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Table of Contents:

Foreword

Welcome to the December issue of the *Asian EFL Journal.* Again we feel privileged to be able to present such a broad range of papers from a variety of cultural perspectives. Our editorial aim is not to attempt to reconcile this diversity but rather to celebrate it.

In this edition we start with several papers that consider the need to re-evaluate the role of teachers. In an age in which EFL in danger of being defined as a product, the important role that teachers play in society is increasingly underestimated. Sandwiched between student surveys and administrative appraisals, teachers may increasingly feel that their unique professional knowledge is not being taken seriously. Hong Wang and Liying Cheng point out that teachers are important stakeholders in their institutions and remind us that "the significant role teachers should play in curriculum reform must not be overlooked if successful implementation and sustainability are to be achieved." In Hui-chin Yeh's paper also in this volume, we find an interesting echo from one of the informants who complains "The teachers are always meant to be blamed".

Research is arguably of little use if it pulls its punches. Mohamed Al-Okda from Oman cannot be accused of doing that when he asserts that "curriculum development in almost all Arab countries follows a top-down model in which teacher involvement is confined to the implementation of pre-designed packages of teaching materials." In this paper, it is argued that neither a top-down strategy, nor a bottom-up one will be effective in bringing about sustainable educational reform. The former can lead to teacher resistance to or misinterpretation of innovative features; and the latter can result in overly local and small-scale endeavors of educational reform." Al-Okda provides a model for the Omani context illustrating "how task-based teacher research can be encouraged and systematized in schools to allow for teacher initiatives to feed in subsequent top-down attempts to develop curricula." Hui-chin Yeh provides us with a fine example of an attempt by student teachers themselves to overcome intercultural difficulties: in this case, the "isolation, frustration, and exclusion" felt by non-native students in the process of learning to teach English in U.S. graduate programs. The formation of a collaborative teacher study group "effectively tore down the walls of isolation", allowing participants to find their voice in English. As one participant so eloquently puts it, "My voice is imprisoned in my not-quite-perfect English."

It is noteworthy that the authors of all these early papers suggest constructive solutions to the problems they raise. In a similar spirit of constructive problem solving, John Adamson investigates teacher development in EFL, specifically referring to the Thai and Japanese contexts at the tertiary level arguing that "teacher development for native speaker teachers of English would benefit from gaining local knowledge of the norms of classroom behavior and a background to the history of EFL in that country." Adamson's paper addresses an important consideration for long-term expatriates. In contrast, the next paper unambiguously proposes a communicative paradigm within an Asian context and reports demonstrable success. The difference may be the type of course described and the length of stay. Wighting, Nisbet and Tindall share their successful EFL summer

camp experience in China with us in their case study. I hope readers will find it stimulating to read this piece alongside Adamson's and in relation to the first PhD published in AEJ. We provide the abstract here. It is not surprising that EFL in a country of the size and importance of China will lead to a variety of approaches in different contexts. In her PhD, Xiuping Li provides a fascinating thesis on the much maligned but much practiced use of rote learning in relation to vocabulary learning strategies. A doctoral thesis cannot be summarized in a few lines, but one reason why it is worth the effort of reading such a detailed and comprehensive manuscript (available in our thesis section online) is that Xiuping convincingly challenges some of our preconceived notions about learning and helps us to understand how cultural "tradition" and "modern" approaches can, and indeed should, be harmonized in both research and teaching and learning practice.

In the September issue, we appealed for contributions on the notion of competence in relation to English taught for international communication. In this December issue, Joanne Rajadurai from Malaysia provides a detailed re-appraisal of Kachru's much cited Concentric Circles Model, which she suggests has let to "a reappraisal of dominant concepts, models and practices in sociolinguistics, SLA and TESOL." Her carefully and cogently argued paper "takes on a critical re-examination of the model, and discusses some of its intrinsic and perhaps unforeseen shortcomings, typified in its centre-periphery framework and its geo-historic bases". She further suggests "that for a model to be relevant, it must focus on individual speakers, their communicative competence and patterns of interaction." Her paper also considers the implications for classroom pedagogy.

Evelyn Doman also provides us with food for thought, broadening the competence debate to a consideration of the direction of SLA research. She argues that "The role of social context in language learning needs to be reconsidered and re-evaluated. It is time to reopen the debate on this subject and to consider where SLA is moving in the 21st century." Her discussion also considers another theme of the earlier papers of this issue, the importance of a practitioners' perspective. "It is hoped that not only researchers but also practitioners in this field will undertake further empirically-based quantitative and qualitative research in their investigations of contextual vs. cognitive approaches."

For the December issue, the *Asian EFL Journal* has also had responses to its appeal for articles describing good practice. Ann Dashwood proposes her approach to classroom discourse analysis underlining the fact that "turns of talk facilitate the meaning-making process as students and teachers collaboratively come to understand the discourse of knowledge they are co-constructing". She emphasizes the practical value of discourse analysis for teachers. Her analysis reveals that "there is potential for teachers to facilitate student talk when the teacher provides alternatives to a follow-up question." In her study, alternatives to questions led to "increased length of turns in students' collaborative talk." Such findings have clear implications for teacher training courses.

Reima Sado Al-Jarf from Saudi Arabia, shows us in admirable detail how solutions to practical constraints can be found by resourceful practitioners within their own teaching contexts. Her study, which we believe could be adapted and replicated in many contexts, concludes that "in learning environments where technology is unavailable to EFL

students and instructors, use of an online course from home as a supplement to in-class techniques helps motivate and enhance EFL students' learning and mastery of English grammar."

Pedro Luchini's piece addresses pronunciation teaching from a task-based perspective in an Asian context. Task–based Learning is our 2006 conference theme and this is one of several in this issue to address the theme. The purpose of his paper is "to critically analyze what some pronunciation teachers are currently doing in some Asian contexts and, in view of their contribution to the profession and their results obtained, propose a state-of-the-art methodology for teaching English pronunciation founded upon the combination of fluency- with accuracy-focused tasks."

In his brief but insightful first contribution to Asian EFL, our new advisor, Francis Mangubhai, provides us with very useful hints from the field of immersion language teaching, arguing that "EFL teachers can also use techniques used by immersion language teachers in their classrooms. In doing so, teachers will increase the amount of input in the SL provided to their students, make their classroom rich with comprehensible input and thus potentially achieve a better language outcome."

The final piece in this issue, the editorial opinion piece by Huw Jarvis (a keynote speaker at our next conference), considers the role of computer technology. Jarvis also contributes to the competence debate by maintaining that computer technology has gone beyond the point where it is merely to be seen as a means of support for EFL teachers. In his view, the language itself has been influenced by the advance of the digital revolution, and any debate into competence will need to take this into account.

Finally I would like to point out that the order in which papers appear in this addition has nothing to do with our perception of their quality. All papers have been through the same increasingly rigorous process. We would like to thank all our authors for their patience in responding to reviewers' comments and for contributing to the *Asian EFL Journal's* continuing efforts to provide variety and quality. Several of December's authors submitted almost a year before seeing their paper online. I would also like to say a special end of year thank you to our editorial team of volunteers who continue to cope so efficiently with the ever-increasing flow of submissions. They too have contributed, often in essential ways, to the content of these papers.

Roger Nunn,
Senior Associate Editor

The Impact of Curriculum Innovation on the Cultures of Teaching

Hong Wang and Liying Cheng

Abstract

This paper describes the Rolling Project conducted in the College English Department at a major provincial university in China from 1998 to 2000. The purpose is to explore the change process, the subsequent challenges presented to the main stakeholders in the university, and the impact that this English language curriculum innovation has brought about to the then prevalent cultures of teaching. It is argued that the failure to sustain the project is the consequence of the top-down approach to curriculum innovation during which the majority of the teachers, despite being the main stakeholders, were excluded from full involvement in the decision-making process. Critical reflections about the project point to the importance of understanding the complexity of educational change and the key role that teachers play in the process within the educational context. It is further suggested that the significant role teachers should play in curriculum reform must not be overlooked if successful implementation and sustainability are to be achieved.

Introduction

Educational change for improvement occurs frequently in any institutionalized context, and more often than not this change process is full of "problems" (Fullan, 1982, 1992, 1993; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Some of the educational changes produce desired results whereas others cause frustrations among the main stakeholders. Teachers and students, especially, get discouraged because of unpredictable and insurmountable hurdles that they perceive difficult to overcome.

The Rolling Project described in this paper regards English language teaching at the tertiary level. This paper describes such a curriculum innovation[1] undertaken in the College English Department[2] at a major provincial university, located in Xi'an, a medium-sized city in China. The innovation was designed from April to June in 1998. It was officially implemented in September of the same year, but was aborted in June 2000. The purpose of the project was to solve the problems that the previous teaching model had caused to teachers and students such as lack of cooperation among teachers

and students of uneven language proficiency being put in the same class. It was anticipated that this curriculum innovation would encourage cooperation and collaboration among teachers through team teaching. Teachers could benefit from their peers' respective expertise in subject content knowledge, classroom management, and pedagogy.

Based on the theoretical framework of educational change and cultures of teaching (Fullan, 1982; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; A. Hargreaves, 1992, 1993; D. Hargreaves, 1980), this paper reveals the need for global curriculum reform in general education and particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in China. A literature review on cultures of teaching and teachers' roles provides a point of entry to the curriculum innovation. The next section presents the national college English curriculum in contrast to the previous college English teaching model, identifying the main difficulties encountered during reform and implementation. This is followed by a detailed description of the Rolling Project framework, its intended benefits, and the implementation reality. Reflections about the discontinued project offer valuable information to administrators and others in leadership roles. The final sections consider the implications of this study for curriculum innovation in other settings and address limitations.

Cultures of Teaching and Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Reform

The knowledge of teacher cultures can be traced back to the early 20th century, when Waller (1932, cited in A. Hargreaves, 1992) first pointed out the segmented and isolated nature of teachers' work in a classroom setting. Much later, research on teacher isolation (Flinders, 1988; A. Hargreaves, 1989; Sarason, 1982) increased significantly in scope. However, some important questions in the analysis of teacher cultures, which A. Hargreaves (1992) raised, still remain unresolved. As he put it, the key question was "whether there is a single entity called *the* culture of teaching that characterizes the occupation as a whole; whether there is a multiplicity of separate and perhaps even competing teacher cultures; or whether the two somehow coexist side by side" (p. 218, original italics). Moreover, some researchers (D. Hargreaves, 1980; Sarason, 1982) contended that a prevailing cult of individualism exists among teachers. This is so

pervasive that it could be considered a unique characteristic of the entire teaching profession.

The factors that make teacher cultures diverse are discussed by Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) in their extensive review of North American literature on the cultures of teaching. They described the differences in age, experience, gender, teaching philosophy, subject matter, and grade level among teachers, arguing that the assumption of a uniform teaching culture is untenable. However, they seemed to overemphasize cultural and subcultural factors, thus neglecting some "generic features" (A. Hargreaves, 1992, p. 218) always present in the teaching environment. A. Hargreaves (1992) acknowledged the presence of those diverse cultures but the absence of overall clarification and configuration of teacher cultures throughout the profession. He deemed individualism and collaborative culture as the most common forms of teacher culture, believing that they were the basis of understanding some of the limits and possibilities of educational change.

Within any culture of teaching, the role of teachers as the main stakeholders in educational reform has been the focus of ongoing interest to curriculum researchers and discussed extensively in the literature both conceptually and empirically. To probe what is occurring in the implementation phase of any curriculum reform, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) used Schwab's (1973) concept of "commonplaces" – subject matter, milieu, learner, and teachers – to explore curriculum problems. They claimed that the most influential factor among the commonplaces is the teacher *per se* as in Stenhouse's (1980) firm belief that curriculum development is ultimately about teacher development. While examining the teacher in relation to curriculum, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) envisioned that "the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms" (p. 363). Munn (1995) emphasized the significance of teachers' involvement in curriculum development and decision-making in curriculum reform in Scotland. He suggested that neglecting teachers and denying their participation in feasibility studies was the main reason national testing failed to be satisfactorily implemented in the classroom.

Teachers' involvement as well as change in teachers are both indispensable to the success of curriculum reform. A. Hargreaves (1989) believed that "change in the curriculum is not effected without some concomitant change in the teacher," because it is the teacher who is responsible for delivering the curriculum at the classroom level. "What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these things have powerful implications for the change process, for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into curriculum practice" (p. 54). Richardson and Placier (2001) specifically claimed that teacher change is not entirely an individually determined phenomenon. Rather, it is shaped by the social context in which they work.

Carless (1998) pointed out the need for teachers to have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of proposed changes in order to achieve successful implementation. He emphasized that teachers need to understand and value the theoretical underpinnings of the innovation. More importantly, teachers must realize how the innovation can be applied within their classrooms. In an exploration of how a communicative teaching syllabus was introduced and adopted in Greek public secondary schools, Karavas-Doukas (1995) discovered that teachers failed to gain a complete understanding of the EFL innovation there. Their misconceptions resulted in negative perceptions of the curriculum innovation.

Implementation of any curriculum innovation is closely connected with "cultures of teaching" as defined by A. Hargreaves (1992). Within any teaching culture, it is always the teachers who play a deciding role in shaping the nature and extent of implementation. The success of curriculum reform and its implementation depends on whether teachers willingly participate in and are valued and acknowledged in the process. Teachers' understanding of the innovation is also indispensable in contributing to or impeding long-term success.

The Rolling Project

The following section critically discusses the implementation of the Rolling Project using the above theoretical framework of educational change, cultures of teaching, and in particular, teachers' role in curriculum reform. We first provide a description of the

national college English curriculum in China and also introduce the context. We then examine the previous teaching model as administered at a major provincial university from 1986 to 1998, identifying difficulties encountered under this teaching model. The framework of the Rolling Project is then discussed, including intended benefits and the implementation problems. Reflections about the discontinued project are linked to concepts and issues raised in the literature review.

The need for the Rolling Project was initially proposed in April, 1998 by the department heads at the College English Teaching and Administration Committee meeting. It was discussed by the seven key departmental committee members (see Han, 2000; Zhu et al., 1998). The committee was comprised of the head of the department, two associate heads, two directors from the College English Teaching and Research Group 1 and 2, one director from Group 3, and one from the computer-assisted teaching group. This project was introduced and documented in the department meeting minutes and finally obtained official approval from the University administration in June 1998.

The national college English curriculum
College English in China refers to the English instruction for non-English majors who constitute the largest proportion of students studying at the tertiary levels. The national college English curriculum (NCEC) came into existence in 1986 and aimed to "develop in students a relatively high level of competence in reading, an intermediate level of competence in listening, and a basic competence in writing and speaking" (College English Syllabus Revision Team, 1986, p. 1). Each year, approximately 2.3 million students are enrolled in English instruction for non-English majors in colleges and universities after sitting in the competitive unified National University Entrance Examinations (Yang & Weir, 1999). These students pursue undergraduate degrees in a variety of disciplines such as arts, sciences, engineering, management, law, medical science, and so on.

For all university non-English majors, a study of college English for two years is mandatory. Students take a total of 280 teaching hours of English – about 70 hours each term (5 to 6 hours each week) – in order to meet the basic requirements. To examine the

implementation of the curriculum and to evaluate classroom teaching and learning, after the first two years of English study, students are assessed using a nationwide, standardized English proficiency test called the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4). For those who pass the CET-4, the College English Test Band 6 (CET-6) can be taken after three years of study. The mandated CET-4 focuses on testing students' language proficiency in listening, reading, and writing. Most of the test items are multiple-choice format.

The context

Founded in 1902 and situated in Xi'an city, the major provincial university where the curriculum innovation took place is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in China. It is a medium-sized provincial university with a student population of 18,000. The national college English curriculum was initiated at the university in 1986 and implemented for 12 years. In 1998, when the innovation started, there were 48 faculty members and 9 administration staff in the College English Department. The department had three Teaching and Research Groups with Group 1 and 2 each having 20 teachers engaged in instructing undergraduate students' EFL learning. Group 3 with 5 teachers had the task to instruct graduate students of non-English majors in their EFL learning.

The most experienced teachers in the department were in their 40's or 50's and were usually "recycled" teachers of Russian. Most had minimal English proficiency, particularly in listening and speaking skills (Cowen et al., 1979). The young and less experienced teachers were those who graduated from foreign language institutes or foreign language departments of a local comprehensive university majoring in English language and literature located in Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi Province. This group of teachers had good training in linguistic knowledge and knowledge of English language and culture, but less experience in terms of pedagogical knowledge and research skills. Teachers tended to teach rather independently, with minimal communication and collaboration among colleagues. This was especially the case in the College English Department at that time.

The vast majority of students at the university (95%) came from Shaanxi Province.

Each year approximately 2,000 students entered English classes. Every EFL teacher was typically assigned 10 to 12 hours per week of college English teaching. They taught two classes comprising 45 to 55 students each. The number of students in each class was pre-determined by administrators at departmental and university levels before the National University Entrance Examinations (NUEE) were administered. NUEE was held once a year in June and all senior high school students were tested. As fewer than 5% could be accepted for post-secondary education in China, good performance on the NUEE was very important (Hu, 2002).

Following the guidelines of the national college English curriculum, English language teaching in the College English Department was conducted in five major prescribed skill areas, which include:

1. Intensive Reading (IR)[3]: 2 hours a week with a focus on grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing, and taught through a written text;

2. Grammar and Exercises (G/E): 20 to 30 minutes practice a week included in IR;

3. Extensive Reading (ER)[4]: 2 hours a week with a focus on different reading skills and strategies;

4. Fast Reading (FR): 20 minutes practice a week included in ER with a focus on reading speed and testing strategies;

5. Focus Listening (FL): 2 hours a week with a focus on listening skills and testing strategies.

In the College English Department from September 1986 up until June 1998, under the "one-teacher-package-class" model (Han, 2000), every single English teacher was responsible for teaching the five skill areas. The university was one of the many schools adopting this teaching model. This model had the most obvious advantage in that teachers' sense of accountability was strong. Teachers worked diligently so that their students could, hopefully, achieve good results when assessed with the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4). Monetary reward was part of the teaching model; teachers whose students failed to meet the passing rate requirements of 50% to 60% as set by the College English Teaching and Administration Committee in the department could even be fined a certain amount. Although nobody was fined, due to successful passing rates,

teachers felt a great deal of pressure. The majority (85%) received symbolic monetary rewards in the amount of 300 to 500 RMB for successful student performance on the CET-4 (College English Teaching and Administration Committee, 1992-98). However, the positive achievements were sometimes overshadowed by the difficulties encountered during the instruction, which will be explained next.

Problems identified with the "one-teacher-package-class" model

During the operation of this teaching model, both teachers and students voiced their dissatisfaction and complaints. Particularly, two groups of students demonstrated their discontent. One group was made up of advanced students with higher language proficiency. As discussed above, upon entering the university all students started their English language learning from college English band 1 regardless of their language proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In classes of students at different levels in English, teachers had to adjust their teaching methodology and conducted classroom activities to meet the needs of the majority of the students. Consequently, students with higher English proficiency often commented that the class was too slow and not challenging, and that they found doing exercises dull and mechanical. This resulted in irregular class attendance by top students. In contrast, the other group was students with poor language proficiency. They complained that the class was still too tough for them, and that they were unable to follow what the teacher was lecturing about nor could they participate in any classroom activities such as discussions, presentations, group work, or pair work. Gradually, they lost their motivation to learn English.

Teachers also expressed their concerns. The teaching culture of "one-teacher-package-class" made it more obvious that teachers taught alone and received little peer feedback on their teaching. Practically, this teaching model prevented EFL teachers from communicating and exchanging ideas on subject content knowledge, classroom management, and pedagogy with their colleagues, and further prevented them from building cooperative and collaborative relationships with their peers in the teaching environment. Even worse, teachers tended to be self-content after many years of this isolated teaching experience without acknowledging how their

colleagues taught, let alone learning from them. As time passed teachers started avoiding long-term planning and collaboration with their colleagues, making it impossible to create an environment where teachers could learn from each other. Thus, year by year, their teaching styles were fossilized and they lost motivation to change.

The reformed framework: The Rolling Project

The Rolling Project was implemented in the fall of 1998 after two months of discussions. The main purpose of the Project was to solve the problems caused by the previous "one-teacher-package-class" which enabled teachers to teach a certain class for two years with a fixed teaching style. The rationale behind the reform was the advocacy of transforming the cultures of teaching in A. Hargreaves' (1992) identification of individualism to a collaborative culture. It was expected that the reformed teaching model would enhance teaching and learning and that the project would be welcomed and sustained in the department.

Under the new model, all entering students were required to take a placement test designed by the testing committee of a top university in Shanghai, China and already in use by many universities throughout China. The test paper included multiple-choice items in listening, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, as well as a writing section including a written composition of 100 words. At the University, students were allowed to take this placement test only once and no make-up test was provided. In general, those students scoring in the top 15% of the entering group entered Level A, the bottom 15% entered Level C, and the rest placed into Level B. So the majority (70%) were in Level B. Besides placement test scores, each student's English score on the National University Entrance Examinations was considered when making final placement decisions.

An assessment was given at the end of each term. Students at each level were thus capable of "moving" up (except Level A) or down between the levels. The use of the term "rolling" in the project name refers to this "movement" between the three levels. In September 1998, of 1,800 new students, 260 students were placed into Level A (highest

proficiency), 240 to Level C (lowest proficiency), and the majority (approximately 1,300 students) into Level B. The following figure provides an illustration:

Figure 1: The Reformed Framework of the Rolling Project
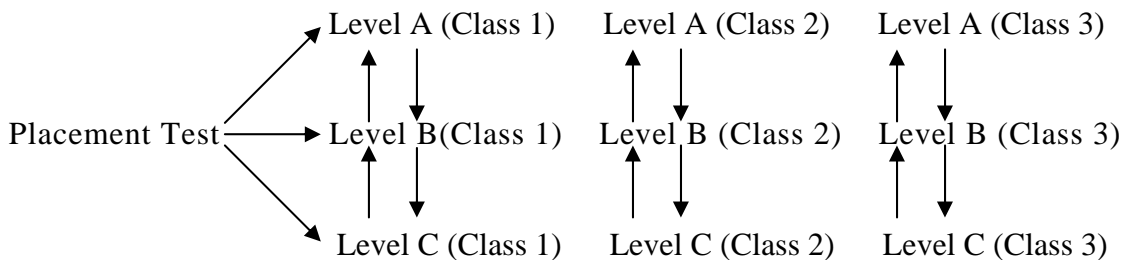
To foster teacher collaboration, two to four teachers were grouped into a team. Take a team of 3 teachers teaching Level B for example. Teacher A may teach Intensive Reading to class 1, Extensive Reading to class 2, and Focus Listening to class 3. Teacher B may teach Intensive Reading to class 2, Extensive Reading to class 3, and Focus Listening to class 1, and so on. Based on past performance as evaluated by students (using an anonymous evaluation form filled out each year) and English proficiency as judged by their performance during teaching competitions (to award teaching excellence) held in the department and the university, the Teaching and Administration Committee of the department decided the levels at which teachers were to teach. In addition to their years of teaching, teachers with more fluent spoken English were assigned to teach Level A. It was stipulated that teachers in a team should work closely by preparing lessons together every other week, sharing teaching plans, observing each other's class, and organizing extra-curricular activities.

The intended benefits

The Rolling Project emerged to meet the requirements of the social and economic development in the contemporary Chinese society, where students with high language proficiency were and still are in great demand in the job market. The innovation, designed to manifest the revised national college English curriculum, was based on the teaching guidelines "differentiating requirements, differentiating supervision, and differentiating instruction" (College English Syllabus Revision Team, 1999, p. 10). In so

doing, the change was geared towards conducting the EFL class according to students' different language proficiency coupled with respective language requirements. In addition, this reformed model introduced the competition mechanism into the teaching and learning environment and further enhanced the learning experience of students (Zhu et al., 1998). This challenge not only was beneficial to teachers' progress but also strengthened students' sense of competition skills (Cui et al., 1999). The fundamental difference in this reformed teaching model from the previous one resided with the strong belief that both students and teachers could benefit from the innovation. Students had the chance to get more input of the target language by attending three different teachers' classes of Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, and Focus Listening. The reformed model encouraged team teaching when teachers had the opportunity to collaborate and to learn more about teaching methodology, classroom management, and pedagogy from each other.

Ideally, through team teaching, all novice and veteran teachers teaching at different levels would have had the opportunity to discuss and consult with each other on issues about their teaching. Han (2000) gave an example of this collaboration in which a teacher in one of the B-level groups initiated a drama project to apply the communicative language teaching approach in her classroom teaching practice. She cooperated with three novice teachers in her team and conducted the project in their ten classes. They helped their students in writing up the script, in rehearsing the play, and finally in performing the plays on campus. This collaboration made other teachers in the team easily approachable and supportive. More importantly, team teaching restructured the former "one-teacher-package" with each teacher team teaching different classes. In this way, students benefited from three teachers with their unique teaching styles and expertise in subject content knowledge. What is most significant is the promotion of A. Hargreaves' collaborative culture (1992), which eventually aims to shape the culture of teaching in the department.

Problems emerged after implementation
The implementation stage of a curriculum is considered a critical phase in educational reform (Fullan, 1992). Without knowing what is happening during the implementation

phase, it is impossible to probe the underlying reasons why so many educational innovations and reforms fail. Also, implementation can be viewed as problematic in that the main stakeholders in the process may be confronted with unpredicted challenges (Fullan, 1982; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The same was true with the Rolling Project. Collectively, teachers as implementers of this curriculum innovation faced immense pressure and competition.

First, the reformed teaching model placed all the teachers into a "public" role in regard to their teaching. Previously, teachers with different language proficiency and experiences usually conducted their classes behind closed doors, and colleagues rarely had the chance to observe their performance. As a result, teachers tended to feel secure with whatever teaching method they preferred to employ in their own classroom. However, team teaching in the reformed model broke this practice and each teacher in the team was expected to demonstrate his or her teaching capacity in front of the same students as the other two team colleagues. Students compared, contrasted, and evaluated teachers' work in terms of diligence, subject content knowledge, classroom management, and teaching methods. This competition for best performance put teachers, especially those with low language proficiency, under great pressure. As mentioned above, some middle-aged or senior instructors who received their language education during the 1950s or 1960s were less proficient in English, especially in communication skills, compared with those young teachers who had more recent comprehensive English language training. Most of the middle-aged or senior teachers used the grammar-translation approach, which did not necessarily require them to speak much English in the classroom.

Second, both novice and veteran teachers considered the new curriculum reform to be demanding and challenging. With the expansion of student enrolments each year, teachers had to bear more and more responsibility for instructing more students in a big class. In an Extensive Reading class, sometimes the class size was as big as 70 to 80 students. When the innovation came about, teachers felt exhausted with all the preparation, marking, and research. Besides, they received little or no in-service professional training after many years of teaching at the tertiary level and their English

proficiency actually decreased. Therefore, the revised curriculum was simply beyond their linguistic and professional capacity.

Teachers who taught the A-level felt quite satisfied academically as they instructed the best students at the university. These students were highly motivated to learn and quite active in class activities. And the excellent results from the national College English Test of their students further strengthened their pride with over 90% of their students passing the CET-4 in the third term and nearly 50% passing the CET-6 in the fourth term (Li, 2002). But their pride was overshadowed by teachers from B and C levels. Teachers from the B-level had an uneasy feeling about the placement. Since all the top students were placed into Level A, it was much harder for them to meet the required passing rate set by the department. Li (2002), a teacher instructing the A-level students, commented,

> … some teachers in B and C-levels threw their hatred to the A-level teachers, who were chosen and assigned by the head of the department, as if it was these teachers who dwarfed them. A-level teachers therefore were under siege of gossip and jealousy, and were isolated from the rest of the teaching staff (p. 104).

This antagonism within the teacher group made A-level teachers feel discouraged as teaching A-level became a heavy burden physically and psychologically for them. They were involved in considerable extra work organizing extra-curricular activities for their students such as speech contest, or language clubs. They were worried about not becoming the target of jealousy. In addition, teachers who taught Level C felt embarrassed "since it is a kind of indication that they are not quite competent" (Han, 2000, p. 12). Moreover, these teachers were not motivated to teach C-level class because students would most of the time sit quietly in the classroom and wait for the teacher to talk. There were hardly any communicative activities such as discussions or presentations conducted in the classroom.

Third, the complaints and resistance to the innovation were also heard from students at Level C, which is the lowest level about the placement. After the placement test, 240 students who entered in 1998 were grouped into Level C and two teachers were assigned to co-teach this group. Although the planned curriculum redesigned the

classroom teaching to meet the needs of C-level students so that they could have perceived the teaching materials and pace of instruction to be comprehensible and accessible, it turned out to pose new frustrations to many students. What was most intriguing was the following dilemma. Since they had comparatively low language proficiency and were known to be in the C-level class, most of them felt "they lost face" in front of their peers who were at A or B levels. Even though they had the chance to move up to the upper level, the placement itself made them feel embarrassed. Many of them came from rural areas where language education was not as good as in cities. These students had low language proficiency and struggled in their language learning. As well, when meeting their classmates who happened to be in the same dormitory and in the same courses every day, some C-level students felt humiliated and others felt ashamed by the grouping. As a result, in the third term, the C-level groups were cancelled and all the students were "promoted" to the B-level; Level A continued till they completed two years of study. At this point, the Rolling Project actually came to an end and the implementation of this curriculum innovation discontinued.

Discussion

The Rolling Project with its intention to meet students' needs and encourage collaboration among teachers caused much more chaos than the previous "one-teacher-package-class" teaching model. In reflection, we have come to realize the important role that teachers play in the whole change process and the implementation context where the cultures of teaching impact its success and sustainability.

Teachers' role in curriculum innovation

It has been attested in a considerable number of studies in both general education and in second or foreign language education that the key factor to guarantee success of any educational reform resides with the teacher (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; A. Hargreaves, 1989; Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Markee, 1997; Munn, 1995). No matter what the reform intends to achieve, if the cultures of teaching fail to provide the desirable context for teachers, eventually it is no surprise to expect discontinuation or failure in the implementation phase.

The exclusion of a majority of teachers in the extensive discussion about the feasibility of the Rolling Project before its implementation resulted in the sad fact that most teachers simply did not "buy in." This was seen from the operation of the project prior to the reform. Right from the designing phase, the majority of the teachers in both Teaching and Research Groups were excluded from participating in the discussions. They were neither invited to attend the committee meetings nor were they officially informed why such a change was considered necessary. As a result, many teachers did not comprehend the necessity nor share the feasibility of the curriculum change. The resistance from some teachers teaching at B and C levels during the implementation phase was seen as a case in point. The resistance to the changes in fact signaled teachers' frustration and dissatisfaction, and it also implied the importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum innovation discussed in the previous studies in the literature (Munn, 1995). Therefore, it is not surprising that the Rolling Project failed to gain support from the teachers.

The failure of teachers' thorough understanding of the Rolling Project was another reason, the same as was seen in Karavas-Doukas' study (1995). Teachers had no idea about what the new teaching model would be nor shared understanding as to how and why it should be implemented. The policymakers, namely, the committee members failed to recognize that teachers not only should have been involved in the process of curriculum innovation but also should have been required to take the initiative in carrying out the innovation in order to make the project succeed. The outcome was that the project was very unlikely to be successfully enacted and further sustained. In relation to all this, teachers should have been provided with adequate professional development sessions and emotional support in understanding what the curriculum innovation aimed to achieve (Brindley & Hood, 1990; Curtis & Cheng, 2001) prior to and during the implementation. Unfortunately, the Rolling Project did not provide such kind of support to the teachers concerned. The fact that most teachers were unable to gain a thorough understanding of the curriculum innovation or receive prompt teacher in-service training resulted in the unsuccessful implementation of the Project. This resonated with what Karavas-Doukas (1995) and Carless (1998) discovered in their empirical studies in EFL settings in Greece and Hong Kong respectively.

Isolation as the generic culture of teaching

The implementation context of the Rolling Project indicated another important factor of what has been discussed in the literature about the cultures of teaching (A. Hargreaves, 1992, 1993; Hargreaves et al., 1992). Although Hargreaves et al.'s (1992) delineation of the common forms of teacher culture such as individualism and collaborative culture is based on the Western ESL context, the same can be applied to the Chinese EFL setting as well. Teacher isolation and individualism as the universal nature in the teaching occupation that Sarason (1982), Flinders (1988), and A. Hargreaves (1989) have mentioned exist among teachers in different settings, and China is no exception. It is so unique that it is present in the entire teaching profession everywhere (A. Hargreaves, 1992). In addition, as pointed out by White (1988), a detailed analysis of existing systems already in place, especially the culture of organizations should be conducted and the innovation context should also be taken into consideration prior to implementation of an innovation.

Studies have shown that in the research on the culture of individualism, the most pervasive characteristic of teaching is that of classroom isolation. Teachers are separated into a series of egg crate-like compartments, isolated and insulated from one another's work (Lortie, 1975). This is typical of primary and secondary teacher cultures but perhaps more so in the tertiary education context where there is less curriculum control over students and teachers. The Rolling Project administered in the aforementioned Chinese university is one such scenario. Ever since the establishment of the foreign language department, all teachers developed the habit of working alone with their own students in their respective classrooms under the "one-teacher-package." It was rare to see colleagues exchange ideas about subject content knowledge, material development, and pedagogy, and neither did they sit in each other's classrooms and observe. More often the heads of the department would observe teachers' classroom teaching for external evaluation purposes. Consequently, teachers had no understanding of what and how their peers conducted their language classes. One reason might be that after 1986, the national standardized syllabus and textbooks were introduced, and teachers' guidebooks were provided. With all these supplementary materials to assist teachers in

their lesson preparations, teachers assumed that they did not need collaboration. However, to enhance teaching and learning, teachers do need to have professional development opportunities to exchange instruction ideas and to learn from each other (Cheng & Wang, 2004).

In addition to the physical classroom isolation, teacher isolation also prevails in the teaching profession. This isolation not only restricts opportunities for professional growth but also represents a potential barrier to the implementation of reform initiatives (Flinders, 1988). As well, regarding the phenomenon of individualism as a generic heresy of educational change, A. Hargreaves (1993) echoed the same position, claiming,

> Teacher individualism, teacher isolation, teacher privatism – the qualities and characteristics that fall under these closely associated labels have come to be widely perceived as significant threats or barriers to professional development, the implementation of change, and the development of shared educational goals (p. 53).

From individualism to collaboration

On the continuum of the teacher cultures, from individualism to collaborative culture, it seems that some forms might co-exist side-by-side, even in one educational setting. Research suggests that the culture of collaboration is a paucity, and that this culture has been "difficult to create and even more difficult to sustain" (A. Hargreaves, 1992, p. 227). The reason behind this might be that from novice to veteran teachers alike, there lies the sensitivity to or fear of being observed while teaching. A. Hargreaves (1993) stated, "They [teachers] do not like being observed, still less being evaluated, because they suffer competence anxiety and are fearful of the criticism that may accompany evaluation" (p. 54). D. Hargreaves (1980) made a similar point by saying, "The heart of the matter, … is the teacher's fear of being judged and criticized. Any observation will be evaluative of the teacher's competence, and the threat therein becomes the greater because such judgment may remain implicit and unspoken, and therefore incontrovertible" (p. 141). In the case of the Rolling Project, especially those teachers who entered the teaching profession in 1970s without adequate English language training in subject matter knowledge and methodology often felt threatened by working in a team (Han, 2000). They had more teaching experience, yet they were not equipped to meet the new challenges in the revised curriculum. Such sensitivity to public

performance and exposure is a major barrier to many innovations in teaching in China. Especially team teaching makes some teachers' language inadequacies more noticeable in front of both students and their colleagues.

Indeed, it is very difficult to achieve collaboration among teachers. However, it is important to bear in mind that the ultimate goal of curriculum innovation and further school improvement should be targeted at collaboration and collegiality, simply because "… schools cannot improve without people working together" (Liebeman, 1986, p. 6). Although there were some cooperation and collaboration endeavors among teachers in the Rolling Project such as the effort of some B-level instructors, it was still not a widely adopted practice in the teaching culture of the department during the whole implementation phase. Although team teaching was strongly encouraged at all three levels, teachers seldom observed each other's teaching, nor did they discuss issues on teaching and pedagogy. In this respect, teachers preferred to retain the former status quo.

Reflections and suggestions on the discontinued Rolling Project

The short execution of the Rolling Project has left much to be contemplated, particularly for administrators and those in leadership roles in the context of higher learning institutions. First of all, the absence of teachers' ownership of the innovation evaded teachers, the key stakeholder in any curriculum innovation, from being interested and involved in the departmental curricular endeavor. The underpinning behind this "not buying into the innovation" attitude suggests the hierarchical administration characteristics in the unique Chinese cultural context. Within such a highly centralized educational system in China, any policy or innovation tends to be disseminated in a top-down instead of bottom-up manner. Whereas policymakers extol the virtue of making certain innovations in accordance with institutional development, teachers fail to see benefits related with their own professional development. Such a top-down policy tended not to be implemented in the way intended by the administration. In such a context, teachers seemed to acknowledge the innovation without actually playing an active role in implementing it (Morris, 1988). To remedy such a mismatch in bringing about any curriculum innovation, policymakers need to bear in mind that top-down

policy should incorporate shared understanding about the potential benefits of any innovation among teachers themselves and their students.

Another important emergent point is the urgency of enhancing in-service language teacher training at the Chinese tertiary level. As revealed from the Rolling Project, many experienced senior teachers felt threatened by teaching the same students as their young colleagues who had better communicative proficiency. The sharp contrast "dwarfed" the senior teachers to a certain extent, which in fact put them in a disadvantaged position regarding classroom teaching. The innovation was beyond their linguistic capacity and further made their language inadequacies stand out in front of their students and peers. The fear of inadequacy and losing face put these veteran teachers back to the previous model of "one-teacher-package." For this reason, upgrading the target language proficiency levels (Cheng, Ren, & Wang, 2003; Phillips, 1991), particularly for this group of foreign language teachers is paramount before the curriculum innovation is put into effect. The administration also needs to recognize that teachers need to feel "safe" before they can be fully involved in any innovation.

Collaboration is a universal concern in terms of enhancement of teaching and learning in the school setting. As discussed in the literature, it is difficult to achieve collaboration, but it does not necessarily mean that cooperation is impossible. It is true that the teaching and learning culture in China is highly competitive, where teachers compete for excellence and promotion. The competition can terrify teachers and put them under immense pressure. In addition, the teaching culture in China does not fully recognize individuality, i.e., individual teachers' strength in different aspects of teaching. Therefore, efforts should be made by institutional administrators to promote and nurture an environment where it is safe and unthreatening for teachers to observe each other without losing face or confidence. For example, teachers can be recommended to observe each other's classroom teaching and then to write a reflection report on the observations and draft plans for their individual personal growth. Following up activities can be arranged by putting teachers into smaller teams of five or six where they feel more comfortable to express their views about teaching. They work together in preparing lesson plans, in discussing strategies in dealing with unpredicted classroom

incidents, in sharing instructional tips, and in helping each other in research projects based on their own strength. Gradually, a climate of collaboration is expected to form within a teaching environment in which every teacher benefits.

Conclusions

Curriculum innovation is a complex social phenomenon because of the social, economical, political, and cultural factors embedded in the teaching and learning process (see Richard, 2001 for a situational analysis of curriculum development). The cultural factors particularly can be seen in the cultures of teaching. The mismatch between the anticipated teacher cultures described in the studies of both Little (1982) and Williams et al. (2001) and the context where teachers work often creates problems that hinder successful implementation of the changes. As well, success is pre-conditioned by whether the educational decision-makers have the main stakeholders engaged in the reform or not. This means that the involvement of all the stakeholders in curriculum reforms is important. Teachers' active participation in and their collaborative work with colleagues turn out to be a deciding factor to ensure the success of the effort. The discontinuation of the Rolling Project lies partly in the assumptions of the policymakers who designed the project. Johnson (1989) pointed out that any curriculum development would involve a tension about what is desirable and what is acceptable and possible (p. 18). It proved to be problematic to believe that good intention to improve both teaching and learning will result in desirable results, and that teachers' commitment to change is unquestionable as long as they perceive the benefits.

Unfortunately, teachers as "change agentry" (Fullan, 1982, 1993, 1999) are often excluded in the decision-making process of the reform. Their place in curriculum innovation and the context of their workplace cultures are usually overlooked by policymakers. To remedy this, policymakers first of all should consider the complexity of the process of any curriculum reform before implementation. They also need to bear in mind that the cultures of teaching will determine whether a desired result can be realized in the working context, where individualism gives place to collaboration and collegiality. Finally, it can be observed that to attain this goal is no easy job, because it requires the joint efforts of all who participate.

This paper provides an in-depth discussion and understanding of a curriculum innovation endeavor in the Chinese EFL setting. Based on the researchers' experience and observations, the reflection on the project points to the essential role that teachers actually play in implementing a given innovation, which adds to the existing change literature in English language teaching. We recognize that this scenario entails implications for other centralized educational systems in some Asian countries where teachers are bound under rigid curriculum requirements and have less autonomy in classroom teaching. We have chosen to focus our discussions on the role that teachers play in this curriculum innovation in this paper although a successful implementation must involve students as well. We also recognize that more extensive interviews with policymakers, teaching staff, and even students together with in-depth classroom observations will generate more insights on this innovative endeavor and will provide a much richer and more valuable source of data for further analysis on the impact of curriculum innovation on the cultures of teaching.

Endnotes

1. In this paper, the term "innovation" is used interchangeably with the terms "reform" and "change."

2. This refers to a department which is involved in teaching English to non-English major students from a variety of disciplines such as arts, sciences, humanities, engineering, social sciences, law, and medicine. It is called College English Department in China to distinguish from English Department, which teaches English to those who specialize in English language and literature studies.

3. Intensive Reading (IR) in the college English curriculum is actually not "a reading course, but the core course in EFL in which everything that the teacher wants to teach (grammar, vocabulary, reading aloud, etc.) is taught through a written text" (Li, 1984, p. 13). Susser and Robb (1990) refer to IR as "close study of short passages, including

syntactic, semantic, and lexical analyses and translation into the L1 to study meaning" (p. 161). In the Chinese EFL tertiary setting, IR integrates all language skills, for example, the reading, use of words, knowledge of grammar and structure, writing skills, and translation practice. All these skills are taught through a reading unit that includes two or three pages of a written text and several pages of exercises on linguistic and grammatical points and on writing topics (Wang & Han, 2002).

4. Extensive Reading (ER) in the college English curriculum refers to a reading class. However, students are required to read texts, out of class, from the ER textbooks including materials of different genres such as autobiographies, short stories, and popular science articles prior to the class. What EFL teachers do in such a class is to check students' homework by asking comprehension questions, having students discuss what they have read, and doing corresponding exercises. The purpose of ER class in the college English curriculum is for general understanding of the texts, but not for pleasure reading with students choosing their own books, as discussed by Susser and Robb (1990). There are different viewpoints about what extensive reading is and how to teach this course (Field, 1985; Robb & Susser, 1989). However, the authors would not focus on this issue since it is outside the scope of this paper.

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A Proposed Model for EFL Teacher Involvement in On-going Curriculum Development

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Abstract

This paper highlights two main assumptions about curriculum development and teacher professional growth. One is that curriculum development is an on-going process that never ceases once a curriculum framework and a package of prescribed teaching/learning materials are produced and introduced in an educational system. The other is that curriculum development and professional growth cannot be separated. Curriculum development in almost all Arab countries follows a top-down model in which teacher involvement is confined to the implementation of pre-designed packages of teaching materials. In this paper, it is argued that neither a top-down strategy, nor a bottom-up one will be effective in bringing about sustainable educational reform. The former can lead to teacher resistance to or misinterpretation of innovative features; and the latter can result in overly local and small-scale endeavors of educational reform. A model that combines both top-down and bottom-up strategies in curriculum development is proposed. The model illustrates how task-based teacher research can be encouraged and systematized in schools to allow for teacher initiatives to feed in subsequent top-down attempts to develop curricula. Practical suggestions for implementing this in the Omani context are made including suggestions for teacher educators who teach pre-service teacher education courses.

Introduction

Oman has recently witnessed a comprehensive educational reform. A major aspect of this reform relates to the efforts exerted in developing new curricula for all stages and all school subjects including that of English as a Foreign Language. To the best knowledge of the present writer the approach used in curriculum development was basically a top-down one. Admittedly, people at the English Language Curriculum Department (ELCD) have exerted all efforts to get EFL teachers involved. Unfortunately, however, teacher involvement has always been selective in nature depending entirely on what is known as the "focus group". To the best knowledge of the present writer, their role has mostly been confined to providing feedback to initial versions of materials produced by expatriate or local experts and, perhaps, trying out

parts of these materials in natural classroom settings. This is not to claim that EFL teacher involvement in curriculum development has not included other activities such as evaluating earlier teaching materials, attending textbook-based training courses or school-based workshops. Presumably, different approaches to curriculum development do include attempts to get teachers involved in the process. With all these efforts, the division of labor that characterizes top-down models of curriculum development between experts as designers and teachers as implementers remains the norm, not the exception. This is not to argue that we can afford to use a wholly bottom-up model of curriculum development from the very beginning. Nothing is achieved to that effect. It is the contention of the present writer that the use of a top-down model is inevitable. However, a case can be made for a subsequent bottom up phase in which Omani EFL teachers may be gradually and systematically more involved in a number of school-based activities including curriculum analysis, curriculum critique and collaborative task-based action research endeavors whose outcomes can feed into subsequent top-down attempts at curriculum renewal.

Limitations of a top down model

A top-down model of curriculum development may be conceptualized in terms of a set of hierarchically ordered processes that are centrally initiated and controlled and that are usually performed by selected expert committees. A decision is made by the supreme authority in the educational system to start the whole process. A steering committee will be entrusted with the production of the educational philosophy. A number of working committees will be selected for producing the curriculum guides/ frameworks for different stages and school subjects or subject areas. A co-coordinating committee will be entrusted with the co-ordination of work done in different committees at different levels. The duties of the working committees might include the production of a retrospective scope-and-sequence through the analysis of existing curriculum documents and then producing the prospective scope-and-sequence based on the goals and broad guidelines specified in the educational philosophy/strategy. Materials will then be produced or selected. Materials production takes many forms and involves various processes depending upon several factors. In most cases, however, this will be

the work of committees including textbook writers and editors. In the different variants of the top-down model, attempts will be made to make those materials teacher-proof through the production of teacher manuals that accompany different textbooks for different stages and grades. This process might also include lots of brainstorming, fact finding, pooling of ideas, proof reading, revising and publicizing conferences in which the views of all stakeholders are sought. Proponents of this model or its variants normally consider such activities major efforts to get all parties concerned, including teachers, involved. Teachers' involvement here might be viewed as attempts to familiarize them with what is going on and, probably, ensure that the products are suitable for or feasible in the local market. Only during the implementation stage are teachers actually involved. The implementation committees will arrange for textbook training, and in some cases trialing language teaching materials on a small scale before they are finally introduced nation-wide. Presumably, this model has its own ways of market evaluation. However, the teachers' role will be confined to implementation of the new product in exactly the same way in which expert designers intended it to be implemented. All measures are taken to suppress/circumvent any criticism; and any difficulties encountered by implementers will normally be interpreted as indicators of their ignorance of, or at least lack of familiarity with, the new product. But the most important advantage of this model is that tremendous nation wide changes that are centrally controlled can be coercively introduced in a relatively short time.

Depending entirely on this model may have both short-term and long-term disadvantages. First, curriculum development in this model looks like an educational raid that ends with replacing the currently used textbooks by a new series that may, or may not, constitute a great improvement on the old ones depending on a host of other factors such as the excessive caution of the change agents to be system-sensitive (See Markee, 1997). This is specially clear when the change agent is an expatriate as is the case in foreign language teaching. More often than not I am being reminded by teachers of very interesting features of the old materials that they miss in new ones. Moreover, no change agent will ever dare to introduce too many theoretically motivated innovative features given the filtering role often played by system constraints. Therefore, the newly introduced textbooks may, in very few years, require a new educational raid in which

they meet the same fate of their predecessors. This is specially disturbing because most educational systems cannot afford such costs of frequent textbook replacement. Second, and perhaps more disturbing, is that it can result in teacher resistance to and/or misinterpretation of innovative features. This argument is supported by the often dwelt upon phenomenon of the gap between theory and practice. To this issue we return later in the section about teacher professional growth. With all attempts made to produce teacher-proof materials through the production of highly prescriptive teacher manuals, teachers may reinterpret any task or language learning experience. Third, detailed guidance given to teachers about how to implement materials designed by experts can lead to guidance jams and feelings of insecurity, anxiety and a relatively low level of self efficacy. It might be argued that such phenomena are expected only in the initial stages of implementation. However, this prescriptive approach can develop what might be called pedagogical dogmatism. Fourth, as Markee (1997, p. 64) argues, it

> "…discourages individual initiatives – a quality indispensable to the long term maintenance of innovation – because it turns teachers into passive recipients of change agents' dictates."

Finally, lack of teacher involvement results in feelings of a lack of ownership. Being excluded from ELT curriculum development decisions and the associated feelings of lack of ownership detrimentally affect teachers' commitment to the success of the newly introduced innovative features.

Bottom-up/school-based curriculum development

In many parts of the world such as USA, Britain, Australia and some other European and South-Asian countries, many attempts have been made to develop curricula using bottom-up models (See Bolstad, 2004). In almost all these attempts, teachers in a particular school or region of a country will be entrusted with developing their school curricula collaboratively. Several definitions of school based curriculum development (SBCD) are available in the literature. Skilbeck (1984, cited in Bolstad, 2004, p.14) defines it as

> "...the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of a program of students' learning by the educational institution of which those students are members."

Bezzina (1991, p. 40) defines SBCD as

"…a process in which some or all of the members of a school community plan, implement, and/ or evaluate an aspect or aspects of the curriculum offering of the school. This may involve adapting an existing curriculum, adopting it unchanged, or creating a new curriculum. SBCD is a collaborative effort which should not be confused with the individual efforts of teachers or administrators operating outside the boundaries of a collaboratively accepted framework."

In her literature review on SBCD, Bolstad sums up its main characteristics:

- Teachers are responsible not only for the implementation of curricula, but also for its development.

- SBCD is a collaborative process.

- It is an on-going process.

- It has to be centrally supported and facilitated.

- It may be adaptive rather than wholly creative.

Several arguments are frequently made to justify SBCD. One major argument is that it helps avoid the problems involved in top-down models. Another argument is that it makes curricula meet the needs of learners and local communities. It is also argued that SBCD ensures teacher autonomy, a goal that is currently believed to be part and part of teacher professionalism (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). But the most important rationale for SBCD lies in the realization that curriculum development and teacher professional growth are inseparable.

Before moving to teacher professional growth, it should be noted that a wholly bottom-up strategy to curriculum development has got its own limitations and practical problems. Bolstad (2004) gives examples of such problems. Examples of such projects show that SBCD can be very slow and piecemeal. Besides, a lack of central governance and monitoring can have serious detrimental effects on the quality of the teaching learning processes. Furthermore, many teachers may simply be unwilling to participate in such attempts thinking that curriculum development is beyond their role commitments. This is perhaps the reason behind the fluctuation between top-down and bottom-up strategies of curriculum development in many countries (Elliot, 1997). Hence the need for a model that combines both strategies in an attempt to preserve the strengths of each.

Professional growth

A number of concepts related to teacher professional growth are relevant to the proposed model. First, teacher learning is currently believed to be a life-long endeavor. But we have to make a distinction between experienced teachers and expert teachers. The former refers to the length of teaching experience measured in terms of years. But, the latter refers to teachers who can be considered exemplars. Earlier, researchers used to compare experts and novices in teaching in terms of a set of behaviors related to specific aspects of teaching, mostly, classroom management (Tsui, 2003). The focus of attention nowadays has shifted to the study of teacher cognition. It is currently well known that teachers will not automatically change their practices once they are told about any new idea or familiarized with it. The main determinant of teacher behavior is said to be his/her theory-in-action or personal practical theory. This has been conceptualized in different ways. However, a major component of teachers' personal practical theory would be their tacit beliefs and values about what constitutes effective foreign language teaching and learning. Such tacit component of the teacher's personal practical knowledge is formed throughout his/her past experience as a learner.

Most teacher educators at the moment would readily agree that tacit knowledge of teaching has its roots in past experience and, at the same time, acts as a filter for any received knowledge in teacher education programs be they pre-service or in-service. This might explain the phenomenon referred to above, i.e. teachers' reinterpretation of the intended curriculum dictated to them using a top-down model. Research indicates that such tacit knowledge does resist change because it cannot be articulated by teachers. Nor can it be directly accessed by researchers. However, there is enough evidence indicating that it is changeable under certain conditions. One condition is that teachers should be autonomous learners of teaching, i.e. they should become reflective practitioners.

Tsui's (2003) characterization of expertise is relevant to the discussion of professional growth. According to her, trying to distinguish expert language teachers from novices in terms of differences in teaching performance may not be very helpful in understanding how teachers grow professionally. Acquiring expertise as a process

would be more useful. In this respect, she identifies a number of characteristics of the on-going process of becoming an expert teacher. First, it involves reflection in and on action. Tsui (2003, p. 227) argues that

> "…the theorization of practical knowledge and the "practicalization" of theoretical knowledge are two sides of the same coin in the development of expert knowledge, and that they are both crucial to the development of expertise."

She further adds that expertise is a "…constant engagement in exploration and experimentation, in problematizing the unproblematic…" Second, she asserts that expertise involves conscious deliberation that enables teachers to see things from different perspectives and identify the adequacy and relevance of past experiences related to new teaching situations. Finally, her notion of multiple and distributed expertise is specially relevant to teacher involvement in curriculum development. According to her, a teacher might gain expertise in one aspect of his/her complex work, but may act as a novice in another aspect. A teacher might be an expert in teaching English inside the classroom, but may act like a novice as a peer coach or a supervisor or even a task designer. Tsui (2003, p. 279) argues

> "…it is perhaps more meaningful to talk about expertise in areas of specialization rather than to use general terms like expert doctors and expert teachers because they tend to mask the multiple expertise that is required in professions that are as complex as medicine, and professions that are not only complex but also ill-defined, such as teaching."

In other words, it is advisable to avoid talking about global expertise in a profession. Expertise in teaching might be viewed as being distributed across individual teachers. It follows then, argues Tsui (2003, p. 280), that "The accomplishment of a task at the expert level often requires the pooling together of the expertise of a number of individuals." Given this notion of multiple and distributed expertise, it might be argued that professional growth is essentially a collaborative and multi-faceted endeavor. Furthermore, autonomy does not mean working individually. Indeed, part and parcel of current thinking on teacher professional growth is the attempt to replace teacher isolation by teacher collaboration in professional growth networks. Another condition is that teachers should be encouraged to engage in enquiry-oriented teaching activities that help them de-routinize their practice in class. This is the essence of reflective teaching. Such activities/task types include, among many other things, action research. This does

not mean that there will be no role for teacher educators such as supervisors in in-service education or professional course instructors in pre-service teacher education programs. Indeed, their roles have to be redefined from lecturers or trainers to professional growth facilitators and co-coordinators.

Action Research

Action research has become a buzzword in the Omani context. But like some other innovative ideas (for example: alternative assessment) that are readily adopted in the fertile and virgin Omani system of education, the term has been associated with a number of misconceptions. The Arabic translation of this reflection enhancing task type is indicative of such misconception. It means literally "procedural research." Academic research also has research procedures. It might be appropriate to use the Arabic translation of other labels associated with action research such as "teacher research" or "practitioner research." Another misconception of action research relates to its purpose. To require teachers to assume a new role that might add to their burdens or that might take part of their valuable time that they have to spend on teaching is definitely undesirable if not unfair. The writer is aware of the various confusing conceptualizations of action research in the voluminous literature published recently. Some people make no distinction between action research and academic research. I would even stress the point that we have to distinguish between practitioners' action research and academic action research. Certainly, teachers are required to engage in some sort of action research to grow professionally. In an earlier paper, El-Okda (2004) discusses two options of action research that might be suitable to EFL teachers in Oman. One is called Exploratory Practice/Teaching proposed by Allwright (2000) and the other is task-based action research (El-Okda, 1991). Both of them share a number of characteristics that make them both easy to conduct and useful for professional growth.

My interest in task-based action research as a means of both professional growth and on-going curriculum development dates back to the late eighties; and the concept emerged as a solution to practical problems encountered during the implementation stage of a task-based ELT program in Egypt (El-Okda, 1991). A top-down model was used in a nationwide ELT curriculum development project. All efforts were made to

ensure its success in such a large system of education with deeply rooted traditions that were expected to make resistance and misinterpretation the norm rather than the exception. More than a decade earlier, the Center for Developing English Language Teaching in Egypt (CDELT) was established at the Faculty of Education, Ain Shams University to prepare the required cadre of educational leaders. A team of American and British applied linguists together with Egyptian experts started an MA program and a Professional Diploma program. The team worked hand in hand with people at the national and regional training centers and the National Center for Educational Research and Development. Many people were sent to Reading University in England for a six-month program for training trainers. Eventually, a new series of task-based textbooks were introduced. The new textbooks replaced a very old audiolingual series. With all the tremendous efforts made to train teachers to implement the new series and the accompanying teacher-proof manuals, a number of problems emerged. Teachers tended to over-teach lesson segments they were accustomed to teaching; and therefore, to skip the focal tasks constituting the innovative feature in the new series complaining that they ran short of time. Their progress in teaching the materials tended to be too slow as if they had had some general agreement to have a go-slow strike. Textbook writers had to cut off four six-to-eight lesson units from the first twenty-unit textbook and include them in the next textbook in the series. Misinterpretation of tasks was the norm rather than the exception.

It was in this context that the seeds of my views about teacher involvement in curriculum development through task-based action research were planted. Rather than allow teachers to copy the detailed guidance prescribed in the teacher manual, which, more often than not, brought about guidance jams for teachers inside the classroom, I called for lesson planning in terms of task analysis. The aim was to allow teachers to form a mental representation of the work program for their learners. They were required to analyze the focal task in each lesson into its components: the givens, the procedure (steps to be followed by the learner), and the expected outcome. They were also required to identify the apparent pedagogical focus of the task. Weekly meetings with teachers consisting mainly of task analysis workshops proved to be very effective in getting over those problems.

Gradually, I began to realize that within the framework of task-based language learning/teaching, teacher professional growth may be conceptualized in terms of three stages: teacher-as-task-implementer, teacher-as-task-modifier and teacher-as-task-designer. As teachers began to gain more self-confidence, their pace of teaching improved and task misinterpretation decreased. Complaints about the course length changed into attempts to supplement focal tasks with similar and/or modified ones of their own make. Many tasks were modified in ways which improved their design. Unfortunately, however, lack of central support and coordination of these efforts in an on-going model of curriculum development made them local and piecemeal. A decade later, a new series of task-based textbooks was introduced to replace the earlier series. Certainly, the new series has many innovative features. But so had the earlier one. And with those features also the teacher-designed tasks were lost.
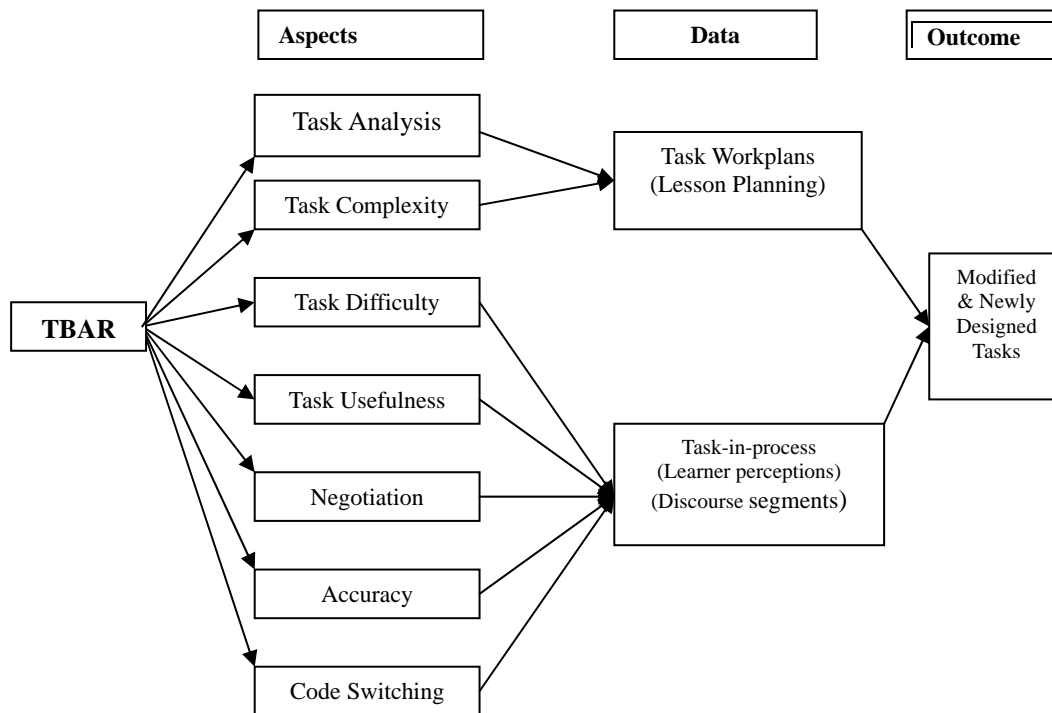
Figure 1: Task Based Action Research: Aspects, Data and Outcomes

Figure 1 diagrammatically shows seven issues that might be addressed in teachers' task-based action research, two types of data that can be used in investigating them and the possible outcomes that may result from such attempts. Task-based action research is discussed in detail elsewhere (El-Okda, 2004). Indeed, Ellis (1998; 1997) has recently dwelt upon the need to engage teachers in task-based teacher research as a kind of

evaluation of language teaching materials that he calls "micro-evaluation". The first two issues (task analysis and task complexity) are related to task design. The former involves analyzing a task work-plan in terms of its three components: the givens (input), the procedure to be followed by learners in performing it and the possible outcome(s) learners might come up with after its completion. This can be done regularly in lesson planning. It helps teachers distinguish between tasks and "non-tasks"/traditional exercises/drills. There are different proposals for analyzing language learning tasks in the literature (see for example Ellis, 2003 and Nunan, 1988). However, the three-component analysis adopted here is consistent with Doyle's (1983) original conceptualization of academic work in the main stream of educational thought. More important still is that EFL teachers find it fairly easy to understand (El-Okda, 1991). If used regularly in lesson planning, particularly in nationally mandated curricula, it can constitute some sort of 'pre-action' reflection that might be used in reflection-on-action.

Task complexity, as Robinson (2001) argues can be determined by looking at specific features in task work-plans such as the number of givens to which learners have to attend to and the number of steps they have to follow and the number of possible outcomes. Robinson distinguishes between task complexity and task difficulty. The latter depends on characteristics of the learners related to both affective and ability factors. Presumably, facilitators organizing workshops to acquaint teachers with those concepts need not use highly technical terms proposed in second language acquisition research. Nor do they have to subscribe to excluding what Robinson calls task conditions from the study of task complexity. It is true that decisions related to learners' participation might be left entirely for the teacher. However, most task work-plans entail the use of specific participation patterns. Following Allwright's specifications of the principles of exploratory teaching, the study of teachers' perceptions of task difficulty can be conducted using ordinary language learning discussion tasks. Information gained from the study of task complexity and task difficulty can shed light on task sequencing. Another issue that can be investigated will be the linkage patterns among different tasks in one unit, as well as across different units. However, this particular issue has received very little attention in task-based research. That is why I have excluded it from Figure 1. Learners' assessment of learning tasks is by no means a new concept (See for example

Candlin & Murphy, 1986) and is specially highlighted in the process syllabus (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). Teachers might do collaborative work on segments of task-based discourse to study issues like the amount of negotiation triggered by different types of tasks or different versions of the same type. They might also look at very practical concerns of theirs such as the amount and functions of code-switching and the different mistakes that might occur in task-based interaction. The study of such issues related to task-in-process might help teachers make informed pedagogical decisions.

Tracing the history of educational action research in Britain, Eliot (1997) shows that it was essentially the tool used for teacher involvement in school-based curriculum development in Stenhouse' famous Humanities Curriculum Project in the sixties. The project aimed at creating social studies curricula that were meaningful and relevant to learners. This led to the emergence of many other school-based, bottom-up curriculum development attempts. The shift to a national curriculum in Britain has led to dissociating action research from curriculum development. Therefore, its role has become confined to teacher professional development (improving practice) or just self-discovery.   However, he predicts a nearby future comeback of collaborative action research involving more teacher involvement in curriculum development so that professional development and curriculum development might be reunited again.
Similarly, Brady (1995) examines the Australian attempt to strike a balance between centralization represented in the production of national curriculum profiles and decentralization represented in encouraging school-based initiatives within the framework of those national profiles, raising the question of the possible coexistence of both strategies. Brady argues that they can co-exist although the role of teachers in curriculum development will be constrained.

A proposed framework for curriculum development and professional growth

The discussion thus far might have highlighted a number of principles that should govern teacher involvement in curriculum development. These include the following principles:

1. Curriculum development is an on-going process that should not cease once a

new series of textbooks are introduced.

2. Curriculum development and teacher development cannot be separated.

3. Teacher involvement in curriculum development is a major aspect of teacher expertise.

4. A national curriculum and school based curriculum initiatives can co-exist.

5. Teacher involvement in on-going curriculum development is essentially a collaborative endeavor.

6. Teaching expertise is both multiple and distributed.

7. Teacher research was historically introduced within the framework of curriculum development projects and should continue to be basically viewed as a tool for involving teachers in on-going curriculum development.

8. Task-based action research is most suited for this purpose. Teachers are in a unique position to undertake such type of micro-evaluation of teaching materials and other national curriculum documents. At least this does not constitute a new burden to the already overburdened teachers.

9. Such attempts need to be systematically organized and centrally supported. Fortunately, it is currently possible to get teachers technically networked.

Figure 2 diagrammatically shows how EFL teachers may be involved in on-going curriculum development integrating top-down and bottom-up strategies. According to this model, teachers' collaborative research based on tasks included in the newly introduced textbooks can lead to newly designed or modified tasks that can be subsequently published as supplementary ideas guides, as Allwright (1981) has called for, or even included in subsequent editions of national textbooks.

National Curriculum Documents

Co-coordinators, Facilitators

Figure 2: A Model for Involving Teachers in Curriculum Development

Curriculum Guides

School-based Workshops

Teacher Networks

Task-based Textbooks

Ideas Guide

Modified/ Newly Designed Tasks

Task-based Action Research
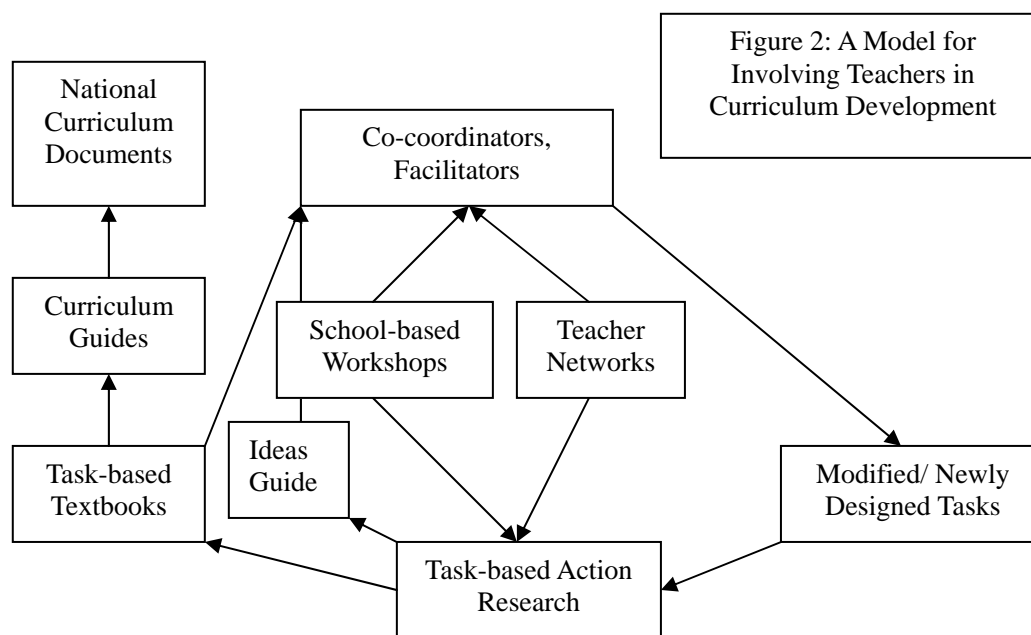
The present writer will readily agree to a modified version of Figure 2 in which teacher initiatives might be included at higher levels of the ELT curriculum development process. Coordinators can also involve teachers in the analysis of all curriculum documents including philosophy statements, and curriculum guides. At least they need to be involved in modifying curriculum guides according to their proposed initiatives. But the matter is not as easy as linking the two top boxes with an arrow pointing from coordinators to national curriculum documents.

Although Figure 2 is self explanatory, a number of comments are in order. First, co-coordinators/facilitators support need not be confined to school-based workshops. There is an urgent need to make use of available technology in connecting teachers and facilitators. The notion of multiple expertise discussed earlier entails collaborative work and one way of putting an end to teacher isolation will be teacher networks. Fortunately, the idea of teacher networks is getting more and more popular in Oman. Second, publishing teacher modified or newly designed tasks can be first published in ideas guides to be tried out in different schools before they are finally published in national textbooks. Currently used textbooks, like textbooks used in other parts of the world, teem with segments of lessons that are no more than traditional exercises or drills except

perhaps for the visual element. Through task-based action research, teachers will hopefully be able to modify those exercises/drills in more well-designed tasks. Finally, supervisors' roles have always been confined to attempts to help teachers improve their classroom behavior. It is time to get them involved in curriculum development through acting as task-based action research coordinators/facilitators.

Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt was made to discuss a number of issues related to involving teachers in on-going curriculum development. The aim was to specify the principles that can be used as guidelines for the proposed framework. The proposed model is a tentative attempt to reconcile top-down and bottom-up models of curriculum development. Though this model has been developed for EFL curriculum development, it can be adapted to other school curricula. It might be argued that EFL materials are task based. But other teaching materials may not be task based. The essence of the model lies in curriculum analysis and curriculum micro-evaluation. This makes it applicable to the curricula of other school subjects.

A number of recommendations can be made. First, micro-evaluation of teaching materials and task design should constitute a major area of undergraduate courses on curriculum design. Second, the process of on-going curriculum development should be centrally supported and co-coordinated. It should be part and parcel of the top-down attempts to develop curricula. Networked teacher circles can be very helpful in this respect. Third, the argument that teachers mostly perceive their role to be confined to curriculum implementation (Bezzina, 1991) should not be taken as an excuse for excluding them from this process. It should only alert us to the need to change teachers' perceptions of their role in curriculum development as a prerequisite for the success of any attempt of this sort. Fourth, administrative obstacles that prevent teachers from being actively involved in such efforts should be removed.

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Teacher Study Groups as a Vehicle to Strengthen EFL Teachers' Professional Identity and Voice

Hui-chin Yeh

Abstract

NNSs (non-native speakers) of English who are EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher candidates have long experienced isolation, frustration, and exclusion in the process of learning to teach English in U.S. graduate programs. Collectively, six EFL graduate students, the researcher included, formed a collaborative teacher study group allowing the group to reflect on and theorize about knowledge and strategies for approaching English teaching and learning issues. This teacher study group effectively tore down the walls of isolation by supporting each other in the process of teacher professional development and providing each other with constructive suggestions concerning future teachers' inevitable confusion, frustration, and struggles in the TESOL profession.

1. Background of the study

My participation in a study entitled: "In their own words: Decisions, Expectations, and Experiences of International Graduate Students in the School of Education," revealed a strong need for peer support in international students' graduate studies. Four Taiwanese graduate students were interviewed by the School of Education at a Midwestern research university to investigate their enculturation processes of studying. During the process of that research, it became clear to me that Asian graduate students' behaviors and learning patterns derived from Asian cultural attributes and are different from American learning styles. As a member of this particular group, I explored Taiwanese graduate students' reasons for coming to the United States, their expectations before arrival, and their experiences in adapting to U.S. academic life after their arrival. It was imperative to recognize that American classroom discussion was usually dynamic and moved at a very quick pace. All of the participants indicated that they had trouble using English intuitively to convey their ideas in an ongoing class discussion. One participant commented that the fact that she needed to pay extra attention and effort in just making sense of the conversation in class inhibited her from making direct contributions. A participant stated her frustration: "My voice is imprisoned in my not-quite-perfect English." They also expressed their disappointment in the curriculum, which was designed only for native speaker teachers in training. Thus, their needs as international graduate students planning to teach English as a Foreign Language were not met. All

agreed that they were isolated and overwhelmed in their own coursework and rarely had a chance to share their academic struggles or learn about what other colleagues were working on. They all expressed having experienced loneliness, stress, and separation in studying in a foreign country and, significantly, voiced a desperate hunger to belong to a community.

2. Introduction

This research was derived from my fellow colleagues' social and academic alienation. I invited several EFL colleagues, four from Taiwan and one from Korea, to join me in forming an EFL teacher study group outside of a U.S.-based graduate course to provide each other with similar experiences with a collegial support group. This group not only allowed us as graduate students and future teachers to co-construct the meanings of new knowledge but prepared us for future challenges in the English teaching field. This forum encouraged participants to collaboratively assimilate new knowledge and theories.

In this process, the intention was to reflect on our hidden belief systems in regard to English learning and teaching and together modify and reconcile them with cross-cultural differences in EFL contexts. This "thought collective" (Fleck, 1935, p. 38) came into play through our process of problem-solving, information-sharing, and supporting one another. But how could a "thought collective" avoid the self-destructive impulse of using the group solely to air complaints? Teacher study groups bring people together to understand and share unavoidable struggles, confusions, and frustrations in the ongoing process of professional development. This paper intends to discuss how a group of EFL teachers, through collective reflection, not only came up with constructive suggestions and solutions but also supported each other in this process of growing in the U.S. program as well as becoming proficient EFL teachers.

3. Non-Native Speaker of English in the TESOL Profession

There is an increasing number of Non-Native Speakers (NNSs) who come to the U.S. to pursue their graduate degrees in programs like Language Education and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). However, there is only a small

body of literature concerning NNSs in the TESOL profession. The issues that have been addressed in the literature are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of NNSs entering the English teaching profession (Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), and the attitudes of students toward NNS teachers (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997). There is little information about the processes of NNS EFL teachers coming from other countries to pursue their graduate studies in the U.S.; that is, how they make sense of those theories initiated in Western countries, further their previous understanding of their underlying culture and its influence on their pedagogy, manage exposure to Western ideologies, and project the mediation of these conflicting values into their evolving teaching practices, both in the U.S. and in their home countries. As Liu (1999) indicates, NNS teachers actually outnumber NS teachers in the English teaching profession world-wide and globalization makes English an ever-increasingly important lingua franca. Furthermore, she claims that NNSs who pursue their training in English teaching graduate programs in North America, Britain, and Australia are two-fifths of that population. As Braine (1999) indicates:

> "Although English as Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) literature is awash with, in fact dependent on, the scrutiny of non-native learners, interest in non-native academics and teachers is a fairly recent phenomenon" (preface, ix).

It was evident that at the U.S. graduate school in which this study was conducted, the NNS teachers outnumbered the NS teachers, and yet little attention was paid to strengthen the voices of NNSs. While most of them returned to their countries to teach English as Foreign Language, their particular needs were left unnoticed in their graduate programs as they themselves needed to bridge the gap between what they learned in the programs and what they could implement in their home countries (Liu, 1999). I am particularly concerned about how these EFL teachers could manage these competing pressures while working on their degrees in their foreign learning context. What could nurture them through their learning process, so that they could transform the theories into relevant practice? This collective connecting and nurturing might lead to the participants questioning the cultural contexts to which they return upon the completion of their courses, as well as the cultural contexts of the United States. Research indicates that the gap between what most EFL/ESL programs advocate as useful, such as a communicative teaching approach and Whole Language in North America, Britain,

and Australia (NABA), cannot be directly applicable to Asian countries (Holliday, 1994). In order to facilitate the revision and transfer of these theories to Asia - a relevant project, given the significant population in the TESOL programs - new research is obviously needed. My group emerged to fill the void present in, possibly unintentionally, the ethnocentric pedagogy we were exposed to. Our reflections on both the theories and our distinct cultural positions were highly productive in localizing our knowledge in order to benefit our future students and contribute more international perspectives to the NABA programs.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Teacher Study Group

In the educational field, teacher study groups, also known as collaborative groups, are commonly sustained by four to ten teachers who share similar interests, and reach their individual goals through interaction and collaboration with other colleagues. Much research has documented that a teacher study group can be an effective avenue to support modern teachers who need to emphasize their ongoing lifelong professional development and can have a great impact on teaching effectiveness (Clair, 1998). Participation in reflective inquiry groups can "enable teachers…to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism…." (Freire, 1970, p. 74). In response to the trend of teacher self-improvement and keeping up with new innovations, teachers in a teacher study group gather together to promote trust and openness, and diminish the sense of isolation long experienced by most teachers. Through "living the process" (Short, 1992) in teacher study groups, participants are empowered to reflect on their current beliefs and practices regarding literacy learning, English language acquisition, and teacher education. According to Matlin and Short (1991), "for the teachers, the study group is an opportunity to think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practices, blend theory and practice, identify professional needs-as well as develop literacy innovation for their classrooms" (p. 68).

When professional development is examined through a constructivist lens, in contrast to participating in traditional teacher training models, teachers in teacher study

groups are able to construct new knowledge through a process of interweaving their schemata and valuable experience. In the teacher study group model, knowledge is not meant to be transmitted by experts. Constructivist notions of collaborative construction, context, and conversation (Jonassen et al, 1995) are crucial components in teacher study group communication. Teacher study groups build up a community in which teachers interact with a small group of people (ideally four to six) to share their hopes and concerns. In study groups, the teachers bring their specific needs and explore their profession together to identify problems and engage in ongoing professional development dialogue. By doing so, teachers can further comprehend their own experiences and the insights of other teachers, which leads the group to a new vision (Freedman et al., 1999). It reflects Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin's (1995) professional development model that "means providing occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners" (p. 597).

Teacher study groups are receiving increasing attention as effective tools for professional development at all educational levels. They provide a crucial format for teachers to gain ownership and autonomy over their learning, serving as a forum in community learning and offering avenues for self-actualization. Many schools have offered various groups for professional development. However, they are often run by administrators or others *outside* the group. Thus, the control lies with outsiders and so the teachers in these groups do not have any autonomy, but are just passively completing a predetermined agenda. In contrast, 'teacher'-initiated study groups are composed of teachers voluntarily joining a collaborative community to meet individual needs as well as to set collective goals as a group. Personal inquiry and exploration are controlled from inside by the membership and collaborative direction of the focus is owned by each member. In essence, each member shares a sense of equality and responsibility.

4.2 Critical Reflection

Noffke and Stevenson (1995) apply critical theory in student teachers' critical reflection and inquiry. They assert that student teachers need to be made aware of, and provided

with opportunities to practice critical inquiry and reflection. McClaren (1989) claims that critical theory "attempts to provide teachers and researchers with a better means of understanding the roles that schools actually play within a race, class, and gender divided society" (p. 163). The importance of exposing pre-service EFL teachers to critical reflection and inquiry in their professional development cannot be overemphasized. Knecht (1997) concurs, noting that "critical reflection involves open discourse that is free from dominance, repression, and inequality. In other words, all views are given critical consideration" (p. 18-19). Palmer (1998) stresses critical reflection by asking teachers to interrogate their own practice, asking, "Who is the self that teaches?" He further notes that "by addressing [the question] openly and honestly, alone and together, we can serve our students more faithfully, enhance our own well-being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world" (p. 7). Critical reflection fosters the most effective teacher interaction in a professional setting; by encouraging teachers to take a stand in questioning and challenging others' underlying assumptions, teaching practices can be improved and conditions of schooling can be made more just (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). However, critical reflection and inquiry do not come naturally to most teachers, so appropriate opportunities should be provided to enhance their practice, especially for those who are attempting to absorb knowledge in a U.S. graduate program and to bring that back to their home contexts. For this purpose, an encouraging and nurturing discussion forum should be established and promoted to enhance critical reflection. Meyer and Achinstein (1998) laud learning communities such as teacher study groups "for an inquiry stance which is meant to embrace critical reflection. Critical reflection is both a capacity and a process to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of teaching and schooling practices and to imagine alternatives for the purposes of changing conditions" (p. 7). In this respect, our own teacher study group attempted to provide us with the essential opportunities to pose questions, express confusion and surprise, reflect on how we had learned and taught English, help each other better understand our prior and current experiences, and, ideally, overcome the obstacles we faced as international EFL students, teachers, and scholars. It is believed that an inquiry group based on equality of participation and encouraging critical reflection can develop a critical awareness of issues naturally.

5. Context and Participants

The inspiration for forming this group began after our participation in a graduate course in a large U.S. Midwestern university, where five other EFL graduate students and the researcher met as an informal teacher study group outside of a graduate course. As individual foreign students and non-native speakers of English on our own, we had long experienced isolation, frustrations, and exclusion in an American graduate program. Having been isolated as foreign students and non-native English speakers, we found this experience so valuable that we decided to form an ongoing 'formal' teacher study group. This was a forum wherein participants shared concerns related to English teaching and learning, educational issues, and professional development. It drew on course materials and our classroom learning and teaching experiences, and was intended as a means by which we could reflect on and theorize about knowledge. The group continually reflected on our past English learning and teaching experiences, carefully examined the knowledge we gained in the Language Education program, and discussed together what would work best for our cross-cultural English classrooms. This collaborative inquiry group brought together individuals to share experiences, concerns, and struggles. We were embarking upon a process of dismantling the walls of isolation effectively by supporting each other in teacher professional development and providing each other with constructive suggestions concerning future teachers' inevitable confusions, frustrations, and struggles.

The study group comprised five participants and the researcher, all graduate students in the English as a Foreign Language related program. Their background details can be seen in Table 1. Pseudonyms were adopted for each participant other than the researcher.

Participant	Year(s) of teaching	Prior teaching level	Home Country	Degree Pursued
Li-Ting	6 years	College and K-12	Taiwan	Ph.D.
Hui-chin	2 years	College level	Taiwan	Ph.D.
Wen-Ling	3 years	K-12	Taiwan	Master's
Ru-Fang	4 years	K-12	Taiwan	Ph.D.

Moon	7 years	High School	Korea	Ph.D.
Kun	1 year	K-12	Taiwan	Ph.D.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information for the First Semester

As a study group, we articulated our own beliefs and practices and challenged the assumptions underlying our own behaviors, attitudes, and teaching in order to enhance our own learning and teaching practices. We began to interrogate how students were taught and evaluated, and to analyze and challenge the existing curricula and mandated policies in our countries. In the second semester, Wen-Ling and Li-Ting returned home, so two other participants were invited (see Table 2 below) and they agreed to join the group.

Participant	Year(s) of teaching	Prior teaching level	Home Country	Degree Pursued
Su-Fen	1 year	K-12	Taiwan	Master's
In-Soon	7 years	High School	Korea	Ph.D.

Table 2: Participants' Demographic Information for the Second Semester

6. Data Collection and Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing, using hermeneutic-reconstructive analysis, which involves the articulation of implicit features of meaning, such as meaning fields and validity claims, into explicit form. This method of hermeneutic-reconstructive analysis is guided by theories of meaning and culture (Carspecken, 1996). The researcher applied the first three phases of critical ethnography described by Carspecken (1996) as follows: compiling the primary record, doing reconstructive analysis, and generating dialogical data. From the beginning and throughout the study, data analysis took place alongside data collection to allow questions to be refined and new avenues of inquiry to be developed. Comparison from one meeting to another as well as across different sources of data was made to discover themes, patterns, changes and processes of development whereby participants themselves progressively articulated implicit structures into their discourse thereby provided both support and indications of needed refinement for the researcher's initial reconstructions.

The data transcripts consisted of 985 pages in double space for the group meetings and 216 pages for interview data.   In the first phase of data analysis, I read all data in a line-by-line fashion in its entirety and later checked for any emerging themes and analyzed the most important issues.

In the next step of data analysis, I created a graphic representation of the conversation that mapped the voices and responses of all the participants while discussing various topics. In other words, I categorized each participant's contributions to the discussion graphically so that I could compare the viewpoint of each participant to the overall conclusion of the discussion. Peer debriefing with graduate school professors on a weekly basis was done to check the emerging categories, reach mutual consensus, and check for validity. A participant check was completed on an individual basis to solicit further comments and facilitate continued analysis.

7. Results and Discussions

Given the chances to engage in dialogue with each other in the group, we drew on each other's experiences, observations, and interests to learn more about English teaching and learning. Through meaning negotiation, problem posing, and information co-construction, we acquired new knowledge of language learning and teaching. We shared our diverse understandings, took positions on issues, and gained new perspectives from each other. Inevitably, tensions arose when differences did occur but these led us to ponder those issues and revise our thinking. Gradually, we moved from vague ideas to a clearer understanding, from what we used to believe to a potential new understanding, and from initial questions to new movements. In this way, we generated more inquiries from sharing, reflecting on our past experiences, and on the possible pedagogical applications in future classrooms. We were encouraged to take thoughtful new actions through the way we structured our meetings.

As a result, the professional development process illuminated as follows in Figure 1: A) Learning through sharing; B) Contextualizing our concerns; C) Examining and challenging each other's underlying assumptions; D) Internalizing the knowledge

collaboratively before implementation; E) Inviting Other Group Members'
Contributions.
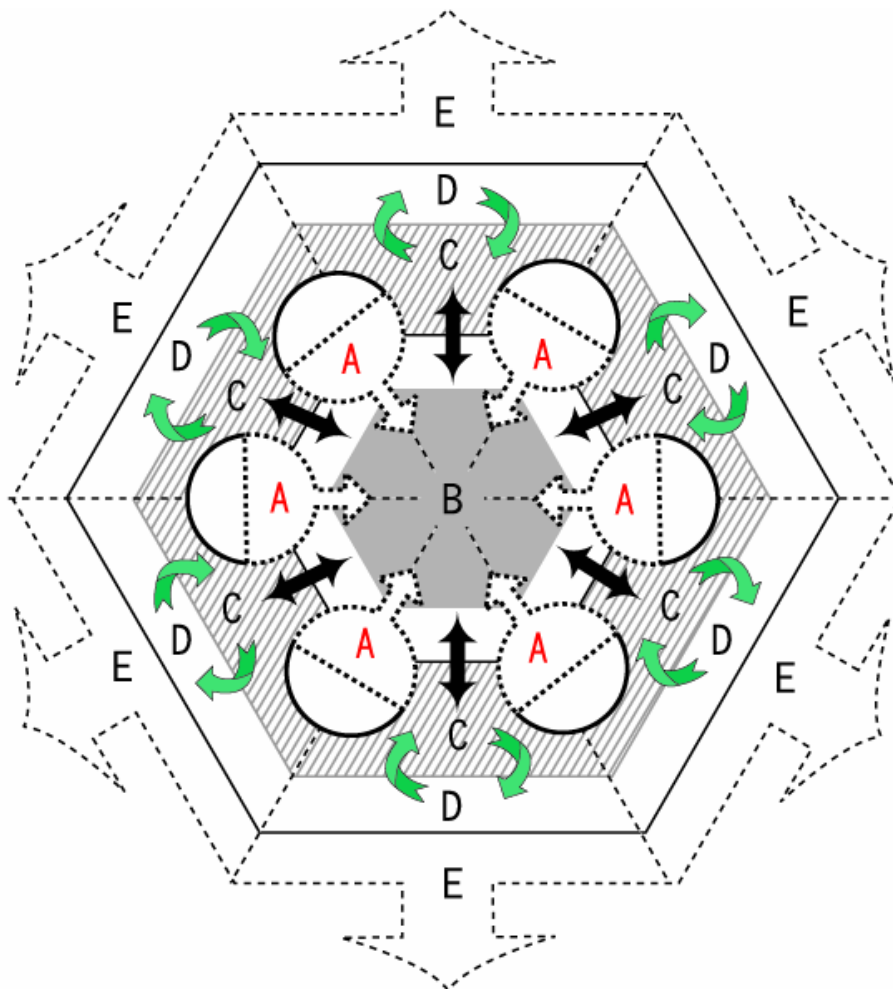
a) Learning through sharing,
b) Contextualizing our concerns,
c) Examining and challenging each other's underlying assumptions.
d) Internalizing the knowledge collaboratively before implementation,
e) Inviting other members' contributions,

Figure 1:   Professional Development Process

7.1 Learning through Sharing

"It is a good place for us to share. In our culture, we rarely share [in our teaching profession]. But now, I have more chances to share and listen to others' voices, [especially] we came from similar backgrounds and had similar concerns" (the Initial Interview with Wen-Ling)

7.1.1 Sharing Current Experiences as Graduate Students

Through group discussions, we went through vicarious learning processes while participants shared their experiences from observing U.S. elementary school classrooms, participating in research projects, and working with native English speakers. The forum allowed us to interact with and learn from other graduate students in the U.S. graduate program. Although our group members were studying in the same graduate program, we took different courses and participated in different projects. Sharing with other group members and listening to others' personal experiences greatly broadened our own individual experiences.

We discussed a wide variety of issues. To name just a couple of examples, Li-Ting shared with us her experiences of observing an inquiry-based classroom, so that our group could often make reference to that specific classroom to envision the dynamic in an inquiry-based curriculum. Kun identified the cultural differences between U.S. children and children in the Taiwanese culture by referring to a classroom observation experience.

Kun: Last time, I observed a first grade class. There was a kid [first grade who] asked me, "Can I make up my own story" because she could not read the book. Then she just narrated a story and turned the pages. She was so good at that. I guess our children could not do that. (Group Meeting)

Compared to those in the U.S., Kun suggested that teachers in the Taiwanese culture did not encourage students to express their thinking verbally but emphasized the importance of thinking, listening, and internalizing the knowledge over expressing personal reactions. In our discussion, we constantly compared the two educational systems and ideologies and learned more about their respective learning styles and cultural attributes.

One of the most significant issues we discussed was English learning in general, and writing in particular for us as non-native speakers. As Li-Ting also participated in a project of reading and writing in a local elementary school, she explained the design and the purpose of the project and utilized that particular experience to facilitate group discussion on our group members' writing pieces. Not only did our group experience the

process of being authors, but we also gained a picture of how to set up a writing workshop in our future classrooms. During our discussion, organized rather like a writers' workshop for ourselves, we vented our frustrations of being non-native speakers as we needed to spend tremendous time on English reading and writing and felt we never measured up to native speakers. We shared the underlying assumption that native speakers would have no problem in their reading and writing.

However, I brought in a new perspective from a course I took with all native speakers.

Hui-chin: This Thursday, I was so surprised on the day that my professor gave back our midterm papers; he lectured for two hours about the importance of writing. The professor said, "It is essential for you to learn NOT to write incomplete sentences." He pulled several examples from the midterm papers. I was extremely surprised to learn that native English speakers also did that. (Group Meeting)

It was a commonly held belief that because native speakers had the ownership of that language, they would rarely make mistakes. Continual sharing in the group broke our assumptions and served to encourage us. Li-Ting supported this view saying,
"You [referring to Moon] said we spent too much time revising your writing last time and you felt your time was wasted. [But as] I said, a lot of native speakers, if they want to be good, also have to spend a lot of time [on it]. I had an experience working with native speakers. We just wanted to come up with a 250 word proposal. We worked on that from one to seven-thirty, almost 7 hours. Can you believe that?" (Group Meeting)

Thus, Li-Ting demonstrated that writing is not just a skill, but a process of making thoughts clear, and she perceived that if a native speaker wanted to master writing, they also needed to put in much effort. She offered us a more optimistic perspective on our learning process as non-native English speakers: "Don't you think when you [as a non-native speaker] write, you also have to pay extra attention because [you] care how much people can understand it. [You pay attention] to how ideas come out and how [it] flows, so that the ideas become better ones." Li-Ting acknowledged the value of taking time to construct ideas when trying to write and think in a foreign language. While some of us regarded our non-native English as a weakness, Li-Ting encouraged us to be confident in ourselves and value the struggle of mastering a second

language.

In addition, Kun recognized the power of sharing in the group by commenting,

We came to this group….it is like a counseling session. We let go of our frustrations as graduate students or EFL teachers. Sometimes we got some suggestions from other members, but sometimes even we didn't come up with any solutions to the problems. I really feel my problems and difficulties were released from sharing (the Second Interview with Kun).

We shared our setbacks in our dual role as graduate students and future teachers, and encouraged each other in a constructive fashion as we all had similar experiences. Kun claimed that this kind of sharing worked like mental therapy in the sense that in articulating the feelings, one could "let go of" distressing experiences and contemplate solutions even though participants did not necessarily receive alternatives or feedback from other group members.

7.1.2 Sharing Past Experiences as Language Learners and Teachers

We related our past experiences as language learners and teachers in order to conceptualize the ways that we might connect our new knowledge and use it in our native lands. Li-Ting shared how she created different learning centers, such as reading, writing, music, drama, and computer centers, for multi-age English learners to engage in learning English. The discussion of the difficulties she encountered, how much she learned from that experience, and any lingering questions that she had advanced our knowledge of language learning and teaching issues.

In the group, our ongoing inquiries were accommodated and other members offered alternative solutions to problems and struggles.

Li-Ting: I think we probably need to explore ourselves more, you know, there are so many things [that] we didn't know about ourselves. Like how we really learn and how we were taught. Each time, it makes me think [what is the relationship between how] I learn and [how I] teach (Group Meeting)

It is interesting to investigate how understanding our roles as language learners and teachers can help us envisage how we would use our knowledge in the language

classrooms. Only through attentively connecting our past experiences with the new theories and knowledge could we enhance our understandings of language learning and teaching.

7.2 Contextualizing our Concerns

This teacher study group allowed us to contextualize our concerns as Asian graduate students and future teachers. Kun shared a classroom discussion situation with group members:

> "My colleague from Taiwan yesterday voiced her opinion in class that Whole Language cannot work in EFL settings because the students in EFL contexts just have one hour to four hours per week for English class. Besides, the whole context does not allow Whole Language to thrive since English is only a subject and people do not use English outside of the classroom" (Group Meeting).

He also pointed out that most of his American classmates did not know the difference between ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL contexts so that they could not situate our difficulty in implementing theories. Other members in the group were interested in how the professor reacted in the class and how we as EFL teacher learners should position ourselves to further the issue.

Li-Ting: That is good. So how did the professor respond?
Moon: [I think the] problem is [that] whenever we talk about our problems in our [EFL] contexts. [We always said there were] too many students in the class. Our problem is always the same. [The professors feel] so sorry for us.
Li-Ting: What? So sorry for us?
Moon: Our [class] discussion is always centered on the American setting. Our answers [to the problems in our contexts] are always like that "but we have 60 students in our class, it is impossible. We don't have enough time, it is impossible. We don't have enough text." It is not contributing to the classroom discussion. [What we did is] just explain our situation, but we did not [offer] insights.
Li-Ting: I think we did not push further. I am not saying that those concerns are not right. I am saying that we need to push them further to understand there are more problems and questions that are rooted in our [context]. That part is class size and we don't have enough material. YES, YES. That is all true, but a lot of people stop there. We did not push the issue further. I can say that even if I give you enough text and I cut down the class size to 25. I will bet the problems are still there. (Group Meeting)

This excerpt demonstrated the problem that we had long experienced in our graduate program: our needs as EFL teachers were different from our native-English-speaking classmates. Situated in a graduate program in the U.S., we examined how we

were positioned as graduate students and what hindered us from expressing the challenges for our own contexts. The graduate courses in the Language Education program are mostly tailored to English as first language literacy and for those in the TESOL program to English as a Second Language. A large group of graduate students from different countries came to these programs to learn to become EFL teachers. However, little effort was paid to meet the particular needs of EFL teachers.

Li-Ting questioned whether we could go further concerning the existing constraints we had in our contexts and looked for alternative possibilities. She said that even if the ideal classroom situation was provided she doubted that everything would be perfect. She longed for a forum through which a group of like-minded people could share the existing challenges and come up with potential alternative solutions rather than being confined by the constraints.

Moon: I know the problem is that in classroom discussion, I know that I want to push [the issue] further. They [the other classmates] are not interested [in that] because our concerns are not their concerns. So we stopped there.
Kun: So they [other classmates] could not give us solutions or something.
Li-Ting: That is a challenging for us too. If we talk to people, the conversation just stops right there and then there is no answer.
Moon: This [our comment] will be not important or contribute[able] to [the class] discussion. We just got tired and our problems--we needed to solve them ourselves.
Li-Ting: I think the professor will get frustrated too because it does not go further.
Moon: But we don't want to take too much time, you know, our language is also too slow [and] many things together, it doesn't go further. If you are slow, then the class loses the moment[um].
Hui-chin: That is why our group can put it further.
Li-Ting: Yes we came here to put it further. That is why we are not satisfied; even we had 17 days from morning to afternoon [in this graduate course]. We got it so small [in the cohort group] like 8 or 10 people. Still we want to push it further and think about that for our classrooms. But you have 3 hours a week [for a class] and so many people in one classroom. The intensity is not there. I think that is the point. (Group Meeting)

It was noticeable that we felt there was no room for our own problems in the American classroom discussions because, on the one hand, our issues were not what most American classmates were concerned about; and on the other hand, suggestions could not be given even after sharing our struggles, since most of the people in the class could not contextualize the problems and situations of EFL contexts. It was unavoidable for us to feel that we, as Asian graduate students, could not contribute our voices to the

ongoing classroom discussions due to the discrepancy between our educational systems and the U.S. educational system.

Moon also pointed out that our language proficiency was not adequate for speed of ongoing classroom discussions. Once in our group meeting, Wen-Ling and I also shared our feelings of guilt over not being able to contribute our voices in either classroom conversation or giving feedback in written forms to English-native speakers in our classes. We consciously examined how we were positioned in this U.S. graduate program and tried to create constructive solutions for our own challenges and dilemmas in regard to the dual roles of Asian graduate students and future EFL teachers. As a result, our culturally homogenous group often expressed how powerful this group was for each of us to share our concerns concerning EFL teaching and international graduate students.

> "In this group, we can situate what we learned and then talk about what it means to us. Because in the classes [we take], we won't have people focusing on the issues that we might face when we go back to our own countries. And I really value this part." (the Initial Interview with Li-Ting)

We acknowledged that this model of professional development contributed the most to our own growth and supported us in the process of absorbing new knowledge and transferring it to our own cross-cultural contexts. This forum satisfied us because we could voice our own concerns without too much elaboration, and because we came from similar educational contexts and cultures. From the start, we shared common ground, such as English proficiency, cultural background, and educational systems, and collaboratively solved the problems or provided potential solutions. In this group, we released ourselves from the burden of native level English proficiency in order to actively participate in group discussions without the fear of our non-native English being judged. We realized that we were empowered by challenging and supporting each other to push the issue further and contextualize our concerns, together as a group, instead of seeking any solutions to our own problems in the graduate classrooms. By means of continuing the dialogue, we each realized that problems or struggles were often common to us all and so further offered support and alternative solutions to each other.

7.3 Inviting Other Group Members' Contributions

During the intensive discussion with other group members, we were often inspired by our conversations. We appreciated the opportunities to gain alternative perspectives on diverse issues from listening to others and to be valued as individuals. We constantly shared our past learning and teaching experiences with other group members, so Li-Ting suggested that our group should collectively write a book about our personal stories.

Li-Ting: I really enjoy our conversation
Kun: Yes. Especially, this argument, "what is really fair?"
Li-Ting: And [also] cheating part, what is fair for education? I think, we should, six of us, together write a book, like one hundred stories about us, or something like storybooks. Because we always have stories like this to talk about, and that really connects people a lot.
Hui-chin: It was great to talk about those [teaching and learning] issues with Li-Ting. But we just feel the same thing and our views are too close. We didn't get another perspective. (Group Meeting)

Despite the relative cultural homogeneity of our group, we acknowledged the power of sharing and invited each other to put down our stories as learners and teachers in print. Our experiences as EFL learners and teachers helped us recognize our validity and, from that recognition, to connect with other teachers and make sense out of them collectively and cross-culturally. I made a distinction between sharing with individual colleagues and sharing in the group: assorted perspectives allowed us to gain new understandings of an issue from diverse angles which one-on-one communication did not always reveal. We often argued with other members to get our meanings across and negotiated meanings to reach a broader view. This could only be achieved by sharing in a group.

We initiated ideas about writing our own English children's literature, based on our localized cultures and learners' proficiency levels, rather than directly appropriating the texts from the U.S. Encouraging each other to work collaboratively with others to write for our EFL learners, we learned that each of us had a different specialty. Ru-Fang also recommended that we should write a grammar book different from the traditional, skills-based ones. She perceived the grammar books we had before as too skills-based and hoped to incorporate the rules into a storyline or other creative literature for us. Recurrently, each of us came up with different invitations that functioned as catalysts.

These different types of invitations, to transcribe our experiences or compose Asian children's literature, opened theoretical and personal windows for us. Even though we did not pursue these dreams at that stage, the possibility of articulating and executing them empowered us and encouraged us to push our limits further.

In our group, we often expressed our needs for understanding the new knowledge and then make good use of it in our near future. New invitations did incorporate our version of Whole Language.

Li-Ting: I hope we can do EFL Whole Language, something that comes from our heart, our experience, and our research
Kun: Great idea. Incorporate Whole Language in our setting.
Hui-chin: I think it is doable.
Li-Ting: My problem was how will all these make sense in EFL [contexts] and in what forms will be represented? So that we think that [EFL Whole Language] represents us and also be true to the theory.
Ru-Fang: Difficult
Li-Ting: But I think what about our version? I just want to come up with our own voice. What about our version of interpreting those theories. (Group Meeting)

We desired to produce our own version of Whole Language in EFL settings. Considering existing hindrances in our contexts, it was crucial for us, as EFL teachers, to envisage our own interpretation of a new philosophy. We recognized that it was inevitable for us to go through the process of deliberating on the knowledge itself and its implementation. Our goal was to honor the fundamental theories behind Whole Language while considering how best the new knowledge could be accommodated within our existing educational system.

7.4 Internalizing the Knowledge Collaboratively before Implementation

We often expressed how much this study group met our needs as international students and future EFL teachers. Moon shared her dramatic change after participating in this teacher study group. She indicated that before these experiences, she always did the minimum amount of studying required for her graduate courses. She did not find a strong connection between what she studied and what she would do as an EFL teacher. Other participants echoed her ideas of how this group made it possible for us to co-construct knowledge in the group and further internalize that knowledge in order to reiterate it in our future contexts.

Moon: I suddenly get interested in studying after joining this group. But at the same time, [I think] this system holds me [back]. I prefer to have this kind of study group or summer institute instead of going to school to study something in which I am not interested. I feel how nicely this group is made. It inspires me to study, continue to do this kind of group, and write a paper about it, instead of working hard for 2 years on writing a dissertation. Because I know a lot of people working hard to earn their Ph.D. but those people spoiled our education. They have very different attitudes. I know they have never been teachers before, but they went back to Korea and employed the new knowledge, but they don't have a clue how school works. They think they are *born* to be professors. They never have had school teaching experience, but they just study a lot and get the degree. After they had the long-term job as professors, they try to criticize the teachers in elementary or high schools.
Li-Ting: Yes
Wen-Ling: The teachers are always meant to be blamed.

This excerpt represented how Moon questioned the existing institutionalized learning process a Ph.D. student goes through. She favored the learning experience in a collaborative group over the other learning experiences, such as taking courses or writing a dissertation. She started to see herself as an autonomous and cooperative learner and believed she was a life-long learner. She had shared her opinions earlier with the group: "I think this system [graduate studies] holds me [back]. I feel I learned something and I want to go back and do something. But the problem is soon I need to take the qualifying exam and write a dissertation. I feel it is a wasting of time." She recognized the meaning of engaging in a study group like this and would rather focus on the issues relevant and practical to her. After intensive discussion in the group, we were motivated to put those ideas into actual classroom situations, and felt enthusiastic about education and our role as EFL teachers. However, we were absent from our home countries during a time of change, resulting in lack of knowledge about current situations. We vented our frustrations of not being able to bring the knowledge we were currently acquiring to the real-life classrooms and tried to find ways to fill this gap.

Carefully looking at how Ph.D. holders positioned themselves and were positioned in our educational systems, we criticized the professors with Ph.D. degrees in our countries who do not take cross-cultural factors into account and also ignore the practicing teachers' existing repertoires.

Moon: When they [Ph.D. holders] go back [to my country], they always said teachers are bad and wrong. They held tons of conferences to teach teachers. They focus on what they need to teach instead of understanding the educational system as a whole. That is

why there is always hostility between teachers and professors.
Hui-chin: This is really a good lesson for future professors like us.
(Group Meeting)

Moon criticized the distance between Ph.D. holders and practicing teachers at elementary and high school levels. College professors tend to impose the new knowledge they learned in the U.S. upon practicing teachers and devalue these teachers. All of us soon will be Ph.D. holders and possibly college professors. Each of us learned how the college professors and elementary and high school teachers are positioned and reminded ourselves to carefully examine cultural and educational differences before we try to implement the knowledge we learned. The group questioned why teaching experience is devalued but the Ph.D. degree is much more valued throughout Asian societies, as Hofstede (1986) reports, whereas higher degree holders often do not link knowledge and practice. We started to challenge the assumption that the higher the degree a teacher gets, the better teaching she will offer. This is often not the case if the Ph.D. holders do not make an effort to make the connection between practice and learned knowledge. On the other hand, we were also concerned that people who earn higher degrees often retreat to the ways they taught before, when they return to teach in their home countries; they do not implement new ideas.

Hui-chin: Why is that they [teach] the same way as they were taught or taught?
Moon: Maybe it is too difficult. And also, the system doesn't support the new ways of teaching. For example, they need to teach for the test, so it is useless to teach in communicative ways. (the Initial Interview with Moon)

In order to achieve change, the whole system needs to nourish the entire process of linking theory and practice. Teachers might experience frustration if not provided with approval and assistance. We realized that forming a teacher study group like this after we return home to teach will support us in grappling with the existing limitations in the school systems. It is reasonable for us to expect not to revert back to the old ways of teaching if supported by a group like this.

7.5 Examining and Challenging Each Other's Underlying Assumptions

In our discussion, we frequently challenged each other's hidden assumptions of language teaching and learning and encouraged each other to articulate our beliefs. We posed questions to continually examine our beliefs and also challenge each other:

"Why are those ideas and theories that came from our past teachers being attacked by the new theories we are acquiring right now? New ideas need time to prove [their] effectiveness."   (Ru-Fang, GM)

"Is tradition always backward and wrong? Many people still practice the traditions; does it mean they were being proven effective?" (Li-Ting, GM)

"In the future, when you teach, will you follow the ways how you were taught or implement these new theories and idea we learned here in the U.S.?" (Hui-chin, GM)

"We know different sign systems are important now. But if you were parents, weren't you nervous when your children were good in different sign system than academics?" (Kun, GM)

"We often expected our learners to learn at fast speed and showed the school or parents the promising products. So how could we allow 'time' for our learners to engage in the process while all school authority and parents expected is the test result?" (Hui-chin, GM)

"I can articulate what I believe…I can test what I believe, because my thinking was never being challenged and just sleeping in my mind. But now I start to talk with [you guys]. I can see clearly what I believe and maybe I can change, and revise what I am doing" (the Initial Interview with Moon)

Our doubts, uncertainty, and uneasiness led us to explore more about our lingering beliefs about language learning and teaching. We took time to deliberate on these recurring concerns haunting our minds. However, we did not always reach solutions. Inevitably, we sometimes felt frustrated by our conversations because we did not come up with solutions to our problems and felt we needed experts' suggestions. Gradually, however, we perceived that those lingering questions encouraged us to advance and re-formulate our understandings and left us more space to think about them at deeper levels.

8. Conclusions

As future EFL teachers coming from similar educational and cultural backgrounds, we formed this teacher study group as a forum to share our struggles and concerns with one another so that we could work together as a collegial community to solve problems and give each other feedback and suggestions. Our group aimed to ensure professional

growth so that our learning and teaching practices became rich and generative experiences for each participant. It was through inquiry that we as graduate students made connections between our past experiences and current learning and further bridged the knowledge co-constructed as a group to our pertinent contexts. The process of being involved in a collaborative group and negotiating meanings is central to the goal of transferring practical knowledge and theories to different EFL contexts. Our study group aimed to build a sense of community learning that made use of group members' inquiry, knowledge, and reflections as vehicles to construct knowledge, improve instruction, and promote professional development. We also saw the group as opening doors for us as EFL teachers with similar concerns, interests, and needs to connect in a community of learning to share lesson plans, ideas, and innovations. The fact that we were guided by theory validated our efforts as we started to take an authoritative stance in our own professional development process. Our voices, even in our non-native English, had been liberated because we had a shared understanding and similar educational and cultural backgrounds. While pursuing our degrees in the U.S., as international graduate students, we did not generally get the opportunity to practice our new knowledge in actual classrooms. This teacher study group provided an opportunity for us to organize and lead discussions, to design the study guide and leading questions for other members, and to reflect on our English learning and teaching experiences. This social context also allowed members to share and circulate up-to-date academic information, and then, consequently, to project what might or might not work in real classrooms. As a result, we familiarized ourselves with the rhetoric of different academic disciplines and developed a collective understanding of the TESOL profession, so that we could return to the larger community and deploy its academic discourses. Our voices and identity in the TESOL profession were thus strengthened and sustained through this supportive community. Most importantly, the community of the group provided each of us with social-emotional support and allowed us to share our difficulties in different aspects of study and work in U.S. academia. We came to realize that we shared the same circumstances and did not need to struggle alone in striving to become excellent EFL teachers.

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Teacher Development in EFL: What is to be Learned Beyond Methodology in Asian Contexts?

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Abstract

This paper investigates teacher development in EFL in the Asian context, specifically referring to the Thai and Japanese contexts at the tertiary level. It argues that teacher development for native speaker teachers of English would benefit from gaining local knowledge of the norms of classroom behavior and a background to the history of EFL in that country. This goes beyond finding appropriate methodologies for the local context, taking the learning process into the spheres of sociology, economics, politics and religion. As examples of such teacher development, it proposes a teacher development (TD) model for the Thai setting which explores the relationships between the classroom, society and religion. It also puts forward a similar, tabulated model for TD in Japan in which the history of EFL is traced to various social and political events. The paper concludes that there is a need for foreign lecturers to raise their awareness of influences upon the learner and the educational system in which the classroom is framed, and that this process needs to consider local, non-Anglo-centric concepts to enhance teacher development.

1. Introduction

This paper considers teacher development in tertiary EFL settings in Thailand and Japan. Whilst Thailand is often stereotypically considered to be less developed educationally and economically than the west, it is argued that teacher development (TD) into learner behaviour and attitudes towards English language study are essential for the expatriate teaching community to be effective teachers in the Thai context. A model for such TD linking classroom behaviour and attitudes is proposed to bridge the gap between western-learned educational knowledge and the local Thai classroom. This is an example, in essence, of the less 'developed' Thai cultural context being used as an important means to develop teachers from so-called more 'developed' countries.

The paper then turns to another Asian setting, that of Japan, clearly viewed as an advanced, more developed country both economically and educationally. Without taking a comparative stance between Thailand and Japan, another TD model is put forward, one which is intended as providing the means to discuss the historical links

between the history of EFL and social, economic and political events potentially influencing the trends in English language education in Japan. Finally, the conclusions attempt to synthesize the rationale for taking such a stance towards TD of native speaker teachers of English in these two diverse settings.

2. Teacher development in the Thai context

Looking firstly at the Thai context, I approach the TD of native speaker teachers of English working in the country by proposing an interactive model of tables which embrace educational, social and religious characteristics. The main religion of Thailand, Theravada Buddhism, can be seen as a belief system playing an important role in influencing everyday Thai social behavior and values. It is then natural to presuppose that the wider social and religious context around an educational establishment somehow permeates the fabric of its schools, colleges and universities. From this perspective, the classroom is like a microcosm or "sub-system of the country to which it belongs", reflecting its values, religious beliefs and economic realities (Buripakdi and Mahakhan, 1980, p. 259). This porous nature to classroom walls may or may not be conscious to every Thai in terms of what particular aspects of Theravada Buddhism influence their social and learning behavior, however, it is essential for expatriate teaching staff to themselves become aware that the learning environment cannot be isolated from all those potential influences. This awareness-raising among teachers is essential in enabling them to overcome cultural misunderstandings and gain a deeper understanding of Thai attitudes to the learning process (Brown, 2004; Adamson, 2003). Unfortunately, TD in the Thai context rarely entails such indirect study, concentrating rather on methodological and linguistic advancement. This is not to downplay the importance of such forms of TD. Indeed finding appropriate methodologies to suit local needs (Holliday, 1994) is an emerging and valuable conceptual force in the region.

So what typifies the Thai learner to inform a TD program what needs to be learned? Literature on the nature of Thai students in classroom situations often refers to the previously explained concept of "krengjai" (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995) whereby Thais are reluctant to express direct feedback to their seniors. Consequently, a Thai student may not be willing to ask questions directly to the teacher in the classroom for

fear of challenging face and causing offence. Ballard (1996) too states that a mirroring of traditional Buddhist values of deference to authority figures can occur in classroom settings. Another concept acting as a potential explanation for confusion is that of "sam ru am" (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995, p. 56) which in Thai Buddhism emphasises the ability to show restraint and composure in stressful situations. This may create the impression of passiveness in classroom discussions. As Buripakdi and Mahakhan (1980, p.269) remind us, there is seemingly a lack of "critical questioning" in the Thai educational system leading foreigners to conclude that the Thai student is unable to think critically, can only be "reproductive" (Ballard 1996) in learning and is, therefore, unprepared for the western lecturers' demands for critical thinking. Biggs (1994) summarises this mismatch of teaching and learning strategies and styles by warning of the wholesale import of western methodologies and assumptions about learner beliefs and attitudes into Asian settings.

In light of these difficulties, TD is necessary to, at least, inform the foreign lecturer of forthcoming silences and possible discontent among students. To counter this, research into Thai learner strategies and attitudes (Adamson, 2004; 2003) proposes workshops among the expatriate teachers and Thai administrative staff with a series of tables utilising three foci: common classroom behaviour and attitudes, social behaviour, and aspects of Theravada Buddhism. Of some importance in this collection of themes is the use of some key Thai expressions, perhaps difficult at first for non-Thai speakers. The rationale for this is that interpretations of Thai behaviour should, if possible, be made with reference to Thai cultural terms themselves (Mulder, 1996). This concurs with Wierzbicka's (1991) rejection of "monolingual universals or static global comparisons". Generic terms such as "shyness" or "reticence" are a vague means to use in assessments and are defined by the assessor according to their own socio-cultural norms. Table 1 illustrates these foci in no particular order or ranking. The criteria are taken from readings in the three fields (Mulder, 1996; Morris, 1994; Marek, 1994; Davidson, 1992; Cush, 1993; Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995). The choice is admittedly subjective and there may be more potential influences upon classroom behaviour. The renegotiation of such items, though, would form the basis of healthy discussion among teachers and administrative staff and could easily be added.

Table 1: Three aspects of religion, social behaviour and learner behaviour

Theravada Buddhist aspects	Thai social behavioural aspects	Thai learners' behavioural aspects
Karma	Success/failure, ambition & motivation	Goal-oriented Novelty
The Self	*sanuk*	Face
Compassion	*sabaaj*	Large group classes
Detachment	Individualism	Plagiarism
Wisdom	The Group	Book-oriented
Self-reliance	Pragmatism/utilitarianism	Rote-learning
Respect for monkhood	Thinking	Lack of critical analysis
	Authority	Teacher-dependent
	Responsibility	Teachers' pastoral care

The objective is to discuss how inter-connected these three foci are, how they inter-play with each other. There is no set answer as the outcome is the process of discussion itself. Firstly, it is proposed that the TD participants focus on the aspects of Theravada Buddhism and then attempt to trace, connect, and relate to their influences on social behaviour and then, in turn, learner behaviour. An example of this is shown in Table 2 from workshops conducted in a Thai college:

Table 2: Potential influences from Theravada Buddhism to learner behaviour

Theravada Buddhism aspects	Thai social behavioural aspects	Thai learners' behavioural aspects
Karma	Success/failure, ambition & motivation	Goal-oriented
	sanuk	novelty
	sabaaj	large group classes, lack of critical analysis
	Pragmatism/utilitarianism	Goal-oriented, lack of critical analysis
	Authority	Book-oriented, rote-learning,

		teacher-dependent & teachers' pastoral care

As can be seen, *karma* was thought to be related to various social factors from people's attitudes towards success and failure, ambition and motivation. These were then inter-linked with goal-orientation in the classroom. By simply asking participants to conceive of a relationship between Buddhist traits and classroom behaviour, the exercise becomes too difficult. This is where the intermediary stage of social aspects of behaviour plays an important role for participants since it appears to provide a bridge between the classroom and Buddhism, acting perhaps as a conduit.

The next stage in the TD process is to reverse the analysis by taking learner behaviour as the focus and then trying to retrace it back through social to Buddhist aspects. This is done to remind the participants of the primary objective of the exercise, that is, to explain and explore the reasons for classroom-based misunderstandings, not just to say with discrimination 'it's because they are lazy', or 'they just don't know how to study' which were common complaints among expatriate staff in my experience. Table 3 illustrates this process with the focus on a lack of critical analysis.

Table 3: Potential influences for learner behaviour from Theravada Buddhism

Thai learners' behavioural aspects	Thai social behavioural aspects	Theravada Buddhism aspects
Lack of critical analysis	*sabaaj,* pragmatism/utilitarianism and thinking	*Karma*, detachment, compassion and wisdom

The exercise itself, though, perhaps has the weakness of not being able to define the relative degree in which Buddhism or a social characteristic is related to learner behaviour, since, as can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, there may be connections with a variety of aspects. Again, this may form the basis of extra discussion, which is in itself a

form of TD. As Buddhist teachings themselves call for verification among religious students (Marek, 1994, and Gurugé, 1977), in the same way, these tables need to be probed, doubted and perhaps even agreed with. They are fundamentally formed by the workshop participants themselves and the resultant discussion in that process is a cathartic one which challenges teachers to explain, in some cases, their prejudice towards Thai students.

What has been described in this section is a proposal for TD in the Thai context. It is a negotiated transfer of local knowledge and serves as an example of what is missing in teacher preparation programmes for EFL teachers coming to Thailand, or even those who have already been present in the country for years working with frustration and even discrimination towards their students. It is not expected that every Certificate, Diploma or Master training programme in EFL include this, yet it does show clearly the need for the concept of "front-loading" (Freeman, 2002) to be recognised as a common cultural limitation on teacher preparation programmes. It is a proposal for deeper reflection about local context (Brown, 2004) which TD in the Thai context needs to integrate in some manner in the development of expatriate staff.

3. Teacher development in the Japanese context

I turn now to a different Asian context, that of Japan, in a similar educational setting, that of college-level EFL. Instead of comparing the Thai and Japanese situation regarding TD for native speakers teachers of English, I would like to focus on another possible TD model which can be used for EFL teachers. Much can still be said about the necessity for expatriate teaching staff to adapt their methodologies to local student needs and, like the Thai TD model proposed, for them to understand the wider social context which influences classroom behaviour. The Thai example of teachers from the 'developed' west learning from their 'less developed' Thai counterparts is an appealing concept, a re-examination of what constitutes appropriate educational knowledge.

The Japanese case is perhaps more complex, however, since religion appears to play a less overt influence on daily behavioral norms. Sensitizing foreign teachers to local educational norms in the more 'developed' Japanese case requires a slightly different

perspective of what criteria to use in tabulated form. For this purpose, Fujimoto-Adamson (2005), in an adaptation of work by Imura (2003), proposes models which require teachers, both foreign and perhaps even together with local staff (as in the Thai models), to examine and discuss the influence of social, political and economic events upon EFL history in Japan. These events are both national and international in nature and, again as in the Thai TD proposal, some concepts are in Japanese. An example of an adapted model can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4. The First Stage of English Education in the Showa Era (Imura, 2003: 289, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson)

Year	Events related to English Education	Social, political and economic events
1926	Starting of 'Primary English Program' by Kataoka on radio	Rise of the military right wing and *nihonjinron* theory
1927	Fujimura, 'Urgent, abolition of English Education'	
1931		The Manchurian Incident and assassination of the Japanese P.M.
1933	First reduction of English lessons at schools	
1936		Withdrawal from the
1937	Palmer went back to U.K.	League ofNations
1938		
	Fujimura, 'Abolition of English	Alignment with
1940	Lessons in Junior High Schools'	the Axis
1941	English words start to disappear from baseball (yakyu).	Japanese dress only encouraged
1942	Dismissal of U.K. and U.S. lecturers in all Japanese universities	The PacificWar

Other tables have been formulated for eras from the opening up of Japan in the nineteenth century to the present day. It is proposed that each era, based on the rule of an Emperor, is used as a separate TD session since discussions can become quite extensive. Viewing Table 4, this important period in time shows the decline in popularity of English from the late 1920s to the start of the Pacific War in 1942 and aligns it with the growth of military-led fascism. In many cases, the educational event may be directly correlated with political movements on the right. There are also social trends, for example, the encouragement of Japanese dress only for men and women which mirrored the increasing anti-western stance propagated by the right-wing governments of the late 1930s. Interestingly, in terms of EFL educational trends taking place, English words were increasingly removed from schools, textbooks, and even baseball terminology.

Historical perspectives appear to have some degree of influence over the various trends of English popularity and changes in government policies towards EFL. Again, as in the Thai models, this lack of degree of influence is not defined. Despite this shortcoming in the models, the basic fact remains that awareness of the interplay between educational events and the wider social, economic and political fields is limited among foreign EFL teachers in Japan. This often leads to misconceptions about why trends are taking place or government policies made. Such misconceptions need a historical perspective to enlighten the teacher, to make them see how English has experienced a number of booms and subsequent political and philosophically–fuelled backlashes. For the EFL teacher at the tertiary level, awareness of such issues translates into an understanding of why recruitment is becoming more difficult, why the curriculum is gradually changed methodologically and, in turn, why students in classrooms themselves have varying degrees of motivation towards English over time.

As an example of this inter-play which is not fully understood by teachers recently arrived to my own teaching context, the 1998 Winter Olympics which took place in the same prefecture ignited an English boom in both the private and public sectors, yet was followed by financial difficulties resulting from overspending on that event. Such

economic factors then induced a tightening of local government funding into education, and consequently a reduction in college budgets previously used to finance the recruitment of English staff and resources. Similar to the Thai case, the classroom *needs* to be viewed as a microcosm of the society around it, whether the teacher is conducive to such indirect perspectives on EFL or not. TD focusing on issues as far away from English teaching as politics, sports and philosophical trends, as in the pre-war *nihonjinron* movement stipulating the uniqueness of the Japanese (Buruma, 2003), can fill the awareness gap.

4. Conclusions

This paper has taken the stance that transfer of knowledge from the local context to foreign EFL teachers is an essential part of their long-term TD. The Thai context necessitates the supplementation to TD programs at the tertiary level of religious and social influences upon learner behaviour, whilst TD in the Japanese context requires economic, social and political (perhaps even philosophical) perspectives to be related to EFL educational trends and policies. Both, I believe, are, in the first instance, examples of how TD in the Asian context should go beyond methodological awareness-raising. In the second instance, they serve as valuable reminders of how foreign English language teachers can learn from both less developed and relatively more developed educational contexts. Perhaps the point here is that TD is an issue not directly related to whether the local context is an economically less or more developed one, but that the teacher is conducive to taking part in development sessions which are a step beyond those intended as appropriating their array of methodologies to the local setting. There must exist a willingness to think and debate issues which are perhaps beyond their original training in linguistics. As Ferguson and Donno (2003) indicate, western-based ELT training programs require the strengthening of the post-qualification foreign appointment by a bridge between their recently acquired methodological knowledge and awareness of the local context in which they are to apply this knowledge. It is exactly for that purpose that these exploratory models of TD have been devised.

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Exploring a Summer English Language Camp Experience in China: A Descriptive Case Study

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Key words: China, communicative competence, EFL, language camp

Abstract
This paper reports on a descriptive study of a summer English language camp held in China. Chinese youths ages 8-18 were taught conversational English through a variety of classes and activities. Instructors were visiting teachers from the USA assisted by local Chinese teachers. Qualitative methods were used to gather data. Results indicate that the camp was beneficial to the students and to both groups of teachers. Recommendations for further study are included.

Introduction

The People's Republic of China contains the largest concentration of English language learners worldwide (Hui, 1997; Zhang, 2004). Of the 1.2 billion people in China, an estimated 200 million are currently learning English (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Additionally, the need for English proficiency among Chinese citizens is rapidly expanding, largely as a result of economic and political growth (Luchini, 2004). China's entrance into the World Trade Organization and the country's successful bid for the 2008 Summer Olympics have been instrumental in broadening exposure to the global marketplace, where English is the standard medium of communication (Luchini, 2004; Nunan, 2003; Zhang, 2004). In response to such major events, Chinese leaders have implemented policies at the grassroots level to expand the use of English. For example, in the city of Beijing, English has become the common second language for taxi drivers, tour guides, and government officials.

The expansion of English language instruction has also been seen within the country's school systems. In 2001, English was introduced as a required subject for

students in primary grades in major cities throughout China, with the directive that other regions of the country were to follow suit as resources became available. This policy change lowered the age of compulsory English language instruction in China from 11 to 9 (Nunan, 2003). Implementation of the 2001 policy is not yet complete (Ashmore, 2003); however, even prior to the introduction of the official requirement, an estimated 3 million primary level students were already learning English as part of their school curriculum (Huang & Xu, 1999). At the present time, primary students in grades three and above (ages 9-11) typically receive two or three 40-minute English lessons per week, while for junior and senior middle school students (ages 12-18), the norm is five or six 45-minute English classes per week (Nunan, 2003; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996).

Although the educational changes evidenced in China in recent years are dramatic, they are not without precedent. Huang and Xu (1999) identify four prominent trends pertaining to English language teaching in China. Three of the reported trends highlight the momentum of innovations taking place within the language teaching landscape of this vast nation. They are: (a) a heightened emphasis on the study of English, as evidenced by changes in college entrance exams and the introduction of many private sector language schools; (b) a shift from teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to using English as a medium of education; and (c) a shift in the overarching goal of English teaching toward more communicative competence, as opposed to grammatical or linguistic competence (Huang & Xu, 1999). The fourth trend cited by Huang and Xu is the lingering presence of significant hindrances to educational reform in China. These hindrances are: (a) a lack of qualified language teachers; (b) extremely large classes, with poor teacher-to-student ratios; (c) teaching methods which focus on grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic phenomena; (d) test-oriented teaching; and (e) lack of suitable, authentic teaching materials.

Taken together, the trends presented by Huang and Xu (1999) reveal a growing emphasis on English language teaching and learning in China, as well as some recommendations for changes in regard to teaching methodology, conditions, and resources. Of particular note is Huang and Xu's mention of the shift in the overall goals of language teaching toward more communicative competence, and the accompanying

challenges inherent in that process. The question of how communicative competence can best be fostered in a Chinese context is one that has both fascinated and perplexed researchers and practitioners for the last two decades (Chan, 1999, Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Hu, 2005; Luchini, 2004; Ouyang, 2000; Rhao, 2002; Shih, 1999; and Zhang, 2004). In fact, there is considerable debate among scholars and practitioners as to the viability of implementing communicative methodology within a Chinese cultural context. Specifically, recent publications have highlighted the potential for cultural conflict and incongruity when western teaching methods are brought into China without regard for local contexts. (See Ellis, 1996; Hu, 2005; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004; and Reed, 2002 for a detailed analysis of this phenomenon.)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with its emphasis on interactive use of language for meaningful communication, has been officially sanctioned in China since the mid-1980s. However, as previously indicated, the adoption of communicative methodology has been fraught with challenges within the traditional, grammar-based instructional context of Chinese classrooms.

A key premise underlying CLT is that learners should develop communicative competence, i.e. the ability to use language to communicate appropriately in a variety of contexts (Hymes, 1971; Brown, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). In regard to spoken language, communicative competence involves knowing what and how to say what to whom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Communicative classrooms are learner-centered and characterized by an emphasis on language use, fluency, authentic language and contexts, and negotiation of meaning (Brown, 2001).

English classes in China have historically been conducted using the Grammar-Translation Method, a teacher-centered methodology that is known for producing excellent grammarians, with limited abilities in speaking and listening. As Shih (1999) reports, "The teaching of EFL in China...has emphasized gaining knowledge about the English language rather than using the language for genuinely communicative purposes" (p. 20). As evidenced throughout the literature on English language teaching and learning, there are significant philosophical differences between

the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative Language Teaching which are not easily reconciled.

While only a few studies have directly addressed teacher and student attitudes toward communicative language teaching (CLT), recent findings indicate that both teachers and students demonstrate a preference for grammar-based methodology and a resistance to communicative methodology (Hu, 2002; Rhao, 2002). Students' and teachers' preference for The Grammar-Translation Method has been linked by some researchers to the type of testing that is required of Chinese learners of English. Indeed, the Grammar-Translation Method has successfully produced learners who score well on the two main tests required of Chinese learners: (a) the national college entrance exam within China; and (b) the international Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). However, neither of these tests has measured the spoken language of learners; and as previously indicated, students of the Grammar-Translation Method have typically not performed well in terms of spoken language. Liu (2001) reports that after approximately 800 hours of instruction, most Chinese students "are still deaf and dumb in English" (Liu, 2001, as cited in Ashmore, 2003).

The issues surrounding the teaching and learning of English and, in particular, spoken English, in China are complex and multi-faceted; and there are no clear-cut solutions that can be readily implemented, particularly on a broad scale. And yet, with China's increasing exposure to the global marketplace, the present need for proficiency in spoken English is critical. It is within this complex milieu that opportunities for more informal means of English teaching and learning are flourishing. Native speakers of English are welcomed throughout China to serve as models of spoken English in a variety of contexts. One such venue is summer English language camps for children and youth, where native speakers are enlisted to serve as teachers of conversational English, often on a volunteer basis or in exchange for room and board. A review of the literature revealed an absence of studies specifically addressing English language camps.

Purpose

The need for spoken English proficiency in China has created rich opportunities for an

influx of informal means of English teaching. Native speakers of English are welcomed throughout China in a variety of contexts to serve as models of spoken English. One such venue is summer language camps for children and youths. To date, little or no empirical research has been conducted on these camps. The purpose of this study is to explore the teaching and learning dynamics at one such camp. The investigation was guided by three overarching questions:

1. How do summer language camp experiences influence the conversational English of Chinese students (ranging from 8-18 years of age)?

2. How are the summer camp experiences different from the traditional school experience for Chinese students (ranging from 8-18 years of age)?

3. What are the most beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers and what are the least beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study comprise students and their teachers who attended an English language camp in China during the summer of 2004. The 149 students are all Chinese, and the majority live in urban neighborhoods in Beijing. They range in age from 8 - 18; the gender breakdown is 69 males and 80 females. All students in this study are from one elementary through high school facility, and their parents paid for their camp attendance. Students who attend this type of camp are assessed as being of average or above average ability, and generally come from relatively high socio-economic family backgrounds. They were participating in a variety of classes and activities while at the camp. The average class size was 16. The Chinese teachers, who were selected by their principals to assist with camp, are all teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and are all from the same school complex. The teachers make up two groups: 10 visiting teachers from the United States (none of whom are professional teachers of English) and 10 local Chinese teachers. Additionally there are 24 teaching assistants from the USA. The American teachers, teaching assistants, and the camp leader live in the same geographic region of the USA.

Setting

The camp is organized annually and is sited on the coast approximately 200 miles east of Beijing. It runs for three consecutive weeks and is located in austere hotel accommodation where all participants are housed and all activities conducted. The daily camp schedule runs from 8 am to 9 pm. Students are grouped by grade level in classes. The average student-teacher ratio for each class is approximately 18 students to one visiting American lead teacher, one Chinese teacher, and two visiting American assistants. Classes meet at least three times daily in a formal classroom setting and run for approximately 45 minutes. The goal of the classes is to improve spoken English so the teachers plan lessons incorporating facilitated dialogues and working with partners in order to encourage oral practice. In addition to formal classes the camp organizes daily activities designed to encourage interaction among the participants. These include arts and crafts, sports and games, and learning activities such as drama, music and singing. Speaking in English is encouraged during all of these activities. Additionally an English Corner is held daily, offering a forum for informal English conversation among students and teachers. Several cultural sightseeing trips are also organized during the camp and spoken English is promoted and encouraged by the teachers during these outings.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered in two stages. Surveys (available in the Appendix) were used for the first stage and semi-structured interviews for the second. All participating students were asked to respond to a language camp survey. The questionnaire contains 16 items measuring reaction to teaching and learning at the camp. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each item on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Study participants checked the place on the scale that best reflected their feelings about the item. Scores were computed by adding points assigned to each of the 20 five-point items. Items are reverse-scored where appropriate to ensure the least favorable choice was always assigned a value of 0 and the most favorable choice was assigned a value of 4. Eight additional questions gathered informational data from each student. Visiting teachers from the United States and local Chinese teachers were also surveyed using separate questionnaires. A pilot study was

conducted on all of these surveys prior to the start of data collection. In the case of the instruments being designed for Chinese participants, the pilot study was conducted in China by a Chinese alumna of Regent University. Four Chinese students from different grade levels representing a cross-section of the proposed participants were asked to complete the students' questionnaire. The administrator noted the time it took to complete the questions, and asked the participants to translate the questions orally into Chinese as a way of evaluating the accuracy of their understanding. Unclear or confusing words or phrases were circled at this stage and later refined. For example, on the student questionnaire, the phrase "teaching methods" was modified to read "ways of teaching." Additionally, "the most beneficial" was changed to "the most helpful." A similar process was used to conduct a pilot study on the questionnaire for local Chinese teachers, and where necessary, question formats were modified to make them clear and unambiguous. Questionnaires for participating teachers from the United States were pilot tested using a number of subjects similar to the participants who were asked to comment on the wording of each question. Based on the pilot study results, minor modifications were made to some survey questions.

A set of principal questions was prepared for the semi-structured interviews and follow-up questions were designed to probe for additional data. Reliability of the interview questions was assessed initially by conducting a pilot study with a sample of students and teachers in China in advance of the actual interviews. The pilot study was conducted to determine whether the questions were clear and unambiguous, and also to show whether the questions were easily and fully understood by a sample of subjects similar to the participants. Following the interviews a sample of the analyzed responses was provided to an independent third party to assess them for reliability of scoring, and this peer review provided an external check of the research process.

Validity of the interviews was enhanced using the following procedures recommended by Creswell (1998). First, writing with rich, thick description enables the reader to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred to a similar population. Second, the analyses, interpretations and conclusions were reviewed by a professional colleague to help validate the accuracy and

credibility of the account.

Procedure

The survey questionnaires were administered to all participants (students and teachers) during the second week of the language camp. A representative of the researchers who had been fully briefed on the required procedures conducted all data collection. Care was taken to ensure that all survey questions were fully understood, with a native Chinese speaker in attendance to assist if required.

Following the administering and subsequent scoring of the survey questionnaires, participants to be interviewed were selected. This selection was taken from within the pools of students and teachers by purposeful sampling, and specifically by maximum variation sampling. Ten participants were selected from among the students, six from among the visiting American teachers, and four from among the local Chinese teachers. This particular sampling technique was chosen as any common patterns that emerged from great variation would be of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects (Patton, 1990).

Students, visiting American teachers, and Chinese teachers selected for the second phase of the study were interviewed separately and privately, and the confidentiality of the process was assured. The semi-structured interviews were recorded using detailed notes with an audiotape recording as a back up. A full and detailed record of each participant's responses was produced on completion of each interview.

Analysis

The analysis in this case study is limited to questionnaire responses and interview data that were collected. Established qualitative analysis techniques were adopted. A content analysis was performed on the data, examining topics, categories of topics, and patterns across questions. First, using interview questions to develop initial coding categories, data from the transcribed semi-structured interviews were coded and charted for each group of participants. Next, in an attempt to answer the three overarching questions, an

across-group content analysis was conducted and the results charted. Finally, all coded and charted data were analyzed again to discover major themes across the two sets of coded and charted data. The analysis was iterative in order to ensure that possible differences in the interpretation of responses were explored. To check the reliability of the analysis, a peer review was conducted to obtain a second opinion on the findings. An audit trail was maintained throughout the analysis. Finally the data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions were taken back to a representative of the participants to comment on the accuracy and credibility of the account.

Results

Results are reported under four categories: overarching questions, most valuable aspects, recommendations for improvement, and emerging themes.

Overarching questions

The first overarching question asked how summer language camp experiences influence the conversational English of Chinese students (ranging from ages 8 to 18 years). The data revealed that the language camp students are highly motivated to speak English. Salient motivators that were identified include interaction with native speakers; the novelty of a relaxed, casual, enjoyable setting; the opportunity to get to know Americans and American culture; attention and encouragement from the visiting American teachers; and participation in games, singing, dancing, drama, sports, and field trips. The data also indicated that students had numerous and continual opportunities to use conversational English in various meaningful contexts with native speakers. This included the following:

1. Interaction in a variety of settings (educational and social) and groupings (one-on-one, dyads, small groups, and large groups) and interaction through a variety of activities such as singing, sports, drama, games, and formal and informal conversations with native speakers.

2. Acquisition of English through direct teaching as well as the aforementioned activities with adult visiting teachers and visiting young people who are peers.

3. Relationship building through social interactions.

The second overarching question explored ways in which the summer camp experiences

differ from the traditional school experiences for Chinese students (ranging from ages 8 to 18 years).

Major differences between summer English language camps and traditional schooling in China as reported by students include focus (spoken English), context, content, methodology, activities, materials, and interaction with native speakers.

Specifically, reported differences include practice of spoken English with native speakers; relationship-building with Americans and learning about American culture; use of casual English; and acquisition of more English idioms. Reported differences also include practice of spoken English in an enjoyable, relaxed setting; interactive teaching methods and activities; the absence of homework; innovative practices; relationship with teachers in an instructional setting; and teacher attitude and behaviors.

The final overarching question explored the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the camp for students and teachers. Analyses revealed the differences displayed in Tables 1-3. The data show that the students favored learning English with native speakers and benefited from the instructional methods employed; they would have preferred being grouped by proficiency; and they would have welcomed some free time scheduled in the program. Chinese teachers learned new teaching methods from the visiting Americans, and also built deeper relationships with the students; they also would have preferred proficiency grouping and scheduled down time. The American teachers benefited most from the relationship building opportunities afforded by the camp; they too reported that scheduled free time would permit all participants to re-energize.

Table 1

Chinese Students: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
Learning English • Learning and practicing spoken English with native speakers Instructional Practices	Instructional Practices • Absence of grouping according to levels of English proficiency • Reluctance of American teachers

Structure of the day	to correct student pronunciation
• Structure of the day • Instruction and activities in a caring, relaxed, fun-filled environment with low teacher-student ratio and teaching assistants who were peers	Schedule • Absence of time in the schedule for students and teachers to re-energize

Table 2

Chinese Teachers: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
Professional Development • Learning from American teachers to make classes more interesting and teach with more spirit • Improving spoken English Relationship with Students • Building deeper relationships and gaining deeper understanding of their Chinese students.	Grouping • Absence of grouping according to levels of English proficiency Schedule • Absence of time in the schedule for students and teachers to re-energize

Table 3

American Teachers: Most Beneficial and Least Beneficial Aspects of Camp

Most Beneficial Aspects	Least Beneficial Aspects
Relationships • Relationships with Chinese students • Friendliness of Chinese teachers and workers	Schedule • Absence of time in the schedule for students and to re-energize Accommodations • Spartan-like hotel

- Acquaintance with other fellow teachers prior to the camp experience - Unity of the team of visiting teachers - Sharing of gifts and expertise - Team teaching - Personal Change	accommodations and poor quality of food

Most valuable aspects

Analysis of the data also revealed the most valuable aspects of the camp according to each group of participants. For the students it was learning and practicing spoken English with native speakers. Chinese teachers indicated that for them the most valuable aspect was learning new methods for teaching English, while the teachers from the USA most valued the opportunity to build relationships with Chinese students and teachers.

Supporting testimonies regarding the students' learning of English were provided by Chinese and American teachers. Testimonials provided by the Chinese teachers include:

1. A student who did not like learning English under the grammar translation method was motivated to want to become a speaker of perfect English.

2. A student who was doing poorly in English in the Chinese school learned to love English and learned a lot of English vocabulary.

3. A student improved her spoken English and stated that she liked English more than ever before.

Visiting teacher testimonies include descriptions of two students: a boy who was identified as a natural leader who became demonstrably more verbal and a boy who was reported as previously unmotivated who demonstrated a strong desire to communicate; i.e., he made a special effort to speak English at the camp.

Participants' Recommendations for Improvement of the Camp

Although participants reported a variety of benefits of the camp, some areas for

refinement were noted. The major recommendations included (a) adjustment of the daily schedule to build in some time for teachers and students to reflect and re-energize; (b) incorporation of time for Chinese teachers and American teachers to interact on matters of teaching learning; (c) provision of more instructional training for American teachers; and (d) grouping students by language proficiency levels. Both groups of teachers (Chinese and American) expressed a desire for further instructional training and all participants expressed a desire for some free time in the daily camp schedule. Chinese teachers and students recommended grouping students by language proficiency levels and not just by grade level.

Emerging themes

Throughout the analysis, three dominant, emerging themes were identified. These themes are:

1. learning and practicing spoken English;
2. building and valuing of personal relationships;
3. experiencing and valuing personal and professional change.

The primary goal of the camp was the learning and practicing of spoken English. Analysis of the data showed that each of the three categories of participants reported that the goal was met. Data analysis also revealed two residual effects that were interwoven throughout the camp experiences of participants, in the form of relationship building and experiencing change. Participants reported that relationships were built and strengthened on multiple levels: student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student. Additionally, members of all three groups of participants reported instances of personal and/or professional change.

Discussion

From the analysis of data obtained both from questionnaires and from interviews, a number of preliminary determinations can be drawn. Foremost, participants in this study indicated that the camp was effective in its primary objective of teaching spoken English. Chinese students, Chinese teachers, and visiting American teachers who were interviewed reported improvement in spoken English proficiency on the part of the students. When students were asked to identify the most helpful aspect of the camp,

they indicated practicing and improving spoken English. Additionally, Chinese and American teachers cited specific examples of students who exhibited dramatic changes in their level of motivation and enthusiasm for learning the language. One of the most influential factors relating to the improvement of students' spoken English was the manifold opportunities to practice spoken English with native speakers through classes, activities, and personal interactions. Because this study was primarily descriptive in nature, no inferential statistical processes were employed and the amount of improvement for individual students or students as a group was not determined.

Recurring themes throughout the data analysis suggest that the positive effects on language proficiency and motivation may spring from a synergistic interaction of three elements: (a) the camp context; (b) the interactive nature of the teaching and learning activities; and (c) the opportunity to use spoken English for authentic purposes. By its very nature, a camp setting is removed from the everyday experiences of students and teachers alike. Language camps, where two cultures meet in a novel setting to focus on spoken English, provide students with rich and authentic language experiences. At the camp described in this study, the teaching and learning experiences were characterized by engagement and interaction. Since students and teachers were housed at the same hotel, shared meals, and were involved in various activities and teaching and learning experiences from early in the morning to late in the evening, opportunity to practice spoken English was maximized.

As reported in the study data, the numerous formal and informal opportunities for teachers and students to converse using English in meaningful contexts were valued by participants. From the camp's many and varied interactive learning activities, the Chinese students indicated that drama, music, games, sports, and conversations with native speakers were the most helpful in facilitating improvement in their spoken English. Interestingly, these informal means of instruction contrast markedly with the type of methodology typically seen in traditional language classrooms in China, where the main focus is on mastery of grammar-based curriculum. Thus, a beneficial aspect of the language camp is that it complements in a limited but distinctly different way the formalized school experience by affording teachers and students the opportunity to

focus almost exclusively on interactive use of English.

Perhaps even more importantly, the camp provides a unique opportunity for participants to use English for authentic purposes. One of the primary manifestations of authentic use of language at this camp was in the building of relationships. Participants revealed that relationships were developed and strengthened on multiple levels: student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, and teacher-to-student. The authentic use of language happened rather naturally as a by-product of the sustained interaction that took place at the camp. Interestingly, while the teachers at this camp were not trained in CLT, the type of authentic language interaction that is the core of CLT occurred. Thus, an important insight from this study is that students were not resistant to interactive language instruction as reported in past studies pertaining to student attitudes (Hu, 2002; Rhao, 2002). In fact, Chinese students indicated that they valued these experiences. Considering the unique context of summer language camps, and the personal and social nature of the language learning process, it is speculated that the camps have potential as vehicles for promoting spoken language proficiency among Chinese students.

As evidenced in this study, other hallmarks of the camp phenomenon are relationship building and personal and professional change. Notably, when reporting on the most valuable aspects of the camp, all interviewees alluded to some form of these elements. Consequently, all participants became learners, teachers and students alike.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for additional study are offered:

1. Replicate this study in other English language camps in China to compare results. Since this study is an initial investigation into what is happening in English language camps in China, it should be replicated with the addition of quantitative measures to determine the amount of improvement in spoken English proficiency as well as to examine other aspects of the camp phenomenon not measured in this study.

2. Conduct a quantitative study to verify the self-reported data and examine the

amount of spoken English learned at language camps and to determine whether the spoken language acquired at the camp is retained over time. Use standardized assessments (pre-, post-, and delayed tests) of spoken English such as the PhonePass Test.

3. Include a measurement of community since summer camps in general have distinct characteristics such as offering a fresh context, release from the usual routine, a unified focus, choice to attend, a certain mystique of bonding among the participants and the forging of a totally new sense of community.

Concluding Thoughts

This study has provided the opportunity to learn more about the dynamics within one language camp in China. We have seen that rich benefits flowed from this particular camp and all participants in the study indicated that the primary goal of the camp was accomplished. At the same time, participants offered valuable recommendations for making the camp experience even more meaningful and effective.

Researcher responses to participants' recommended improvements are supportive. It is recommended that (a) the daily camp schedule includes time to re-energize for students and teachers as well as time for Chinese and American teachers to interact concerning teaching and learning; (b) the camp director enlist an English language teaching specialist who understands Chinese culture to serve as a trainer-consultant to visiting American teachers; and (c) the teachers group students by language proficiency especially in the more formal teaching and learning sessions.

With these types of enhancements together with others that may be revealed by further research, summer English language camps like the one examined in this study may be an untapped resource that could play a role in addressing the growing need in China for spoken English proficiency. These camps also have great potential to provide rich opportunities for exchanging individual worldviews, promoting cultural understandings, experiencing professional and personal growth, and fostering meaningful and lasting friendships across cultures.

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Appendix A

LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

What grade are you in at your school?   …………

How old are you?   ………….

Are you male or female?........................

What languages do you speak in addition to Chinese and English? …………….

How many years have you studied English? ……………..

What grade were you in when you started to learn English at school? ....

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

For questions 1-15 please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA   (Strongly Agree)

A   (Agree)

N   (Neutral or uncertain)

D   (Disagree)

SD   (Strongly Disagree)

1. I enjoy learning English in a group of other students

2. I find the classes at this camp difficult

3. The teachers at the camp make learning English seem easy

4. I have previously learned all of my English at school

5. The teaching methods at the camp are different from those at my school

6. I am learning many new English words at this camp

7. Reading English in textbooks is the best way for me to learn

8. I prefer to learn English by listening to English speakers talk

9. This camp is helping me with my spoken English

10. The teachers at my school make learning English seem easy

11. Learning English is more fun at the camp than at school

12. I find the classes at this camp quite easy

13. I learn English best by memorizing lists of words

14. I am more confident in speaking English as a result of this camp

15. I prefer learning English in my classroom at school

16. I think the morning classes are more helpful for learning English than the afternoon and evening activities

Finally, please respond to the following questions:

A. On a scale of 1-9, with 1 being the lowest and 9 the highest, please indicate how much English you think you are learning at this camp compared to how much English you would learn in the same amount of time at school. ………….

B. What are the most beneficial aspects of this camp for you?

………………………………………………………………………………………

C. What are the least beneficial aspects of this camp for you?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

D. What do you do best in English?

--------speak   ----------read   --------listen   -----------write

E. Which of these is the most difficult for you in English?

--------speaking   ----------reading   --------listening   -----------writing

F. When you are not at camp, how many hours per week do you spend speaking

English? ----------   How many of these hours are outside of school?....................

G. When you are not at camp, which of the following do you do in English?

-----talk to friends   --------watch TV   -----------listen to radio

-----talk to parents   --------talk to family   ----------- listen to music

-----read books   --------read newspaper   -------- use the internet

-----read magazines   --------play computer games   ---------watch movies

H. Why do you want to learn English?

-------to talk with friends   ………..for future career   -----------for travel

………...required to learn it at school   ………..interested in the language

………interested in the culture   ……..other   (please explain) ………………

Appendix B

LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VISITING TEACHERS

Are you male or female?.........................

Have you taught English to Chinese students previously?..............

Have you taught in a language camp previously?...................

What is your occupation at home?---------------------

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

Please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA   (Strongly Agree)

A   (Agree)

N   (Neutral or uncertain)

D   (Disagree)

SD   (Strongly Disagree)

1. I find it easy to teach English at this camp

2. Students seem to be more confident speaking English as a result of the camp

3. Teaching at this camp is frustrating for me

4. I think the camp activities are beneficial for students learning English

5. The students are improving their ability to speak English at this camp

6. Teaching at this camp is more difficult than I expected

7. I was well prepared for the non-teaching aspects of this camp, such as living conditions, cultural considerations, and team interactions

8. The students appear to be enjoying the English teaching at this camp

9. I think the morning activities are the most beneficial for learning English

10. I am learning a lot from teaching at this camp

A. What do you think is the best aspect of this camp for you?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

B. What do you think is the least beneficial aspect of this camp?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix C

LANGUAGE CAMP QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS FROM BEIJING

Are you male or female?.........................

What do you teach at your school in Beijing?...........................

What grade do you teach?..............................

How long have you been teaching?...........................

Have you taught in a language camp previously?...................

On the attached sheet are some statements regarding the teaching and learning at the language camp. Please give us your own opinions by indicating whether you agree or disagree with the items as they are stated.

Please write alongside each statement (to the LEFT of each number) one of the following:

SA   (Strongly Agree)

A   (Agree)

N   (Neutral or uncertain)

D   (Disagree)

SD   (Strongly Disagree)

1. Students seem to be more confident speaking English as a result of the camp
2. I think the afternoon and evening camp activities are beneficial for students learning English
3. The students are improving their ability to speak English at this camp
4. The students appear to be enjoying the English teaching at this camp
5. I think the morning activities are the most beneficial for learning English
6. The methods used to teach English at this camp are very different from the methods used in my school

7. I would like to assist with this camp again in the future
8. I enjoy working with the English speaking teachers at this camp
9. I intend to use some of the teaching methods I have seen at this camp when I return to my own school
10. I think all students would benefit by attending a summer language camp like this one

A. What do you think is the best aspect of this camp for the students?

………………………………………………………………………………………

B. What do you think is the least beneficial aspect of this camp for the students?

………………………………………………………………………………………

C. I think the teaching at this camp could be improved by………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………….

An Analysis of Chinese EFL learners' Beliefs about the Role of Rote Learning in Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Dr Xiuping Li

Abstract

(Full version available at http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/xiuping_11-05_thesis.pdf)

This study sets out to investigate Chinese EFL learners' beliefs about the role of rote learning (RL) in vocabulary learning strategies. The focus of the study is Chinese EFL learners' culturally-influenced beliefs about their preference for RL strategies as opposed to other memory strategies (MSs). Based on the literature, there is a widely held belief that Chinese EFL learners rely on RL and that they are passive learners. Although recent studies (e.g. Bond ed. 1996; Kember, 1998; Kennedy, 2002), have offered reinterpretations of the values concerning RL from Confucian heritage cultures (CHCs), no specific or systematic study appears to have been carried out to focus on RL to discover precisely how and why Chinese learners hold the belief that they rely on RL. What is more lamentable, there is no clear description of the features of RL and almost no consensus in the literature of which memory category RL exactly belongs to.

The study addresses the need for a concrete understanding of the role of RL in EFL vocabulary learning by looking at Chinese EFL learners' own beliefs. This study has four main aims: (1) to promote a concrete understanding of the concept of RL in the literature; (2) to explore Chinese EFL learners' culturally-based beliefs about their preference for RL strategies; (3) to offer a challenge to widely-held beliefs that Confucian culture is a negative influence on learning; (4) to offer guidance to EFL teachers/researchers who are interested in Chinese EFL learners' memory strategy choice and use.

The data for the study was obtained through three instruments---questionnaires, interviews and an English vocabulary test. The subjects were 100 Chinese learners in the English Department at a large University in the Northeast area of China. To confirm the results of the study and to show their generalisability across China, open-ended questionnaires were also administered to Chinese university teachers from different parts of China as "advanced learners". The data was analysed using descriptive analysis, Condorcet's method, Kendall's W, content analysis, chi-square, triangulation and factor analysis. The main hypothesis (Chinese EFL learners believe that RL strategies are preferable to other memory strategies for learning and memorising vocabulary. They hold positive beliefs about RL, because they consider RL strategies to be consistent with traditional Chinese culture and values) are supported by both quantitative and qualitative results.

The findings of the study indicate that Chinese EFL learners generally hold highly positive beliefs about RL in EFL vocabulary learning because they believe that this form of RL---an integration of repetition, memorisation, practice, including reviewing and understanding---suggests consistency with traditional Chinese culture and values. The results also suggest that there is significant difference between the learners who

hold positive beliefs and those hold negative beliefs about RL. A factor analysis of the 28 items on their beliefs showed the current situation for Chinese EFL learners, reflecting traditional Chinese learning strategies (Active CHC-based MSs; Repetition with perseverance strategies; Repetition with association strategies; Memorisation through practice strategies; Exam-oriented MSs and Repetition to enhance better use of words strategies), which serve as the features that could characterise Chinese EFL learners. Six factors (Chinese educational/cultural background; EFL environment; traditional habit; national situation/examination demand; Chinese linguistic background/the way of learning mother tongue; and Failure to try out "best" strategies) were identified relating to the reason why RL was so popular and why there continues to be a reliance on RL in China. The responses from teacher questionnaire ascertained the generalisability of the findings.

The findings of the study indicate that Confucian heritage learners' use of RL actually involves far more complex processes than have been supposed to be the case. Thus, the researcher suggests a new term "Active Confucian-based MSs" to distinguish these strategies from passive RL.

The subjects' beliefs also suggest that they believe RL is an effective way of learning EFL vocabulary, but not the best way. However, the findings suggest that their belief that RL is consistent with Chinese culture and values tends to override other considerations.

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Revisiting the Concentric Circles: Conceptual and Sociolinguistic Considerations

Joanne Rajadurai

Abstract

The Concentric Circles Model promoted by Kachru has had a tremendous impact on the teaching and research enterprise, as its underlying tenets have demanded a reappraisal of dominant concepts, models and practices in sociolinguistics, SLA and TESOL. However, this paper takes on a critical re-examination of the model, and discusses some of its intrinsic and perhaps unforeseen shortcomings, typified in its centre-periphery framework and its geo-historic bases. It also highlights certain drawbacks that have become salient in the face of globalization, and these are explored in terms of changing norms, contemporary patterns of language use and the rise of EIL. In response, it is suggested that for a model to be relevant, it must focus on individual speakers, their communicative competence and patterns of interaction. In particular, the paper draws attention to the 'glocal' nature of English: the need for speakers to be able to function effectively both in local and global contexts of use. The discussion concludes by considering how a reconstituted model can impact attitudes and inform classroom pedagogy.

1.0 A brief description of the Three Circle model

In a seminal article, Kachru (1985) drew attention to the global diffusion of English and resultant innovations around the world. Describing the sheer magnitude of the spread of the English language as unprecedented, he pointed to the changing demographic distribution of the language, as well as its new roles in terms of range of functions and depth of societal penetration. This, he went on to argue, had rendered the traditional dichotomy between native and non-native speaker uninsightful and linguistically questionable. Instead, he proposed the use of the term World Englishes to symbolize "the functional and formal variations, divergent sociolinguistic contexts, ranges and varieties of English in creativity, and various types of acculturation in parts of the Western and non-Western world" (Kachru, 1992, p.2).

Furthermore, Kachru (1985) described the spread of English in terms of three

concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. These circles represent "the types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages" (Kachru, 1985, p.12). The Inner Circle comprises the traditional bases of English, dominated by the mother-tongue varieties, that is, where English is the primary language of a substantial, often monolingual, majority. Countries in the Inner Circle include the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Outer Circle is primarily made up of countries where English has a colonial history, and where the language has developed institutionalized functions. Although English may be accorded an important status by language policies, it is only one of two or more codes in the linguistic repertoire of the speakers, who are usually multilingual, or at least bilingual. Hence, English typically exhibits an extended functional range in the Outer Circle and is used in various social, educational, administrative and literary domains. In addition, the language displays a significant depth in terms of users at different levels of society, resulting in a cline of competence manifested in educated to bazaar sub-varieties of English. Most of the countries placed in the Outer Circle are former colonies of the UK or the USA, such as Malaysia, Singapore, India, Ghana, Kenya and others.   Finally, the Expanding Circle includes the rest of the world, where performance varieties of the language are usually used, essentially in restricted contexts. In general, English plays a role here as a foreign language for international communication and for specific purposes as in the reading of scientific and technical materials. Countries in the Expanding Circle include China, Egypt, Indonesia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and others.

Kachru (1985) also distinguished speech fellowships with reference to the circles and described them as norm-providing, norm-developing and norm-dependent. The Inner Circle was seen as norm-providing, but within these Inner Circle Englishes, the British variety, and more recently, the American model seem to form an elite, preferred group. In the norm-developing speech fellowships of the Outer Circle, a tension may be observed between linguistic norm and linguistic behaviour, resulting in divided attitudes towards endocentric norms. Finally, norm-dependent varieties were said to be used in the Expanding Circle countries, and these norms are essentially external (usually American or British).

2.0 The value of the model

When it was first proposed, the concentric circles paradigm proved to be extremely useful as it raised awareness of and appreciation for the contexts and varieties of English worldwide, and also provided a framework for the study of World Englishes. According to Kachru (1985), using the concept of speakers of English from the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles is preferable to the traditional native, ESL, EFL labels because the latter maintains the native-nonnative dichotomy between *us* and *them*, whereas the former emphasizes WE-ness. Moreover, the idea that English is someone's second language, implies that it is someone else's first language, and this, it is argued, creates problems. It gives the impression that English belongs to the native speaker who owns it as his first language; as for the rest, "it is almost unavoidable that anyone would take 'second' as less worthy" (Kachru and Nelson, 1996, p.79). In contrast, the Three Circle model helps promote varieties of English by drawing attention to their systematicity, robustness, creativity, communicative potential and relative prestige. In this way the model has provided the impetus for processes of codification and legitimization, resulting in, for instance, the recognition of literary works and pedagogical models and materials beyond the traditional norm-providing varieties. In short, the strength and impact of the model reside in its ethos that emphasizes pluralism, linguistic diversity and inclusivity.

It has to be said, however, that Kachru (1985) himself noted that the concentric circles may be an oversimplification and that fuzzy areas exist, the difficulty with the status and placement of countries like South Africa and Jamaica within the circles being a case in point. The fact is that the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Kachru himself has acknowledged, and grey areas exist between the circles. Moreover, he has pointed out that languages have life cycles, particularly in multilingual communities, and the status of a language may shift overall, or even within a given locality. Bolton (2005, p.75), for instance, expresses the view that "the Kachruvian model of the three circles was never intended to be monolithic and unchanging, but was formulated in the 1980s as a potent rewrite of centrist orthodoxies of that time". There is thus an implicit acknowledgement that because the situation is dynamic, changes are

only to be expected. These caveats and sentiments taken together bolster the plausibility of the construct.

However, I feel that as revolutionary and valuable as the model has been, the pace with which English has spread, the power and politics associated with it, and the sweeping consequences of globalization have made a review of the Kachruvian circles timely.

3.0 Centring of the Inner Circle

The first unfortunate product of the model is that it locates native speakers and native-speaking countries of the Inner Circle right in the privileged position at the centre. The very term 'inner circle' conjures up a host of connotations, and a quick cross-reference to the Wordnet dictionary 2.0 reveals the following descriptions: "confined to an exclusive group", "privy to inner knowledge", "inside information", "privileged information", "exclusive to a center; especially a center of influence". Undoubtedly, this representation played a part in ushering in Phillipson's (1992) influential and critical conceptualization of the unequal relations between the 'core English-speaking countries' (situated at the centre of the model) and the 'periphery-English countries' (the Outer and Expanding Circles).

Graddol (1997, p.10) points to the positioning of native-speaking countries as a drawback of the model as it seems to imply that the Inner Circle should be viewed as "the source of models of correctness, the best teachers and English-speaking goods and services consumed by those in the periphery". Modiano (1999, p.24) too criticizes Kachru's Inner Circle as presenting a Eurocentric frame, and points out that it "re-establishes the notion that the language is the property of specific groups, and that correct usage is determined by experts who speak a prestige variety". It is ironic then that the tri-circle model inadvertently reinforces the concept of the native speaker as the centre of reference, thus promoting a form of linguistic imperialism and language hegemony that Kachru was determined to avoid.

All this has contributed to other drawbacks, such as the emergence of

conflicting attitudes. This may be exemplified in the bipolar views expressed among scholars about the spread of English. Some have taken a less politically-charged stance, treating the spread of English as a function of aspirations to modernity, social mobility and economic opportunities. Such views are, of course, paralleled by the emphatic calls for English language competence and increasing support for English language education in both countries of the Outer and Expanding Circles, where a very high premium is placed on the language. On the other hand, there are scholars who have vigorously criticized the relentless propagation of English and its gate-keeping roles which create and perpetuate socioeconomic factions in societies, such that competence in English becomes a crucial divider. Pennycook (2003, p. 519-521), for instance, denounces the "descriptive inadequacy" of the Three Circle model, and its "exclusionary tendency", as its principal focus appears to be on national, "codified varieties … spoken by a small elite". The paradigm as a whole is soundly criticized for its political naiveté that ultimately serves to promote global capitalism.

A second area that illustrates the adverse effects of the positioning of traditional varieties in the centre of the model is the growing ambivalence between linguistic norms and actual behaviour of users of English in both the Outer and Expanding Circles. Despite ongoing efforts to recognize the new varieties and elevate their statuses, there remains widespread perception among non-native users that Inner Circle norms are somehow superior, and their own varieties somewhat defective. Such schizophrenic attitudes are captured in a number of studies in which speakers express pride in their own accents and varieties, and yet at the same time, espouse a preference and yearning for the native-speaker accent and for traditional old variety norms (see Dalton, et al, 1997; Timmis, 2002; Jenkins, 2005). One may point out, of course, that the Circles model merely captures and describes such discordant and paradoxical views among speakers. But, equally, it may be argued that by locating speakers in specific circles, the model is divisive, creating linguistic conflict and insecurity as marginalized groups of speakers continue to wrestle with issues of legitimacy and ownership of the language.

4.0 Norms of English use

Another change that has gradually taken place involves the role of the three speech

fellowships. From an initial three – norm-providing, norm-developing and norm-dependent, Kachru (1996) himself later re-conceptualized the speech fellowships, making only a dual distinction between norm-providing users which include L1 and L2 norms (e.g. USA, US, Australia and others, together with Singapore, Nigeria, India, etc.), and norm-dependent users (e.g. China, Egypt, Iran, South Korea, Taiwan, etc.). Kachru claimed that as a result of the development and establishing of local norms and models for the acquisition, teaching and creativity in Englishes, the countries of the Outer Circle may well be considered norm-providing as well. However, this modification brings about an undesirable divide between norm-providing and norm-dependent varieties and creates an *us* and *them* dichotomy, which the Kachruvian model sought to abolish in the first place. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that the centre, in particular, provides the standards and norms of English to which others, especially Expanding Circle countries, need to conform.

While the grouping of L1 and L2 norms into one norm-providing speech fellowship draws into question the need to maintain the rigid distinction between the Inner and Outer Circles, it also moves the spotlight onto the excluded Expanding Circle. Clearly, several countries of the Expanding Circle are increasingly moving away from dependency on traditional varieties, and scholars like Seidlhofer and Jenkins (2003) have argued for the legitimization of Expanding Circle Englishes. A number of countries of the Outer and Expanding Circles have developed their own standards that not only provide norms for internal consumption, but are also 'exported' to other countries via textbooks, training programmes, ESL/EFL teachers and literatures in English. Strevens (1992, pp. 43-44) observes that "India has supplied teachers of English to China, Belgian teachers teach English in Morocco; while in the Arabian Gulf States, many teachers of English are from Pakistan …". Similarly, Honey (1989) describes India as the third biggest publisher of books in the English language and a major exporter of graduates of various disciplines, from medicine to education, to Western Europe, Africa, the Gulf States, and North America. Graddol (1997) notes that Malaysia has become a regional exporter of educational goods and services, including an early learning kit designed to help pre-school children in Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Indonesia learn English. Furthermore, in line with aspirations of becoming a

regional hub of educational excellence, Malaysia and Singapore continue to attract students from all over the world desiring to gain proficiency in English and thereafter embark on courses conducted in English. Ironically, even the countries of the Inner Circle have sought to employ teachers from the other circles in schools and in universities, as attested to by the growing presence of international staff in many English departments across the world. As Braine (1999, p. xvii) observes "a fairly recent phenomenon in Western academia is the increasing presence of foreigners as teachers, researchers and scholars in almost every discipline including ELT."

Nevertheless, some may argue that no matter how we conceptualize the spread of English and its consequences, it is still founded on Inner Circle norms. This may still be true with respect to formal varieties of English, best captured in the written form, but the existence and growth of distinct yet internationally intelligible spoken varieties of English attest to the viability of alternative patterns of use in certain linguistic areas without communication being adversely affected. Although still under-researched, this would point towards a core English essential to maintaining mutual intelligibility, but one that is not necessarily and exclusively tied to Inner Circle norms. The move away from dependence on traditional Inner Circle norms will continue as English spreads and acquires more first and second language speakers from diverse countries, and as globalization paves the way for increased interactions in English between speakers of the other circles. In fact, Jenkins (2000) goes a step further, suggesting that because most interaction in English today takes place between non-native speakers, any attempt to establish new models and norms must take these speakers and their varieties of English into account.

5.0 Changing patterns of language use

Changes, both gradual and dramatic, in the use and users of English around the world call attention to what may be regarded as a critical shortcoming in the Kachruvian model: its historical and geographical bases. Not only does the Three Circle model draw heavily on colonial pasts, it is also constituted on specific geographical locations. Modiano (1999) takes exception to the fact that the model represents the spread of English as being the consequence of the historic exploits of certain groups of people,

thus establishing their superiority, whilst further marginalizing the peoples of the Outer and Expanding Circles. Bruthiaux (2003, p.161) declares that Kachru's Three Circle model is severely limited because it is "a primarily nation-based model which draws on specific historical events and which correlates poorly with current sociolinguistic data". Bruthiaux's claim that the model encourages broad-brush descriptions and leads to a tendency to gloss over variations in the Expanding, Outer and Inner Circles is now examined in the discussion below.

Clearly, as Kachru himself highlighted, there is tremendous variation in proficiency levels among speakers within the Outer and Expanding Circles, ranging from little or no competency to full 'native-like' competency. Firstly, there are people in the Expanding Circle who have acquired proficiency and a range of use in English, and are more appropriately placed in one of the other circles. Graddol (1997) presents a list of nations in transition from EFL to L2 status, which includes countries as diverse as Argentina, Norway and United Arab Emirates. Additionally, there are countries in the Expanding Circle like Denmark and Germany which have been using English domestically, intensively and extensively, for quite some time. Does Germany belong to the Expanding or to the Outer Circle? Berns (1995) argues that the use of English in Germany displays qualities that make it more similar to Outer Circle countries than to those of the Expanding Circle. Although English does not have institutionalized status, it is difficult to keep Germany in the Expanding Circle given its central position within the European Union, and "the functions it [English] serves in various social, cultural, commercial and educational settings" (Berns, 1995, p.9).

By the same token, it is obvious that there are Outer Circle speakers with minimal command of the language, and who rarely use English outside the classroom. Furthermore, it is also important to consider the phenomenon of nativization of English (Kachru, 1992). While the process of nativization has enabled English to adapt to new contexts in which it was transplanted and to take on localized identities, it has also resulted in varieties distinctly different from each other and from the traditional varieties from which they were derived. While these developments have been lauded in many quarters, they have also raised serious concerns about the communicative value of these

new Englishes outside their local communities. Research has uncovered the fact that there are vast segments of the population in Outer Circle countries who are familiar only with a highly localized form of English. Should a person who is fluent only in colloquial, basilectal or pidginized English count as a proficient speaker of English?

Then, of course, there are people in the Outer and Expanding Circles who may use an internationally intelligible form of English, claim English as their first or preferred language, and thus 'deserve' to be placed in the Inner Circle. In many of the countries of the Outer Circle, it is not uncommon to find English adopted as the language of the home, particularly among the professional and middle class members of society. This led Richards and Tay way back in 1981 to declare that the native speaker of English need not be identified only by virtue of his birthright, nor does he have to be from one of the traditionally native-speaking countries. Instead they redefined the native speaker of English as "one who learns English in childhood *and* continues to use it as his dominant language *and* has reached a certain level of fluency in terms of grammatical well-formedness, speech-act rules, functional elaboration and code diversity. All three conditions are important" (p. 53, italics in original). Such a characterization makes it possible for native speakers of English to be found anywhere in the world, making the demarcation between Circles less significant. As Graddoll (1997, p.11) puts it, "English is thus acquiring new first-language speakers outside the traditional 'native-speaking' countries". Crystal (2003a) calculates that there are over 329 million speakers of English as a first language, including Creole, in over 50 territories around the world, ranging from Antigua and Barbuda, to Malaysia and Singapore. All this only makes it increasingly difficult to sustain the strict geographical distinction between the circles.

Another area that is being challenged is the traditional description of Inner Circle speakers as possessing a model that is largely endonormative, displaying the norms of correctness. This depiction ignores huge dialectal variation that is evident throughout Inner Circle communities. As Bruthiaux (2003, p.162) points out, "the model reinforces the perceptions of Inner Circle varieties of English as largely monolithic and standardized because it offers no account of dialectal variation within

each of the varieties that it lists". In Inner Circle Britain, for instance, Trudgill (1999) records that only about 9 -12 percent of the population speak Standard English, and even then with some form of regional accent, whilst Crystal (2003b) notes that Received Pronunciation (RP) in its pure form is spoken by less than 3 percent of the British population. Today, it is not uncommon to hear anecdotes of English-speaking visitors to the UK baffled and bewildered by the near incomprehensible speech of many of its speakers, thought to be paragons of correct English.

Furthermore, the countries in the Inner Circle are not spared from changes in the use and users of English, due to increasing diversity primarily as a result of immigration. Referring to countries of the Inner Circle, McArthur (2001, p. 8) points out that in the past they were presented as if they were language monoliths. The reality is quite different: "in such territories, one can find intricate language mosaics, including hybridization, as for example in the US, New Zealand, South Africa, and Wales, and in such 'world cities' as London, New York, Sydney and Montreal". According to the US Census Bureau, the percentage of foreign-born people in the United States doubled between 1970 and 1995 from 4.8 percent to 8.7 percent, and the 2000 Census indicates that more than 17% of US residents speak a language other than English at home (Source: US English Foundation). Yano (2000, p. 122) quotes a newspaper report indicating that the number of non-native English speakers in the US will soon exceed that of native speakers in certain areas like California, Hawaii and Texas. The prevalence of speakers not typically considered native speakers in the Inner Circle countries is further attested to in the problems faced by researchers on the International Corpus of English (ICE) project who had to grapple with the issue of defining who should count as a native speaker, and thus be allowed to contribute towards the corpus. Working in New Zealand, Holmes (1996, p. 164) asks, "At what point does an immigrant become a New Zealander?" The researchers in New Zealand, for instance, finally decided that New Zealanders who had spent extensive periods of time overseas were ineligible, as were people who had lived in New Zealand only after the age of ten. This dilemma and the resulting criteria only underscore the difficulty of claiming that Inner Circle countries represent native speakers of English. Similar changes on demographics are occurring elsewhere as well, prompting Yano (2000, p. 122) to

declare that "such internationalization of community components in Britain, the US, and other countries in the inner circle may make it necessary to redefine what the inner circle is".

6.0 The rise of EIL

Another contentious issue that should be taken into consideration is the fact that the speakers of the Inner Circle for whom English is the first or dominant language may not always be the models of correctness when it comes to English as an international language (EIL). Informal varieties of the Inner Circle rarely perform well on the global stage, and, moreover, Modiano (1999, p. 24) points to the fact that many speakers of regional varieties in the US and UK are not intelligible to other speakers of English. Burgess (2004) writing in the Guardian says, "I've observed Australian kids in Japan having huge problems communicating in English because they have no notion of how much their own speech works only in an Australian context". Similarly, global fans of the English Premier League are often subjected to doses of unintelligible dialectal speech from some British footballers, whilst ironically, some of their European and African counterparts in the EPL come across as speaking very clear, highly comprehensible English. I shall return to the notion of EIL again, but for now, the point is that it is difficult to justify the central position occupied by speakers of the Inner Circle whilst many proficient speakers of the language are strictly assigned to function outside this privileged circle.

7.0 Alternative approaches

What then is an alternative model that better reflects present day sociolinguistic realities? Rampton (1990) moots the idea of replacing the concept of nativeness with one of competence, and argues for the notion of expert speaker to be used, rather than native speaker to denote accomplished users of the language. This, I would concur, is probably the best way forward. Thinking along similar lines, Modiano (1999) proposes a centripetal circles model in which the inner circle is not formed by native speakers of English, but by excellent communicators of English as an International Language (EIL). Modiano (1999, p. 25) excludes from the inner circle native speakers of English who have "excessive regional accents and dialects" and who are incapable of switching to

EIL when the context demands it, as he feels that they are not efficient communicators in an international context. He places such native speakers of regional dialects into the second circle, alongside non-native speakers who speak internationally incomprehensible indigenized varieties, and speakers of Creole, whose language is not intelligible to speakers of EIL. The third circle then comprises those who are not yet proficient in any variety of English, be it a native variety, a regional variety or an indigenized one. While, Modiano's proposal is not without its weaknesses (the discussion of which is outside the scope of this paper, but see *English Today, 58*), his model gets rid of the notion of native speakers being in a privileged group and responsible for defining the language; instead the responsibility is shared. A similar principle is used by Melchers and Shaw (2003). Using speakers' scope of proficiency as a criterion, they distinguish four levels: those who are internationally effective, nationally effective, locally proficient and ineffective. In this way, categories defined in terms of nativeness, history and geography are discarded in favour of individual competence.

At this juncture, it is perhaps prudent to confess that I have used the term international English or EIL as if it were an unambiguous and unproblematic concept. In reality, it is still a subject of some controversy and despite a steadily growing number of advocates, the notion remains rather nebulous. For starters, *English as an international language* (EIL) has been variously defined, and it is often used interchangeably with *English as a lingua franca* (ELF), *English as a global language*, and *English as a world language*, and Burt (2005) points out that it is often unclear exactly which groups of speakers are included and which excluded in these terms. In particular, ELF has been the focus of considerable research, and appears to be associated especially with non-native speakers' use of the language for international communication (Seidlhofer, 2004; Llurda, 2004). Yet another thorny issue is the temptation to continue to use L1 norms to describe and regulate EIL. As Phan Le Ha (2005, p. 33) notes, current practices suggest that "the centre Englishes and their related pedagogies are generally used as international standards, while other Englishes are for local uses only". Other scholars, too, have opposed this stance, and have argued for a relinquishing of native-speaker competence as the yardstick, and for EIL to develop without reference to

Inner Circle Englishes (Brutt-Griffler, 1998; Seidlhofer, 2001). A third area of contention is the nature of EIL. With preliminary findings characterizing it in terms of a simplified lexicon and grammatical structure (Seidlhofer, 2001), concerns have been raised about neglecting linguistic competence in attempts to promote EIL. Nunn (2005, p. 63) provocatively asks if "there is a danger of "international" becoming a byword for reduced linguistic competence". On a more critical note, Hadley (2004) argues that by not emphasizing linguistic competence, learners of EIL are "returned to a system of dependence and conformity… creating the need for experts to come in to assist in the process of clear communication" (p. 47).

It is not the intention of this paper to resolve these burning issues. Allow me, however, to reiterate my working conceptualization of the term EIL. I use this term broadly to refer to English used across national boundaries, and as such it may be used by both native and non-native speakers. Furthermore, EIL is not equivalent to Inner Circle varieties, and so native speakers cannot assume the role of custodians of it. In fact, as Widdowson (1998, p. 399) argues, EIL must be allowed to develop without reference to any of the circles: "notions of the Inner and Outer Circles are irrelevant". There is no role for or allegiance to the specific varieties of English used within regions in any of the circles. I also concur with Widdowson's (1998, pp. 399-400) argument that English "cannot be national and international at the same time", for Englishes adapted to "local communal requirements are not qualified as a global means of communication". This is exactly the point, and it paves the way for bidialectalism, an idea also promoted by Crystal (2003b, p.185) who describes the practice of switching between an informal variety, spoken at home or in the local community, and another dialect used in situations removed from the familiar. The former may be "full of casual pronunciation, colloquial grammar, and local turns of phrase" and the latter "full of careful pronunciation, conventional grammar and standard vocabulary", signalling the development of World Standard Spoken English. This view of bidialectalism accommodates the idea of speakers actively using a regional sub-variety that provides access to a local community and another sub-variety which provides access to the world community, and it can be applied to all speakers of English, regardless of the circle with which they are associated.

Briefly then, a more sociolinguistically-sound perspective to variation in varieties of English needs to preserve a division between learners who have not acquired competence in English and proficient users of the language, be they monolinguals or bilinguals. The language of the former may be characterized by inaccuracies and learner errors, whilst that of the latter is best described as a stable regional form wielded by proficient speakers. A second fundamental dichotomy is that of intranational and international ways of speaking. As a reflection of intranational and international imperatives, to be communicatively competent in today's increasingly borderless world, a speaker must be able to switch, when necessary, from a private voice to a public voice (Kramsch, 1999), and thus embrace both "local appropriation" and "global appropriacy" (Alptekin, 2002, p. 63). I would suggest that such accomplished users of the language may be monolingual or bilingual, and that terms like 'multicompetent language user' (Cook, 1999) and 'successful user of English' (Prodromou, 2003), which were hitherto restricted to L2 or non-native speakers, may be reconstituted to aptly describe these speakers.

Such a conceptualization would give rise to a different Three Circle model. While acknowledging the fuzzy distinctions between circles, in principle, the inner circle could comprise all users who are proficient in English and able to instinctively code-switch between international and national or regional varieties to communicate in the most appropriate way. The case has already been made earlier that this need for proficiency in EIL and for skills in code switching concerns equally both native and non-native speakers, thereby establishing a democratic basis for language development and reinforcing the notion that English belongs to all its users. The second circle could consist of speakers who are proficient only in regional varieties, i.e. native and non-native speakers with restricted intranational proficiency, while the outer circle could be made up of learners of the language. This reconfigured three-circle model also allows for those who have mastered EIL to move into the inner circle, and so the first circle expands. However, in preserving the outer circle for speakers who are content with competence of a restricted or regional kind, and have no need for communication on a more global scale, it creates space for localized identities. In that sense, the model

is able to accommodate notions of social mobility, economic ambition and individual identity, and so presents a view that is more in keeping with a democratic ideology of linguistic diversity.

I grant there is some oversimplification here and the proposed model probably raises more questions than it answers. For example, what characterizes the proficient speaker of English, or what level of proficiency should one have to qualify as a competent user of English? Is it possible to lack linguistic competence, and yet be an internationally successful user of English, drawing perhaps on intercultural competence? Can linguistic competence actually impede international communication on occasion? The questions and complexities derive partly because, as Nunn (2005, p. 66) suggests, "EIL competence cannot be reduced to a single, limited, monolingual or mono-cultural concept. It is composed of a set of interlocking and interdependent competences that sometimes compensate for each other, sometimes counteract each other and sometimes reinforce each other". Clearly, there are no easy answers, but the fact that communicative competence in EIL has yet to be unambiguously defined should not warrant a dogged insistence on norms being exclusively and often unreasonably linked to monoglot native-speaker competence and thereby to matters of residence, inheritance or affiliation. Instead, it is hoped that the issues raised in this paper will contribute to the debate and spur further investigations on the question of competence and norms with respect to EIL.

8.0 Pedagogical considerations

The arguments and tentative model presented in this paper offer several pedagogical points for reflection. First, it would mean that there is little need to continually look to certain countries that play host to the traditional native speaker for standards, reference points and approval. Instead, the focus shifts to the proficient speaker, and clearly, expert users of English may be found anywhere in the world. It potentially allows for a Malaysian and an Australian, for example, to be placed on equal footing, and encourages the dismantling of paradigms and hierarchies built on superiority, imperialism, exclusivity and bias. It also helps draw attention to the fact that the competent non-native speaker is in many ways the more appropriate role model for

most learners of English.

Second, the proposed model acknowledges the impact of globalization, the reality of the interdependent world and seeks to respond to the growth of EIL by privileging internationally articulate, intelligible English. It also recognizes and even celebrates the fact that this variety of English will necessarily be characterized by diversity and vibrancy. This in turn should act to promote less judgemental attitudes towards emerging World English varieties, as classrooms seek to raise awareness of language attitudes and cross-cultural communication, and students learn to adjust their expectations to accommodate to diversity and different interlocutors. Such a stand would have important implications for the development of the curriculum, instructional materials and classroom practice. To illustrate, McKay (2003, p. 19) points out that "the de-linking of English from the culture of Inner Circle countries also suggests that teaching methodology has to proceed in a manner that respects the local culture of learning". Although it must be admitted that the whole area of EIL is still in its infancy, progress has been noted (Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002) and should inspire further research.

Third, the model recognizes the fact that English is increasingly used as a global language, even while it is rooted in local contexts. Therein lies the challenge: English serves both global and local communicative needs, a fact that led Pakir (1999) to refer to it as the "glocal" language. Rajadurai (2004) for instance, analyses this dual role of English in her description of the different faces of English in Malaysia. It may be likened to the two faces of the Roman god, Janus, facing in opposite directions. When engaging in global interaction, English points us outwards as a language of wider communication, but when used within the community, it points us inwards into our very being, our sense of individual and social identity. These two faces of English establish a tension that learners and users must come to terms with. As for educators, they must grapple with the uses of English for global communication, without losing sight of how it is embedded in local contexts.

9.0 Conclusion

I would like to conclude by first acknowledging the invaluable contribution Kachru's Concentric Circle model has made to our appreciation of the spread and development of English worldwide. However, the thrust of this paper has been to critically re-examine the fundamental features of the model in the light of current sociolinguistic realities, and here it is found to be wanting. Moreover, by being grounded in historical and geographical factors, it tends to reproduce, perhaps unwittingly, some of the unequal relationships it purports to critique. Instead, it is proposed that a model of variation in English be founded on the concept of proficiency and communicative competence of individual users; after all, it is not countries but people who speak languages. It prioritizes competence as a critical criterion, recognizes the growth of EIL as a consequence of globalization, and acknowledges the 'glocal' nature of the language. It is hoped that the issues raised in this paper will challenge current thinking and pedagogical practices, and provide an impetus for continuing research.

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Current Debates in SLA

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Abstract:

Firth and Wagner (1998) point out the imbalance in the field of SLA of cognitive and mental approaches over social and contextual approaches in learning a language. They assert that acquisition cannot occur without usage. In examining the validity of their assertion, this paper traces the pattern of thought about current practices in SLA and questions whether a re-conceptualization of the field is necessary or not.

Introduction

SLA is, as its name indicates, the study of second language (L2) acquisition. Questions abound about what defines SLA, how far its borders extend, and what the attributions and contributions of its research are. Thus, there is a great amount of heterogeneity in the entire conceptualization of SLA. Some researchers tend to ignore certain aspects of the field, while others scrutinize those same aspects piece by piece.

The definitions of key terminology in the field of SLA are as numerous as are the researchers in the field. According to Van Lier (1994, p. 331), some researchers seek to posit facts in SLA, while others focus more on communicating, investigating, and finding common ground. It is this diversity of opinions in the field of SLA that has given rise to a number of debates. The key points of contention are related to the philosophical nature behind SLA research, the goals and scope of SLA theory, the kinds of methodological approaches employed in SLA, the role of social context in SLA research, and the relationship between SLA research and practice. Scholars in the field of SLA and related fields, such as Applied Linguistics, are divided in their beliefs about these points. The ongoing debate between these researchers dominates the literature on SLA today. Therefore, since these debates are prominent in the field, we should look more closely at them individually and summarize the main issues.

I.   The philosophical basis of enquiry

The purpose of SLA research has changed tremendously over the last decade or so. Earlier research in the field attempted to describe and explain how language developed in the minds of second language learners. Such research was focused purely on the Chomskyan view of a language instinct within the brain which enables language acquisition to take place. This Chomskyan paradigm of learners being endowed with a Universal Grammar places cognitive issues as central concerns within SLA research. Language is seen as being transferred from brain to brain rather than as being a social and negotiable product of interaction (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 290).

This focus on psycholinguistics places SLA in the field of "hard" sciences. The camp of "mainstream" SLA researchers such as Beretta, Crookes, Gregg, Jordan and Long holds that the ultimate goal of SLA is the development of SLA theory, much the same way as scientists work to develop theory. As scientists adopt a rationalist approach, so SLA researchers, in their opinion, need to follow this approach (Gregg, Long, Jordan, Beretta, 1997, p. 551).

The opposing camp, consisting of such researchers as Lantolf, Block, Firth and Wagner, points fingers at this "mainstream" (used here as a means of identification and distinction and also to show the author's personal bias against the arguments they present) group and accuses them of holding a positivist, rationalist attitude that is typical of modernists who see steady progress as only possible through scientific discovery as Long (1998, p. 96) believed (Lantolf, 1996, p. 716). Accordingly, this opposition group – under the leadership of Lantolf - has, likewise, been accused of being postmodernists (Lantolf, 1996, p. 732) who follow a relativist approach. This opposition group believes that the "mainstream" group strives to rid the field of SLA of its relativistic traits (ibid). Relativism allows for multiple theories to "bloom" and flourish, whereas the rationalistic perspective holds that only theories worthy of acceptance be discussed (Gregg, 2000, p. 384). Seen from the position of the "mainstream" group, relativism allows "all positions to be defended equally well, regardless, of its apparent truth" (Long, 1998, p. 98), which they feel is ridiculous considering that there can only be one accepted truth from a rationalist point of view.

In simple terms, the opposition group attributes "science envy" to the "mainstream" group (Block, 1996, p. 73). Relativists would question SLA as being a science. SLA researchers influenced by Chomskyism, such as the "mainstream" group, believe that the mind imposes structure on thoughts and languages, whereas a postmodernist following relativism would say that language imposes structure on the mind (Lantolf, 1996, p. 721). The relativist might recognize a variety of types of knowledge and not assume that scientific solutions are better than others (Van Lier, 1994, p. 331). In fact, the relativist may never even try to put a human issue such as language acquisition into scientific categories (Van Lier, 1994, p. 332).

Thus, the dispute between rationalism and relativism, between science and humanities, looms large in the debate concerning the philosophical basis behind SLA. The "mainstream" camp strives for SLA to be accepted as a science and to have SLA theories culled to a limited number (Long, 1990, p. 649). While striving for SLA to become a "normal science", assertions are made that multiple theories in SLA are problematic and that the field should be united around a few theories which emphasize only the "accepted facts" (Long, 1990; Crookes, 1997; Gregg, 1993). Gregg (1993, p. 276) holds that too much diverse research fogs the true goals of SLA. The "mainstream" group holds that reducing the number of theories is "an attempt to sort things out and move forward" (Gregg, Long, Jordan and Beretta, 1997, p. 547). Agreeing with this point, Long (1990) states that a theoretically smaller SLA would allow for greater knowledge to be accumulated. SLA thereby would become a process of discovery and explanation. In this camp, the absence of a paradigm (taken here to mean limited accepted theories) is a weakness of the field.

The opposing camp holds to the idea that attempts to rule out certain approaches or theories can lead to theoretical totalitarianism (Van Lier, 1994, p. 335). Block (1996, p. 63) agrees with this view and sees SLA as a process of exploration and speculation. The "existence of pluralism appears to provide fertile ground for discussion and for the advancement of the field" (Block, 1996, p. 66). Lantolf and Block, believe that would-be SLA theory should not be cut off "before it has the opportunity to be taken

seriously (i.e., to bloom)" (Lantolf, 1996, p. 713; Block, 1996, p. 77).

The debate delves further into who has the right to assess which theories should be accepted and which should be rejected in the SLA field (Block, 1996, p. 66). As pointed out, the primary gatekeepers may be the editors of applied linguistic journals (Block, 1996, p. 67). Yet, when the editors publish ideas beyond the scope of the "mainstream" camp, they are criticized (see Gregg, Long, Jordan, and Beretta, 1997, p. 554). Long (1998, p. 114) confirms this sentiment and asks how such researchers with dissenting opinions got access to scholarly journals and were able to publish allegations which lack substance.

II.   The goals and scope of SLA theory

The field of SLA has a broad scope, as mentioned above. With such a broad scope, many researchers, especially those in the "mainstream" camp, insist that it is impossible for SLA to make a stronghold for itself. They, therefore, call for a more limited scope (Long, 1997; Gass, 1998; Kasper, 1997).

Moreover, what the limited scope of SLA should be focused on is also debated. The debate in the research literature concerning the goals and scope of SLA theory has led to criticism of "mainstream" SLA approaches which traditionally have focused on only the cognitive aspects of language learning and have disregarded the social aspects of acquisition (Tarone, 2000; Breen, 1985; Firth and Wagner, 1997; Rampton, 1997; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The imbalance in SLA theory in favor of cognitively-oriented theories upsets some researchers in the field, as it makes them feel that SLA is an exclusive club which only like-minded members can join (Firth and Wagner, 1997). What they saw as the exclusive nature of SLA pushed Firth and Wagner (1997) to call for a reconceptualization of the entire field of SLA.

Firth and Wagner (1998) point out the imbalance in the field of SLA of cognitive and mental approaches over social and contextual approaches in learning a language. Acquisition cannot occur without use, Firth and Wagner (1998, p. 93) claim. Usage of language in communicative situations leads to acquisition, they believe. Therefore, the

significance of learning a language during interaction is challenging the learners' internal cognitive processes (Breen, 1985).

The relevance of social context – and use - in acquisition is questioned by Long (1997, 1998). Firth and Wagner's points are rebutted by Long (1998) most strongly who asks which social dimensions are important (p. 90). Long sees context as having nothing to do with acquisition. He denies Hymes' view of language as a social and cultural phenomenon (Long, 1997, p. 319) and asserts the importance of understanding how the mind works in taking in a second language and in using interlanguage (IL) grammar. Use and acquisition are two unrelated fields of L2 study in his opinion. Furthermore, the Hymesian view of language acquisition that "the acquisition of competence for use can be stated in the same way as acquisition for competence for grammar" (Hymes, 1971, p. 279) is challenged by Acar (2005). In Acar`s claim to consider the acquisition of competence for use different from the acquisition of competence for grammar, he puts forward evidence that "while the acquisition of the grammatical knowledge of language, what Chomsky calls linguistic competence, is complete in a certain period of time, is acquired unconsciously, and once it happens in childhood, shows almost no change throughout the life of the individual, the ability in the use of language appropriately in appropriate situations and contexts develops throughout the life of an individual" (pp. 58-59).

Thus ensues the debate between communicating and learning, between language and cognition (Breen, 1985, p. 126). According to the "mainstream" group, in determining how knowledge evolves in language acquisition, studies on "the language used and not on the act of communication" should be considered (Gass, 1998, p. 84). In short, they assert that the question involved in SLA is "How do people learn a L2?" and not "How do people use a L2?" (Gass, 1998, p. 85). Therefore, language use is outside the scope of SLA (Long, 1997; Gass, 1998). The goal of SLA is to understand what "types of interaction bring about what types of change in linguistic knowledge" and not to understand language use. Language use does not show changes in grammatical systems and therefore does not lead to acquisition (Gass, 1998, p. 84).

Contrary to this, Tarone (2000) has shown that skills such as error detection, developmental sequences, and negotiation of meaning may all be sensitive to social context (p. 190). She holds that Larsen-Freeman's (1997) proposal to join psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic strands of research together into a single framework is necessary (p. 193).

III. Methodological approaches employed in SLA

Research in SLA today is predominately concerned with coding, quantifying data, and replicating results (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 288). Experimental settings over natural settings are preferred locations for research. Explanations for the results of data collected are given primarily to cognitive processes. Etic (analyst-relevant) concerns are valued more than emic (participant-relevant) ones. These are the approaches which the "mainstream" researchers would like to see continued.

The opposition, spoken for most loudly by Firth and Wagner, believes that such approaches are limited. Rampton (1997) supports Firth and Wagner and says that "in terms of its methodologies and guiding philosophy, a lot of L2 research is profoundly out of tune with the themes of late modernity" (p. 330). What is needed is a methodological broadening of SLA with methods being contextually-sensitive, value-relevant, and interpretative (Rampton, 1997). Firth and Wagner insist on using empirical data about the social aspects of acquisition. What Firth and Wagner (1997) have seen within "communication strategies" are social processes being interpreted from the cognitive perspective (p. 289), and they believe this needs to change.

Firth and Wagner's position here is supported. Kasper (1997) and Poulisse (1997) – although most usually siding with the "mainstream" group - see social context as somewhat influencing SLA, while maintaining a cognitivist priority in SLA. Kasper's language socialization theory requires "establishing links between culture, cognition, and language and between the macrolevels of sociocultural and institutional contexts and the microlevel of discourse" (p. 311). Poulisse (1997) says, "You first need to describe the basic processes of learning and using language, and then to discuss the contextual factors that may influence these processes" (p. 324).

Moreover, the focus of research also is distorted, according to the opposition group. According to them, success is often ignored in SLA investigations, which focus more on the difficulties and problems associated with learning a second language (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 288). The problems are claimed to be created by one of the interactants in a conversation due to the lack of language skill. Gass (1998) agrees and also insists that NS and NSS are handicapped in conversation with one another in that there are always breakdowns in communication. Yet, rather than as a thing belonging to an individual, as Kasper (1997) believes, Firth and Wagner (1997) hold that problems should be seen as shared inter-subjective social issues that can be solved through negotiation. Perhaps because communicative successes are less "psychologically salient", they have been ignored (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 288). However, concentrating on stories of success would provide new insight into SLA, in their opinion.

IV. The role of social context in SLA

There is disagreement about what constitutes acquisition among researchers in the field. There is a fine line between language acquisition and language use. As the terms are fluid, it is hard to tell where one begins and the other ends. On a larger scale, it is equally difficult to divide the roles of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

The tension of the cognitive weighted over the social and contextual looms large in the current debates in SLA research (Firth and Wagner, 1997; Tarone, 2000). On the one hand, the asocial aspect of SLA reduces active cognition to "passive internalization" and reduces language to the memorization of grammatical points (Breen, 1985, p. 125). The social aspect must be considered in that the context of learning shapes what is available to be learned (ibid). On the other hand, in SLA studies the social context is so greatly controlled that researchers have assumed that social factors are irrelevant to their work (Tarone, 2000).

In this debate also, the role of the learner or non-native speaker (NNS) in "mainstream" SLA research is also under attack. Firth and Wagner (1997) assert that in SLA research the learner is seen as a "deficient communicator struggling to overcome

an underdeveloped L2 competence", with the highest goal being to become more like the idealized native speaker (NS) of the language. The learner is defined as an "adult receiving formal education in a S/FL" (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 288). The emic issues of the learner are ignored. The learner has only one identity, solely as a language "learner", nothing more and nothing less. No other social identities exist for the learner, such as a friend, father, business partner, etc. Furthermore, the learner is placed as subordinate to the NS who is regarded as "King" (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 291).

The preoccupation with the learner is defended by Gass (1997) who, while defending the "mainstream" position, concludes that "learners are, after all, the sine qua non of acquisition" when one is talking about learning (p. 85). The "non" in nonnative speaker is simply terminology in the field and does not lower the status of the learner (Gass, 1997, p. 85; Kasper, 1997, p. 309).

"Mainstream" researchers use the native speaker as a prerequisite for collecting baseline data. The NS is the necessary and sufficient condition for SLA, thereby forming the norm (Firth and Wagner, 1997). With NNS striving to achieve the norm in communication in the second language, the field in which few or none of the participants are native is ignored (Long, 1998, p. 89). In reality, though, acquisition often takes place in contexts with little or no contact with NS. World Englishes are devalued in SLA. Long agrees but asserts that this is due to the restraints of SLA researchers' work (i.e. funding) (Long, 1998, p. 90). Yet, Rampton (1997) sees the English-as-lingua franca societies of the world as great places of research. SLA studies need not have native-speaker base-line data, in his opinion. Given the increasing recognition of world Englishes and the inappropriateness of native speaker norms forming the baseline data, researchers are faced with the question of what might be the alternative model or competence. As a first serious attempt to define competence in relation to English as an international language, Nunn (2005) argues that "EIL competence cannot be limited to a single, limited, monolingual and monocultural concept. It is composed of a set of interlocking and interdependent competences that sometimes compensate for each other, sometimes counteract each other, and sometimes reinforce each other." (p. 65).

Next, the debate over interlanguage exists in this arena. Most studies are concerned with the learners' interlanguage (IL), the phase between the L1 and the L2 which all learners eventually enter, according to the "mainstream" camp. Studies in IL show modifications in NS-NNS interactions and place the NS in the role of "information gatherer" and the NNS as "information provider" (Firth and Wagner, 1997, p. 294). The premises of IL show that language learning has an end; that is, the acquisition of native-like competence (Firth and Wagner, 1998, p. 91). In fact, according to Firth and Wagner, learning never stops and certainly continues outside the classroom (as opposed to Poulisse (1997, p. 327) who says that "learner's L2 behavior continually changes in the direction of that of the L1 speaker, until learning stops").

Yet, the use of a "derogatory" term such as "interlanguage" frustrates the opposing camp. They believe that there exists systematic variation in different contexts. Each variation requires a different type of language. For example, in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms, the interlanguage (IL) must be sensitive to the social setting. SLA fails to take into account the social reality (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 168). Research focuses on the learner and IL data but overlooks the social reality in which the research is conducted (ibid). The learner language forms are different from the target language because of the differences among the social purposes in which the language is needed (p. 170). Social context affects the degree to which interlocutors make linguistic and conversational adjustments for learners (Tarone, 2000, p. 188). Furthermore, input provided by others leads to changes and improvement. Most namely, repair (error correction), developmental sequencing, negotiation of meaning, and balancing of L2 forms are all part of the social context in which language must change to meet the situation.

The need for ongoing negotiation during interaction increases the learners' overt participation and perhaps even their innate capacity for acquisition, although this has yet to be proven (Breen, 2001b, p. 114). This "interaction hypothesis" alerts the learners to failures in making themselves understood and thereby pushes them to reformulate what they want to say (Breen quoting Long, 1996). However, whether overt

participation by learners can lead to the acquisition of previously unacquired aspects of the language remains to be seen (Breen, 2001b, p. 127). Yet, in discourse, there is a constant interrelationship between use and acquisition (Breen, 2001b, p. 131).

V. The relationship between SLA research and practice

The existence of a relationship between SLA and language pedagogy (LP) is an additional area on which few SLA researchers agree. Practice and theory are seen as distinct entities (Van Lier, 1994, p. 338). Since, though, many SLA researchers were originally S/FL teachers who became involved in SLA research in attempts to improve S/FL teaching, there should be a close relationship between SLA and language pedagogy. However, quite to the contrary, most S/FL practitioners do not perceive the relevance of SLA research to their teaching.

Tarone (2000) states that the lack of contextual perspectives in SLA turns off EFL/ESL practitioners. Instructors in the field believe that the effects of psycholinguistic processes have nothing to do with what they are actually concerned with on a daily basis. They say that SLA is impervious to instruction. While focusing on language theory, it provides little direction into success in the classroom and actual teaching, in their opinion. Information gathered about L2 in artificial settings has nothing to do with the language used in social contexts in real situations both inside and outside the classroom (Tarone, 2000, p. 183). Therefore, many L2 teachers do not need to know the results of current SLA research (p. 184) since it has basically nothing to do with language pedagogy (Ellis, 1997, p. 69). Furthermore, teachers' working conditions further deter their interest in SLA matters. Many S/FL teachers have long classroom hours and little preparation time, and in consequence, little time to read through published research to find ideas for teaching (Crookes, 1997, p. 94). Even when pedagogy-related matters are addressed in SLA research, their presentation is not accessible to practitioners of LP in that the terminology is not on their level. Discourses of SLA and LP represent different worlds.

There is a need to breakdown the barriers between theory and practice. These two worlds can only be bridged by either increasing the research knowledge of teachers

or to publish research in a more understandable language without technical jargon (Ellis, 1997, p. 73). (Van Lier (1994) and Crookes (1997) disagree with this latter opinion.) Practical activities such as those that occur in the language classroom are equally a source of theoretically relevant data. Theory is not something that is constructed and then practiced. Rather, theory should be a reflection of practice (Van Lier, 1994, p. 338). Teacher-researcher connections in studies increase the likelihood that the findings of the research will hold more prominence to the practitioners (Crookes, 1997, p. 102). Teachers can work in tandem with researchers in action research in evaluating the needs of the classroom. They can even conduct small-scale research studies of their own (Crookes, 1997, p. 102; Ellis, 1997, p. 85). Using the students in their own classrooms as subjects for research, teachers could do research generated around SLA topics (Crookes, 1997, p. 102). Issues in SLA which might be relevant to practitioners include classroom interaction, task studies, and grammar. However, because SLA is more attuned to the learner rather than the teacher, practitioners may have even little need for studying those topics unless priority is given to the teacher's perspective (Crookes, 1997, p. 97).

The "mainstream" camp in SLA "may feel the practitioner's foray into theory is a waste of time" and that they are "meddling in complicated matters that are outside his or her proper domain" (Van Lier, 1994, p. 334). Others in this camp cite "the unwillingness to recognize the insights that language teaching has quietly absorbed from SLA theory and research" and do not feel the need to cater to the practicing group (Long, 1998, p. 112).

Personal Conclusions

A reconceptualization of SLA, as proposed by Firth and Wagner, is necessary in my opinion. Learning how language is acquired as it is used is important. Important to language use is the social context. Students can learn and even acquire language outside of the classroom, while they are in their social roles of father, friend, partner, etc. Language learning does not stop when a student leaves school. Language is an interactive phenomenon and is as dependent on social context as it is on cognitive transfer. A paradigm stressing the importance of both of these factors is necessary.

The role of social context in language learning needs to be reconsidered and reevaluated. It is time to reopen the debate on this subject and to consider where SLA is moving in the 21st century. It is hoped that not only researchers but also practitioners in this field will undertake further empirically-based quantitative and qualitative research in their investigations of contextual vs. cognitive approaches.

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Alternatives to Questioning: Teacher Role in Classroom Discussion

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Abstract

In language classrooms turns of talk facilitate the meaning-making process as students and teachers collaboratively come to understand the discourse of knowledge they are co-constructing (Wells, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978) in their interactions together, teacher to student and student to student. Questions shape the essential teaching exchange IRE/F as a teacher initiates (I) the first move, a student responds (R) and the teacher again takes up a turn and evaluates (E) in the follow-up (F) move. As common and useful this exchange is for managing classroom behaviour, during the pivotal third turn in the essential teaching exchange (Young, 1992), there is potential for teachers to facilitate student talk when the teacher provides alternatives to a follow-up question (Dillon, 1985). When students talk in discussions there is potential for them to develop their communicative competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale and Swain, 1980). This case study of young adult English as Second Language (ESL) users in face-to-face interaction in a university preparatory study skills course indicates a limiting influence of teacher questioning on student talk in discussions. Rather than talk being generated by a teacher's questioning, alternatives to questions lead to increased length of turns in students' collaborative talk. Teacher plays a significant role in giving 'voice' to students whose role in discussion is limited by a less vocal membership category in the class. This study brings a discourse analysis focus to whole class discussion between teacher and international UNIPREP students in the higher education sector and provides a context for second language acquisition researchers, teachers and TESOL trainers.

Introduction

A pedagogy which creates an individual metaphor is a practice that affects fundamental aspects of teaching and learning at the interface, where teachers meet students in their common interactions in the classroom. Types of questions: open-closed and display-negotiation have been extensively analysed (Nassaji & Wells, 2000) to examine their impact on the content of interactions between teacher and student. Open questions

such as "How do you cook rice in your country?" and closed questions as in "Is it 2 o'clock yet?" and display questions such as "What is the capital city of Pakistan?" and negotiation questions "What is the connection between culture and food?" are all used by teachers in exchanges that are a regular part of classroom life. Second language learning classes also make use of a range of question types. A teacher's cognitive challenge through a question of higher intellectual quality provides impetus to start classroom talk but it is not necessarily conducive to discussion.

Background

When a teacher poses a question for which there is a predetermined 'known' answer, the teacher occupies the role of 'primary knower' (Berry, 1981). The teacher poses a question and students are expected to provide a specific answer, the one the teacher had in mind. Display questions are typical of teacher-fronted lessons in which transmission of knowledge from teacher to student is the expected form of interaction. Students become adept at reducing the length of their answers to conform to the teacher's preferred composition of the answer. Display questions are therefore not conducive to discussion, when students are expected to express ideas and elaborate them. Use of open questions does change the teacher's role to one of 'secondary knower'; the teacher does not have control of the knowledge the student will provide. As students answer open questions, particularly of the negotiating kind, they have an opportunity to express their views, but even so their answers conform to the frame of the teacher's question.

Essential teaching exchange

The essential teaching exchange (Young, 1992) called triadic dialogue (Lemke, 1985) and known as IRE and IRF is the most common pattern of language interaction between teacher and students in a classroom. The exchange is well recognised as playing a key role in setting cognitive challenge for students and guiding direction of learning through co-construction of concepts (Wells, 1999). In each exchange:

"I" = initiation move (first turn) usually a question asked by the teacher;

"R" = response move (second turn) a reply made by a student in response to the question

"E" = evaluation move (third turn) of the student's response, also known as   "F" =

follow up of the student response, usually made by the teacher.

A teacher's third turn becomes problematic in discussion, when it includes a further question, even when the first question was an open one, as in this example:

(Wanda B3, lines 422-426):

Teacher initiates the first turn

"I"   - ***T: What do you do when you're under stress?***

Student responds in the second turn

"R" – *L: Go shopping*

Teacher follows up at the third turn

"F" – ***T: Yes some people like to go to the shops. Any other ones?***

The teacher's third turn (F) acknowledges the student's response (R) to her open question (I) by rephrasing the answer, but then includes another question, in this case *"Any other ones?"* Dillon (1985) maintained that questions foil and frustrate discussion. He suggested by way of contrast that alternatives to questions foster discussion and that as students maintain the floor during discussions, they attain a higher quality of language output than when they respond to a teacher's questions. This observation is particularly noticeable at the third turn in traditional IRE/F exchanges, so teachers have to consider alternatives to questioning if their students are to have opportunities to increase language output in a way that promotes discussion.

Alternatives to questioning

Alternatives at the third turn have been shown in Dillon's studies to elicit higher quality talk from students and to increase the length of their utterances in discussions. Criticism has been levelled at teachers' use of the IRE pattern claiming that triadic dialogue controls students' ideas and expression and limits the range of ways students can interact in a discussion in the classroom setting. From early sociolinguistic studies of the teacher's role in managing classroom interaction (McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1979, and Cazden, 1988) transcribed texts have been used to analyse the essential teaching exchange (IRE). Generally research has been conducted in mainstream primary classrooms. This study brings those concepts into higher education sector among

international students who are preparing for undergraduate and postgraduate studies where active participation in discussion rather than passive reception of information is a valued behaviour in the university tutorial setting.

The UNIPREP program provided coursework and face-to-face teaching in classrooms. Student talk was a valued component of academic skills students were developing. There were four courses of study, one of which was Studying at University (SAU). As part of the speaking component of English language development in SAU, students were involved in critical thinking. Topics included independent learning, motivation, democratic discussion and cultural responses when seeking and accepting help. Opportunities were created through discussions for students to develop communicative competence. The classroom offered a supportive environment for students to make propositions and have their peers comment, by adding and by modifying understanding from personal experience and from studied reading on relevant topics. The language they generated was output that provided a means of enhancing their linguistic competence. A discussion forum within UNIPREP coursework was selected as the context for the study. It offered natural opportunities for students to talk and for the teacher to provide reinforcement of discussion points and to manage who could take a turn and who might hold the floor next.

Discussion was considered a significant part of tutorial talk. By definition discussion is involved when people talk over a subject and if they investigate it by reasoning and argument. Other definitions include the concept of considering a question in open and usually informal debate, in addition to treating a topic formally in speech or writing. As students engage with a teacher's response to their statements, and with reactions from other students to the teacher's initiating move, they become involved in discussion. In a tutorial setting students are expected to make contributions that are focussed on a selected topic, rather than on a range of casual conversations that are more appropriate to a group of friends outside. In a discussion, talk involves gathering information and soliciting opinion thus providing opportunity for students to talk. It is also an invitation to participate in the cognitive exercise of comparing other students' view of the world.

In their multicultural UNIPREP classroom, there was scope for students to develop inter-cultural awareness while following discourse rules appropriate to the academic tutorial setting. Rules included turn taking, waiting for a transitionally relevant place to make a contribution, making an orientation to the topic being discussed and facilitating involvement of others in the group by allowing expression of personal views. During the pivotal third turn in the essential teaching exchange (Young, 1992), there was potential for teachers to facilitate student talk by providing an alternative to another follow-up question (Dillon, 1988).

Among alternatives to questioning Dillon (1994, pp.77-85) provided the following:

- restatement of the student comment: *a Reflective Statement*
- reflection of her own views on the topic – *a Statement of Mind*
- a thought that occurs as a result of what the speaker was saying – *Declarative Statement*
- expressing an interest in a person's views – *Statement of Interest*
- referring to a previous statement of a speaker – *Speaker referral*

To the above five alternatives, *back-channelling* was included in the study. Back-channel signals included gesture, verbal signal and pause. Each signal allowed students to hold or take back their turns and continue expressing a view.

Method

A case study of adult English as Second Language (ESL) users in face-to-face interaction in a university preparatory study skills course was chosen to investigate the influence of a teacher's questions on student talk.

Selection of teacher and course content

The program coordinator on campus was also the course team leader of Studying at University (SAU). That course had discussion topics incorporated from week 5 in the 13-week program. As teacher of the study skills course amongst second language users of English, she recognised that students needed to be active learners across the four macroskills, and to have opportunities to develop their oral skills. One well-tried avenue

to talk construction was discussion. Topics had been selected in the course materials that were relevant specifically to international students enrolled in a university preparation program. The teacher knew that the traditional IRE/F teaching exchange was characteristic of classroom talk and she was prepared to focus moves in the third turn to alternatives to a further question.

Selection of students and stage of the program

Students in two UNIPREP SAU classes participated during weeks 5, 6, and 7 of a 14-week program. They were familiar with routines of classroom talk and had experience with the expectation that they were to make contributions to discussion when topics were raised. Over a three-week period, when discussion topics were due for wider exposure, a ten-minute segment in each class was recorded on audiocassette. The teacher had selected the module for discussion from their class materials, namely personal stories of adjusting to study in an English-speaking environment.

Number of recorded sessions

Six audiotape recordings were made, two segments of talk from each class providing sufficient corpus for analysis and to capture talk on a range of discussion topics.

Students understood that they were to be participating in class as usual, in a natural way and to ignore the audio recorder and researcher-observer. They provided permissions of their willingness to participate in the recorded sessions.

Quasi-experimental action

For a ten-minute period in the discussion stage of the session, an audio recording was made of the teacher and students responding to the set topic. In whole-class interactions the teacher aimed to open up and maintain discussion in a natural way based on an opening topic question, such as "What were some of the stresses that Evelyn faced?"

Questions were posed and alternatives to questions offered by the teacher through the discussion period. For example, following a student statement, rather than closing the talk, the teacher rephrased the statement and paused, thereby encouraging a student to retain her turn.

In this example (M2) is a student and (T) is the teacher:

(M2): *I said it's better for her to staying at home and do something++ instead of her studying++*

T: *So her family expected her to be a home person*

In that case, the teacher provided a reflective statement as an alternative to another question. The teacher chose from the six alternatives to questioning as the choice of response at third turns in teaching exchanges and as prompts through interactions, (Dillon, 1994, pp.77-85).

Analysis of data

Language data were dealt with in the following way:

1. Transcriptions were made; teacher and student moves were identified.

2. Teacher's evaluative / follow-up moves were noted as a stimulus to student talk.

3. Questions and statement types were marked on the transcriptions.

4. Transcribed text was analysed for student responses following a teacher's initiation

5. Numbers of words uttered by students (both content and function words) in response to a teacher's question or statement were noted and tallied.

6. Comparison was made of student responses following teacher utterance types.

7. Role of membership categorisation devices, female 'voice' in discussion.

Results

Predominantly open negotiation types of questions were employed by the teacher. These had the effect of starting discussion when students did not initiate questions themselves. Open questions were expected in situations where the teacher was prompting personal views and did not have prior knowledge of the content of the students' talk. Display questions were minor occurrences in the data and usually had question tags attached, such as "that's what you said isn't it?" On occasions, statements with question tags "You don't like that, do you?" were treated as rhetorical questions, and therefore as not requiring a student answer. They were 'heard' as confirming responses and classified as declarative statements.

Transcriptions showed teacher and student talk in English, with false starts and fillers, content questions, students' answers, students' initiations, interruptions and

extended talk with samples of discussion in written form available for closer analysis. Teacher's follow-up moves which demonstrated one of the six response types at the teacher's move were identified as demonstrating an influence on choice of students' moves and indicated length of their talk in the discussion mode. General notice was taken of the meaningful content of the students' talk. Word count of students' utterances demonstrated a difference between responses to teacher questions and to the other five types of prompts the teacher provided during discussion. Each type of response was analysed on a pie chart and some explanations offered as to the findings.

Both questioning by the teacher and alternatives to questioning yielded language production by students. Samples of the teacher initiation were provided from across the sample of transcriptions. When questions were asked, student responses tended to be short and undeveloped. Often the question had to be posed more than once. The following samples of talk indicate interactions for groups A and B, where T= teacher; H, M, F = Students

Effect of questions on discussion

Sample (from transcription A1):

117: T: **Would anyone else like to add to that? How did you find the story?**

+++

118: M: ..the story

120: F: encouraging

The teacher posed questions often in the form of a tentative construction, using an auxiliary verb in the conditional form 'would' to soften the request. In English this structural form is preferred as it is thought to reduce the face-threatening act of asking a direct question. Teachers use polite request forms when asking students questions expecting them to provide an answer or proffer a view. Secondly, questions were not to be taken literally on all occasions. Students had to process the question and interpret the proposition as one requiring a pragmatic understanding of the questions as in the sample given. The teacher in this instance allowed whole class participation by asking for 'anyone else', which implied all people were invited to speak by adding to what the last speaker had said. The last speaker would feel inclined not to be the one to add more on

hearing that statement. The proposition was not to be taken necessarily at face value; 'to add to that' can be explained as increasing content of what has already been said, or it can mean provide some other substantial content. Likewise the second question was not to be interpreted at a literal level. A reaction to the story they had heard and read together was implied.

Taking this example of a typical classroom question, a considerable level of interpretation or familiarity with English was required simply to determine the question. Then there was processing time to determine what and how to answer the teacher's questions in terms of the discussion theme. Simply put, questions were more difficult to interpret than alternatives to questions.

Sample (transcription from B1)

63: T: **Do you think she was a critical thinker?**

64: H: Yes.+++(5)

When display questions were posed by the teacher, minimal responses were likely. Students produced minimal answers with hesitant or little follow up. In the next sample following the minimal response 'Yes' by student H, the teacher proceeded to elaborate and develop a long turn, so discussion by students was foiled. (Dillon, 1993)

Effect of reflective statements on discussion

Sample (from transcription A1):

92: T: **You would describe her as that sort of person**

93: M: I would describe her as ah challenging

A reflective statement of a student comment was one in which the teacher stated her understanding of what the students had just said, giving her sense of it in an economical one sentence reflection. Reflection took the form of repetition or summary, characterising the student's utterance. Often the teacher would start the utterance with "So you're saying that…' and not change the intention of the speaker but make a reflective restatement. By rewording a student's statement in that way, the overall effect of clarification engaged the student in discussion and appeared to reduce confrontational

effects of a question. In that sample of talk, student M extended expression of his view as a result of the teacher's reflective statement.

Sample (from transcription B1)

15: T: **So her family expected her to be a home person**

16: M3: And they maybe think that she is, doesn't ah finish the program first+++ Maybe they criticise her

Reflecting on the discussion theme and reformulating a previous comment, the teacher engaged students and allowed them to expand expression of their ideas. Less imposing than a question was the teacher's reflective statement which immediately signalled to students that the previous student turn was valued, and considered worthy of personal reflection and retained as a discussion point. Generally students are used to teachers taking back the third turn, to acknowledge accuracy of a student response before posing the next question, often with little reflection on explicit or implied meaning of the student's previous response. So with an occasion to have another opportunity to talk following the teacher's endorsement of the previous response students were likely to continue, providing even further endorsement of the student's view in discussion.

Effect of declarative statement on discussion

Sample (from transcription A2)

1: T: ….**you were asked to prepare your thoughts++ on whether you think there is a link between food and culture, and how important it is in your society+ in your home country++….**

(intervening student talk…laughter)

5: M1: I think there is a strong link between the food and culture.+++ Ummm back home ah+++ah++ I said that because back home++there is a strong++

6: M2: /connect/

7: M1: strong ++ah++ link between food and culture

8: Students (laughing)

9: M1: Um+ culture for us is being in the desert ++ and ++ um people + usually they have their customs and + and ah ah the reasons and they are /often/ being

generous

10: M1: When someone visits the other one they has to slaughter lamb, and make a big dish of rice and lamb.

11: M1: and they eat from the dish . So ah they [they

12:   M2:

[eat by hand

In a declarative statement the teacher stated her 'pre-question' thought that came to mind as a result of what the student was saying. It is the thought which would trigger a follow-up question if the teacher were to ask the next question. It might not necessarily be the opposite of what was stated; it could be complementary to it, or simply informative of her thoughts, somewhat like the answer she would have given herself in response to her next question. The student speaker in such situations of hearing the teacher's declarative statement had the benefit of her thoughts on the matter. In the above sample, student M1 repeated the teacher's main idea, holding the turn as he formulated the content of his worldview in lines 9, 10 & 11.

Effect of speaker referral on discussion

Sample (from transcription B2):

113:T: **Similar to what Tai was saying according to what was grown in that area**

114: M: but that's a few years ago

117: M2: that was when family ate together and were sitting together

The teacher stated a relationship between a current student's statement and a previous speaker's, referring one to another, offering potential for students to discuss a previous proposition.

Effect of statement of mind on discussion

Sample (from transcription A3)

113: T: **Some people do find prayer helpful. Um**

114: F: If it works

Having heard a student statement, the teacher described what came into her mind. The

student got to speak and respond to the teacher's true state of mind allowing discussion to develop. There was potential for that alternative to yield higher language production but the students' realisation of the ideas might have been different from the teacher's perspective.

Effect of statement of interest on discussion

Sample (from transcription A1)

73: T: **Tell me more about why you think that**

74: M: Arh++ because of the environment that she lived in +++is ah + I'm mean simple   ah for what she was living in and it was a lot of pressure.

The teacher stated an interest in hearing further about what the student had been saying. She showed a direct interest in the student's expressed view, and she wanted a definition or example, so interest was reflected in the statement she made to the student. Recognition of a viewpoint being well received by the teacher had a motivating effect on the student's engagement with discussion and it was evident as the student expanded his previous concept.

Effect of back-channel signal on discussion

Sample (from transcription B2)

89: M7: ..because we start the meal we have to mention the name of god.++ Ah we mention the name of god before we start .

90: T: **A + yes + mmh mmh**

91: M7: and ummh ++ we eat by + a right hand. We use our right hand ++ +

When the teacher listened to students in discussion format, she provided verbal and non-verbal signals indicating that a speaker was being encouraged to continue. Non-verbal signals included a nod of the head, making eye contact, or other hand gesture. She acknowledged what was said by means of verbal signals, or a pause or fillers such as 'eh uhm' while looking intently at the speaker showing that she had no intention of interrupting. Pauses and attentive silences created a feeling of obligation by students to offer more language input to discussions. Back-channel signals (Hatch 1999) indicated that the student speaking could keep the turn and not be interrupted by the

teacher although another student might have joined the discussion. The signals also indicated to students that they were on track. Given such assurance as in line 13 in this sample, student M expanded his views and provided a contrast in the discussion.

> Sample (from transcription B1)
>
> 12: M: Yeah, I think they're her family++
>
> 13: T: Mmm
>
> 14: M2: They said it's better for her staying at home and do something++ instead of her studying.

Back channel signals were used throughout the recorded segments of talk in discussion.

English language production

Production of language and length of student turn were higher in the alternatives than to direct questions, even of the open kind. Taken overall, on average students produced 15 words following a teacher's question. By contrast, utterances were longest from a teacher's statement of interest in the students' ideas in the discussion (36 words average). More questions were asked by the teacher than alternative forms of communication with students but those questions yielded less opportunity for students to talk, 10% on average.

Figure 1 showed quantity of English language production by students in Group A expressed as number of words in response to seven types of teacher verbal initiations. Statement of interest provided the alternative most likely to receive extended talk by students, followed by declarative statements, reflective statements, back channel-signals and statement of mind. The alternative of referring to another student yielded lowest count of number of utterances on this occasion, similar to the length of utterances from the teacher's questioning.
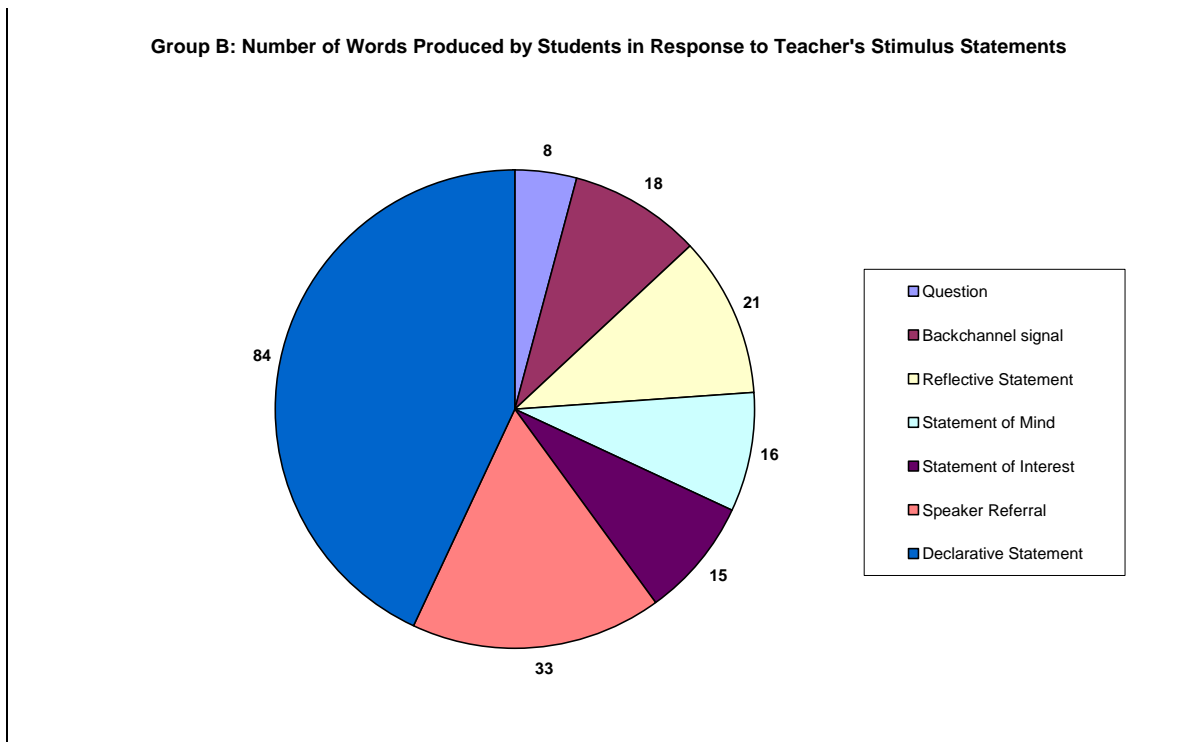
Figure 1: Length of Student Utterances in Group A (number of words)

Group A: Number of Words Produced by Students in Response to Teacher's Stimulus Statements
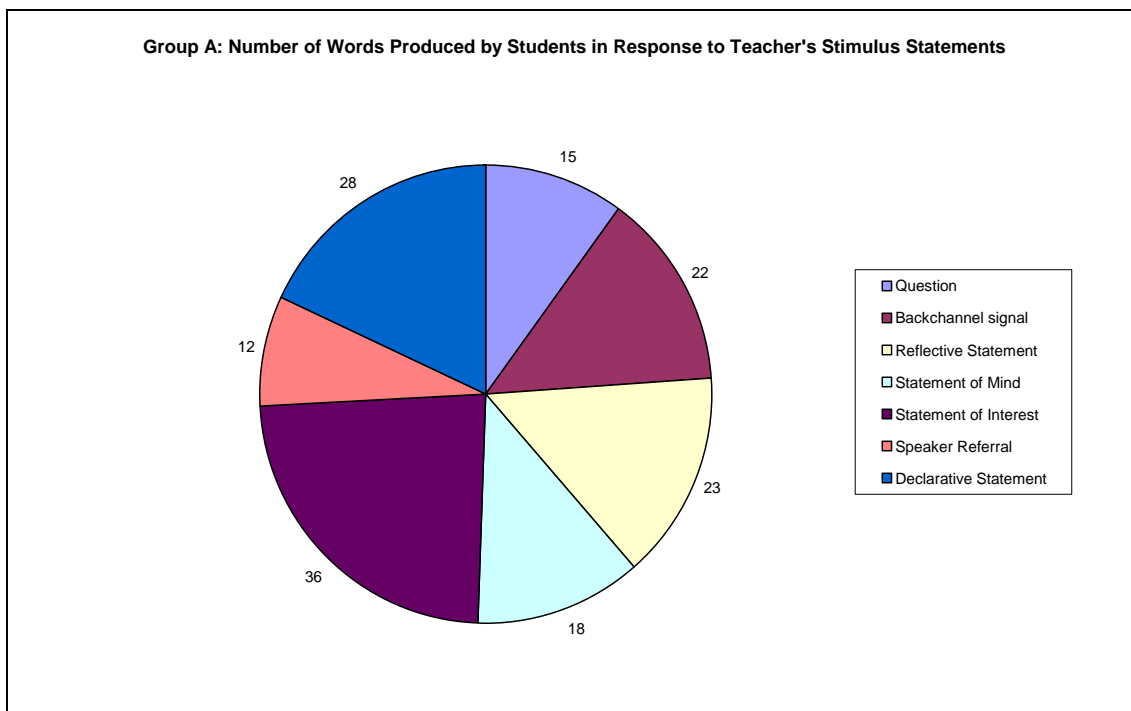
The teacher's questioning yielded the fewest utterances by students in Group B, repeating the pattern which emerged among Group A students. Figure 2 showed quantity of English language produced by students, expressed as number of words uttered in response to teacher verbal initiations. Intelligible utterances following a teacher's question averaged 8 words among Group B students. Although more questions were asked by the teacher than any other single alternative to a question, those questions yield less opportunity for students to talk, only 4% on average of student talk in the data.

By contrast, students' utterances were longer when they followed any of the six alternative types of initiating statements made by the teacher. Declarative statements made by the teacher yielded longest responses by students, on average 84 words a response. On speaker referral statements by the teacher, students averaged 33 words in their responses and on reflective statements 21 words per response in discussion.

Figure 2: Length of Student Utterances in Group B (number of words)

Group B: Number of Words Produced by Students in Response to Teacher's Stimulus Statements

Legend:
- Question
- Backchannel signal
- Reflective Statement
- Statement of Mind
- Statement of Interest
- Speaker Referral
- Declarative Statement

Discussion

Classroom communication exchanges between text and learner, teacher and students, students and students provided the learning context for discussion in tutorials. Teacher talk and talk generated by turns within the classroom discourse (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Edwards & Westgate, 1994; Dillon 1988, 1994) had an impact on the learning context and tended to foster discussion when the teacher was conscious of the roles of questioning and of alternatives to questioning.

Alternatives to questions provided opportunity for more language to be produced by students than direct questions. Although direct questions engaged students, the question often had to be repeated to gain an answer. When a response came, it was a brief answer without a clear development of the idea held in the question. It appeared that students were trying to second guess the teacher and provide a short accurate answer as a summary or non-elaborated point when the teacher posed a question.

Whereas questions tended to yield short answers, alternatives to questions more

often produced longer responses which were picked up by other students and elaborated upon, extended, and exemplified. The IRF pattern of interaction did not preclude collaborative interaction between teachers and students, as previous research indicated. Students built on one another's contributions as Wells (1999, p.209) has also shown, "in a manner that advances the collective understanding of the topic under discussion". They brought into view elements from their cultural heritage that were not anticipated or produced when direct questions were posed at the third turn. As students they had to acquire tools that attuned them to the 'cultural logic' (Baker & Freebody, 1989) of the pervading teaching practice in an academic English tutorial. They had to perform student roles within parameters their teacher encouraged or allowed them to act out (McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004) while they could be seen also to conform to the quite narrow range of behaviour that their peers accepted in discussion.

Cultural influences on discussion in the diverse international group of students

There were some issues related to cultural expectations among the group of student participants. Of 40 students in the study, 30 were men and 10 were women; 70% were 25 years of age or younger. Over 50 % (23 men) were from China or countries in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Libya). Among the women, up to three in each class were Chinese; all other nationalities were represented by only one woman. Other countries represented included PNG, Solomon Islands, India, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, Ghana, Korea, and South Africa. Unless they were explicitly invited by the teacher to join the discussion, women contributed fewer turns of talk than men and fewer than might have been expected in an all female class.

Roles of female and male students in discussion

Women in this study were from paternalistic cultures and many were less inclined to initiate talk in English or to speak out in mixed multi-cultural company. Further, there may have been hierarchies of age and status that predisposed the female participants to *turn taking* rather than *initiating* a turn or *interrupting* others in conversation. Also they came from traditions in which reading and writing were academic pursuits more highly valued than the spoken word. They may also have been inclined to hold beliefs that the teacher should control discussion. They may have been acting out those beliefs, so they

were hesitant and tended to wait for an invitation to contribute to the discussion.

For a section of the male cohort, having women in the class was a new experience. Men and women in their home countries were educated in separate institutions. This background experience may have caused them to be less inclined to acknowledge contributions from their female classmates or to hear them. Cultural background may have contributed to their dismissing the female viewpoint in the whole discussion. Further the men, particularly those from the Middle East appeared more confident than the women in speaking English. In order for the female voice to be heard, the teacher tended to reiterate the female speaker's statement by repetition or restating it with interest. These strategies gave 'voice' to the women and kept their ideas alive in the discussion rather than having them missed by quiet voices or dismissed as a male provided his ideas without acknowledging or following up on the previous female speaker.

Sample (from transcription   3B)

263: Filope: face face the problem ++

264: T: Uh huh

265: Filope: Face the problem ++ not be scared ++   because[

266: T:

[Face the problem ++ Mmm

267: +++ (3)

268: M36: Sharing of jokes +++ (2)

269: M?: /?/ /?/ start [

270: T: [Just back to Filope for a minute ++
        Umm +++ (3)

271:                          Did you want to say something more
        about face the [problem?

272: Filope: [Face the problem and not be nervous just to
        start to++ so /?/

273: T: So [

274: Filope: [so [stressful

275: T: [don't put things on hold++

160

make a start

Topic coherence

Sacks introduced the concept of **membership categorisation device** to provide a means of describing a category, for example gender which comprises one or more subordinate concepts of categories for example 'male' and 'female' and a set of rules which enables one to pair population members with a category (Coulthard, 1977, p.85).

Two further rules, *the economy* rule and the *consistency* rule. The economy rule states that if a member uses a single category from any device then he can be recognised to be doing *adequate* reference to person. The consistency rule states that once one member of a device has been used 'other categories of the same collection may be used to categorise further members of the population' (Coulthard, 1977, p.86). In the classroom, students who conformed to the teacher's prescription on a particular behaviour provided a category of how to contribute to a discussion. Sometimes the teacher made explicit how to identify in a specific category. Inevitably there were two categories of student, those who conformed and those who did not and they were identified by their behaviours as still within the same device 'this discussion'. A teacher's implied reference that the female Selin had offered a good idea for relief of stress (line 59) showed that she valued her response. The teacher gave an opportunity to develop the concept in lines 62, 64 and 67 as adjacency pairs teased out the male – female categories such that the 'voice heard' in this discussion was the female Selin. She claimed to use swimming as a means of relieving stress at university. The teacher ensured that her voice was heard.

Sample (from transcription A3)

57: **T: We do have many ideas on the board if you agree with some of those ++ you could do more about that**. +++ (5)

58: Felie: Just sports maybe/ +++ (3)

59: T: That's a good one?

60: Feline: Yeah Really.

61: ?????

62: **T: And ++ if you take sport, how do you think /that's/ +++ (2)**

64: **T: /Hashan/? +++ (2) Well that sounds like a [good idea**

65: H:

[/She can't think/ how how how

how can she survive?

66:      Not the /same thing/

67: T: Perhaps Feline is a good swimmer +++ (4)

68:      Ah + anybody else who uses sport.

The consistency rule then allows a corollary, the *hearer's maxim:* 'If two or more categories are used to categorise two or more members of some population and those categories can be 'heard' as categories from the same collection, then hear them that way. (Hester & Eglin, 1997). Feline was a female who used the sport of swimming as an example of a means of stress release and her view was not to be dismissed by a male voice claiming that she was off track in her answer. The two individuals mentioned together, Feline and Hashan were heard as being co-members of the device 'contributors to a discussion' and they were to be 'heard' as two equal participants. Many devices were duplicatively organised throughout the discussion.

The population consisted of a series of contributors and the talk was analysed from a view that the teacher aimed to give equal value to each speaker, and not one speaker was to be more valued than another. The participants in the population of the discussion consisted of those in the class. They were not unrelated devices all talking about different topics. They were related and bound by their category 'student' and device, the topic of discussion 'How to relieve stress at university'. Category-bound activities are those that are done by members of certain devices. 'Proposing relevant ideas' is an activity bound to the category 'participant' when it is a member of the 'discussion' device. Also there is an ordered relationship like student speaker, listeners, contributors, and teacher. A category-bound activity can be instanced to support or criticise. When a listener 'hears' the membership category the way the speaker intended, his response will be meaningful as part of that membership. However, if the listener has not 'heard' the sequence as the speaker intended, for example when the speaker provides a role that is unexpected or a controversial role for a female in the listener's view and

the student listener has not identified the membership role, there is potential for communication breakdown as occurred in line 65 by Hashan.

As students with background languages other than English, they were using English in developing an understanding of cultural adjustment to Australian university tutorial setting. At the same time they were actually finding out what their own culture represented. That was a challenge which hitherto had not been properly noticed. Those who were culturally aware recognised that they were experiencing a process of finding a 'third place' (Crozet & LoBianco, 2003). A third place is the space where users of a language learn to manage personal reaction to content identified as typical of the target culture. As they learned they could be comfortably part of two cultures, they identified with behaviours common to both and they managed those that were distinct. They began to recognise they no longer clearly identified with one culture only; they had a third place to identify with.

Conclusion

There had been an expectation among students from particular education systems that the teacher was to provide all information in the classroom. Rather than it being a student's role only to listen, so that discussion responses might have been elicited more in keeping with the requirements for Australian university tutorial exchange, a climate of encouragement to speak developed. Statements of interest and reflection, referrals to previous speakers and use of non verbal support were made meaningful as students came to acknowledge a role in their own learning from contributions their colleagues made to the discussions.

This study has brought a discourse analysis focus to whole-class discussion between teacher and international UNIPREP students in tutorial sessions in the higher education sector. It has provided a context for second language acquisition researchers, TESOL trainers and teachers and shown potential as another site for imagining ESL Study Strategies pedagogy.

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The Effects of Online Grammar Instruction on Low Proficiency EFL College Students' Achievement

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Keywords: grammar, second language learning and teaching, online courses, technology, EFL, college.

Abstract
Technology is not currently used in EFL classrooms at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Therefore an online course was used in the teaching of English grammar from home. The aim of the present study was to find out whether integration of online learning in face-to-face in-class grammar instruction significantly improves EFL freshman college students' achievement and attitudes. Two groups of freshman students participated in the study. Pre-test means scores showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their grammatical knowledge. Following online instruction with Nicenet, comparisons of the post-test means scores showed significant differences in achievement. The study concluded that in learning environments where technology is unavailable to EFL students and instructors, use of an online course from home as a supplement to in-class techniques helps motivate and enhance EFL students' learning and mastery of English grammar.

1. Introduction

More and more instructors around the world are seeking to enhance their language instruction through activities and experiences made available through technology. Many have integrated a variety of technologies in the teaching of grammar in foreign and second language learning environments, such as websites and CD-ROM virtual environments (Bowen, 1999), a Cyber Tutor that allows students to annotate sentences while providing instant feedback and help facilities (McEnery and Others, 1995), the Learning English Electronically (LEE) computer software, which consists of 43 lessons emphasizing grammar concepts and accurate sentence structure, and covering topics such as employment, food, health, school, and transportation (Schnackenberg, 1997). In addition, explicit, implicit, and exploratory grammar teaching approaches that use word

processing packages, electronic dictionaries and grammars, the World Wide Web, concordances, electronic mail, computer games/simulations, and authoring aids were combined to overcome the "grammar deficit" seen in many British undergraduate students learning German (Hall, 1998). Corkhill (1996) used a computer software program consisting of a no-frills, user-friendly personal tutor with easy to locate and call up grammar topics for teaching and reinforcing a comprehensive range of grammar topics. Collaborative projects between L1 and L2 students were also utilized as a new approach to the teaching of grammar. Students in an immersion program in Australia were linked, via the web, with students in Canada and France to produce a web magazine containing articles written collaboratively in French by the Australian and Canadian students and in English by the French students (Matas and Birch, 1999; Matas and Birch, 2000). In Hong Kong, an interactive messaging system was set up on the Internet to enable teachers of English to discuss language-related issues as part of the TeleNex teacher-support network. Grammatical explanations based on the analysis of corpus data are routinely used to answer teachers' queries (Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999).

Despite the glamour of technology, its use in language teaching does not guarantee students' success in skills acquisition nor higher levels of achievement than traditional classroom environments. The effects of technology on L1 and L2 acquisition vary. They depend on what kind of technology is used, how it is used, what is being taught, and for how long. The impact of technology on the development of language skills in general and grammatical development in particular by L1 and L2 elementary, high school and college students were the focus of several studies. Studies by Grant (1998), Nagata (1996), and Collentine (2000) found technology to be an effective tool in teaching and learning grammar. Grant (1998) conducted a study with two groups of 5th grade students in which one group received computer-based instruction in English grammar, and the other received computer-based instruction in mathematics. The instructional programs included drill and review. Results of the opinion survey revealed that the computer-based instruction increased students' interest in school and learning in general. Students reported an increase in satisfaction with learning with immediate responses. In a study with Japanese students, Nagata (1996) compared the effectiveness of Nihongo-CALI (Japanese Computer Assisted Language Instruction) with non-CALI

workbook instruction. The ongoing intelligent computer feedback was found to be more effective than simple workbook answer sheets for developing learners' grammatical skill in producing Japanese particles and sentences. In a third study, a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) software containing user-behavior tracking technologies promoted the abilities of foreign-language learners of Spanish in generating indirect speech (Collentine, 2000).

Likewise, Zhuo (1999) examined the effect of hypermedia on grammar instruction and learning. She developed a hypermedia courseware through authoring tools such as Macromedia Authorware and Director. Post-treatment scores showed that participants' achievement significantly increased, confirming the premises that the hypermedia-based instruction is very effective for grammar teaching and learning. However, the proficiency level and instructional sections did not have significant effects on learning time. The performance of learners with different cognitive styles did not significantly differ indicating that hypermedia-based instruction could accommodate the needs and ability of different individuals.

At the high school level, Frigaard (2002) examined the performance of high school students' who participated in a computer lab on vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension in Spanish. Analysis of student surveys indicated that the computer lab was a beneficial tool, benefiting some students more than others. Some of students favored lab-based activities like the Spanish study Website and the grammar tutor. Other favorite classroom activities included flashcards and games. Most of the students believed that the computer lab improved their listening skills and made class more interesting and they enjoyed having regularly scheduled lab sessions. However, they preferred to learn vocabulary and grammar in the classroom and felt that having an instructor present in the computer lab increased their learning potential.

Use of technology in language instruction was also found to have varying effects on students' attitudes towards foreign/second language instruction. Chen (2004) surveyed a sample of 1,026 freshmen and sophomore students in Taiwan taking the required college EFL course. The students expressed significantly positive attitudes

toward educational technology use for EFL instruction. Likewise, Felix (2001) reported that on the whole, students were positively inclined to working with the web and found it useful, with the majority preferring to use the web as a supplement to face-to-face teaching. Very few significant findings relating to strategy strength were obtained. Significant differences for age and gender were found relating to clarity of objectives, number of hours worked, mode of delivery, perception of comfort and appreciation of graphics. Furthermore, intermediate level community college ESL students and teachers expressed very positive attitudes toward using LEE (Schnackenberg, 1997). Strengths of the program identified by teachers were the additional grammar practice available, the self-paced and non-threatening nature of the program, the inclusion of sound in the program, and the grammar topics being presented with content topics. The students enjoyed using the program and felt it helped them learn, and they liked having teacher supervision while using the program individually. Both students and teachers reported some weaknesses such as the slow response time of the computer in executing commands, difficultly using the mouse, starting and ending the program, and printing.

Although, thousands of students and instructors around the world are using Online Management Systems like Blackboard, WebCT, Online Learning, Moodle and Nicenet in teaching all kinds of courses including EFL and ESL, the effect of using online courses in grammar instruction was not investigated by prior research. As in many developing countries, use of online courses in EFL instruction in some higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia is not yet known due to insufficient numbers of PC's, lack of internet connectivity in some colleges, lack of trained instructors, and lack of administrative support. A few individual attempts are now available here and there. Several instructors are using OWCP and Moodle to teach writing, grammar, literature, linguistics and others. However, the effect of such practices on Saudi college students' achievement has not been investigated yet. This author has been using online courses as a supplement to in-class instruction (blended learning) since the year 2000. In the present study, EFL freshman students used an online course with Nicenet from home as a supplement to face-to-face in-class grammar instruction. It aimed to investigate the effectiveness of blending online instruction in in-class instruction on students' achievement in grammar. It tried to answer the following questions: (1) Is there a

significant difference between EFL freshman students registered in the online grammar course as a supplement to face-to-face instruction and those using face-to-face in-class instruction only in their achievement level as measured by the post-test? (2) Does the frequency of using the online course correlate with the students' achievement level, i.e. are active participants better achievers than passive participants, and passive participants better achievers than non-users? (3) Does online and face-to-face instruction (blended learning) have any positive effects on students' attitudes?

To answer these questions, two groups of EFL students participated in the study: One was taught grammar using traditional face-to-face in-class instruction depending on the textbook only and the other was taught using blended learning consisting of face-to-face in-class instruction and an online course with Nicenet. The impact of online and face-to-face in-class instruction on EFL freshman students' grammar achievement was based on quantitative analyses of the pre- and post-tests. The effect of online and face-to-face in-class instruction on freshman students' attitudes was based on qualitative analyses of students' responses to a post-treatment questionnaire.

2. Subjects

A total of 238 female freshman students were enrolled in their fist grammar course. All the students were majoring in translation at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They were concurrently taking listening (3 hours per week), speaking (3 hours), reading (4 hours), writing (4 hours) and vocabulary building (3 hours) courses in English as a Foreign Language.

The subjects were all Saudi nationals and were all native speakers of Arabic. Their median age was 18 years, and the range was 17-19. They all had 6 years of EFL instruction in grades 6-12 prior to their admission to COLT. They were all studying English in a segregated environment where all of the students and instructors were females. Therefore, findings of the present study may not be generalized to male freshman students at COLT taking the same Grammar I course and studying the same textbook.

Seventy-four students (31%) were registered in the online course; 164 students (69%) were not. Registration in the online course was optional as many students had no access to the Internet. Registered students constituted the experimental group, and unregistered students constituted the control group. Both groups were exposed to the same in-class instruction using the same grammar textbook. In addition to face-to-face in-class instruction depending on the textbook, the experimental group was exposed to online instruction (blended learning). Students in the experimental group had no prior experience with online instruction.

Results of the T-test presented in Table 1 showed significant differences between the experimental and control groups in their knowledge of English grammar before grammar instruction began (T = 2.8; df = 236; P<.008). The experimental group outperformed the control group (median = 26% & 23% respectively, with larger variations existing among students in the experimental group than the control groups as revealed by the standard deviation values presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Independent Samples Test (comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores)

	t-test	df	Sig. level	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pretest	2.686	236	.008	2.7521	1.0247

Table 2

Distribution of Pre-test Scores of Experimental and Control Groups in Percentages

	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Range
Experimental group	74	25.63%	26%	16.12	1.90	11-67%
Control group	164	22.88%	23%	13.78	1.08	03-61%

3. In-class Instruction

The experimental and control groups were exposed to the same traditional in-class instruction. The topics covered in class were: parts of speech, prepositions, prepositional phrases, transitive and intransitive verbs, linking verbs, regular and irregular verbs, adverb placement, information, tag, negative and yes-no questions, negatives, regular and irregular plurals, use of definite and indefinite articles, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, 9 tenses, modals, pronunciation of –ed, -s and -es at the end of verbs and nouns, spelling of –ing, -ed, -es. The students studied the same grammar textbook *Understanding and Using English Grammar* by Betty Azar (3rd Edition) and completed the same exercises and grammatical topics in that textbook. The grammar course was taught in Spring 2004 for 12 weeks.

Students in both groups did all the grammar exercises in class. While doing the exercises, the author monitored students' work and provided individual help. Only errors related to rules under study were highlighted. Feedback was provided on the presence and location of errors but no correct forms were provided. The students had to check the rules and examples in the book by themselves. Extra credit was given to students who could do all the items in the exercise correctly and within the designated time.

As for assessment, students in both groups were given two in-term tests. Tests were graded, returned to the students with comments on strengths and weaknesses. Words of encouragement were given. The slightest improvement was noted and commended. Answers were discussed in class.

4. Treatment (Online Instruction)

In addition to the traditional in-class instruction, the experimental group used an online course with Nicenet, because using the Nicenet course site did not require any special license or registration fees. It was easy to use. The experimental group used their own PC's and the Internet from home, as the Internet was inaccessible from COLT. The students were given the class key and they enrolled themselves. The author had to provide the online instruction herself.

Prior to online instruction, the students' computer literacy skills were assessed by a questionnaire. A tutorial was given to them for reference. The online course components were described and instructions on how to use certain course components were also posted in the "Conferencing" area. Online instruction was initiated by posting a welcome note, by starting a discussion topic and by sending a group e-card. The author continued to do so every now and then throughout the semester.

Every week, grammar websites (hyperlinks) related to the grammar topic covered in class was added in "Link Sharing". The links contained explanations, examples, exercises and quizzes and a daily grammar lessons. Questions that required use of a particular tense or grammatical structure were posted in the "Conferencing" area. In addition, the students could post short paragraphs on any topic of their choice. The students checked the specific grammar links posted under "Link Sharing", answered the quizzes and were encouraged to check the daily grammar lesson.

Throughout the semester, the author served as a facilitator. She provided technical support on using the different components of the online course, and responded to individual students' needs, comments and requests for certain sites. The author sent public and private messages to encourage the students to interact and communicate. She had to look for relevant websites and post them in the "Link Sharing" area. She had to post questions and discussion topics and write model responses every week. The author did not correct spelling and grammatical mistakes. She would point out the type of errors they made especially in the grammar threads and ask the students to double-check their posts. Using the online course was optional as 69% of the students had no Internet access and were not able to participate. Students were given extra credit for using the online course.

5. Procedures

Before instruction, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. They took the same grammar pretest that consisted of questions covering the grammatical topics to be studied. At the end of the semester, both groups took the same post-test that covered all of the grammatical topics studied throughout the semester: These included the

following: (1) Fill in the blanks in the text with an article where necessary; (2) Write if each noun is Count or Non-count as it is used in the text. Use C or NC; (3) Write the part of speech of each word as it is used in the text. Use abbreviations; (4) Write the plural of each word as it is used in the text; (5) Write the plural form of the noun where necessary; (6) Write the singular form of the noun where necessary; (7) Use the correct tense of the verbs in parentheses or add a modal where necessary; (8) Read the following paragraph, then make questions as indicated; (9) How is -ed or -es pronounced in the following words; (10) Write the past participle of each verb; (11) Fill in the blanks with a pronoun; (12) Complete the following sentences; (13) Change nouns and pronouns to plural where necessary and make any necessary changes; (14) Underline the correct word; (15) Fill in the blanks with an expression of quantity or an indefinite pronoun. Most of the questions required production.

The pre- and post-tests of both groups were blindly graded by the author. The students wrote their ID numbers instead of their names. An answer key was used. Questions were graded one at a time for all the students. Marks were deducted for spelling mistakes.

At the end of the course, all of the students answered an open-ended questionnaire, which consisted of the following questions: (1) Why did you register and use the online course? (2) What did you like about it? What did you not like? (3) Did your English improve as a result of using the online course? In what ways? (4) Did it make any difference in learning English grammar? (5) If you did not post any responses or paragraphs in the online course? Why? (6) What problems or difficulties did you face in using the online course? How were those problems solved? (7) How often did you use the online course? (8) How much time did you spend using and browsing the online course? (9) Would you register again in a similar course in the future? Why? (10) Which links did you find most useful?

6. Test Validity and Reliability

The post-tests are believed to have content validity as they aimed at assessing the students' achievement in grammar. The tasks required in the post-test were comparable

to those covered in the book and practiced in class. In addition, the test instructions were phrased clearly and the examinee's task was defined.

Concurrent validity of the post-test was determined by establishing the relationship between the students' scores on the post-test and their course grade. The validity coefficient was .78. Concurrent validity was also determined by establishing the relationship between the students' scores on the post-test and their scores on the second in-term test. The validity coefficient was .72 for the grammar test.

Since the author was the instructor of the experimental and control groups and the scorer of the pre-test and post-test essays, estimates of inter-rater reliability were necessary. A 30% random sample of the pre- and post-test papers was selected and double-scored. A colleague who holds a Ph.D. degree scored the pre- and post-test samples. The scoring procedures were explained to her, and she followed the same scoring procedures and used the same answer key that the author utilized. The marks given by the rater were correlated with the author's. Inter-rater correlation was .99 for the post-test.

Furthermore, examinee reliability was calculated using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21'. The examinee reliability coefficient for the posttest was .85.

7. Data Analysis

The pre- and post-test raw scores were converted into percentages. The mean median, standard deviation, standard error and range were computed for the pre- and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. To find out whether there was a significant difference in ability between the experimental and control groups prior to instruction, an independent sample T-test was run using the pre-test scores.

Since experimental and control groups are unequal in size, significant differences existed between the experimental and control groups in their pre-test means scores before at the beginning of the semester. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was run using the post-test scores as the response variable and the pre-test scores as the

covariate to correct for chance differences that existed when the subjects were assigned to the treatment groups. This correction resulted in the adjustment of group means for pre-existing differences caused by sampling error and reduction of the size of the error variance of the analysis.

To find out whether each group had made any progress as a result of instruction, a within group paired T-test was computed for each groups using the pre- and post-test mean scores of each group.

To find out whether there is a relationship between the students' post-test scores and frequency of using the online course, the student' post-test score was correlated with the number of responses she posted in the "Conferencing" area using the Pearson correlation formula. Post-test scores could not be correlated with the frequency of using the hyperlinks posted in the Link Sharing, as such statistics are not provided by the Nicenet system.

8. Results

8.1 Effect of Online and Face-to-face on Achievement

Table 3 shows that the typical EFL female freshman student in the experimental group scored higher than the typical student in the control group on the post-test (medians = 62% and 55% respectively) with similar variations among students in the experimental and controls (SD = 17.98 and 18 respectively).

Table 3

Distribution of Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups in Percentages

	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	Range
Experimental Group	74	61.80%	62%	17.98	2.12	30-100%
Control Group	164	55.76%	55%	18.00	1.24	14-94%

Table 4

Comparison of the Pre- and Post-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

		df	t	Sig level	Mean	Mean Difference	SD	SE of Mean
Ex Group	Pretest	73	27.09	.000	25.6%	25.6	8.08	.95
	Posttest	73	32.33	.000	61.8%	30.9	8.17	.96
Control Group	Pretest	163	42.46	.000	22.9%	22.9	6.90	.54
	Posttest	163	44.66	.000	55.8%	27.9	8.00	.62

Results of the paired T-test in Table 4 reveal a significant difference between the pre- and post-test mean scores of the experimental group at the .01 level, suggesting that student achievement in the experimental group significantly improved as a result of using a combination of online and traditional face-to-face in-class grammar instruction (T = 7.5; df = 73). Similarly, a significant difference between the pre- and post-test mean scores of the control group was found at the .01 level, suggesting that achievement in the control group significantly improved as a result of in-class grammar instruction which depended on the textbook only (T = 10.29; df = 163). Since the two groups are unequal in size, and significant differences existed between the experimental and control groups in their pre-test scores, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on adjusted post-test means revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups (F = 117.23; df = 236; P<.0001). The experimental group made higher gains in grammar achievement than the control group as a result of using a combination of online and face-to-face in-class instruction. The effect size was .49.

8.2 Correlation between Post-test Scores and Frequency Usage

Table 5 shows the total number of discussion messages posted together with the median and maximum number of messages posted. The study found a significant positive correlation between the post-test scores of the experimental group and the frequency of using the online course. The correlation coefficient was .40 and it was significant at the .01 level. This suggests that a student's achievement in the grammar course correlated with the number of contributions she made to the discussion topics and questions posted in the online course. This means that high and low usage frequencies

of the online course were found to correlate with high and low achievement levels as measured by the post-test. It can be concluded that using the online course did contribute to the students' overall performance level.

Table 5

Distribution of Discussion Messages Posted by Experimental Groups

	Total # of Group Messages	Median	Maximum # of Individual Messages
Grammar	364	6	50

8.3 Effect of Online and Face-to-face Instruction on Attitudes

Analysis of student comments and responses to the post-treatment questionnaires revealed positive attitudes towards online learning and the grammar course under study. All the students found the online grammar course useful and fun, and considered it a new way of leaning English grammar and doing homework. It heightened their motivation and raised their self-esteem. It created a warm-climate between the students and instructor and among the students themselves. They found the exercises posted in "Link Sharing" useful, as they provided more practice and gave instant feedback. The exercises helped clarify difficult points and helped the students review for the in-terms. They could use the online course any time and as many times as they needed. It made the class material easier.

Some of the negative aspects of online teaching in the present study are that some students do not post any responses if not prompted by the instructor and if the instructor does not post new topics and post a sample response. Some students start a new thread dealing with the same topic instead of posting a response under that topic. Some wrote "Thank you" notes and compliments instead of real responses. Others just browsed and read rather than posting messages.

Inadequate participation in the online course was due to lack of computers and Internet connectivity at COLT and at home. Some students did not take online

instruction seriously as it was not used by other instructors and students at COLT. The author could not make the online course mandatory and could not allocate a proportion of the course grade to it. Using the Internet as a learning tool was not part of some students' culture. Some were so used to traditional instruction that depended on the book. They indicated that they were not net browsers and preferred to read books and references. They also believed that online courses should be used for fun not for credit and serious studying. Many Saudi college students do extra work for grades only. If online learning is not part of tests and grades, they will not participate. The author did not have sufficient time in the classroom to brainstorm topics before and after posting and could not go through the material in the hyperlinks in class.

Other weaknesses are due to the Nicenet online course design. The instructor could not design her own tests and exercises and could not upload graphics and PowerPoint presentations.

9. Discussion and Conclusion

Significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups in grammar achievement as measured by the post-test, suggesting that achievement in the experimental group improved as a result of blending online and in-class instruction. This means that use of online instruction as a supplement to in-class instruction proved to be a powerful tool for improving students' achievement in grammar. Findings of the present study also indicated that active participants made higher gains than passive participants who in turn made higher gains than unregistered students (control group). This finding is consistent with findings of prior studies using other forms of technology in grammar instruction such as the Nagata (1996), Collentine (2000) and Zhuo (1999) studies. Nagata found the ongoing intelligent computer feedback to be more effective than simple workbook answer sheets for developing learners' grammatical skill in producing Japanese particles and sentences. Collentine reported that user-behavior tracking technologies promoted the abilities of foreign-language learners of Spanish in generating indirect speech. Zhuo concluded that hypermedia-based instruction was very effective in grammar teaching and learning. Nutta (1998) compared postsecondary English as a Second Language (ESL) students' acquisition of selected English

179

grammatical structures based on the method of instruction - computer-based instruction versus teacher-directed instruction. She found that for all levels of English proficiency, the computer-based students scored significantly higher on open-ended tests covering the grammatical structures in question than the teacher-directed students. No significant differences were found between the computer-based and teacher-directed students' scores on multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank tests. She concluded that computer-based instruction can be an effective method of teaching L2 grammar.

Unlike Frigaard's study (2002) in which the students preferred to learn vocabulary and grammar in the classroom rather than in the computer lab, students in the present study showed interest in learning grammar online. Moreover, the present study revealed positive effects of blended learning (online and face-to-face instruction) on students' attitudes towards the grammar course. This finding is also consistent with findings of other studies. For instance, Lin (2004) found that international students' attitudes towards ESL were positively related to their attitudes toward computers. Their attitude towards ESL was also positively related to their perceived computer competency improvement and their experience in ESL was positively related to their perceived computer competency improvement. In Chen's study (2004), freshmen and sophomores students in Taiwan expressed significantly positive attitudes toward educational technology use in EFL instruction. Moreover, Felix (2001) reported that on the whole, students were positively inclined to working with the web and found it useful, with the majority preferring to use the web as a supplement to face-to-face teaching. Furthermore, intermediate level community college ESL students and teachers expressed very positive attitudes toward using LEE (Schnackenberg, 1997). As in Schnackenberg's computer software LEE, online grammar instruction in the present study provided additional grammar practice, a self-paced and non-threatening learning environment. The students enjoyed using the online course and felt it helped them learn.

Finally, the present study recommends that use of blended learning (use of online instruction as a supplement to face-to-face instruction) be extended to other language course and other college levels. Students of different college levels (i.e., lower and upper class students) enrolled in courses focusing on the same skill such as reading

or writing can share the same online course together with their instructors. To encourage the students to participate, the instructor has to prompt and motivate them and rules for using the online course should be made clear. A minimum number of postings may be specified. Administrative support is also required in order for the students to take the online course seriously. Other Management Systems like WebCT, Moodle or Blackboard may be used instead of Nicenet to enable the students to edit, upload pictures and PowerPoint presentations, use online chat and to enable the instructor to design her own quizzes and exercises. The effect of grammar instruction delivered fully online using course materials and quizzes designed by the instructor is still open for further investigation.

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Appendix (A)

Sample Grammar Links

Daily Grammar Lesson

http://www.thebeehive.org/external_link.asp?r=/school/middle/subjects.asp?subject=12&e=http://www.dailygrammar.com/archive.shtml

Parts of speech

http://www.jiskha.com/english/grammar/parts_of_speech.html

Parts of Speech (Definitions)

http://www.cftech.com/BrainBank/OTHERREFERENCE/GRAMMARANDPUNCTUATION/PartsSpeech.html

Parts of Speech (Lessons & Quizzes)

http://www.eslus.com/LESSONS/GRAMMAR/POS/pos.htm

http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/partsp.html

http://www.cityu.edu.hk/elc/quiz/partspee.htm

http://www.cityu.edu.hk/elc/quiz/partspee.htm

Prepositions : Quiz

http://a4esl.org/q/j/ck/mc-prepositions.html

English Zone: Questions

http://english-zone.com/index.php?ID=30

Singular and Plural

http://www.better-english.com/grammar/sinplu.htm

http://www.better-english.com/grammar/sinplu.htm

http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises/plural6.htm

Irregular Verbs

http://www.englishpage.com/irregularverbs/irregularverbs.html

Tenses

http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/grammar_list/zeitformen.htm

Verb Tense Chart

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/esltensverb.html

Verbs

http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/grammar_list/verbs.htm

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/exlist/exlist.htm

Quiz Center

http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/quiz/

Appendix (B)

**An Unedited Sample Online Grammar Discussion Thread with Students'
Responses and Comments**

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/18/04 10:15 AM GMT -06:00)

SUBJECT: Practicing the Simple Present

Please write few sentences in which you tell us about what you and your family
members do every Ramadan day or night. Make sure you use the Present Simple Tense.
Use punctuation marks like periods and commas. Use a capital "I" for the pronoun "I".
Thanks.

FROM: Maryam AL-Qassim   (10/19/04 11:45 AM GMT -06:00)

SUBJECT: Hello every one*****

I and my family sleep early .that because we wake up to eat a meal befor AL_FAGER prayer .Then ,everyone from us goes to his¥her work or universty.

REPLIES (1):

FROM: fatima abdulwahed   (10/21/04 5:52 PM GMT -06:00)
In ramadan especially, every one of my family tries to do something different.
Ramadan is a nice month. we usually visit our relatives. My little brother likes to eat so much cookies in ramadan , so he usually gets fat evey ramadan. it was just few 'separate' sentences.

FROM: Rasha khaled   (10/23/04 12:45 PM GMT -06:00)
SUBJECT: Practicing the Simple Present

I love Ramadan because it's a great month to be more closer to Allah. I and my family everyday get's together and eat the first meal after al-athan in the sunset . Ramadan is a special month to me and to all the muslem's in all over the world.

FROM: fatima al-abd ulmughni   (10/25/04 11:43 AM GMT -06:00)

I usually help my mom in the kitchen, after breakfast we watch T.V. I like staying at my room most of the time and draw, but in Ramadan staying with my family is more fun then being alone.

Fatooma

FROM: Hanan Abdel Monem   (10/27/04 6:59 AM GMT -06:00)
SUBJECT: My Habits in Ramadan.

Daily habits:

1- I pray fajr.

2- I sleep after fajr.

3- I get up little bit later.

4- I wash my face.

5- I sit to surf the net and study my lessons.

6- I work on translation tasks.

7- I attend the online courses.

8- I work on my assignments.

9- I check my mail.

10- I pray frud.

11- I talk to relatives by phone.

12- I prepare something to iftar.

13- we take our eftar.

14- we pray Maghreb.

15- we pray Isha and traweh.

16- we sit to talk.

17- I read Quran.

18- I sleep to get up early.

Weekly Habits:

1- I clean our house.

2- I visit rahem.

Monthly Habits: (after Ramadan)

1- I pay telephone bills.

2- I renew internet subscription.

3- I buy our house necessities.

Dr Reima if we use present simple, should we imagine that the speaker want to tell us at the end of his speech that what he said is his (daily habit or weekly habit or monthly habit or annual habit or hourly habit without writing this depending on the presence of this tense present simple in the sentence and not any other tense)and if the subject is solid can we imagine that there are words that are omitted like (everyday, every week, every month, every year, every hour)

REPLIES (1):

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/27/04 4:37 PM GMT -06:00)
Habits can be daily, weekly, monthly, annual and even things we do every 5 or 10 years, or things that happen every 100 years. For example, I can say:
I travel every summer.
I change my furniture once every 5 years.

FROM: Hanan Abdel Monem   (10/27/04 7:10 AM GMT -06:00)
SUBJECT: Question

If I am not persistent in doing the action I did I mean I did it but not everyday everyday may be I stop doing it then I redo it again then something else takes me but I return to do it again Can I use here present simple? can we call this habit? and if not what can we call it? and which tense all thes meaning without writing them explicitly?

REPLIES (5):
FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/27/04 4:42 PM GMT -06:00)
(1) Could you please add punctuation marks to your sentences.
(2) You need to use a mixture of tenses here. In real life communication situations, we use a mixture of tenses and we move back and forth among the tenses. However, when you teach beginners, you have to teach the tenses one at a time and have the students practice them one at a time. Once they master each tense, then we can proceed to practicing 2 tenses, then more. At the early stages, students should practice the tenses at the sentence level, and at a later stage they can practice them at the discourse level. But if a teacher requires that her students use all the tenses at the same time, they will not

master any. My students are in their first semester of college. This is their first grammar course; they will be taking 2 more: one in semester 2 and one in semester 3. In semester 2, they will be practicing the tenses at the paragraph level.

I hope this explains it.

FROM: Hanan Abdel Monem   (10/28/04 9:23 AM GMT -06:00)

Correction:

If I am not persistent in doing the action I did, I mean I did it, but not everyday everyday may be I (will) stop doing it. then I (will) redo it again. Then something else takes me (away). But I return to do it again. Can I use present simple (here)? Can we call (these) habits? and if not, what can we call them? Which tense applies to all these meanings without writing them explicitly?

Yes, Dr. but I remember in narrating something, they always told us to stick to one tense, whether present or past, it was really strange because sometimes there are things should be in other tenses, for that I have this idea that we can not change tenses throughout the text but it is really a big misery.

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/29/04 10:00 AM GMT -06:00)

It depends on what you are writing about. No hard and fast rules.

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/29/04 10:05 AM GMT -06:00)

Thanks for the exclusive list, Hanan. I am sure your friends will like them and will make a long list like it.

FROM: Hanan Abdel Monem   (10/30/04 5:30 AM GMT -06:00)

Thanks Dr. for correction.I try to encircle all what is called a habit in my life to know what "habit", that we say all the time, mean? I hope I successed.

FROM: Najla Faisal   (10/26/04 9:33 AM GMT -06:00)

Everything changes in Ramadan, The food, T.v, people, conversations and even the way u feel changes.

My Grandfather insists that we have breakfast at his house everyday, which is really nice, it gives us the chance of knowing him (and each other) better.

The food in Ramadan is another story, my mom makes the best pastries in the world, Not to mention her Gatayef (an arabic desert).
Just talking about it makes me droll !

Anyway, I think this year my basic Ramadan day will start by going to the university, watching Ramadan`s series`, having breakfast with my family, praying at the mosque (which I really want to make a daliy habbit), watching more T.V, studing (cause I have midterms in Ramadan) then sleeping.

So far, I think it`s going to be a great Ramadan.

Wishing u all a Great Ramadan Too :)

Najla :)

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/26/04 2:46 PM GMT -06:00)
This is an interesting paragraph. I like the informaiton and I like your writing style too.
Looking forward to hearing more about Ramadan from you and from your classmates.

FROM: amal amal   (10/28/04 11:57 AM GMT -06:00)
In Ramadan I read the Holy Quran and pray after 8:00 p.m .Ieat dats and water with some of food.

FROM: Malak Ajina   (29/10/04 5:12 AM GMT -06:00)
My daily list in Ramadan is change From year to another ,but I want to tell you what I do in Ramadan in this year. When I wake up at 9:00 (this is when our holiday started) Iclean my house with my sisters untill 9:30 or 10:00.Then I read Qura'an some hours unto my mother call me to help her in cooking. When the time come 4:00 I watch T.V, because thereis anice program in Kuwait Channel this program his arranger is

Mohammad Al-Aode. After it is finish I see another program about profet Mohammad by Tareeq Al-swidan. Then I go back to the kichin to my mother till to Magreb foretoken and all my family eat Fatoor. At 7:00 Istudy my Grammer Book each day Ireview 2 pages to 3 pages also my Vocabulary Book. When I finish those books Iread my favourite story which is (Jane Eyre) becuse I want to improve my Einglish languge and I hope read many stories in Ramadan befor the holiday finish. You know Prof. Reima now we rae in holiday so my small brothers want to shopping, travel, park or any place from 11:00 to 2:45.Then I eat Sahoor and go to Sleep.

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/29/04 1:42 PM GMT -06:00)

Dear Najla

I like your writing style. There is something special about it. I can see a great writer. Keep on writing and let us enjoy more of your thoughts and reflections.

FROM: Prof. Reima Al-Jarf   (10/30/04 1:39 PM GMT -06:00)
SUBJECT: Your paragraphs

Dear Students

I enjoyed reading your paragraphs and learning about your Ramadan daily activities. However, I suggest that you type your paragraph using Microsoft WORD before you post it. MS WORD will underline spelling mistakes in red. It will also give you the options for correcting your mistakes. This way your English will improve. Try it and let me know what you think.

Task-Based Pronunciation Teaching: A State-of-the-art Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze what some pronunciation teachers are currently doing in some Asian contexts and, in view of their contribution to the profession and their results obtained, propose a state-of-the-art methodology for teaching English pronunciation founded upon the combination of fluency- with accuracy-focused tasks.

Introduction

For a long time, from the literature, it would seem that pronunciation teachers in many Asian contexts have been using what some would epitomize as an conventional methodology for teaching English pronunciation rooted in drilling and automatic exercises. The outcome of this divulges that many learners retain some critical deviant phonological forms which prove highly detrimental to successful communication in English.

A predicament of this type may entail a need to effect a change in the methodology used whereby tasks function as a central focus in a supportive and natural environment for language study. Under this new approach which combines meaning- with form-focused tasks, learners are expected to develop their communication skills and, in so doing, modify those deviant phonological forms with the intention of preserving phonological intelligibility.

In the last decades, and perhaps due to the effects of globalization as a worldwide phenomenon, there has been a steady growth in the attention to the magnitude of pronunciation teaching, as the general goals of teaching have primed the effective use of the spoken language to establish successful communication. This fact, however, has brought about an emergent debate about the models, goals and, particularly, the methodology used for pronunciation skill teaching. For some, such changes and the uncertainty of debate are puzzling, so a study to resolve some aspects of the debate is a valuable contribution to the English language teaching profession.

In the more distant past, conventional approaches to teaching pronunciation emphasized the study of phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, along with some structurally based interest in stress, rhythm, and intonation. From the pedagogic perspective, instruction mainly consisted in articulatory descriptions, imitation, and memorization of patterns through drills and set scripts, with overall attention to correction, all this, in the hope that learners would eventually pronounce the English sounds like a British native speaker. This concern for perfect pronunciation, derived from native models, aimed at enabling learners to come as close as possible to the native-like performance of a single prestige accent – Received Pronunciation (RP).

Later, under the notional-functional approach, nevertheless, came the need to get learners to use the language freely for communicative purposes. Along these lines, drillings and other types of mechanical exercises were considered outdated whereby the focus was placed mostly on meaning and not on form. In this context, pronunciation teaching was downgraded pedagogically as a result of difficulties in aligning it with and

incorporating it into more communicative approaches to language teaching since work on phonology, it was believed, could impede communicative practice and thus threaten learners' self-confidence (Jenner, 1996).

Nonetheless, in recent years, and with the renewed professional support to enable students to become effective and efficient speakers of English, there has been a incessant progress to bring pronunciation back on stage since, as many prominent theorists and researchers point out, it is a vital element of communicative competence and, as such, it should be given preferential treatment (see, for example, Morley, 1991; Taylor, 1991; among others). At present, and possibly as a result of this new trend, many more people are again keen on pronunciation, but the truth is, as was said above, that we are not completely convinced of which models, goals and methodology are more helpful for students and teachers alike.

In accordance with the different approaches to teaching pronunciation, the bottom-up approach, on the one hand, begins with the articulation of individual sounds and works up towards intonation, stress and rhythm. On the other hand, the top-down approach begins with patterns of intonation and brings separate sounds into sharper focus as and when required. In the bottom-up approach, the central idea is that if you teach the segments first, the suprasegmental features will be subsequently acquired without the need of formal instruction. In the top-down approach, however, the assumption is that once the prosodic features are in place, the necessary segmental discriminations will follow accordingly (Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994).

Starting holistically from voice quality and then moving on to work on segmental features, according to Jenkins (2000), implies that learners are pushed to adapt to and use L2 articulatory settings with their articulators still geared towards the production of L1 sounds:

> …learners of a second language approach its pronunciation with their articulators still geared to the production of their L1 (mother tongue) sounds (and prosodic features – though these are rarely mentioned by name). Thus, they begin the process of trying to acquire the phonology of L2 (target language) at a serious disadvantage, since many of its sounds are virtually impossible to produce unless the articulators adopt the same positions, types of movement, and degree of muscular activity as those employed by L1 speakers. (2000, p. 157)

Regarding the polemic claim presented by many pronunciation writers which asserts the view that suprasegmentals are more indispensable and contribute more to intelligibility and accent than segmentals do, Jenkins (1996, 1998, 2000), rather contentiously, argues that the view that most segmental errors, though evident, do not impair understanding, is something of an overstatement, since most mishearings between NSs-NNSs and NNs-NNs, according to her own data sources, can be identified as occurring at a segmental level. According to her "segmental transfer errors can prove highly detrimental to successful communication in English" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 39). On the same grounds, and to provide support for her claims, Anderson-Hsieh (2000) reported that "very few studies have actually investigated the relative roles of the segmentals and suprasegmentals in intelligibility, but also that the few that have been conducted have been *suggestive* (emphasis on original) rather than strongly conclusive of the greater influence of suprasegmentals" (in Jenkins, 2000, p. 135).

Close examination of these controversial beliefs may lead us to think that a reasonable aim would be to establish a degree of segmental-suprasegmental balance through which learners, for personal or professional reasons, are allowed to choose whether they wish to sound as close as possible to native speakers of English or not. However, even with these needs in place, although it may sound discouraging, many students will never acquire through formal instruction all the suprasegmental features because some of these, especially pitch movement, are apparently not teachable and can only be acquired over time – if at all – through extensive non-pedagogic exposure (Roach, 1983; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994; Nelson, 1998; Jenkins, 2000; among others).

For pedagogical reasons, it might be helpful to think about the teachability-learnability scale as introduced by Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) which suggests that there are certain aspects of the English pronunciation which seem to be easily taught; namely, sounds and stress while others, such as intonation, are extremely dependent on individual circumstances and thus practically impossible to separate out for direct teaching. In her latest studies, Jenkins (1996, 1998, 2000) explains that even if it were feasible to teach pitch movement in the classroom, she does not believe that the use of native speaker pitch movement matters very much for intelligibility in interactions between NSs-NNSs or NNs-NNs since this feature very seldom leads to communication breakdowns, and when it does, it is accompanied by other linguistic errors – commonly phonological.

Nuclear stress, and especially contrastive stress, however, unlike intonation,

operates at a more conscious level and is crucial for intelligibility. In her data, Jenkins (2000) found out that most of the errors that caused unintelligibility were segmental, a substantial minority consisted of intonational errors and, of these, almost all related to misplaced nuclear stress, particularly contrastive stress, either alone or combined with segmental errors. Yet again, this last finding provides evidence to support the view that the furthermost phonological obstacles to mutual intelligibility between NSs-NNSs and NNs-NNSs seem to be deviant sounds in combination with misplaced and/or misproduced nuclear stress.

On looking back at this discussion and turning back to the concern about setting realistic and achievable goals for teaching pronunciation, it could be sensible to think that instead of pushing learners to strive for perfect pronunciation, a focus on pedagogic attention on those items which are teachable and learnable and also essential in terms of intelligible pronunciation, appears to be a more reasonable goal. The main pedagogic aim underlying my proposal is that, upon the implementation of a new methodology for teaching pronunciation, which combines fluency- with accuracy-focused tasks, students are expected to develop a highly acceptable phonological competence to become fluent bilingual speakers, a fact which will enable them to communicate in EFL (English as a Foreign Language), ESL (English as a Second Language) and EIL (English as an International Language) contexts.

After exploring and critically analyzing the different approaches to teaching pronunciation and what appears to be teachable and learnable for classroom settings, I will now refer to the type of methodology that, according to some influential

pronunciation scholars and my own experience, appears to be more useful for learners and teachers alike. As was mentioned above, the formal instruction of those common core features of English pronunciation - vowel length, nuclear stress (especially, contrastive stress), and voice setting- which seem to be vital for establishing intelligibility enable learners to take utmost advantage of both their receptive and productive pronunciation skills.

Concerning production skills, interactive or "reciprocal" (Ellis, 2001, p.49) tasks with a specific focus on form are crucial for the development of key phonological features (Thornbury, 1993; Jones and Evans, 1995; Jenkins, 2000; Swain and Lapkin, 2001; among others). More controlled sessions, on the other hand, are vital to classroom work in accommodation skills and where changes to L1 phonological habits are indispensable, as learners will not be able to converge with one another on more target-like pronunciations unless it is within their capacity to produce them successfully.

Indeed, practice activities of specific target sounds – minimal pair exercises and drilling - as well as the rules of contrastive and nuclear stress, for instance, will facilitate learners to move from receptive to productive competence in core problematic areas (Jenkins, 2000). Nonetheless, it is very doubtful that these types of tasks will promote pronunciation skills or motivation in the language classroom. Although drilling exercises might be of noteworthy importance to cause to happen decisive changes in L1 phonological habits, they should not be overused in the pronunciation class at the expense of other kind of more communicative tasks through which learners may have the opportunity to develop the appropriate use of specific phonological features, and

197

above all, their accommodation skills.

Less controlled pair and small group work, especially involving joint problem-solving situations, as Gass and Varonis (1991) suggest, are better than those which are "non-reciprocal" (Ellis, 2001, p. 49) because they involve negotiation of meaning and more opportunities for learners to adjust and accommodate their receptive as well as productive pronunciation skills (in Jenkins, 2000). According to Thornbury (1997), students should be provided with opportunities for "noticing gaps which, even if essentially meaning-driven, allow the learners to devote some attentional focus on form, and, moreover, provide both the data and the incentive for the learners to make comparisons between interlanguage output and target language models" (p. 327).

Consistent with a consciousness-raising approach to teaching pronunciation (Rutherford, 1987; Schmidt, 1990), it follows then that teachers should try to promote noticing in their classes, by focusing their learners' attention on specific targeted phonological forms in the input, and on the distance to be covered between the present level of their interlanguage, on the one hand, and the target form, on the other. The comparison by learners of their version with the input model presents them with helpful evidence of yet-to-be-acquired phonological features, and this process of noticing, it might be argued, turns input into intake, and serves to reorganize the learners' developing phonological competence. Indeed, this kind of tasks overturns the order of traditional models of teaching, which go from accuracy to fluency, as, for instance, when learners are presented with a rule for later use in freer practice activities. This task-based mode of instruction, in turn, proposes a fluency-to-accuracy sequence which

pushes learners to complete the task set by using whatever linguistic resources they have within reach, and at the same time, allows for consciousness-raising at the discoursal, syntactic, lexical, and phonological levels (Luchini, 2004.a; Rutherford, 1987; Schmidt, 1990; Thornbury, 1997).

On looking back at the above discussion on the implementation of different types of tasks for the pronunciation class and their ultimate impact on learners' acquisition of specific phonological features, it could be pointed out that, as for my proposal, the aim would be to establish a degree of controlled to less controlled task-type balance appropriate to a class composed of students of different talents, different motivations, and even different stages of development.

As to their receptive skills, learners need to range far beyond the limits of the dominant native-speaker accents such as RP (the standard British accent) or GA (General American) in their receptive repertoires in order to be able to deal with the different accent varieties of their interlocutors whom they are most likely to meet, whether they are Ns or NNs English speakers. The best way for this familiarity to be achieved is through repeated pedagogic exposure to assorted L1 and L2 accents of English with a focus on areas of difference, especially those which are considered highly threatening for establishing mutual understanding. The aim of exposing learners to these different accents is to help them develop greater awareness of the fact of L1 as well as L2 accent variations – particularly in vital phonological areas – and a readiness to attempt to cope with them, especially when faced with a completely new accent (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2000; Rosewarne, 2002).

Since 2001, the theoretical principles underpinning this proposal for teaching pronunciation have been implemented at Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata –Teacher Training Program in Argentina- with student teachers attending Oral Discourse II – a course on English pronunciation which is taught in year two of this program. Some of the data sources drawn from this longitudinal evaluative study have already been analysed and interpreted against the criteria presented in this discussion in order to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of this new methodology for teaching pronunciation. The results obtained so far, coming from different instruments of data collection (see Luchini, 2004.b), reveal that this proposal for teaching English pronunciation is effective, at least at this stage in the study, for both students and teachers alike. This suggests that pronunciation teachers no longer need to hesitate to introduce task-based instruction to their Asian learners, or perhaps to any other group of students in different contexts worldwide.

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What can EFL Teachers Learn from Immersion Language Teaching?

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Abstract

Immersion language teaching has developed techniques that enable teachers to make their subject matter, through a second language, more comprehensible. It is argued in this article that EFL teachers can also use techniques used by immersion language teachers in their classrooms. In doing so, teachers will increase the amount of input in the SL provided to their students, make their classroom rich with comprehensible input and thus potentially achieve a better language outcome. The techniques that are briefly discussed and examples provided are: Questioning downward, rephrasing, recasts, modelling or demonstrating, and the use of visuals and realia.

Introduction

One of the most effective ways of learning a second language is, what is now known as, immersion language teaching. The programs that have used such techniques have been called immersion (Swain & Johnson, 1996), content-based instruction (Snow, 1998), two-way bilingual education program (Cazabon, Lambert, & Hall, 1993) (the last program being different from the other two because the languages used for instruction are L1 for some of the students in class). In each of these types of bilingual programs there has been an emphasis on meaning, and more particularly on conveying content matter to the students. Teachers of such classes therefore have to learn how to make their language comprehensible to their students so that through an understanding of this language (second language, in most cases) students can develop an understanding of the

content that is being taught. Teachers skilled in teaching immersion classes (immersion will be used as a short-hand for all types of programs where content is taught through a second language) show a number of common techniques, all designed to help students understand meaning.

Teachers of EFL might wonder how immersion language teaching techniques can be relevant to their context in which they are not focused on teaching content. EFL teachers are, nevertheless, increasingly using more communicative approaches to second language teaching. One of the primary characteristics of this approach is a focus on meaning, or as (Ellis, 2005, p. 217) recently put it, that instruction is 'predominantly [focused] on meaning'. One of the reasons for the limited amount of second language learning that occurs in a foreign language context is that there is such a limited amount of second language input provided or available to students. Where the teacher speaks the first language of the students there is a great temptation to do much of the explanation in the first language so that during a class of 40 minutes, the second language is heard or read only a small fraction of the total class time. In other words, input provided to learners is frequently quite limited and if we are agreed that input is vital for language development (Ellis, 2005; Krashen, 1994; Lighbown, 2000; VanPatten, 2003), then improved outcomes in our foreign language classrooms are more likely to occur if the amount of input in the second language in class is increased substantively.

The argument in this brief paper is that EFL teachers can increase the second language input in their classes by adopting some of the immersion language teaching

techniques: questioning downward, rephrasing, recast, modelling or demonstrating, and the use of visuals and realia. All these techniques result in a greater focus on meaning and understanding the second language without recourse to translation.

1. Questioning downwards

This is a technique that can be best used with both reading and listening comprehension. It is a way of helping students to reach the textual meanings through establishing what students might already know about the topic. The idea of 'downwards' is a metaphor of trying to establish what the students know and then building their comprehension of the text from that starting point. In educational terms, it is constructivism at its operational level (Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998), as teachers build students' knowledge of a text from what knowledge they already possess about the subject matter of the text. For example, in a short piece of reading text on seasoning food, it is suggested that novices wanting to use spices and herbs in cooking their food should underseason the food. The following dialogue shows how downward questioning might occur.

T: *What advice does the writer give a cook who is not used to cooking with herbs and spice?* [No response from the students.]

T: *If someone was not experienced at cooking using ginger what advice would you give him/her about using this spice?* [If there is still no response from the students or still show signs of not understanding, then an even easier form of questioning might be required – that is, down-shift further.]

T: *If you were cooking and you did not how much spice to put into the food, what would be a good strategy for you to follow: put only a little bit of the spice into the food, or put quite a bit into the food?* [At this stage, one presumes there will

be an answer, and the teacher can begin to question 'upward' now, if necessary tracing the questions previously asked, but in reverse order.]

The point about such questioning is that it is carried out in the second language, that the focus for students is meaning, and that an implicit message is conveyed to students that they often know more than they think they do and they need to use their background knowledge to help them to understand texts.

2. Rephrasing

This technique can be thought of as a paralleling the questioning downward technique. In the previous example, the focus has been on conceptual understanding without focusing on whether vocabulary items or particular structures might be the cause of lack of understanding. (Note the last sentence suggests that the perspective is the teachers', that is, it is the teachers who decide that it might be a word, a phrase or a particular structure that might have presented a problem to their students, reflecting teachers' thinking at any particular moment of the lesson.) Rephrasing therefore requires active thought on the part of the teachers as they evaluate the classroom situation and make decisions about whether they should focus on linguistics items or on content in order to further students' understanding of the topic of the lesson.

[The teacher has just written down on the blackboard: $4^2 = \qquad = 4$ X 4 – gap between the two equal signs.]

T: *Can you tell me another name for it?* (i.e. what goes in the gap) [No response]

T: *Or another way you could say it?* [No response]

T: If you didn't want to write 4 times 4 and you didn't want to write 4 squared, how

else could you write it?

S1: *4 times squared*

T: *No, not 4 times squared. ... But if you wanted to write it a shorter way ... what does 4 times 4 equal?*

S2: *16*

T: *16 right, so here I want you to write 16.*

[from Mangubhai, Ross and Albion, 1999)

3. Recasts

While rephrasing is regarded as basically a teacher-driven behaviour, the genesis of recasts lie in the language behaviour of the students and is frequently the feedback in the oft-cited IRE or IRF triadic dialogues that occur in the classroom (that is, teacher Initiates, the student Responds, and the teacher provides some form of Feedback, or Follow-up) (see, for example, Lemke, 1990; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Such feedback may focus on the correctness or otherwise of the utterance ('right', 'not quite' 'good try' etc) but it could also focus in two other ways, which can lead to some learning: one where teachers modify the students' utterance, and secondly, where teachers repeat the learner's utterance and implicitly correct any errors made by the learners, in ways that are similar to those found in the language data of interactions between parents and their young children. Both instances can be regarded as recasts, though they perform a slightly different function. In the first case, teachers recast a learner's utterance keeping meaning intact but giving it under a slightly different form, as in these two examples:

S: *It is better to put in only a little ginger.*

T: *Yes, it is better to underseason the food.*

207

S: *She had some problems she ah overcome – by her positive self motivation*

T: *She was a very motivated person* [Example provided by colleague Ann Dashwood]

The second case is found frequently in language teaching classrooms (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and represents those cases where teachers provide a correct version of the utterance. This may be done as in the example below:

S: *The boys goes to town.*

T: *Yes, the boys go to town.*

Such recasts may be carried out in class with or without any intonational emphasis on the correct form. Research data suggests that those done with some emphasis, particularly on the incorrect item slot, may be more salient for learners, thus increasing the potential for change in the learner's interlanguage than might be the case in those situations where there are no such overt signals (Nicholas, Lightbown, & Spada, 2001). In the latter case, it is quite likely that they are interpreted by students as confirmation of the content (Lyster, 1998) and the input is thus not available for language development.

The role of recasts in language acquisition is quite complex (for example, it is found more at lower levels whilst at upper levels of proficiency, corrections might be more explicit) and readers might like to look at Nicholas, Lightbown and Spada (2001) who summarise some of the research in both L1 and L2 acquisition as it relates to recasts and discuss some of the complexities surrounding their role in language learning.

4. Modelling or demonstrating

Modelling and demonstration of meanings is more usually associated with vocabulary items where teachers may demonstrate, for example, what an oblong is by the use of their hands. Such visual cues help students to understand new words and store them both as linguistic items as well as a visual representations of them. An establishment of this practice in one's classroom also sends a message to students that the first recourse in case of incomprehension is not necessarily the dictionary. Here is an example from Mangubhai et al., (1999) that shows how demonstrating brings forth an answer.

[The teacher is comparing two animals.]

T: *Can you tell me something else that is the same? … Iva, can you tell me something else that is the same? [waits for an answer]. What do you know? What did we learn last week? (as he asks the last question, he bends around points and touches his own spine).*

Iva: Backbone

5. Use of audiovisuals or objects

Use of visuals in classroom is a powerful way to convey meanings to students. To try to convey the idea of *globalisation* a very good starting point can be a picture of *globe* (or better still a model of globe itself). The visual aid can lend itself equally well to teach the converse of globe, the *local*. At early stages of second language learning the use of visuals or objects can be effectively used through a teaching approach called Total Physical Response Method, where a teacher might be able to introduce a series of names of fruit, for example, in the second language through use of fruit, or colours through the use of coloured pens. The following example from Mangubhai et al., (1999)

shows the use of students' bodies as physical objects.

> [The teacher has got students to take on the name of each of the planets in the Solar System. They then introduce themselves as "I am Saturn" and so forth.]

> *T: Now this time I want you to re-organise yourself –if you know the answer – from the biggest to the smallest.*
>
> [She has the diameters of the planets on a chart, so students have to understand the figures and remember names of the planets (i.e. other students) and get into the right order.]

Conclusion

To sum up, the techniques used by immersion language teachers are in essence good teaching techniques that can be employed in other contexts also. The critical mode of behaviour for the teachers is that they endeavour to use language in such a way as to facilitate students understand of it. In the process of doing so, teachers will have also increased the amount of input they provide in the second language to their students.

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Technology and Change in English Language Teaching (ELT)

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Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which computers are impacting upon change in ELT and argues that Asian countries are, in a sense, at the heart of this. The paper reviews and further develops a shorter forthcoming colloquium article in *The British Journal of Education Technology* and begins by linking the growth of English to the growth and widespread availability of computers. It briefly examines the ways in which computers have historically contributed to ELT with both pedagogical applications and by helping us understand the nature of the language; however, it is suggested that the Internet, and the resulting computer mediated communication (CMC), has now gone way beyond this to change the language itself. The implications of such change are then discussed from two perspectives. Firstly, for ELT's long established notions of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL); here it is suggested that we need to shift towards a more appropriate view of English as an international or global language (EIL/EGL). Secondly, the paper considers the implications for language teaching pedagogy and argues for a shift away from traditional notions of curriculum and syllabus towards task-based approaches.

1. The growth of ELT

English Language Teaching (ELT) has been with us for many years and its significance continues to grow, fuelled, partially at least, by the Internet. Graddol's study (2000) suggests that in the year 2000 there were about a billion English learners - but a decade later, the numbers will have doubled. The forecast points to a surge in English learning, which could peak in 2010. The same study indicates that over 80% of information stored on the Internet is in English. For the first time in history there are more non-native than native users of the language and diversity of context in terms of

learners' age, nationality, learning background etcetera has become a defining characteristic of ELT today. What are the implications of this? (Jarvis, forthcoming).

Technological innovations have gone hand-in-hand with the growth of English and are changing the way in which we communicate, work, trade, entertain and learn and it is non-native users of English, frequently from Asian countries, who are arguably, at the heart of this. It is fair to assert that the growth of the Internet has facilitated the growth of the English language and that this has occurred at a time when computers are no longer the exclusive domain of the dedicated few, but rather widely available to many. Warchauer (2002) has discussed this change in terms of conflicts between local identities and the globalisation of the English language; whilst Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004), in this journal, have suggested that the Internet may be a contributory factor in shifting away from a communicative towards a context-based approach to language teaching pedagogy. The notion of widespread availability requires some qualification as there are clearly important issues of a 'digital divide' and 'electronic literacy'. This issue is frequently presented as being between nations and it is clearly the case that the most powerful economies dominate Internet activity; but such a perspective explains unequal power relations purely from the influence of external factors and the picture is surely more complex than this. The same type of economic power relations also exist within nations, and divisions of social classes within are equally important here. In short, it is the middle and upper classes in virtually every country who have much greater access to computers and, significantly for this paper, it is the Asian countries which are experiencing massive growth as their economies develop and change.

Change of this magnitude clearly raises a number of issues for ELT and, it is argued, necessitates a revision of traditional definitions of what constitutes the English language as well as a move away from the established EFL¥ESL classifications and towards a less culturally loaded view of English as a global or international language (EIL/EIL). This in turn has implications for language pedagogy and approaches to syllabus design.

2. Computers in ELT

To fully understand the impact that computers are currently having on ELT it is firstly necessary to step back and consider their how their role has developed.

2.1 Pre-Internet

In pre-Internet days computers in ELT could be viewed from one of two perspectives. Firstly, computer assisted language learning (CALL) developed and concerned itself with the pedagogical applications of the technology. Students used the computer to develop and practise their English. CALL is, of course, still with us today but in pre-Internet times rather limited text-based provisions were something of a novelty for both students and enthusiastic practitioners; this novelty factor has, of course, long since gone for many who use computers as part of their day-to-day life. A second perspective was in the use of computers for assisting and understanding of what constitutes the English language and how it works. Corpus linguistics and the arrival of lexis as an item to be included within the syllabus began in the 1980s with Sinclair (1987) and others, and work of this type continues today. This statistical analysis of language, initially analysis of written language, but more recently spoken language, has allowed us to examine the frequency of words and this has informed the profession from several

215

perspectives. It has given us insights into the most useful vocabulary to teach and facilitated the emergence of the lexical syllabus. It has also allowed us to look at form-based words and this has given us insights into the grammar that we teach. One positive outcome from all this has been the arrival of a range of publications for teachers and students – such material can now be based on how the language is actually used rather than what the traditional grammar book prescribes. The work of Biber et al. (1999) is particularly useful; they found, for example that the modal verb 'may' is hardly ever used in spoken language for permission! For students, resource publications such as McCarthy and O'Dell (1994) provide good practice of such real language.

We can see that computers have had a role in pedagogical practice and in analysing language – both these aspects have further developed with the arrival of the Internet but the point here is that in pre-Internet days the role of the computer did not fundamentally influence the language itself and it is only with the arrival of the Internet (and related technologies such as text-messaging on mobile phones) that computers began to significantly change language.

2.2 The Internet and a changing language

The Internet (of which CMC forms a major aspect) is changing the language partly because it gives rise to new vocabulary, but more importantly because the medium and its users drive the language in certain directions (Crystal, 2001). The following verbs are just one illustration of the influences on vocabulary, they all either meant different things, or did not exist, only a few year ago; to … email, text, boot, chat, surf, bookmark, e-shop, google, etcetera.   More fundamentally, the Internet is changing

language, a 'Netspeak' and a 'Netiquette' is emerging, the former refers to a language variant, the latter to the conventions which surround its use. This changing language is rapidly evolving and does not have a long history to inform syllabus designers and ELT practitioners. Emails do not have, and arguably do not need, to follow punctuation conventions. Typos and spelling mistakes are also, depending on context, more acceptable with this medium. To what extent should we allow this to influence the language content of emails in our teaching? Furthermore, synchronous emails, those in real time chat forums (e.g. MSN), are a kind of unique text version of spoken English and the language generated from this, along with text messaging on mobile phones, is at times completely different to anything else that we have hitherto known. I had the fortune, or perhaps misfortune, of picking up my daughter's mobile the other day and I read some of the messages which seem to occupy so much of her time. That the content of these messages were of little substance came as no surprise, but the ways in which English was being used was revealing. As my daughter explained these incomprehensible texts and smileys to me (e.g. "c u l8r m8" for "see you later mate" and o-:) for the user being an angel), I felt as though I needed to go back to a foreign language classroom again. Except of course on this occasion it wasn't a foreign language, it was a variety of English, a 'Netspeak', from which I had previously been excluded. On a different occasion I was chatting to a Thai colleague on MSN and "555" was typed to mean "ha ha ha" (laughter) – the word five translates as "ha" in Thai! The Internet, as these simple examples show, is clearly impacting upon the ways in which we use language and what constitutes language. And this rapid and largely uncharted evolution of language is surely set to continue unabated – like it or loathe it we all, especially as language teachers, have to come to terms with it. Should we

include Netspeak and Netiquette in our classroom practice? Can we avoid not including it? (Jarvis, forthcoming).

Within a traditional approach to syllabus design we arguably need to plot these new items of language and include them in our programmes, but as we will see later, I shall argue here this in a sense futile and it will be more useful to specify a series of tasks for our learners and allow them to generate whatever appropriate language is required in order to successfully complete such tasks. But before we come to these implications for pedagogical practice, let us firstly explore the potential impact of change on our well-established notions of EFL and ESL.

3. Implications

3.1 From EFL/ESL to EIL/GL

A few years ago the long-established UK-based newspaper of the profession the *EFL Gazette* changed its name to the *EL Gazette*. In due course I would fully expect this journal to follow suit and drop the F in EFL! Why is this and in what ways might the Internet be contributing to such changes? To answer this question it would be helpful to firstly clarify what is meant by EFL and ESL. Jarvis (forthcoming) notes that, "These terms are used to describe learners and users whose native language is not English. It is a foreign language if used by non-native speakers in a non-native English-speaking country which has not adopted it as the "official" language of that country." By official I refer here to the language of government and commerce. Asian countries here would include Japan, Korea, Thailand, China and many more. Jarvis continues, "It is also a

foreign language when used by a non-native speaker who is a temporary visitor to a native English-speaking country." Asian students studying in the UK, Australia or the USA would fall into this category. "It is a second language if used by a non-native speaker who migrates to a native English-speaking country." The Chinese community who have settled in the UK, Australia or the USA would be an example of this group. "It is also a second language if used by a non-native speaker where it has been adopted as the official language in their country." In Asia, Indian or Pakistani users of English would fall into such a category.

These definitions have been with the language teaching profession for half a century. However, they carry with them connotations that the language does not actually belong to the users; it is foreign (alien), or it is second (not first) - this despite the fact that today these users are now a majority. A case can be made (Phillipson, 1992) that these connotations are contributory factors in the manifestation of a linguistic imperialism. Certainly there is an implied uneven power relationship which centres on ownership. Furthermore, and of critical importance for the arguments presented here, these definitions tend to be based around the notion of learners and users in physical spaces, a notion which is very much undermined by the virtual world of the Internet. The work of Crystal (2003), McKay (2002), Burns and Coffin (2001) and others, echo a view that today it is more useful to think in terms of English as an international or global language. This new majority being non-native users has, as we have seen, been considerably facilitated by the Internet, and, it is argued, the English language today belongs just as much to this new majority as it does to the now minority native users. (Jarvis, forthcoming).

It is in this sense that it is not a foreign or second language because it is their language too – it "belongs" to all users. Every minute, hour, day, week, month and year there are millions of users of English across the Asian region and beyond; more often than not the medium for such users is the Internet. When somebody from Korea, China, or Thailand communicates with A.N. Other from Japan, Malaysia or Indonesia they are likely to do so in English and they are likely to do so primarily via the Internet. These people may well meet in person but a great deal of any communication is computer-mediated and they will use a variety of language appropriate to the medium. Given this situation, our challenge, it seems to me, is to promote a pedagogy which reflects what users are actually doing with language, rather than prescribing items to be taught. I would echo Phan Le Ha's (2005) call in this journal for a pedagogy "… in which the teaching and learning of EIL should involve valuing and nurturing the expression of other cultural voices in English… and helping learners to construct identities as owners, users, meaning makers and authorised users…"(p.43). I would suggest a task-based approach is the most appropriate framework from which to address such challenges and it is to this which we now turn.

3.2 Towards a task-based approach

Typically, a traditional ELT syllabus lists learning items in terms of structures, functions, notions and vocabulary which are then set in situations and which usually integrate a variety of skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). This dominant approach has been characterised as product-orientated because it focuses on what is to be learnt or on products (White, 1988). The problem with this approach, as Nunan (1988) has pointed out, is that input cannot be equated with output and that teaching cannot be equated with

learning. In short, what the teacher teaches is not what the learner learns. It is a problem which is compounded within our proposed EIL framework. Nunn (2005) has argued that linguistic, communicative and other kinds of competences have not been adequately addressed in relation to EIL and goes on to argue that "… international communication seems to require the ability to adjust to almost infinitely diverse intercultural communication situations" (pp. 61-62). An alternative approach can be characterised as process-orientated because it focuses not on items to be taught and learned, but on what the learner does with the language. A task-based approach is very much process-orientated because it focuses on "learning through doing" i.e. on tasks. Tasks mean different things to different people and the work of Ellis (2003) has been particularly helpful in documenting and discussing these issues. For our purposes it is useful to distinguish between pedagogic and authentic tasks. In the case of the former, students are asked to do things which are unlikely to occur outside the classroom, information gap activities or ordering scrambled sentences are examples of these. With authentic tasks students are asked to complete activities which are likely to be carried out in real life once the student has left the classroom. Working with a map to ask a classmate for directions, or listening for a departure time and gate number for a specific flight, would be examples of this. The example discussed below can be viewed as authentic, given certain assumptions about the learners. But let us firstly address a reservation by some to adopting a task-based approach.

A primary objection to task-based approaches is that they are considered unworkable and removed from every-day teaching and learning contexts. It is an argument which I have never really accepted because the approach can be implemented

at various levels – it is really about encouraging learners to do useful, interesting and meaningful activities with language and this can be applied in a range of contexts. Indeed, the various levels at which task-based approaches can be delivered (even within a traditional structural syllabus) and a variety of case studies exploring how to do so is discussed in an excellent edited publication by Breen and Littlejohn (2000). This work goes a considerable way to addressing these objections. However, once computers are introduced into the ELT curriculum, and our discussion to date touches upon the case for doing so, then task-based approaches become arguably the only way to effectively take into account the changes in language that we have identified and to shift to an EIL/EGL perspective.

We have already noted the issue of the digital divide and I am addressing the discussion here at those practitioners who, along with their students, have regular access to networked computers in their teaching context. It would be undesirable and arguably quite impossible to list the variety of language generated by CMC and/or posted on web pages. It is, as we have noted, rapidly changing, subject to trend and fashion and varies in different contexts. This makes product–based approaches virtually impossible; in contrast, as we will see, task-based approaches represent a perfect match! It is very easy to devise simple, achievable tasks which encourage students to use email to communicate with each other, their tutors and the wider world; likewise it is not difficult to find useful meaningful ways in which students access and even post information on the web. The needs of the learners and the contexts in which they work will ultimately determine the most appropriate tasks. Jarvis (2004, 2003, 2001) for example provides extensive accounts of how such ideas can be realised with English for

Academic Purposes students. Similar ideas can be utilised with general English students, they might for example be asked to prepare a travel itinerary for a visitor to their country, province or city. This could involve accessing web sites to note and decide upon the best places to visit, using the web and email to arrange flight bookings to and from the city, negotiating amongst themselves (via email) on the best options etcetera. There must be literally hundreds of task-based activities of this type across the globe which involve students using computers to access information and to communicate with others. The task is specified and students generate appropriate language, with help as required. Success is measured by the extent to which the task is successfully completed and the language is viewed as the tool to achieve the ends; it is not prescribed. The learners are viewed as working with tools which belong to them as much as to anyone else.

4. Conclusions

Several key threads emerge from our discussions. Computers are, on the one hand, impacting on the way in which we define our subject matter (EFL/ESL vs. EIL/EGL) and, on the other hand, are also impacting upon the English language, upon the subject matter itself. This new age would seem to go hand in hand with task-based approaches and represents challenges for everyone involved in ELT. For practitioners, applied linguists and educators there is a changed dynamic in which computers have now become much more than a tool or a tutor for developing language skills. This traditional distinction (Levy, 1997) would no longer seem adequate. Warschauer and Healey (1998) have observed that it is now less a question of the role of computers in the language classroom and more a question of the role of the language classroom in an information

technology society.

Language teaching education is clearly entering a new and largely uncharted phase and we would seem to be at a crossroads. Warchauer and Kern (2000) have identified this as a "sociocognitive phase" where, unlike in previous phases, students interact with each other and the world via the computer. A great deal of work has focused on the value of computers in learning or second language acquisition (see for example Cameron, 1999; Chambers and Davies, 2001; Chapelle, 2000; Debski and Levy, 1999; Egbert and Hanson-Smith, 1999; Zhao, 2003) but rather less, beyond resource publications (Dudeney, 2000; Sperling, 1998; Teeler, 2000; Windeatt et. al. 2000), on the implications of the content of teaching itself, i.e. the syllabus. Even less consideration seems to have been given to how we see, define or classify our learners.

We have argued that a task-based syllabus offers a way forward and practitioners will need to reflect upon what is achievable within their own contexts. In addressing these challenges we will clearly need to develop a sense in which English belongs to the students and their fellow countrymen and women just as much as anyone else and to do this we will need to avoid classifying the vast majority of users as "foreign" or "second" language learners. ELT would seem to be at a crossroads and it is heartening to see that much of the momentum for change is coming from, and driven by, practitioners and students from the Asian nations and from journals such as this one. We live in interesting times and colleagues are invited to contact me if they are interested in setting up joint-research projects to investigate and further explore such issues.

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225

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