab = vocabulary test, RdgSpan = reading-span test, RT = reaction time, RdgT = reading time, SV = Subject-verb violation type, Gen = Gender violation type, SR = subject-relative clause and OR = object-relative clause.

Examining intercorrelations between the baseline measures, the RT and the reading time data.

Tables 2 and 3 represent the intercorrelations among the scores for the three baseline measures, the RT data and the reading time data.

Discussion

Experiment 1 aimed to investigate the manner in which the processing and storage components operate in the WM and to examine which of two principles (i.e. trade-off or trace-decay) governs the relationship between these components in L2 visual sentence comprehension. The analysis of the structural complexity effect indicated that while there was no significant difference between the two complexity levels for the SV violations, the participants performed significantly better in the SR condition than in the OR condition for the Gender violations. This result partly provides evidence for a trade-off relationship between the processing cost and maintenance efficiency. The next analysis focusing on the level of correlation between the RT and

the reading time data revealed highly significant correlations in all four of the conditions. The overall intercorrelations among the three baseline measures, the RTs and the reading times were then examined, and they showed that while the reading comprehension scores were highly correlated with the RT and the reading time data in both the violation conditions, the reading-span scores failed to show significant correlations with most of the RT and the reading time data. Considering the overall findings from a series of analyses presented thus far, one could speculate that a trace-decay principle is more suitable for explaining the relationship between the processing and storage components in the WM. However, this conjecture is not straightforward and a few cautionary steps must be taken before any solid conclusions can be made.

The first need for caution arises in connection with the scatterplots in Figure 3. All the plots manifest a common fan shape, signifying that not all detection performances were equally affected by the reading times. Dividing the data equally into slow and fast responders—as illustrated by the dotted lines in the graphs—suggests that while slow responders took longer to detect violations because they read more slowly, fast responders' RTs were almost at the same level, irrespective of the reading time. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the mean RTs and SDs of slow and fast responders; where by a remarkable difference in the SD values, with slow responders' SDs being considerably larger than those of fast responders, is identified. The view that there are two main routes in word recognition processes—direct visual and phonology-mediated ones—lends an important implication to this slightly confounding outcome. The theoretical framework of the WM capacity maintains that while the phonological information retained in the phonological STS can last only a couple of seconds, conceptualized information can be retained for a considerably longer period in the storage component (e.g. Baddeley and Hitch, 1994). Regarding the result of the current experiment, one could reasonably speculate that since fast responders depended more on direct-visual processing, their detection performance remained almost at the same level, with relatively less influence of the reading times. In contrast, slow responders were affected to a greater extent by trace-decay because they may have depended on acoustic mediation. This justifies the clear fan-shaped correlation illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 4. Mean RTs, standard deviations and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients from corresponding reading times in all the four (2 violation conditions × 2 structural complexity levels) conditions

Conditions	Slow responders			Fast responders		
	Mean	SD	Correlation withRdgTs	Mean	SD	Correlation withRdgTs
SV-SR	2510	934	.66**	1372	208	.48**
SV-OR	2426	732	.44*	1321	201	.55**
Gen-SR	1897	314	.58**	1235	137	.67**
Gen-OR	2159	497	.13	1389	145	.36*

Note. n = 62. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. RdgTs = reading times.

The second cause for caution stems from the differences in the manifestation of the RT data between the SV and Gender violations. First, as indicated in Table 4, the *SD* values in the two Gender conditions were considerably smaller than in the SV conditions, particularly for the slow responders. Figure 3 also shows that the scatterplots considerably ‘shrunk’ vertically in the Gender violations compared to their SV counterparts. In addition, the overall RTs were significantly faster in the Gender violations than in SV violations (as indicated in Figure 1 and the related analysis). These differences between the SV and Gender conditions can be explained by using the same rationale as the previous one based on fast/slow responders (i.e. information-retention efficiency for detecting violations is affected by the actual delivery mode of the information and not by the information itself). One possible explanation for this issue derives from the fact that the equivalent of the morphological distinction between singular and plural forms in English is generally not available in Japanese (e.g. Tsujimura, 1996). It would suffice to assume that for the participants of the current study, whose L1 is Japanese, the numerical information of the subject may not have been processed as efficiently as the gender information, which is equally important in general in Japanese as in English. Therefore, it may have been more liable to depend on phonological mediation to be retained while reading. These arguments can be reasonably considered as pertinent, if not exhaustive, explications for the dissimilar manifestations of the RT data between the two violation conditions.⁵

The final need for caution is the possible existence of a structural complexity effect in the Gender conditions. Although the trace-decay view appears to better explain the relationship between the processing and storage components in the WM, the potential existence of a structural complexity effect in the Gender condition implies that the involvement of the trade-off principle cannot be disregarded. While the information stored in the phonological STS is affected by simple trace-decay, and is, therefore,

independent of processing efficiency, maintaining conceptualized information may share the same resource pool with the processing activity. Baddeley and Logie (1999) maintain that one of the major roles of the central executive is the retrieval of stored long-term knowledge relevant to the task in progress and that these WM constraints may arise from the capacity for activation. This reasonably lends a rationale to the assumption that retrieving and maintaining semantic information involves resource-sharing. In this context, the possible role of trade-off in the Gender conditions may occur because of the different numerical and pronominal reference systems that exist between English and Japanese—the information maintenance of pronominal references was more likely to be carried out in the conceptualized form for the current participants. Conversely, the manifestation of the trace-decay effects in the SV conditions might occur because the current participants may have depended on the phonological form regarding SV agreement to a greater extent.

Implications for the L2 reading threshold

The present results indicate that the relationship between the processing and storage components could be better explained by the trace-decay view rather than the trade-off view; further, these two components function within the WM capacity on the principle of resource-switching rather than resource-sharing. The mechanism of the L2 reading threshold can be interpreted as a situation where slow, not costly, L2 computation causes the magnitude of the interference with the storage function to lead to the overall comprehension impairment. However, the need for caution arose from a) the fan-shaped pattern observed in the scatterplots and b) the existence of a structural complexity effect evidenced in Gender violations. Experiment 2 thus attempted a close examination of the mode of information maintenance and its impact on storage efficiency.

Experiment 2

Based on Experiment 1, the present experiment observed the levels of interference induced by the irrelevant speech effect, which involves the presence of verbal/non-verbal background noises while reading, in order to investigate which of two types of word recognition processes (i.e. through phonological or direct-visual route) the participants were more likely to employ in the same experimental paradigm as that used in Experiment 1. In addition, a pseudo word sounds task and a non-word orthographic

regularities task were conducted to examine the relationship between the participants' awareness of phonological/orthographic conditions and their self-paced reading performance. The former task, which was adapted from Olson, Kleigl, Davidson and Foltz (1985), tested the participants' ability to recognize incorrectly spelt words by examining the level of awareness of letter-sound correspondence rules. The latter task was based on the Orthographic Constraints task from Treiman (1993) to test the participants' familiarity with orthographic regularities in English.

Hypotheses

Following is the detailed hypotheses of the experiment:

- *Within-subjects hypothesis.* If the participants depend on phonology as a crucial mediator for lexical access, their reading behaviour should reveal disruption by irrelevant speech. Their detection performance for violations should be poorer than that in the Silent conditions. However, if they employ a direct orthography-to-meaning word recognition process, their comprehension performance will reveal no effect in the presence of irrelevant speech.
- *Between-subjects hypothesis: Slow vs. fast responders.* The results from the previous experiment suggest that slow responders are affected to a greater extent by rapid trace-decay; therefore, they are assumed to be more dependent on phonological mediation. In this case, the subjects' detection performance will be impaired further in the presence of irrelevant speech. In contrast, fast responders might be less influenced by the trace-decay, as it is assumed they will employ direct visual word recognition skills.
- *Correlation coefficients: Phonological/orthographic processing efficiencies.* Fast responders' performance in detecting violations should correlate with their orthographic processing efficiency, since they were shown to more likely to have employed direct visual processing during reading. Conversely, slow responders' performance should correlate with their performance in a phonological processing task, since they were shown to more likely to have depended on phonology during reading.

Method

Participants

The participants were the same as those in Experiment 1.

Self-paced reading task

A completely new set of material sentences was used, but their lengths and sentence structures were identical to those used in Experiment 1. However, the current experiment focused on only one level of structural complexity, subject- relative (SR) clauses, since its aim was to examine the mode of maintenance, rather than to further investigate the relationship between the processing and storage functions. Consequently, there were only two experimental conditions—the SR condition in both SV and Gender violations. As in Experiment 1, each condition was comprised of 5 sets of target and verification sentences, with a total of 10 sets. Thirty filler sentences were added to obtain a total of 40 sets of sentences.

Two types of irrelevant sounds were played during the self-paced reading task: a news commentary in English (News condition) and a piece of classical music (Music condition). The former exhibited a normal conversational speech rate throughout the programme and was recorded from the BBC radio news. The latter included the first and second movements (Adagio–Allegro and Andante con moto) of Symphony No. 39 in E flat (K. 543) composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791). Both the sounds were played on a CD player, MATSUI CD 420D, with the volume in each condition set at exactly the same level for all the participants. The reliability estimates (Cronbach's Alpha) of RT data for each experimental condition are: The News condition: SV = .74, Gender = .78; and the Music condition: SV = .73, Gender = .84. Although a similar procedure was used in Experiment 1 for this task, oral instructions were again given and provided in their L1 (Japanese), albeit with additional instructions—they were instructed to read the sentences on the computer display over two sessions: once while a news commentary in English played and again while the other a piece of classical music was played. It was also clarified that after the test, they would not be asked anything about the contents of the news commentary or about the music. The order of the presentation of the material sentences was randomized as was the News and Music conditions counterbalanced.

Measuring phonological processing skill.

Thirty pairs of pseudowords were established as test stimuli. Only one of the words in each pair corresponded in sound to a real English word. The participants were

instructed to choose from each pseudoword pair the word that most sounded like a real English word, and to answer as quickly as possible by pressing either the right or the left key on the computer keypad. The order of the presentation of the target stimuli was randomized. The participants were discouraged from reading aloud at the sight of the stimuli, and none of them actually did so. Five pairs of practice items followed the instructions. The stimuli were presented on a Macintosh PowerBook 540c with the experimental package PsyScope© (Cohen et al., 1993). The computer recorded all the responses and the reaction times in milliseconds.

Measuring orthographic processing skill.

The task also was comprised of 30 pairs of monosyllabic nonwords; only one word of each pair conformed to the orthographic regularities of English. The test was conducted in precisely the same manner as the previous task, but with slightly different instructions: the participants were requested to answer as quickly as possible about which of the presented nonwords appeared to them to be an English word. The order of the two processing tests—phonological and orthographic—was also counterbalanced. Appendix B and C contains the complete list of the test stimuli.

Analyses

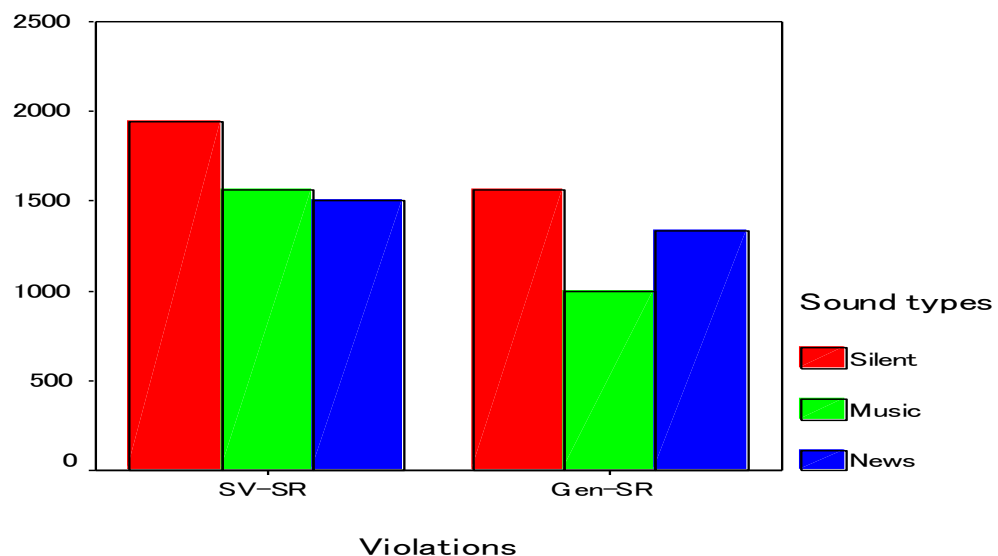
Examining the within-subjects hypothesis.

The first analysis involves the within-subject changes in the detection performance across the three conditions. The data for the Silent condition came from the corresponding condition in Experiment 1. Following are the mean correct response rates by violation conditions and types of sound background: a) SV-Music: 4.10 (out of a range of 0–5, $SD = 1.11$); b) SV-News: 3.17 ($SD = 0.91$); c) Gender-Music: 4.78 ($SD = 0.45$); d) Gender-News: 4.77 ($SD = 0.46$). A $2(SV \text{ and Gender}) \times 3$ (Silent, Music and News) mixed-design ANOVA was carried out. There were main effects of violations. First, Gender violations were detected more accurately than SV violations: $F(1, 55) = 101.1, p < .0001$. A main effect for sounds was also observed: $F(2, 110) = 15.8, p < .001$. In addition, there was a significant interaction between violation types and sounds: $F(2, 110) = 20.4, p < .001$. Follow-up paired comparisons were carried out between the three sound types in each violation condition. In the SV condition, the correct response rates in the News condition were significantly poorer than those in both the Silent and the Music conditions: $t(56) = 4.44, p < .001$ and $t(56) = 5.25, p < .001$, respectively. The

difference between the Silent and the Music condition was not significant: $t(56) = .566$, $p = .573$. There were no significant differences found across the three sound conditions in the Gender condition: Silent vs. Music, $t(56) = .410$, $p = .683$; Music vs. News, $t(56) = 1.13$, $p = .261$; Silent vs. News, $t(56) = .164$, $p = .870$.

Figure 4 displays the bar chart for the mean RTs by violation types and sounds. As in the previous analysis, a 2×3 ANOVA was conducted, resulting in significant main effects of violation. First, Gender violations were detected more quickly than SV violations: $F(1, 55) = 47.5$, $p < .001$. There was also a main effect for sounds: $F(2, 110) = 29.0$, $p < .001$. In addition, there was a significant sound and violation interaction: $F(2, 110) = 11.5$, $p < .001$. Follow-up paired comparisons were carried out between the RT data for the three sound types. In the SV condition, the RTs in the Silent condition were significantly longer than those in both the Music and the News conditions: $t(56) = 3.8$, $p < .001$; $t(56) = 3.9$, $p < .001$, respectively. There was no significant difference between the Music and the News conditions: $t(56) = 1.04$, $p = .301$. In the Gender condition, the RTs in the Silent condition were significantly longer than those in the News condition: $t(56) = 4.5$, $p < .001$, which in turn were significantly longer than those in the Music condition: $t(57) = 9.9$, $p < .001$. Interestingly, overall, the RTs in the irrelevant sound conditions proved to be consistently quicker than those in the Silent condition, which is completely against the prediction that there would be a performance drop in the presence of irrelevant sounds.

Figure 4. Bar chart for RTs by sound type (Silent, Music and News) and violation type (SV and Gender).



Examining the between-subjects hypothesis: Slow vs. fast responders.

Changes in detection performance in terms of the correct response rates and the RTs across the three sound conditions were examined separately with slow and fast responders—the groupings were based on the RT data from the Silent condition. Regarding the correct response rates, paired-sample *t*-tests for the SV violation revealed that slow responders' correct response rates in the News condition were significantly worse than those in both the Silent and the Music conditions: $t(28) = 2.42, p < .05$; $t(28) = 3.00, p < .01$, respectively. The effect sizes (*d*) of these differences were .37 and .96, respectively. No significant difference was observed between the Silent and the Music conditions: $t(28) = 1.89, p = .070$. With fast responders, the correct response rates in the News condition was again significantly poorer than that in the Silent condition: $t(28) = 2.34, p < .05$, which in turn was poorer than that in the Music condition: $t(28) = 3.40, p < .01$. The effect sizes (*d*) of these differences turned out to be .33 and .45, respectively. The same set of tests for the Gender violation did not reveal any significant differences. Figures 5 and 6 present the bar charts that display the RTs for each group of responders by the three sound conditions. Paired-samples *t*-tests were again carried out, and in the SV-SR condition, the RTs of slow responders in the Music and the News conditions were significantly faster than those in the Silent condition: Silent and Music, $t(28) = 5.8, p < .001$; and Silent and News, $t(28) = 5.1, p < .001$. No significant difference was observed between the Music and the News conditions: $t(28) = 1.37, p = .180$. With fast responders, there were no significant differences between any of the relationships. In the Gen-SR condition, for the slow responders, the RTs in the Silent condition were significantly slower than those in the News condition: $t(29) = 6.6, p < .001$, which in turn were significantly slower than those in the Music condition: $t(29) = 6.4, p < .001$. The difference between the Silent and the Music conditions was also significant: $t(29) = 9.7, p < .001$. For fast responders, no significant difference was found between the Silent and the News conditions. The RTs in these two conditions were significantly slower than those in the Music condition: Silent and Music, $t(28) = 7.7, p < .001$; and News and Music, $t(28) = 7.6, p < .001$.

Figure 5. Bar charts of RTs for slow and fast responders by sound types (Silent, Music and News): SV condition.

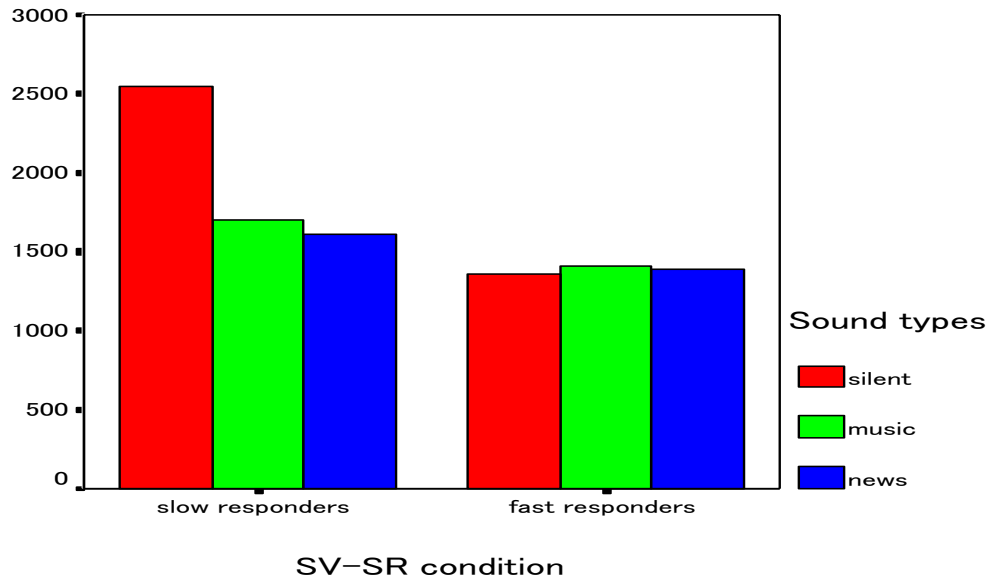


Figure 6. Bar charts of RTs for slow and fast responders by sound types (Silent, Music and News): Gender condition.

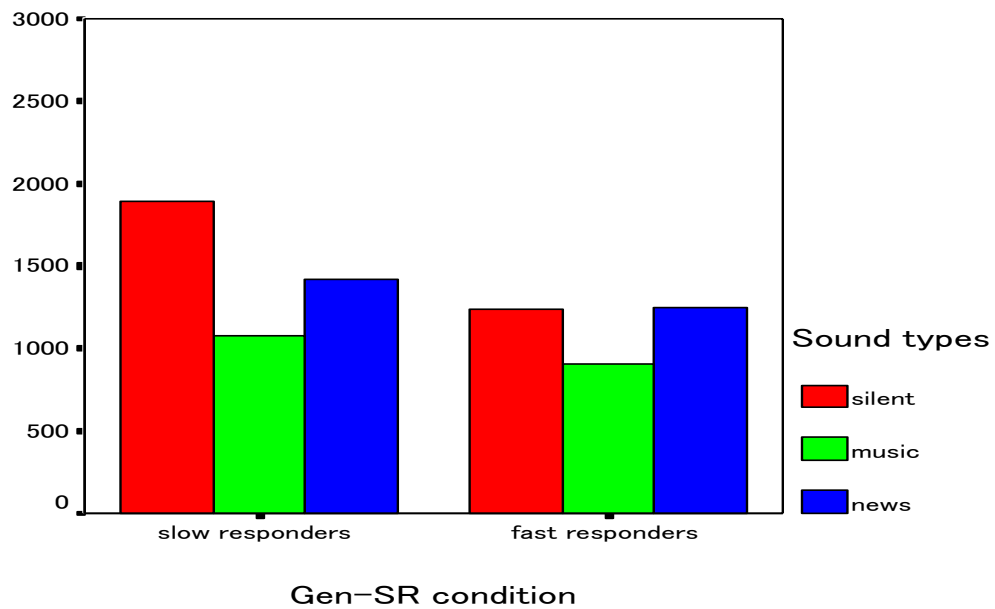


Figure 7a. *Scatterplots between RTs and reading times by violation and sound types: SV-Music condition.*

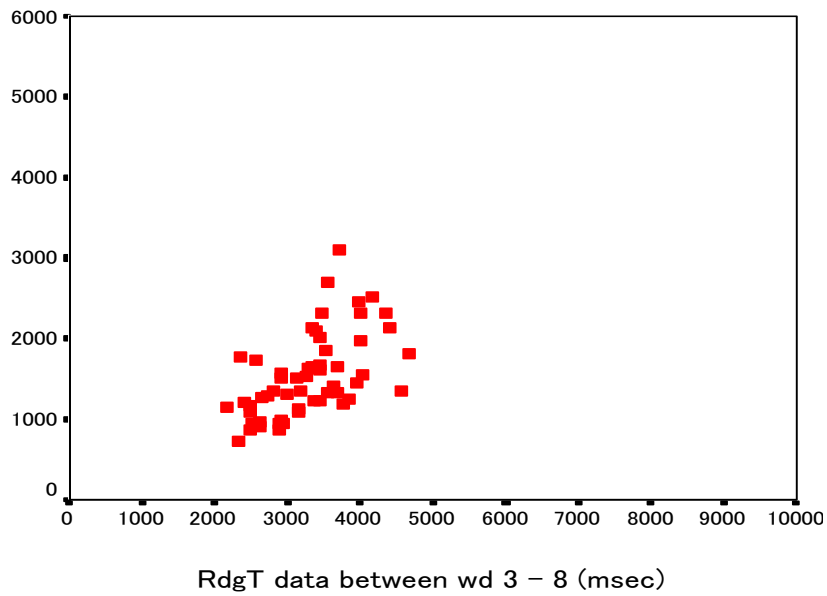


Figure 7b. *Scatterplots between RTs and reading times by violation and sound types: SV-News condition.*

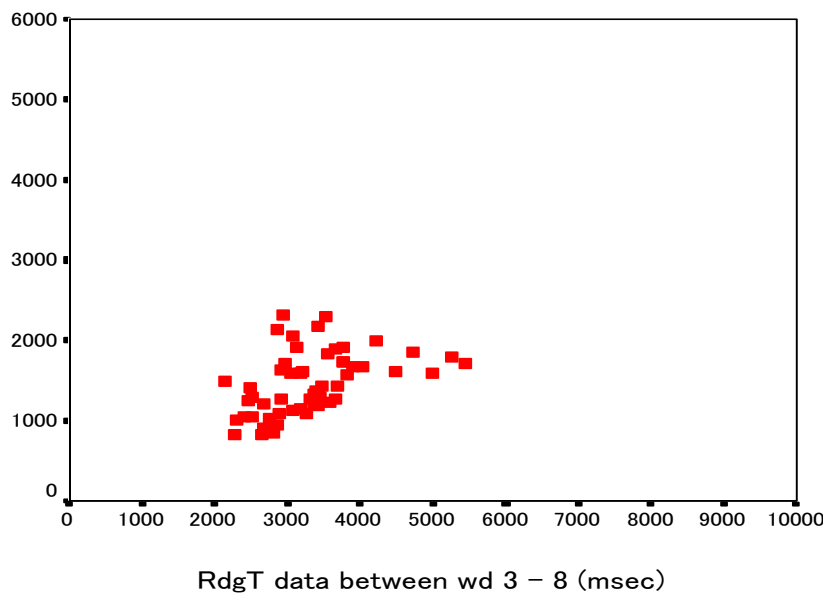


Figure 7c. Scatterplots between RTs and reading times by violation and sound types: Gender-Music condition.

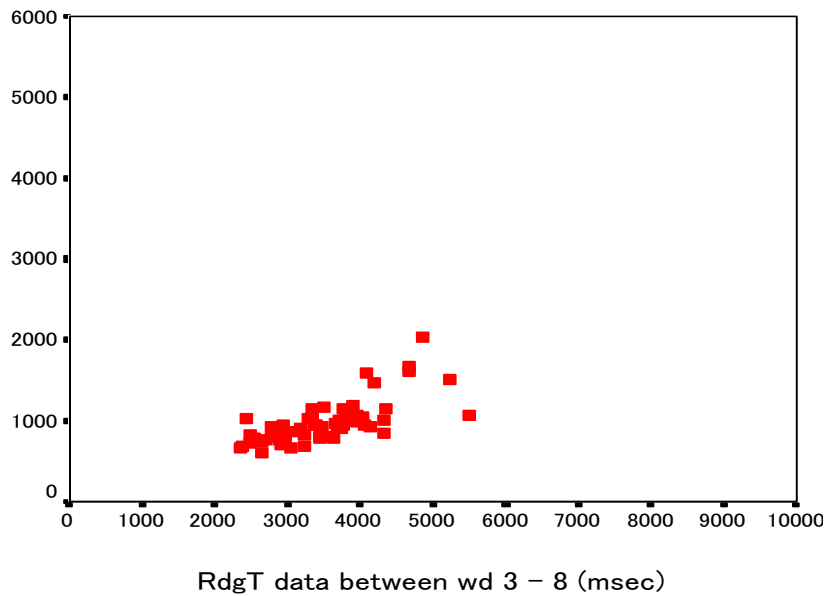
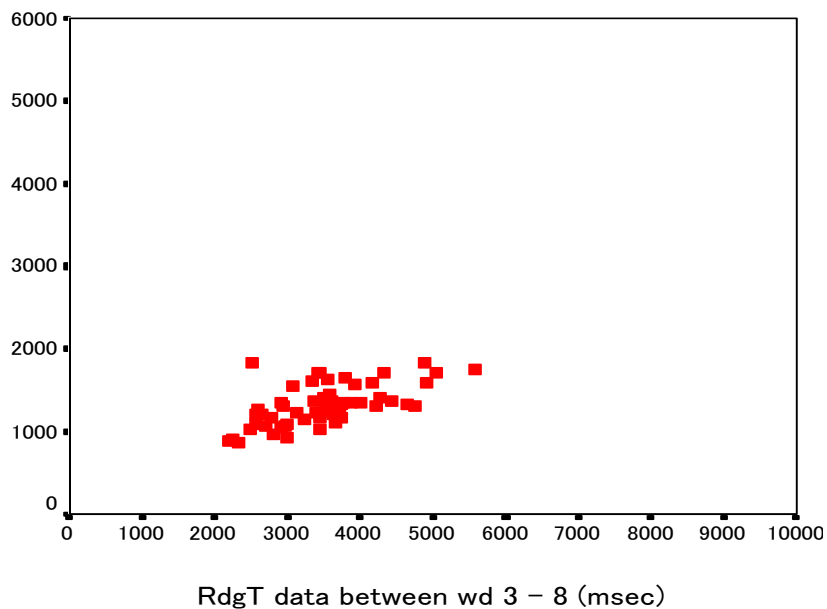


Figure 7d. Scatterplots between RTs and reading times by violation and sound types: Gender-News condition.



The reading time effect.

As in Experiment 1, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated

between the RT and the reading time data for the two sound types. Highly significant correlations were found in all four conditions: SV-Music: $r = .58$, $p < .001$; SV-News: $r = .46$, $p < .01$; Gen-Music: $r = .71$, $p < .001$; and Gen-News: $r = .61$, $p < .001$. The scatterplots are presented separately in Figures 7a)–d). The graphs for the Silent condition have already been presented in Figures 3a) and c).

Correlation coefficients: Relationships between RTs, phonological/orthographic processing efficiencies and baseline measures.

The mean RTs and the average number of incorrect responses (Errors) for the phonological and orthographic tests are: a) Phonological skill: mean RTs = 2822 msec. (ranged from 1211 to 4840 msec., $SD = 829$), Errors = 5.31 (ranged from 1 to 12, out of a maximum of 0 - 30, $SD = 3.10$); and b) orthographic skill: mean RTs = 1548 msec. (ranged from 846 to 2593 msec., $SD = 353$), Errors = 4.24 (ranged from 0 to 13, out of a maximum of 0–30, $SD = 2.62$). The RTs were taken only from the correct responses. The data analyses were carried out by using composite z-scores for the purpose of integrating both speed (RTs) and accuracy (Errors) into a single value (cf. Stanovich & West, 1989; Nassaji & Geva, 1999).

First, the relationship between word-recognition performance and the RT data from Experiments 1 and 2 were analyzed. Table 5 displays the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between two composite z-scores and RTs from the three sound conditions. Next, the same procedure was carried out between the two types of composite z-scores and the scores from three baseline measures (i.e. reading comprehension, vocabulary and reading-span tests). Table 6 displays these results. Clear contrasts were observed between the Phonological and Orthographic z-scores in terms of their relationships with the three baseline measures: the Orthographic z-score was highly correlated with these measures, while the Phonological z-score was not correlated with any of them. Next, the same procedure was performed separately for slow and fast responders. Table 7 shows the results for each group of participants. Remarkable contrasts were observed between the two groups; the Orthographic z-score of fast responders showed significant correlations with the three measures.

Table 5. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between two types of data (SV-SR and Gen-SR) and two types of z-scores (phonological and orthographic z-score)

Skill	Condition					
	Silent		Music		News	
	SV-SR	Gen-SR	SV-SR	Gen-SR	SV-SR	Gen-SR
Phono. z-score	.18	.41**	.27*	.31*	.00	.02
Ortho. z-score	.02	.26*	.34*	.46**	.29*	.33*

Note. Phono. z-score = phonological z-score; Ortho. z-score = orthographic z-score.

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$.

Table 6. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the scores from three baseline measures and two types of z-scores (phonological and orthographic z-score)

Skill	Pho.z-score	Orth.z-score	Comp.	Vocab.	WM
Phono. z-score	—	.35**	-.20	-.24	-.15
Ortho. z-score	.35**	—	-.42**	-.46**	-.34**

Note. Pho. z-score = phonological z-score; Orth. z-score = orthographic z-score; Comp. = reading comprehension test; Vocab. = vocabulary test. ** $p < .01$.

Table 7. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between three baseline measures and two types of z-scores (phonological and orthographic composite z-score) by group (slow and fast responders, based on two types of grouping, i.e. SV-RTs and Gen-RTs)

Group	Skill	Pho.z-score	Orth. z-score	Comp.	Vocab.	WM
<Grouping by SV-RTs >						
Slow rspdrs	Pho. z-score	—	.04	-.20	-.22	-.27
	Orth. z-score	.04	—	-.30	-.03	-.13
Fast rspdrs	Pho. z-score	—	.47**	-.14	-.10	-.02
	Orth. z-score	.47**	—	-.46*	-.56**	-.50**
<Grouping by Gen-RTs>						
Slow rspdrs	Pho. z-score	—	.11	.05	-.16	-.05
	Orth. z-score	.11	—	-.41*	-.16	-.21
Fast rspdrs	Pho. z-score	—	.31	-.22	.14	-.22
	Orth. z-score	.31	—	+ .45*	-.36	-.37*

Note. Slow rspdrs = slow responders; Fast rspdrs = fast responders. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$;

+Two outliers were excluded from this calculation.

Discussion

Experiment 2 investigated the impact from the presence of irrelevant speech on performance in detecting SV and Gender violations and how the result can be related to phonological and orthographic processing efficiency. First, the overall within-subjects analysis revealed that the RTs in the News condition proved to be significantly *faster* in comparison to those in the Silent condition for both the violation types. The next analysis showed that a greater reduction in RT in the News condition was observed with slow responders than with fast responders. This suggests that the performance improvements from the Silent to the News conditions found in the overall within-subjects analysis primarily stemmed from the drastic changes demonstrated by the slow responders.⁶

These unexpected but consistent findings could be attributed to a) different stimuli across the three sound conditions, b) a practice effect from the first to the second session, and c) a fundamental change in sentence processing strategies. Possibility a) can be rejected because the sentence structures and the level of vocabulary used were consistent across all three sound conditions. Possibility b) deserves careful consideration since the Silent condition was examined in the first session and the other two conditions were conducted in the second session. Therefore, the data from the irrelevant sound conditions could be interpreted as resulting from increased familiarity with the task. However, the existence of a trade-off between fluency and accuracy in violation-detection performance is incompatible with this possibility. There was a significant decrement in detection accuracy from the Silent to the News condition for SV violation. Furthermore, a closer examination of the performance for the verification task provides an additional perspective to the trade-off interpretation. The overall error rates for the task actually increased from the Silent to the News conditions—from 10.4% to 16.2%. Analysis using the total number of incorrect responses out of 20 verification sentences provides further details. The participants made significantly more errors in the News condition (Mean = 3.24, $SD = 1.53$) than in the Silent condition (Mean = 2.08, $SD = 1.38$); $t(57) = 4.59, p < .001$. Additional analysis with the two groups of responders reveals that each group showed significantly more errors in the News than the Silent condition: a) for slow responders: $t(28) = 4.25, p < .001 (d = .86)$; and b) for fast responders: $t(28) = 2.50, p < .05 (d = .70)$. Moreover, the actual degree of deterioration was slightly larger for slow responders than for fast responders, with error rates being slightly higher (1.27 vs. 1.03 errors) and the effect size comparatively larger (.86 vs. .70). This could lead to the suggestion that slow responders indulged to a

greater extent in a trade-off between fluency and accuracy than the fast responders, which could be an additional piece of counter-evidence to the practice effect interpretation.

Possibility c) assumes that there were some structural changes in the participants' reading strategy, particularly in the case of slow responders. To be more specific, slow responders may have abandoned their old strategy and adopted a new one to avoid interference from irrelevant sounds. This suggests that slow responders who depended on phonological processing skills began to instead use orthographic processing skills in the presence of irrelevant sounds. Conversely, fast responders, who may have already employed orthographic processing, were not required to change their strategy, thus resulting in negligible improvements in the irrelevant sound conditions. The RT data results support this rationale. First, the constant utilization of orthographic processing skills by fast responders is consistent with the fact that they showed almost the same level of detection performance across the three sound conditions (see Figures. 5 and 6). Second, the improved performance in slow responders in the irrelevant sound conditions was closer to the level of fast responders. Thus, despite the findings being entirely contrary to the initial hypothesis, the assumption in Experiment 1 had robust support in a highly interesting manner in the present experiment.

For further confirmation, the analyses of the efficiencies of phonological/orthographic processing attempted to investigate the manner in which individual differences in the two types of processing skills were related to the maintenance efficiency for detecting violations. The results with the overall participants revealed that all the relationships with the Orthographic z -scores proved to be significant, whereas those with Phonological z -scores almost completely disappeared in the News condition. This is compatible with the proposal relating to the strategy switch, whereby all the participants eventually utilized the orthographic processing skills as the sole mediation process for lexical access.

Next, two correlational analyses examined the relationship between the two types of word recognition skills and the performance on the three baseline measures. In the analysis with all the participants included, another marked contrast was observed between the Phonological and Orthographic z -scores (see Table 6). All the interactions between the Orthographic z -scores and the three baseline measures were highly significant, whereas none of the corresponding interactions with the Phonological z -scores reached significance. The analysis with groupings of slow and fast responders

amplified the magnitude of the contrast found in the previous analysis (see Table 7). Strengthened correlations were observed between the Orthographic z -scores and all three baseline measures for fast responders, except for the interaction with the vocabulary score in the Gender-RT based grouping, whereas main effects were largely absent for slow responders. This finding is compatible with fast responders' being reliant on orthographic processing skills, particularly in the reading comprehension and reading-span tests. A significant correlation between orthographic skill and reading comprehension with slow responders was found only in the Gender-RT based grouping. This seemingly contradictory outcome is in accordance with the assumption that processing Gender agreement involves conceptualization to a greater extent than that necessary for SV agreement.

The final concern is related to the significant correlation between orthographic processing skill and the WM capacity found in both the SV and Gender conditions. In particular, the related results observed with fast responders may support the argument that the entire process involving orthographic processing skill shares the same resource pool with higher-level processing skills, such as making inferences, activating background knowledge and integrating propositions, within the WM capacity. These arguments contextualize one of the initial findings obtained from Experiment 1 that the structural complexity effect was observed only in the Gender condition. The findings from the current experiment provide additional support for the following proposal: the processing linked to phonological information is independent of the WM, whereas that involving semantic, or conceptualized, information shares the general WM capacity. This proposal bears an important implication for the developmental changes associated with word recognition skills. Those readers whose orthographic processing skill is still highly costly may need to depend upon phonological processing skill, and this cost-saving choice might be prioritized over the possible damage from the rapid trace-decay of phonological information.

Summary and Implications

The present study of ESL sentence comprehension by native Japanese speakers first investigated which principle, trade-off or trace-decay, governs the functioning of information processing and maintenance in the WM. The results of Experiment 1 indicated that these two components may generally operate on the basis of simple trace-decay. However, the performance of the participants who showed quicker responses to

the violation was affected to a much lesser extent by the trace-decay principle than that of the participants who demonstrated slower responses. This suggests that the former participants retained information in a more stable conceptualized form resulting from direct word recognition skills through orthography, whereas the latter participants were more likely to be dependent on phonology as a crucial mediator in information maintenance. Experiment 2 further investigated these proposals by examining the impact of irrelevant speech in the same experimental paradigm. The findings revealed that the overall detection performance showed *improvement*, rather than deterioration, in the presence of irrelevant sounds; particularly, the slow responders' performance manifested greater improvements than that of the fast responders. This remarkable outcome conversely provided robust support for the assumption that the former group of participants had originally depended on phonological processing in the Silent condition.

Experiment 2 also focused on the manner in which phonological/orthographic processing skills are related to the results in Experiments 1 and 2, including those from the three baseline measures. The results supported the proposal of a strategy-switch in word recognition skills from Silent to irrelevant speech conditions, whereby the participants eventually employed orthographic processing skills as the sole mediation process in lexical access. With regard to the relationship between the two word recognition skills and the reading comprehension measure, unlike the slow responders, the fast responders used a significantly higher level of orthographic skills. Analyses of the interactions between these two processing skills and the WM capacity provided an important perspective. Significant correlations between orthographic processing skill and reading-span scores imply that orthographic processing shares the same resource pool with other language processing components. In contrast, the total lack of significant correlations between phonological processing skill and reading-span scores indicates that phonological processing operates independent of the WM capacity.

The findings from Experiment 2 provided evidence for the proposal that both the trace-decay and trade-off views actually explain the relationship between the processing and storage components. This standpoint explains the two seemingly contradictory manifestations of the relationship between these two components as presented in the literature review. The findings from Just and Carpenter and their colleagues' studies (Just & Carpenter, 1992; Miyake, Just & Carpenter, 1994; Saito & Miyake, 2004), which indicate the involvement of a trade-off principle in the WM, can partly be

explained by their subjects' dependence on direct conceptualization through orthography in their maintenance processes. In Saito and Miyake's study (2004), the authors mention the possibility that the type of representation is of significance in explaining the forgetting mechanism. They further suggest that the degrees of representational overlap between the processing requirement of sentence comprehension and the storage function critically determine the overall recall performance. However, they do not necessarily refer to the contrast between phonological and conceptualized representation.

Implications for the threshold hypothesis in L2 reading

The speculation regarding the notion of the L2 reading threshold therefore requires extension with relevance to the distinction between phonological and conceptualized information-maintenance systems. The initial assumption was that the threshold level is the point where the total cost for various levels of linguistic processes and storage function could exceed the limited WM capacity. However, this is appropriate only when the L2 readers are able to employ orthographic processing skills in their word recognition processes. In the developmental stage of depending on phonological codes in the information-maintenance process, the threshold level should be the point where information retained in the phonological STS is no longer available due to the *slower*, not more demanding, L2 processes. In short, while the original emphasis is on the *cost* of operating various processes, the latter focuses on the *time* for effectively completing them.

The importance of information-maintenance in reading comprehension has been well established in L1 studies. The construction-integration model presented by Kintsch (1988) postulates that maintaining propositions in the LTM and simultaneously establishing coherent networks among them is crucial for creating final textual representations. The structure-building framework proposed by Gernsbacher and his colleagues (e.g. Gernsbacher, Varner & Faust, 1990) maintains that mapping coherent information is essential for establishing the referential, temporal, locational and causal coherence crucial to the understanding of texts. One critical problem with less-skilled comprehenders is that they tend to suffer disruptions in remembering recently comprehended information while reading (Gernsbacher et al., 1990, p. 440). The original conception of the L2 reading threshold referred to the unsuccessful transfer of higher level L1 reading skills to L2 reading tasks, such as generating inferences,

activating relevant background knowledge and monitoring and evaluating established propositions (e.g. Hudson, 1982). This conception is in accordance with the above proposals from L1 reading research in terms of the importance of cross-sentential or discourse level information-maintenance processes. However, the present findings suggest that, particularly in L2 reading comprehension, unsuccessful information maintenance within sentences can also be a crucial cause of disruption in constructing propositions and their components, which would inevitably lead to difficulties in maintaining and associating higher level propositions and representations. The L2 reading threshold can thus be regarded as a notion whereby either slow or costly target language processes impair the maintenance function of various levels of textual information.

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Appendixes

Appendix A. Example Material Sentences for Self-paced Reading Task

Target words with violation are italicised. Verification sentences are presented after each primary sentence. (T) = Verification sentences conform to the content of corresponding material sentences. (F) = Verification sentences do not conform to the content of corresponding material sentences.

Subject-verb (SV) agreement violation, Subject-relative (SR) condition.

The writer who wrote those funny short stories *are* very rich now.

The writer wrote short stories. (T)

The cooks who made that hot chicken soup *is* famous in Japan.

The cook made vegetable soup. (F)
Subject-verb (SV) agreement violation, Object-relative (OR) condition.
 The doctors who the patient wished to see was not on duty.
 The patient didn't see the doctors. (T)
 The boy who the teachers liked to teach are now enjoying studying.
 The teachers hated to teach the boys. (F)
Gender agreement violation, Subject-relative (SR) condition.
 The boy who tried the strange games enjoyed herself for a while.
 The boy played the strange games. (T)
 The girl who chose the lovely dress saw himself in the mirror.
 The girl chose the lovely jacket. (F)
Gender agreement violation, Object-relative (OR) condition.
 The boy who we wished to help injured herself in the accident.
 We wished to help the boy. (T)
 The girl who they agreed to choose let himself be a candidate.
 They agreed to choose the boy. (F)

Appendix B. Target Stimuli for Phonological processing task (Correct answers are

italicised.)

<i>agane-agine</i>	<i>awldo-awlso</i>	<i>bloe-blog</i>
<i>bofe-bote</i>	<i>thruе-thrup</i>	<i>doil-deel</i>
<i>feer-feam</i>	<i>ferp-ferr</i>	<i>ferst-felst</i>
<i>fipe-fite</i>	<i>floar-ploar</i>	<i>thord-thurd</i>
<i>harf-tarf</i>	<i>hoat-hoap</i>	<i>kard-karn</i>
<i>lote-lait</i>	<i>larf-tarf</i>	<i>meeve-leeve</i>
<i>moove-poove</i>	<i>tirt-tirn</i>	<i>nead-gead</i>
<i>warld-werld</i>	<i>prais-grais</i>	<i>reesh-reech</i>
<i>saif-saip</i>	<i>youte-youze</i>	<i>seet-seef</i>
<i>shaif-shair</i>	<i>shaip-shate</i>	<i>strale-strate</i>

Appendix C. Target Stimuli for Orthographic processing task (Correct answers are italicised.)

<i>taidge-dgait</i>	<i>bewh-bew</i>	<i>bive-biv</i>
<i>blav-blave</i>	<i>blick-blic</i>	<i>bloz-bloze</i>
<i>cew-cewr</i>	<i>tcheb-cheb</i>	<i>whin-niwh</i>
<i>flij-flidge</i>	<i>frack-frak</i>	<i>tchag-gatch</i>
<i>gew-gewr</i>	<i>huz-huze</i>	<i>joll-dgoll</i>
<i>ckade-kade</i>	<i>klaze-klaz</i>	<i>truv-truve</i>
<i>kuft-ckuft</i>	<i>tchul-lutch</i>	<i>nutch-tchun</i>
<i>pluz-pluze</i>	<i>prew-prewh</i>	<i>qerm-querm</i>
<i>bave-bav</i>	<i>qong-quong</i>	<i>smaze-smaz</i>
<i>dawr-wrad</i>	<i>squam-sqam</i>	<i>sqon-squon</i>

Endnotes

¹The methodology of the self-paced reading paradigm has been used in a range of L1 and L2 studies. They have confirmed that the self-paced reading paradigm reveals a performance pattern similar to that of the eye-tracking methodology when examining

agreement processes (e.g. Pearlmutter, Garnsey & Bock, 1999) and that the speed and patterns in self-paced reading tasks are very similar to those in natural reading (e.g. Waters & Caplan, 2004). These studies also suggested that that reading-time data collected in a self-paced reading paradigm provides useful information for a fine-grained evaluation of sentence processing mechanisms (e.g. Fernández, 2002).

²There have been several discussions on the difference in processing difficulty between the centre-embedded subject- and object-relative clauses. King and Just (1991) indicated that the latter is more demanding than the former because the information in the main clause must be retained for a longer period in object-relative clauses (see also Wanner & Maratsos, 1978). They also pointed out the difference in the WM demands between the two structures in terms of the assignment of thematic roles to the successively appearing nouns; the assigned roles must be retained in the WM at least until the conclusion of the relative clause. MacDonald and Christiansen (2002) also indicate that there may be a greater similarity of lexical sequences in SR sentences to those in frequently occurring active constructions.

³All the trials with incorrect responses on any word position, including the cases with no response despite the existence of the violations, were eliminated throughout the subsequent analyses. The overall incorrect response rate for the target material sentences was 19.6%. However, the trials with incorrect responses for the verification judgement task were included throughout the subsequent analyses, because the overall error rates for this task throughout this study were 10.6%, reasonably suggesting that the participants were constantly engaged in the primary task.

⁴Cohen's *d* (Cohen, 1988), which is the standardized difference between the two condition means, was used as the effect size measure.

⁵The number (dis)agreement between the noun in the main clause and the one in the relative clause was not controlled in the SV-OR condition. Therefore, one could also speculate that this varied relationship in terms of number (dis)agreement between the nouns in SV condition may have provided an additional processing cost, as discussed in the studies of Bock and her colleagues (e.g. Bock & Miller, 1991). However, with regard to the material sentences in the current experiment, any of the relevant paired comparison with the actual RTs considering the above number factors did not reveal significant differences.

⁶The performance in the music condition also provided interesting outcomes. Detection performance in this condition generally proved to be the best among the three conditions for both within- and between-subjects analyses. Detection performance by both slow and fast responders was significantly better in the music condition than in the news condition, as well as in the silent condition, in the Gender violations. With regard to the reading times as well, performance from both groups showed the same level of improvement in the music condition as in the news condition. These results are consistent with those of the previous studies where non-verbal as well as verbal noises affected the efficiency of serial recall performance, particularly with the finding in Boyle and Coltheart (1996), where instrumental music delivered a considerable impact on the task performance.

How Multicultural Learning Approach Impacts Grade for International University Students in a Business Course

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Abstract

This study surveyed over 700 business degree students in the same university program to determine how their cultural background and learning approach impacted their grades. The research replicated and extended earlier published work, taking an interdisciplinary approach by adding cultural factors to a learning style model. Culture was identified during enrollment, while learning approach was measured through a published survey instrument. The sample data was inspected to ensure it was normal and the theoretical instruments were validated using confirmatory factor analysis. Some experimental control was enforced as the students were in the same course, they had the same teaching team, and they were assessed at the same place/time. Structural equation modeling and generalized least squares regression were used to test the hypothesis that the cultural and learning approach factors significantly impact grade. The resulting multicultural learning approach model was statistically significant, revealing four of the eight factors were very predictive of grade.

Keywords: multicultural learning approach, culture, interdisciplinary, pedagogy, regression.

Introduction

The paper presents an empirical estimation of the impact of learning approaches and cultural background on academic grade, for purpose of identifying what factors are important for international university student performance. The theoretical model was constructed by integrating previously tested instruments from educational psychology and anthropology. A wide range of empirical cross-cultural literature was consulted (namely: Hofstede, 1991; DeVita, 2001; Felder & Soloman, 2001; Smith, Sadler-Smith, Robertson & Wakefield, 2007; Manikutty, Anuradha, Katrin & Hansen, 2007).

This research builds on the premise that “learning styles are affected by culture, and thus should be considered in the process of instructional design” (Edmundson, 2007, p. 285). Many empirical studies have concluded that better course design and teaching methods are needed for international students, more specifically, for people having ‘east’ cultural backgrounds such as China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Middle East, and so on (other than ‘west’ such as UK, USA or Australia). Previous empirical studies have reported that the learning approaches of international under-graduate students significantly explain their grade (Strang, 2008a). However, cultural background was rarely considered in these studies, or when it was, often it was formed as a simplistic category of ‘domestic’ or ‘international’. For example, it has been noted in education research that “critical and assistive cross-cultural dimensions need to be further tested” (Edmundson, 2007, p. 287).

In this study the situation was unique because although Australian universities apply UK and USA (western-oriented) materials, learning objectives and pedagogy, many students are from eastern cultures. In this sample, the majority of students (95%) were international (recently immigrated from Asia or elsewhere). There is also a need to improve pedagogy, because enrolment has decreased dramatically since the 2008 economic depression, thereby increasing competition. International students that immigrate to Australia seeking degrees have become more demanding. They are less interested in paying tuition for a tropical vacation and/or trying to compete for scarce domestic jobs. Instead they want to obtain a reputable degree that is suited to their learning approaches. This research attempts to show a relationship between student culture, learning approach, and grade. This should improve the ability of university curriculum planners to assess international student needs and thereby design degrees as well as pedagogy to enhance academic performance. Likely this type of research would generalize to other countries that offer degrees to mostly multicultural students.

Literature review

Existing models of culture and learning style are reviewed because they are tested and accessible. This allows multicultural pedagogy to be extended and improved, instead of reinvented. However, one of the obstacles noted above is that few studies have quantitatively examined culture and learning approach in a single model (using a large enough sample size and adequate statistical methods). The literature review will first discuss contemporary issues in multicultural learning approaches, followed by learning approach and cultural factors. The review closes with a synthesis and a hypothetical model for this multicultural learning approach study.

Contemporary issues in assessing multicultural learning approaches

Student learning styles differ across cultures; therefore, teachers should at least be aware of this potential impact on pedagogy (Hofstede, 2007; Edmundson, 2007; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Oxford, 1995). Factors beyond teaching pedagogy, student intelligence and study strategy, affect learning (Schunk, 2004; Mayer, 2003). However, these factors have not been measured together. A global meta-analysis of learning styles complained there was “no extensive research in the UK on learning styles and social class, or on learning styles and ethnicity” (Coffield, Moseley, Hall & Ecclestone, 2004, p. 84). Homogeneous cultures tend to cluster in universities, and it is argued here this creates groups having similar learning styles, which professors could be aware of to improve teaching. As Shi (2005) and Wahlbeck (2002) warn, cultural groups can have propensity for negative actions.

Brinkerhoff (2008) also highlights the psychological and sociological need for awareness of student cultures, and while her research focused on ethnic identity and violence, it is argued here that her rationale to appease ethnic cultures would also apply to universities. Some writers rhetorically ask if there is a right learning style for multicultural students (Valiente, 2008; Carroll, 2005). Other researchers argue learning styles are not measurable or predictive (Mitchell, 1994; Curry, 1990). Contemporary studies of multicultural learning suggest ethnic culture is a relevant yet unproven factor (Toledo, 2007; Abril, 2006; VanOord, 2005).

There are very few interdisciplinary studies of the impact of culture and learning style on academic outcome in higher education. Two empirical studies of culture and learning style with outcome are worth mentioning. Chang's (2006) interesting study

examined how Chinese students are influenced by cultural variations in word meaning when learning using digital media, but there were no precise measurements of learning style. Um's (2000) empirical study of culture and learning style for Korean adult learners in USSR was relevant but the community-vocational setting was too diverse from a university platform to compare with here.

In an attempt to find more relevant literature, the focus was shifted towards studies that measured either culture or learning style using proven models (yet included both theories). DeVita (2001) used the *Index of Learning Styles* (ILS), (Felder & Soloman, 2001), to assess domestic versus international students at a UK university, but culture was categorized based on national or international status (DeVita, 2001, p. 168), and his statistical evidence was sparse (pp. 169-170).

Hayes and Allison (1996) provided a theoretical discussion of learning style and culture, then developed the *Cognitive Style Index* (CSI) that measured a two factor model of intuition and analysis (Allison & Hayes, 1996). CSI is unique in the learning style literature because it has been validated, and according to meta-analysis reviews it “has the best psychometric credentials” (Coffield et al., 2004, p. 56), but it does not assess culture. Smith and colleagues (2007) applied a self-directed learning construct to assess professional learning outcomes across twelve companies in Australia – although their ethnographic study was revealing, it did not specifically isolate culture, and the learning construct did not produce statistical evidence of the key factors.

Manikutty, Anuradha, Katrin and Hansen (2007) proposed a multicultural interdisciplinary taxonomy relating the *Approaches and Study Skills Inventory for Students* (ASSIST) model (Entwistle, 1998) with Hofstede's *Global Culture Model* (1991) for students in India, but culture was not measured. Toledo (2007) presented an interesting conceptual perspective but again culture was not measured.

At this point, several viable learning approach theories and instruments have been identified, of which the ILS was selected for use in this study (mainly owing to its successful application with multicultural students). Now the discussion turns to explaining the ILS, which is followed by a review of relevant cultural factors.

Learning approach factors

Learning styles are defined within this research context as “characteristic preferences for alternative ways of taking in and processing information” (Litzinger et al., 2007, p. 309). Like culture yet more voluminous, there are 71-103 learning style models

recently cited in the literature (Boström & Lassen, 2006; Coffield et al., 2004, p. 1). Relevant empirical studies (Zwony, 2003; DeVita, 2001) found the most internationally suitable and proven learning style theories are the *Learning Style Inventory* (Kolb, 2005) and the *Index of Learning Styles* (ILS) model (Felder & Soloman, 2001; Felder & Silverman, 1998). There are competing opinions in the literature about the ILS reliability and most refute its internal validity (Reynolds, 1997) albeit there is very little, mostly confusing, statistical evidence in both the negative and positive claims.

Nevertheless there is strong empirical evidence the ILS model is valid (Litzinger et al., 2007; Livesay et al., 2007; Abril, 2006; Güneş, 2004; Zywno, 2003; DeVita, 2001). Several studies indicated the ILS is simpler to understand for multicultural English Second Language students (Strang, 2008a; Zywno, 2003, p. 14; Cooper, 2001). Felder (2008) wrote online that the ILS is popular; it “gets close to a million hits per year and has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and several other languages” (p. 1).

The ILS is a questionnaire designed using a four dimension model that “classifies students according to where they fit on a number of scales pertaining to the ways they receive and process information” (Felder & Silverman, 1998, p. 674). The ILS is a free open-source online survey (Felder & Soloman, 2001). The 44-item ILS instrument is designed on four dimensions (latent factors), each representing two subscales: visual-verbal, sensing-intuitive, active-reflective, and sequential-global, tested by 11 questionnaire items per dimension. The ILS borrows upon Myers-Briggs as well as Kolb's theory for some of the underlying principles (Felder & Brent, 2005). The four dimensions and subscales of the measurement model are briefly enumerated below.

1. **Input:** verbal (prefer written and spoken explanations, such as narratives and tables); or visual (prefer visual representations of material, such as pictures, diagrams, flow charts).
2. **Perceive:** sensing (concrete, practical, oriented toward facts and procedures) or intuitive (conceptual, innovative, oriented toward theories and underlying meanings);
3. **Process:** active (learn by trying things out, enjoy working in groups) or reflective (learn by thinking things through, prefer working alone or 1-2 familiar partners);
4. **Understand:** sequential (linear thinking process, learn in incremental steps) or global (holistic thinking process, learn in large leaps); (adapted from: Strang, 2008a, p. 219; Felder & Spurlin, 2005, pp. 104-106).

Cultural factors

While cultural identity is deeply rooted in anthropology, it has been successfully modeled within industrial psychology by studying business projects (Tan & Snell, 2002; Watson, Johnson & Zgourides, 2002), as well as in management education contexts (Hofstede, 2001). Learning styles have been studied in education and business contexts around the world (Litzinger et al., 2007; Hofstede, 2007), in many languages and cultures (Felder, 2008). Albeit studies have been published comparing culture with communicating style (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim & Heyman, 1996), as well as with leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004; Dimmock & Walker, 2000), the two disciplines of culture and learning style have not been empirically tested together (Strang, 2008a; Leung & Bond, 1989).

Culture is broadly applied in this study using a macro-ethnic trait-based viewpoint, defined as: a group of human beings whose members identify with each other, on the basis of distinctiveness measured by combinations of cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioral and/or biological traits. There are opinions in the literature that caution against assuming the link between international students and their cultural identity is consistent over even a short time (one year), or that cultural identity can be measured from self-reporting surveys. There are generational differences that can inform the purpose to join cultural groups (and adapt new norms), which becomes linked to either homeland or hostland culture (Butler, 2001). Often younger international students will adopt the culture which affords the greatest opportunities in terms of resources (employment) and quality of life (Waters, 1999). Chandra (2001) noted in her research that ethnic identity may be unstable due to changing group boundaries and/or social preferences. Consequently one cannot ask the students to self-report their cultural identity using a survey. Instead, it is asserted here that one must use student demographic data (captured at enrollment) to identify culture, and then link to an *a priori* model.

There are three well-cited and similar empirical global culture models in the literature: the Hofstede (1980; 1991) world-wide 40 country IBM study (n=116,000); Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003) international manager study across 28 countries (n=15,000); and Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness study (House, Javidan, Hanges & Dorfman, 2004) of 951 non-multinational organizations (in food processing, financial services, or telecommunication industries), across 62

societies/countries throughout the world. There are alternatives and variations, along with supporters and objectors to the validity of each. Hofstede has continued to extend his model over the years (2007; 2002) and defended its validity (Hofstede, 2003; 2002), for example, citing for proof the “over 400 significant correlations” (Hofstede, 2001, p 520).

Hofstede's (2007; 2001; 1991; 1980) global culture model was designed by conducting ethnographic studies of IBM employees around the world, directly and using research colleagues over several years (2006), to cluster countries across four dimensions as enumerated below. His data resulted in indexes on every dimension for 40 countries. Hofstede (2002) later added a fifth long-short time index but it used a separate 23 company Chinese Value Survey, but it has not been fully evaluated in all countries used in this sample data. It is worth noting that Hamden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) created a similar cultural construct with six dimensions: (1) universalism-particularism, (2) individualism-collectivism, (3) affective-ascribed (neutral) status, (4) specific-diffused, (5) sequential-synchronous time orientation, and (6) inner-outer directed. Trompenaars later added a seventh: task performance-affective sensitivity (Trompenaars & Woolliams).

To answer the research agenda, Hofstede's (2006; 1991; 1981) seminal work on global culture will be employed, in hope that his data intersects with the cultural identity of the sample students and their learning styles. The key reasons the Hofstede model was selected here are: its parsimony, proven/defended construct reliability with large sample sizes, and coverage of countries in this sample. His theory is summarized below.

1. **Power Distance Index (PDI)**: extent members of a certain culture accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally, whereby a lower index signals a more equal-rights society;
2. **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**: general intolerance of ambiguous situations; the higher the intolerance for ambiguity, the less the willingness try things, lower = accept more risks and ambiguity;
3. **Individualism-Collectivism Index (ICI)**: individualism exemplifies tendency to primarily care about oneself and immediate families, while lower = collectivism, need to belong to and function within groups, organizations, or collectives; a lower index means more team identity and clan type behavior;
4. **Masculinity-Femininity Index (MFI)**: masculinity (high) is “a situation in which the dominant values in society are success, money, and things”; while femininity (lower) is “a situation in which the dominant values in society are caring for others and the quality of life” (Hofstede, 1980, p 420).

Conceptual synthesis and hypotheses

The research design is conceptually presented in Figure 1. This diagram synthesizes the literature review to integrate the critical factors that can be measured to identify cultural background as well as learning approach of the international students. Starting at the left, the cultural background can be identified from the demographics data supplied in the ‘homeland’ application form fields. From this, the national culture code can be used to estimate the a priori global culture dimensions of PDI, MFI, ICI, and UAI. The first hypothesis (H1) is that the global culture construct can be validated from the sample. Each of the four cultural dimensions become individual hypotheses that can be tested (H2-H5). On the right side of the diagram, the international student learning approach can be assessed by a ‘survey’ adapted from the ILS, to approximate the four learning dimensions of input, perceive, process, understand – which is the sixth hypothesis (H6).

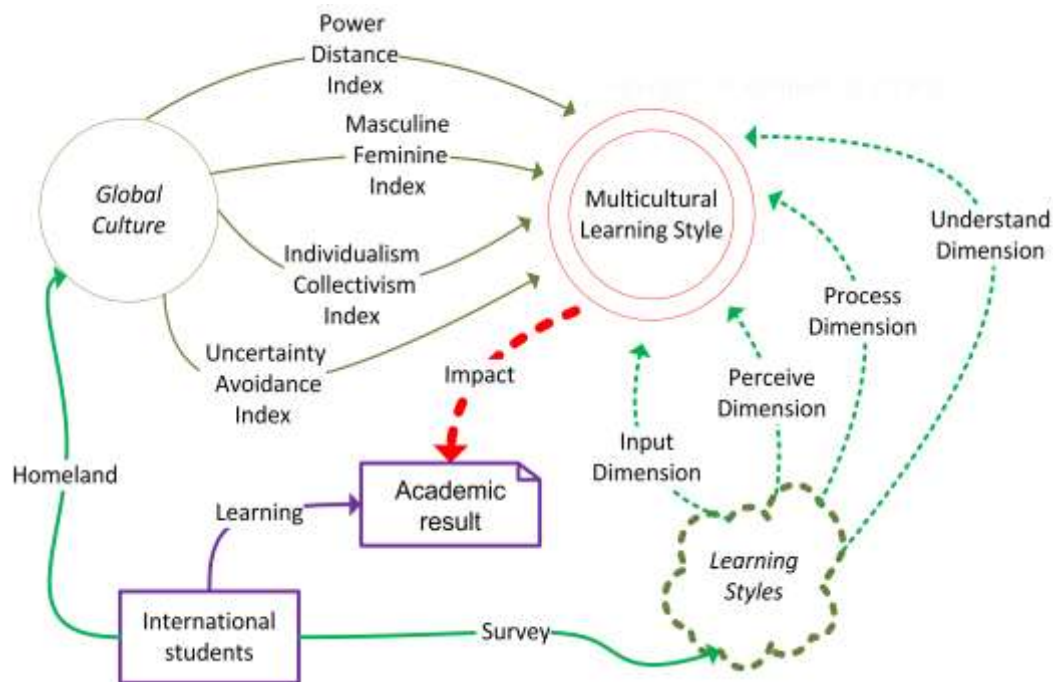


Figure 1: Hypothetical model of multicultural learning approach

As explained above, each of the four learning dimensions are measured on a bipolar subscale (in a similar fashion as the cultural dimensions). The next four hypotheses

(H7-H10) test the learning dimensions. Cultural background dimensions and learning approaches constitute the 'multicultural learning style', with the factors shown as solid arrows for culture, and dotted arrows for learning style. There is an implied H11 that these two theoretical constructs of culture and learning approach will be significant when integrated in this fashion. The course grade measures the student's actual learning (as 'academic result'). The last hypothesis (H12) is that the 'multicultural learning style' model will reveal a significant overall impact on grade

Research design and methodology

Several statistical techniques were employed: confirmatory ordinal factor analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM) and regression, for method triangulation (Strang, 2009), in order to test the hypotheses summarized in Figure 1. This study captured 764 valid cultural demographic records and learning approach survey responses, from a sample frame of 861 (this also reflects outliers that were deleted). Group experiment control consisted of same university, same course, same teaching team, identical place and time. Furthermore, all individual demographic variables (age, gender, TOEFL score, work status, etc.) were tested with stepwise regression, to ensure the multicultural learning approach model was not being confounded by other factors.

The respondents were multicultural and domestic students enrolled at an Australian university for the last semester term ending in late 2008, taking the same subject in an undergraduate business degree program. Demographic data was gathered during enrollment, capturing attributes such as age, gender, immigration details (if not a domestic student), current location, language(s) spoken, and so on. Cultural identity was obtained from student 'homeland' demographic data element 346, "COUNTRY-BIRTH A code representing the country of birth of a student" (DEST, 2008, p. 13), which nominated primary homeland association over the last five years, following the ideology of Waters (1999). Primary cultural identity was cross-referenced to the Standard Australian Classification of Countries using the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation convention (ABS, 2008, p. 12) so that identity could be linked to the global culture code (Hofstede, 2001; 1991; 1983). The ILS scales were adapted from Strang (2008a), based on Felder and Spurlin (2005), except visual and verbal were reverse coded. The resulting effective scales for this study were that low values on the culture dimensions referred to low PDI, low ICI, low UAI, low MFI, and low values

on any learning approach dimension referred to verbal-input, sensing-perceive, active-process, and sequential-understand, respectively.

Results, analysis and discussion

The statistical procedure began with ensuring the sample was normal. ILS was validated using confirmatory factor analysis techniques. The multicultural learning approach model was tested using SEM and regression.

Descriptive statistics and sample normality

The first step was to confirm the sample approximated a normal distribution, which was necessary to use the planned statistical techniques (Keppel & Wickens, 2004). The key statistical estimates of kurtosis and skew were acceptable (listed in Table 1) and the histograms of all variables were acceptable. There were 21 cultures represented (countries), with domestic Australians comprising only 2% of the sample (New Zealand students also constituted a small portion, 3% of the total). This is typical of enrollments at the university. Key demographic factors - namely: age, gender, TOEFL score, and culture - were examined to ensure they 'made sense' (were normal) as representing this university degree program population over three previous terms.

Since historical data was available from the relevant population (over several terms), so z-tests were used to statistically estimate if this sample was representative of the relevant university population. The academic grade (GPV) was a key variable used to confirm this homogeneity (+1.584, $p < .05$; $M = 76.7$, $SD = 14.1$).

Key demographic estimates		Homeland culture	%	Homeland culture	%
Sample size	764	Philippines	0.20	Australia	0.02
		India	0.17	Italy	0.01
Mean Age	21.8	Singapore	0.14	Austria	0.01
Standard Deviation	0.17	HKChina	0.08	IsraelGaza	0.01
Kurtosis**	-0.01	Pakistan	0.08	Germany	0.01
Skewness**	+0.03	Thailand	0.05	Turkey	0.01
		Japan	0.04	Nigeria	0.01
Gender	F=53%	Slovenia	0.04	France	0.01
	M=47%	Taiwan	0.03	Greece	0.01
		NewZealand	0.03	SouthAfrica	0.01
Countries	21	KoreaSouth	0.03	(Homeland culture is sorted by %).	

Culture, learning style and outcome model validity

Next the cultural background and learning approach constructs were validated for this sample data, using confirmatory statistical methods. All chi-square goodness-of-fit and likelihood-ratio indexes from the confirmatory ordinal factor analysis were significant ($p < 0.01$, $RMSEA < 0.1$). A principal component analysis (PCA) was also conducted to confirm the ILS construct validity (for method triangulation), with good results. In terms of important PCA estimates, eigenvalues were higher than 1 (all but input dimension were > 3); the total variances captured for each dimension were greater than 60% (50% is a benchmark, most were $> 70\%$).

Finally, the culture-learning-approach model was estimated using structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM results indicated a good-fitting model that captured 57% of the variance in academic outcome from an integrated construct of global culture and learning style ($X^2 = 20.35$, $df = 10$, $p = 0.025$, $RMSEA = 0.038$, $GFI = 0.99$, $AGFI = 0.96$). These good results (Hedeker, 2005), so hypotheses H1 to H11 were accepted. At this point, the decision was made to use generalized least squares regression (GLS) to illustrate the multicultural learning approach impact on grade to complete the hypothesis testing. This decision was made because SEM had validated the multicultural learning approach model, yet GLS estimates are easier to diagram and explain. This is acceptable (Freedman, 2005), especially when a robust method like SEM produces a low chi square and good fit indices, although GLS regression will usually produce inflated effect sizes (Strang, 2008b).

Regression model of multicultural student learning approach and grade

The GLS regression resulted in a statistically significant model (shown in Figure 2), with a good fit ($r^2 = 0.87$; $X^2 = 67.1$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.0001$). All factors had acceptable t-test estimates and p-values. Therefore, the last hypothesis (H12) was accepted, meaning that the 'multicultural learning approach' model estimated a significant impact on international student grade in this sample.

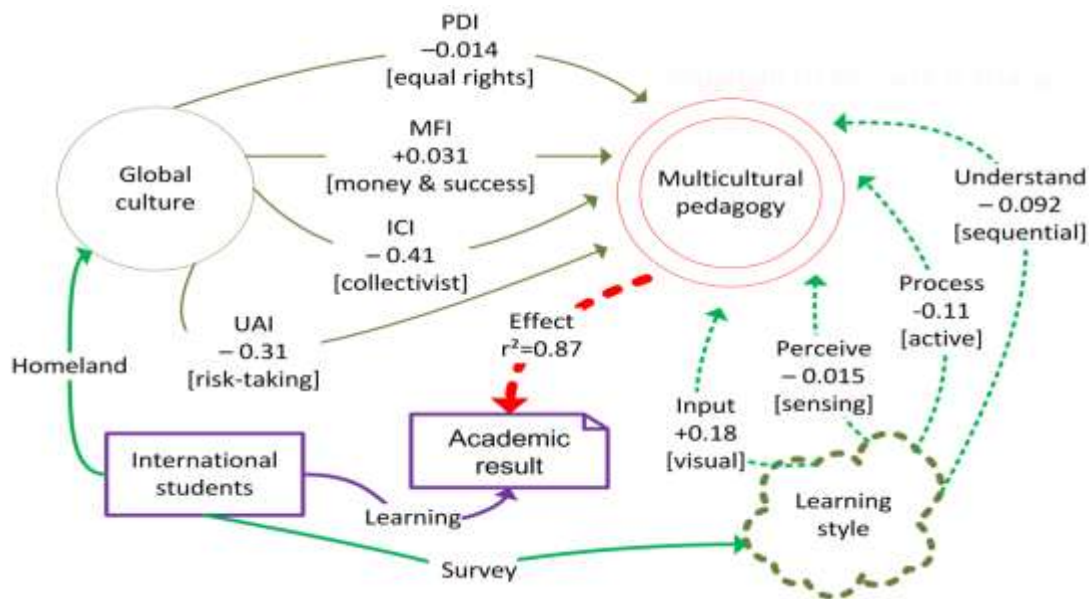


Figure 2: GLS regression model of multicultural learning approach

*all <0.05; $r^2 = 0.87$; $n=764$; factor coefficients and variance effect estimates shown

Figure 2 summarizes the statistical measurements by updating the hypothetical model from Figure 1. Arrows again show the factors from each of the two multicultural learning approach constructs, pointing towards a ‘multicultural pedagogy’, meaning a combination of culture and learning approach for teaching. The GLS coefficient estimate is shown under each factor, along with a brief phrase to interpret the theoretical meaning. For example, the ICI coefficient was -.41, implying a low ICI scale [collectivist] predicted a higher grade.

Table 2 is a companion to Figure 2, listing the detailed estimates and significance, by model ‘component’ category, starting with learning, and then culture. Each section in Table 2 is sorted by coefficient size, showing the highest impact factors on top. Important benchmarks are bolded. In the table, “p=” is null-hypothesis probability, and “t=” refers to a t-test estimate. The right side of Table 2 gives standardized beta coefficients, adjusted to reflect the different factor interval scales (culture dimensions have a broad range, over 100, but the maximum learning approach is 11). The most informative numbers from Figure 2 are the coefficients, revealing the impact each factor has on grade, and r^2 which estimates total variance captured.

Table 1: GLS estimates of multicultural learning approach model (sorted by coefficient size)

Cultural coefficients	Learning coefficients	Grade point value effect size
Individualism Collectivism Index (ICI) = -0.41 (t = -35.84, p = 0.011)	Input Dimension = +0.18 (t = 2.78, p = 0.010)	GPV r³ = 0.87 (common error variance -1.51, t = -1.95, p=1.04)
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) = -0.31 (t = -39.56, p = 0.0078)	Process Dimension = -0.11 (t = -2.38, p = 0.047)	Standardized total direct and indirect effects of X (factors) on Y (GPV):
Masculine Feminine Index (MFI) = +0.031 (t = +2.27, p = 0.014)	Understand Dimension = -0.092 (t = -2.95, p = 0.037)	Input Perceive Process Understand PDI UAI ICI MFI
Power Distance Index (PDI) = -0.014 (t = -2.31, p = 0.010)	Perceive Dimension = -0.015 (t = -2.20, p = 0.049)	GPV 0.16 0.00 -0.16 -0.02 -0.02 -0.62 -0.61 0.02

Theoretical interpretation of multicultural learning approach model

First, a brief explanation can be offered about how the GLS model coefficients relate to theory. As explained earlier, the scales were set such that low values on the culture dimensions referred to low PDI, low ICI, low UAI, and low MFI, while low values on any learning approach dimension can be interpreted as verbal-input, sensing-perception, active-processing, or sequential-understanding orientation, respectively. High versus low GLS coefficients do not equate to good versus bad. Instead, these GLS coefficients suggest more or less concentration towards ‘one end’ of the particular dimension, for both culture and learning approach, in terms of how a factor increases grade. In Figure 2 and Table 2, negative coefficients imply the lower ‘end’ of the dimension resulted in a higher average grade, and vice-versa, a positive coefficient means the higher ‘end’ of the dimension predicted a higher mean grade. Theoretically, in culture, a lower PDI implies more equality focused (higher PDI suggests authority acceptance). A lower UAI means more risk taking (higher is risk avoidance). Lower ICI suggests collective (higher is individualist). Lower MFI means more caring/quality focused (higher is masculine, tangible focused). In learning approach, lower input dimensions suggest verbal orientation (higher are visual). A lower perception indicates sensing (intuitive is higher). Lower processing values signal active (versus reflective when higher). Finally, lower understanding dimensions point to a sequential approach (as compared with global learning style for students having higher understanding styles).

In terms of interpreting the GLS model, several factors were influential. The individualism collectivism index (ICI) and uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) of cultural background were very significant and the most important factors in the GLS model. The input and process dimensions of learning approach were also significant

factors in this model. The other factors do add as much value to the model in terms of capturing impact variance on the grade, so the discussion can be focused on the more significant components. However, note that all factors were significant and must be included intact if replicating this GLS model (Strang, 2009) – this is logical since a GLS coefficient close to zero means a ‘balanced’ dimension increases average grade.

UAI and ICI were the dominant factors predicting grade in the GLS model, while input and process learning approach dimensions were somewhat influential, with the other components playing a minor role, as judged from the t-test values, coefficients, and standardized beta coefficient estimates. More specifically, the GLS model implies that international students with cultural dimensions of collectivism and risk-taking will score a much higher grade as compared with those having high-authority acceptance and/or individualist dispositions (UAI coefficient= -0.31, $t = -39.56$, $p = 0.0078$, $\beta = -0.62$; ICI coefficient= -0.41, $t = -35.84$, $p = 0.011$, $\beta = -0.61$). The high input dimension estimate suggests international students with a visual-input learning approach scored higher grades on average as compared with those favoring a verbal/reading dominated learning style (input coefficient= +0.18, $t = 2.78$, $p = 0.010$; $\beta = +0.16$). The low process dimension estimate means a higher average was found where students preferred an active-processing study approach (perceive coefficient= -0.11, $t = -2.38$, $p = 0.047$, $\beta = -0.16$).

The four remaining factors: MFI, PDI, perception, and understand learning approach, were very minor components in the GLS model. Given the previous assessment of the dominate factors, and considering the standardized beta estimates, a few interpretations of these can be offered. It would be appropriate to conclude a favorable impact on grade might be realized with a slight masculine MFI and low PDI (moderate authority acceptance) cultural disposition. In similar fashion, a sensing-perception and sequential-understanding learning approach would likely increase or maintain average grade.

More importantly, based on the characteristics of this sample, extreme multicultural student learning approach orientations on any dimension (other than those discussed above) would very likely produce a low grade (or failure). For example, international students with extreme individualist and/or a fear of taking on risks, would likely not do well in this program. Likewise, students expecting to rely on a reading and/or reflective-processing study approach, might find it difficult to obtain good marks in this course.

Summary and comparison with existing empirical research

In summary, the GLS model implies the better performing multicultural students were those with collectivist and risk-taking cultural dispositions, having visual input and active processing learning approaches. To reiterate, a reasonable degree of experimental control was imposed on this study, leveraging the intact environment of the university, and checking for similarity within and between the individuals (using demographic factors and prior language testing scores). Furthermore, the sample was compared with student averages of previous semesters to ensure this not an unusual cohort. The statistical methods were triangulated (ordinal factor analysis with principal component analysis and SEM, as well as SEM with regression).

The results in this study are generally in agreement with existing empirical research testing learning styles, especially those that involved international students (even though culture was not specifically measured in other studies). For example, Litzinger and colleagues (2007), along with Felder and Spurlin (2005) noted higher frequencies of visual input and active processing dimensions from studies of international students (although grade was not tested and they specifically caution that learning styles might not predict academic result). Furnham, Jackson and Miller (1999), found a statistically significant relationship between, personality and learning approach that predicted the performance of telephone sales staff (r^2 was 8% as compared to 87% in this study). Strang (2008a) found that “students having active processing and sequential understanding learning styles achieve higher marks in either [the management or statistics] course” (p. 227), and the effect size of the first significant predictor was 12% with others factor effects ranging from 8.5% to 63.6% (as compared to 87% in this study, while noting the research methods were quite different).

In terms of cultural impact on performance, Gudykunst and colleagues (1996) found a collectivist type culture improves communicating style. Hofstede (2007; 1991) found collectivists tend to favor group work while risk-takers are creative and willing to try new theories, answer questions, and volunteer, often out-performing non collectivists. DeVita (2001) was one of the few researchers to first test learning style and culture together, concluding they were related to one another (not random), and that both impacted academic outcome. One of the best examples of empirically testing culture and learning approach on grade can be found in the study by Manikutty and colleagues (2007). They found eastern cultures, namely India, were collectivist,

exhibited high PDI authority acceptance, and favored active learning experimentation, while students from a western culture (namely USA), were individualistic, displayed low authority acceptance, and preferred reflective observation. What was most interesting in their study was they empirically demonstrated students with low ICI (collectivist) and low UAI (risk taking) culture, in combination with moderate visual-input and active-processing learning dimensions, achieved higher academic outcomes. The Manikutty and colleagues (2007) results are similar to the findings in this study, plus they used different instruments and methods.

Conclusions, limitations and implications

This study created an interdisciplinary model of culture and learning, surveyed 764 international business degree students in the same university program, and then used multiple research methods to measure impact of multicultural learning approach on academic grade. The sample was international (95%), with domestic Australians and New Zealanders representing only 5% of the total. Rigorous statistical techniques were used to triangulate the methods. Experimental control was enforced through the intact university environment (same teachers, same course, same place/time), and by comparing the homogeneity of the sample to previous semester groups. Confounding factors were ruled out by adding demographic factors in stepwise regression.

A statistically significant model was produced, that contained eight factors, which together accounted for 87% of the variation in average grade. This multicultural learning approach model contained four factors that represented cultural background – ICI, UAI, MFI, and PDI - drawn from the work of Hofstede (2001), and four factors to measure study style – input, perception, processing and understanding – drawn from the research of Felder (2008), Strang (2008), as well as Felder and Soloman (2001). Four of the eight factors dominated the model to grade, namely: UAI, ICI, input, and processing - yet all were statistically significant. The model implies the better performing multicultural students were those with collectivist and risk-taking cultural dispositions, while also employing visual input and active processing learning approaches.

These findings were in general agreement with other empirical studies of learning styles (especially those that measure effect on academic performance), and in particular, they corroborate the results of interdisciplinary culture-learning research. Furthermore, the findings here directly support the similar study by Manikutty and

colleagues (2007), and they used different culture-learning instruments with alternative statistical methods.

Limitations

This study merely scratches the surface on integrating culture and learning style theories to measure academic performance (and there are those that will argue grade cannot be predicted by these factors). From a statistical perspective, there are likely to be differences in the so-called experimental controls imposed here, as compared to other universities in Australia and beyond. Secondly, the demographic and individual characteristics of the international students that attend these Australian universities will not necessarily be sufficiently homogeneous to international students in other countries. Notwithstanding this, the geographic distances have been bridged by e-learning (online) courses, which might argue the opposite of the above. However, these were business courses tested in the face-to-face classroom mode. The same limitations extend to other aspects of the ‘experimental control’, being that there could be differences in the professors and/or their teaching/assessing methods, as compared with other universities and countries. These were business courses delivered in English so it is unknown if this model could generalize to other languages, or subjects. Finally, there is a macro-environmental factor that will likely impact upcoming empirical research – the 2008 global economic crisis is already impacting the university context, and this study concluded before that event.

Implications

I’m not ready to recommend using this model for changing curriculums (or teachers), yet I certainly do use it to help international students and colleagues to better understand multicultural learning approaches. Given the above limitations, my recommendation is to improve the multicultural learning theories paradigm by integrating the interdisciplinary ESL perspectives raised by the authors in this issue of AEJ, such as cultural-modified factors of English language dialect marginalization, student self-reflection, EFL learning goals, feedback, gender, phonetics, motivation, repetitive reading, visual-linguistic aids, and other visual-phonetic trade-off theories.

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Book Review

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning and Creativity

Jason Ohler. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2008. Pp.vii+228.

Reviewed by Wu Wenmei

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Ohler's *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning and Creativity* is a timely and practical resource for teachers who intend to blend multimodal meaning-making with language teaching in the classroom and for students who want to express their ideas through media-based means.

This book consists of three parts. Part one foregrounds an overview of the necessity and discussion of digital storytelling in education. The first chapter begins with building teachers' confidence and competence in deploying new media narrative by the demonstration of twenty revelations about digital storytelling in education. The following chapter involves teachers in discussion topics which fall into three categories: (i) story type, purpose, and impact, (ii) story element, and (iii) story production. Chapter three explains how digital storytelling can be used in the classroom as an academic tool to engage digital age students in constructive learning. A framework of digital story assessment traits is listed in chapter four.

Part two consists of six chapters which explicate the principles and art of developing memorable and effective stories through concrete examples and vivid figures. Chapters five and six display the components of the story core and deconstruct story maps by means of an annotated visual portrait of a story (VPS), and chapter seven explicates the story planning process in depth and provides tips for working with younger kids and team members. Chapter eight is dedicated to character transformation in which Bloom's cognitive and affective taxonomy is introduced to elicit levels of character transformation. In addition, in case of the inapplicability of VPS, chapter nine adds more approaches to story mapping from Aristotle to the

present (e.g. Aristotle's dramatic diagram, Joseph Campbell's simplified map, treasure maps, Kieran Egan's story form in education, and Ken Adam's story spine), and chapter ten contains stories in other forms (e.g. stream-of-consciousness storytelling and music videos), and stories from other perspectives (e.g. indigenous storytellers).

The final part focuses on guidelines and procedures for integrating traditional stories into digital storytelling. Chapters eleven and twelve focus on the overall concern of the media production process which include five specific phases: (i) story planning, (ii) identifying and gathering materials, expertise, (iii) development and implementation, (iv) honoring, editing, and finalizing, and (v) sharing with others. Chapter thirteen specifies the digital storytelling toolbox including hardware and software and chapter fourteen lists the guidelines for assessing students' media expression. The last chapter illustrates the issue of copyright and fair use in education.

Overall, this book provides detailed and practical guidelines for integrating simple, traditional stories into modern digital storytelling. However, some readers may find it challenging to operate the digital tools recommended by the writer in chapter thirteen, such as iMovie or Movie Maker. Had a brief step-by-step manual of DST project or a CD-ROM been enclosed in this book, it would more easily reach its goal "to help any teacher who wants help using technology effectively, creatively, and wisely in the classroom" (p. ix).

Despite this criticism, readers will find the book to have many positive attributes. Although it is written within an American cultural and educational context, it also applies to other teachers whose countries have been equipped with digital facilities for education. What's more, the strength of this book lies in an up-to-date interpretation of traditional elements of storytelling, so much so that it enriches notions of literacy and pedagogy in the twenty-first century. As the title suggests, it focuses on new media narrative set within educational context where traditional and emerging literacies, learning and creativity, are synthesized, the purpose of which is to underscore the ever-increasing application of multimodality in educational settings because of the advent and popularity of the new media.

On the whole, readers will find that the book is one that contains a rich resource of information to promote the development of students' new literacy (e.g. media literacy) as well as traditional literacies (e.g. reading, writing, speaking and the arts) and that engages the readers--teachers--to apply appropriate theories as well as

relevant research in their own ways and in their own working contexts; a text which indeed illustrates Ohler's opinion that there is "no better vehicle for blending traditional and emerging literacy development than DST" (p. 11).

Book Review

Discourse Analysis

Henry Great Widdowson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xvi + 136.

Reviewed by Karim Sadeghi

Urmia University, Iran

Discourse Analysis, a volume in the *Oxford Introductions to Language Study* series, has been written to act as a transitional text for novice readers who need an introduction to the notion of discourse before embarking on a more technical enquiry into the field.

The book has been organized into four sections: “Survey,” offering a non-technical coverage of basic issues in eight short chapters, “Readings,” where 22 extracts from specialist literature are offered for discussion, “References,” an annotated list of selected work on discourse analysis (DA), and a “Glossary.”

Chapter 1, entitled “Language in Use,” specifies the conditions under which a spoken or written text becomes interpretable to a receiver, the meaning of which is ultimately hidden from the recipient unless he/she is aware of the linguistic features of the text and the actual situational and abstract cultural contexts. By making recourse to a consideration of Dell Hymes’s (1972) model of communicative competence, chapter 2, “Communication,” explains how users of a language make sense of what they receive. “Context,” as the title of chapter 3 suggests, has been defined as an abstract mental construct which includes not only “the actual circumstances of time and place” (p. 19) but also a knowledge of the state of affairs, the values which need to be activated for successful communication to take place. The construct of “familiar knowledge” (p. 28), schemata, is the focus of the next chapter “Schematic Conventions.” This chapter discusses how the co-text serves as a “frame of reference” (p. 29), inside which the existing discourse is interpreted. “Co-textual Relations,” as the title of chapter 5 aims to explicate, is the role of information structure (i.e., the sequence of theme/rheme or new/given information) and text linkage (i.e., the explicit cohesive devices such as anaphoric and cataphoric pro-forms) in the interpretation of

a text.

Chapter 6 is in a way a summary of the book in that the author tries to link the arguments already made to “The Negotiation of Meaning,” the title of the chapter. For this to happen, the author notes that not only should the recipients possess systemic knowledge (i.e., the “knowledge of what is encoded in the language system” (p. 53) and schematic knowledge, but there should be some degree of convergence between knowledge types possessed by communication parties. The author introduces critical discourse analysis (CDA) in chapter 7 and explains that CDA is not just “an academic exercise” but “a campaign” against those who use “power to control opinion to their own advantage” (p. 71). In the last chapter, “Text Analysis,” the author offers a tool for practitioners in DA and CDA to use for finding out whether what has been proposed falls inside the commonly accepted norms.

Neglecting a few minor editorial inconsistencies in parts of the book, it nicely fulfills the purpose for which it has been intended as both an insightful coverage of the key concepts in DA and an illustration of many abstract notions using carefully worked-out examples.

Reference

Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride and J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). London: Penguin.

Book Review

Early Language Development: Bridging Brain and Behavior. Angela Friederici and Guillaume Thierry, (Eds.). Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2008. Pp. xiv + 263.

Reviewed by Reima Al-Jarf

King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

This new book from the International Association for the Study of Child Language is important for neuropsychologists, speech pathologists, psycholinguists, early childhood educators, and graduate students interested in the non-traditional study of early language development.

Providing several theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of English, French, Welsh, Spanish, Dutch, and German and coming from different geographical backgrounds (USA, UK, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Mexico) and different academic backgrounds (psychology, human cognition, and psycholinguistics), the authors highlight the significance of electroencephalography and functional brain imaging in establishing language dependent patterns of brain activity in the text's ten chapters: (1) A general introduction to event-related potentials (ERPs) methodology and various issues arising in infant studies; (2) a comprehensive overview of key ERP studies investigating phoneme, word, and sentence processing during early language development; (3) the infant's ability to segment words from the continuous auditory speech stream; (4) the problem of word segmentation and the processes underlying word segmentation; (5) an overview of a cross-sectional investigation addressing the onset of word from recognition in English and Welsh infants based on behavioral measures; (6) how ERPs can provide fundamental insight into the ontogenesis of the semantic system between 12 and 14 months; (7) an account of the phonological, prosodic and semantic processing of single words in children between the ages of 3 months and 3 years; (8) a case for experimentation to be grounded in cognitive theory; (9) a description ERP patterns elicited by phrase structure violations in 24- and 32.5 month-olds and compare them to those of adult listeners; and (10) a discussion of the prospects and challenges involved

in language acquisition and ERP research approaches.

Each chapter follows a similar format. In each, the authors provide an overview of their main research approaches, review the context in which they conducted their research, and discuss theoretical issues and report results pertaining to their research. They also compare experimental and event-related potentials (ERPs) at different processing levels (e.g. phonemic discrimination, categorical perception, speech segmentation, syllable and word recognition, semantic priming) and share their vision of how the early language acquisition field might develop in the future, taking into consideration latest methodological and theoretical developments.

A unique feature of this text is that unlike other books that focus on the study of early language development in the past 30 years that examine observations of infant and toddlers' overt linguistic behavior and the invaluable findings that have been reached, the authors in this text present research studies of early language development based on a new research approach that combines experimental psychology and neuroimaging, especially event-related potentials (e.g. behavioral and electrophysiological measures), which have recently started to appear in the infant language development literature.

Not all general readers, teachers, and parents will easily comprehend the detailed accounts of the neurological and behavioral approaches to the study of early language processing, but they can read the first tutorial chapter in the book and refer to the glossary at the beginning that explains some of the terminology used throughout the book for help. The reiterations of the techniques and lines of reasoning used will also make the book even more accessible to the general reader.

Book Review

Touchstone Series

Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten, and Helen Sandiford

Reviewed by Colin J. Toms

The Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Touchstone, a series by Michael McCarthy, Jeanne McCarten, and Helen Sandiford, is a well-thought out and motivating text for young adult beginning and intermediate learners of English and is written with the intention of helping students to develop confidence in their ability to understand real-life English and “to express [themselves] clearly and effectively in everyday situations” (Welcome to Touchstone, p. iv).

Corpus driven and grounded in lexical and communicative principles, the series comprises four course books of 12 units each (plus four revision units), which take learners from beginner to intermediate levels. Each text is buttressed by attendant workbooks and listening material (which comes in a choice of CD or cassette format). Add in the teacher’s editions, and there are 36 different components in all (not to mention the video series or online test creator).

Each book, fronted by a comprehensive scope and sequence matrix, comprises 12 units, each interspersed with “Checkpoints” at three-unit intervals which review and revise what has already been learned.

Each unit is further broken into four sections, A to D. Each section typically occupies two pages, excepting section D, which runs to a third: the “Vocabulary Notebook.” Grammar is presented in the first section of each cycle and reinforced in the second, where it is integrated with vocabulary while sections C and D tilt the balance in favor of listening and speaking activities. Useful corpus inspired tips such as “In conversation, *I don’t know* is the most common three-word expression” appear throughout as boxes in margins.

All readers will appreciate the series’ layout with its bright, modern and engaging photographs and illustrations. However, while the target audience, young adult

learners, should easily connect with the multicultural group of 20-somethings who people these books, older learners may have trouble identifying with the characters presented in the texts. Yet despite this, the *Touchstone Series*, due its content and design, is a good resource for beginning and intermediate students who wish to express themselves clearly and effectively in everyday English.

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6. A statement that the submission has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere should be included at the bottom of the page.

Organization:

Reviewers are encouraged to peruse reviews recently published in the quarterly PDF version of the Journal for content and style before writing their own. While creativity and a variety of writing styles are encouraged, reviews, like other types of articles, should be concisely written and contain certain information that follows a predictable order: a statement about the work's intended audience, a non-evaluative description of the material's contents, an academically worded evaluative summary which includes a discussion of its positive features and one or two shortcomings if applicable (no materials are perfect), and a comment about the material's significance to the field.

Style:

1. All reviews should conform to the Journal's APA guideline requirements and references should be used sparingly.
2. Authors should use plural nouns rather than gendered pronouns such as he/she, his/her him/her and adhere to the APA's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language, which can be found at:
<http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/publications/texts/nonsexist.html>.