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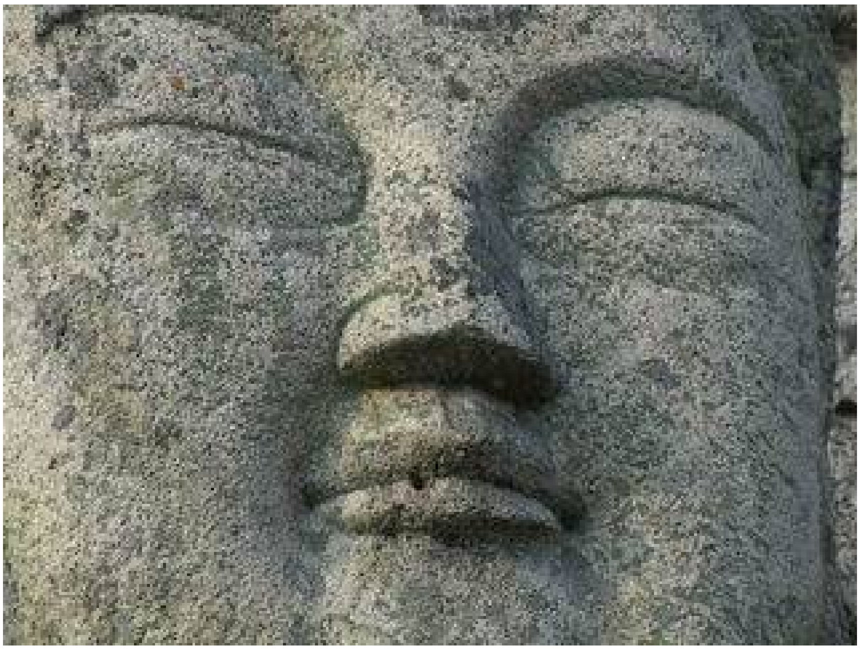

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Table of Contents:

ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
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Foreword

Welcome to the June Issue of the *Asian EFL Journal*. The first papers in this issue all address international issues of a very different nature, reflecting the variety of potential areas of interest in a journal with international aspirations like *AEJ*.

AEJ always welcomes contributions that deal with the realities of international English usage. In "High School Freshmen's Responses to Home Economics Conducted in Non-native Variety of English: A Three-year Survey on Content-based Instruction in Japan", Takagaki and Tanabe provide us with a very innovative study into using non-native varieties of English in the classroom. This paper should be of interest for both researchers and practitioners who are interested in raising awareness of the expanding reality of international English use. It also leads to some interesting implications for content-based instruction.

In "Refusal Strategies by Yemeni EFL Learners", Abdullah Ali Al-Eryani from Yemen investigates the speech act of refusing by Yemeni Arab learners of English as a foreign language. In spite of the similar strategies available in both language groups, cross-cultural variation was still evident. This kind of comparative research into speech acts is interesting in relation to EIL as it can be argued that we increasingly need to consider the usefulness of teaching students to conform to target norms in a single target speech community.

The other cross-cultural study in this issue attempts to understand students' strategy use. In "Language Learning Strategies for Junior College Students in Taiwan: Investigating Ethnicity and Proficiency", Ming-Nuan Yang investigates the effects of ethnicity and language proficiency on the use of language learning strategies by junior college students by comparing aboriginal and non-aboriginal students in Taiwan. Understanding students' strategy use assists in making decisions about incorporating language learning strategy training into English lessons with all the potential advantages for heightened language acquisition.

Classroom discourse studies are particularly time consuming and difficult to conduct, which might explain why the *Asian EFL Journal* does not receive enough of them. To improve what goes on in classrooms, it is important to describe what actually goes on in them on a regular basis and this can be very different from reported perceptions of what happens there. In "Reactive and preemptive language related episodes, and uptake in an EFL class", Farrokhi and Gholami examine the potential of two types of focus on form for promoting uptake, an essential prerequisite to learning. Farrokhi and Gholami not only address a common issue of such research, the low amount of uptake, but also provide a new characterization of a neglected aspect, ‘camouflaged’ uptake, in addition to learners’ immediate responses to focus on form.

Vocabulary is quite rightly a central concern of EFL learning wherever it takes place. In "An Examination of Vocabulary Learning of College-level Learners of English in China", Ming Wei reports on the learning of English vocabulary by college students in mainland China. Wei's analysis reveals that important strategies such as contextualized activation and management strategies are underused and points out that this "may lead to difficulties in long-term retention and use of vocabulary, the top two problematic areas in vocabulary learning rated by the participants."

The related topic of providing comprehensive input is also a central issue in EFL. It has not been uncommon in the three universities I have taught to encounter first-year students who have never read a book in English. The important policy issue of developing a reading habit is addressed by Anson Yang, a Secondary School Vice Principal in Hong Kong, in "Cultivating a reading habit: Silent reading at school". His paper illustrates the effectiveness of a "whole-school" approach to solving problems when administrative support can be obtained. Yang concludes that that "students find it fruitful reading during school time, because it allows them to cultivate a reading habit, and they can find time to do leisure reading when they grow older."

Also focusing on high school English, Ali Jahangard looks at the staple diet of so many high school students, the EFL textbook, in "Evaluation of the EFL Materials Taught at Iranian Public High Schools". Jahangard underlines the need for teachers themselves to be involved in textbook evaluation. Looking critically at textbooks is important because it makes us aware of the differences between intended and actual use. He proposes 13 common criteria for text book evaluation and provides suggestions for some shortcomings he encountered in the books in relation to these criteria.

The use of the students' first language in the classroom is a common subject of discussion in journals and something very frequently practiced in classrooms. The next two studies both discuss using the first language in some form. Zheng Lin, in "Setting EFL Reading Comprehension Questions in Learners’ L1?", asks: ‘Will it make a difference if reading comprehension questions are set in learners’ L1 instead of English (L2)?’ In a carefully developed research-based argumentation, Lin concludes that EFL reading comprehension test questions, especially those for beginning learners, should be set in the learners’ L1 whenever feasible.

Anchalee Sattayatham and Somchoen Honsa Jr., in “Medical Students’ Most Frequent Errors at Mahidol University, Thailand” provide us with a detailed study of error analysis partly depending on translation identifying a “top ten” list of errors in the writing of first-year medical students. Error analysis is a very complex issue, in particular in relation to translation, so we would welcome other studies in a similar area and reactions to this paper. Their study has practical implications for material development and curriculum planning.

Finally, James Moody, in our first contribution from Qatar, “Plagiarism or intertextuality?: Approaches to Teaching EFL Academic Writing” concludes this issue with an interesting discussion of a fascinating topic and one that all teachers of extended writing have to deal with in this age of easy Internet access. Moody argues that “treating plagiarism from the perspective of intertextuality is a productive approach to teaching writing skills, as it can help to foster student writers’ self confidence.” Moody provides a thorough review of the issue concluding that the best self image to impart to the student academic writer is that of “a contributor to a developing body of knowledge”. We would be happy to host debate on this topic in future issues.

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Asian EFL Journal

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High School Freshmen's Responses to Home Economics Conducted in a Non-native Variety of English: A Three-year Survey on Content-based Instruction in Japan

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Abstract

From 2002 to 2004, a public high school in Japan provided Home Economics lessons for freshmen using non-native varieties of English for instruction. Offering a content course using non-native varieties of English was a significant step in the Japanese education scene since the need for students to be familiar with non-native varieties of English is essential, given the fact that non-native speakers outnumber native speakers of English in the world. This study focused on questionnaire data gathered from the high school freshmen over three years and analyzed the data in terms of satisfaction, listening comprehension, teachers' speech rate, and students' written comments. Finally, several pedagogical implications are presented based on the findings. It is hoped that this paper will be of use for both researchers and practitioners to critically evaluate the current English teaching programs at high school in Japan and to change them to a more "*Englishes*-conscious" classroom.

Keywords: Englishes, non-native speaker, content-based instruction, Japanese high school

Introduction

Background

According to Crystal's estimate (1997), the number of speakers of English as a first language ranges from 337 million to 450 million, while the number of speakers of English as a second language ranges from 235 million to 350 million and the number of speakers of English as a foreign language is estimated to be as low as 100 million and as high as 1000 million.

Those who have learned English as a second language are known to use "institutionalized varieties" such as Singaporean English and Indian English, and those who have learned

English as a foreign language are known to use "performance varieties" such as Japanese English and Brazilian English (Kachru, 1982). Given the numerical and sociolinguistic reality, the need for Japanese students to become more familiar with both performance and institutionalized varieties is essential from the practical point of view because there are more likely to engage in English communication with non-native speakers of English than with native speakers. Thus it is wise to pay due attention to non-native varieties of English in addition to native varieties in classroom settings.

Researchers, such as Suzuki (1975), Honna and Takeshita (1999), and Matsuda (2002), have claimed that it is important for Japanese students to be exposed to and to become familiar with non-native varieties of English. One of the main reasons is that native varieties of English have been the only models in the English classes in Japan, regardless of the sociolinguistic reality of English. Honna and Takeshita (1999) indicate that the domination of native varieties of English in EFL classrooms may foster students' negative attitudes toward non-native varieties of English.

In this context, Onomichi Higashi High School, a prefectural school in Hiroshima, decided to provide a course of content-based instruction taught entirely in English by non-native teachers as part of their special English program from 2002 to 2004[1]. In the year 2002, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, and Technology (MEXT) designated 18 high schools as schools which place a special emphasis on English education, and Onomichi Higashi High School was one of them. These schools, called Super English Language High Schools, do not have to follow the national guidelines and they can implement innovative English education. While what is offered is up to the individual high schools, MEXT encourages the schools to offer courses taught in English, send students on overseas exchange program, and consult with local university researchers periodically as they carry out their English program.

The special course offered at Onomichi Higashi High School was Home Economics for freshmen who entered the school in 2002, 2003, and 2004. Offering the course in a non-native variety of English was probably the first such attempt in the history of Japanese public high schools, making it worthwhile to document how the course was conducted and how students reacted to it during the three-year experimental period[2].

The course syllabi and other basic information are available in *Kenkyu kaihatsu jisshi houkokusho* (Onomichi Higashi High School, 2005). Therefore, this paper will exclusively focus on the high school students' responses to Home Economics taught in English by non-native speakers and discuss several pedagogical implications based on the findings.

Brief Course Description

Home Economics was offered in English at Onomichi Higashi High School in the second semester of 2002, 2003, and 2004. Students met once a week for an English-mediated class[3]. In the same week, students had a follow-up class in Japanese. In 2002, the course comprised eleven 50-minute classes in English, and eleven 50-minute classes in Japanese. In 2003, the course comprised nine 50-minute classes in English, and nine 50-minute classes in Japanese. In 2004, the course comprised six 50-minute classes in English, and six classes in Japanese. The number of classes per year gradually decreased because of a short study-abroad program introduced in early December from the second year, as well as smaller budgets for the content-based course for 2003 and 2004.

For the first two years, the course was taught by the same Filipino teacher who was a former university teacher in the Philippines. Another Filipino teacher was in charge for the third year. Both teachers are former associate professors in science in the Philippines. The class was assisted by an Indonesian teacher in the first year, a Malawian teacher in the second year, and a Sri Lankan teacher in the third year. All of them spoke completely in English, and taught through lecture and hands-on experience.

The aim of this course was to study home economics and do actual cooking, as well as to learn some table manners. (See Appendix for course topics and instruction modes). After each 50-minute class, the teachers, the second author who stayed and observed the teachers and the students during the class, and a Japanese teacher of Home Economics met and discussed ways to improve the class. Then, the Japanese Home Economics teacher reviewed the content in Japanese with the students in the same week and gave a preview for the forthcoming lesson.

Method

Participants

Participants were high school freshmen in the Global Education Course at Onomichi Higashi High School[4]. The number of the participants were 39 (28 females and 11 males) in 2002, 40 (30 females and 10 males) in 2003, and 40 (35 females and 5 males) in 2004. All the participants took an English proficiency test developed by Benesse Corporation two months prior to the start of the courses to ascertain that their scores were above the national average for high school freshmen[5].

Procedure

Data were collected over one semester each from September to December of 2002, 2003, and

2004 through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered in Japanese immediately after each class. The questionnaire included the following questions: *1. How much were you satisfied by today's class? (satisfaction); 2. How much English did you understand today? (listening comprehension); 3. How was the speed of the teacher's English? (speech rate).* Concerning the first two items, students circled responses from 0 % to 100 % at 10 percent intervals (i.e. 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, 100%). As for the third item, students chose from among four options; *too fast* (=1), *fast* (=2), *fair* (=3), and *slow* (=4). Besides these items, students were asked to write comments in Japanese about the day's class. All the directions were in Japanese, and approximately five minutes were allowed for the students to fill out the questionnaire. During the class, the second author stayed and observed the teachers and the students over the semester.

Findings

The questionnaire data were tabulated to calculate the means in terms of satisfaction, listening comprehension, and speech rate for each class. The data from 2002 are given in Tables 1 and 2. As seen in Table 1, the average percentage for satisfaction was 73.9, ranging from 61.8 to 86.1 percent. The average percentage for listening comprehension was 70.8, ranging from 58.7 to 80.3 percent. The average for speech rate was 2.7, ranging from 2.6 to 2.9.

Table 2 summarizes the students' comments obtained from each class in 2002. Only comments made by five or more students are presented. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of students. The most frequent comments over the semester were related to "fun/enjoyable" (77). Among them are: *Very enjoyable* (29), *It was fun* (25), and *I enjoyed our presentations* (13). The second most frequent comment related to "delicious" (55). Among them are: *Spicy but tasty* (24), *Food was delicious* (20), and *Very tasty* (15). *I could understand because the teachers spoke slowly* (25) was another common comment.

Table 1: Means for Satisfaction, Listening Comprehension, and Speech Rate in Home Economics, 2002

	satisfaction	listening comprehension	speech rate
1st class	66.4 (80)	58.7 (50)	2.6 (3)
2nd class	68.1 (70)	66.2 (80)	2.7 (3)
3rd class	81.8 (80)	75.1 (80)	2.8 (3)

4th class	61.8 (80)	61.1 (60)	2.6 (3)
5th class	68.6 (70)	65.9 (70)	2.6 (3)
6th class	63.1 (70)	68.5 (70)	2.7 (3)
7th class	80.0 (100)	72.3 (80)	2.8 (3)
8th class	86.1 (100)	78.2 (100)	2.8 (3)
9th class	70.0 (70)	73.0 (70)	2.8 (3)
10th class	82.4 (100)	79.2 (80)	2.9 (3)
11th class	85.1 (100)	80.3 (100)	2.8 (3)
average	73.9	70.8	2.7

Note: Satisfaction and listening comprehension were rated from 0% to 100% by 10 percent intervals; Speech rate was rated from 1 (very fast) to 4 (slow); Figures in parentheses indicate modes.

Table 2: Students' Comments on Home Economics Classes, 2002

	Students' comments
1st class	Very enjoyable.(17); I could understand the class because the teachers spoke slowly.(13)
2nd class	It was fun.(16); I could understand the class because the teachers spoke slowly.(12); I look forward to the next cooking class.(10)
3rd class	Very tasty.(15); Very enjoyable.(12); It was good that I could speak English with the teachers as we cooked.(6)
4th class	It was difficult.(9); I could understand the importance of nutrition.(5)
5th class	It was good that I could learn some table manners.(11); It was fun.(5)
6th class	It was fun.(9); I enjoyed learning with a card game.(5); I look forward to the next cooking class.(5)
7th class	I was glad to learn how to fold a napkin.(8); It was good that I learned some table manners.(6)
8th class	Food was delicious.(20)
9th class	I look forward to cooking chicken curry next time.(9); It was difficult to listen to and understand the recipe.(9); Fun.(6)
10th class	Spicy but tasty. (24); Fun.(5)
11th class	I enjoyed our presentations.(13); I am sad because this was the last day of this course.(9)

Note: Comments made by more than five students were recorded; Figures in parentheses indicate the number of students; Multiple comments were allowed and counted separately.

The data gathered from each class in 2003 are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. As indicated in Table 3, the average percentage for satisfaction was 68.6, ranging from 52.5 to 84.1 percent. The average percentage for listening comprehension was 65.2, ranging from 53.1 to 76.9 percent. The average for speech rate was 2.6, ranging from 2.5 to 2.9.

Table 4 shows the students' comments on the class in 2003. The most frequent comments made by students were: *It was fun* (43), followed by *I look forward to cooking next week/time* (39), and *Food/Fish was delicious* (26). Comments related to "understanding" such as *I could understand table manners* (14) and *I could understand Philippine culture* (6) were also common.

Table 3: Means for Satisfaction, Listening Comprehension, and Speech Rate in Home Economics, 2003

	satisfaction	listening comprehension	speech rate
1st class	52.5 (60)	53.1 (50)	2.5 (3)
2nd class	63.8 (70)	64.1 (70)	2.6 (3)
3rd class	65.5 (70)	64.5 (70)	2.6 (3)
4th class	84.1 (90)	76.9 (90)	2.7 (3)
5th class	64.3 (70)	58.1 (50)	2.7 (3)
6th class	71.1 (70)	65.8 (50)	2.6 (3)
7th class	61.1 (50)	57.4 (50)	2.7 (3)
8th class	77.4 (90)	74.1 (90)	2.7 (3)
9th class	77.5 (70)	72.6 (50)	2.9 (3)
average	68.6	65.2	2.6

Note: Satisfaction and listening comprehension were rated from 0% to 100% by 10 percent intervals; Speech rate was rated from 1 (very fast) to 4 (slow); Figures in parentheses indicate modes.

Table 4: Students' Comments on Home Economics Classes, 2003

	Students' comments
1st class	I could understand Philippine culture.(6); It was fun.(6); I could not understand English well.(5)
2nd class	I could understand table manners.(14); It was fun.(9); Table manners were difficult.(6)

3rd class	I look forward to cooking next week.(9); It was difficult to understand.(6); It was fun.(6)
4th class	It was fun.(22); I could speak English a lot.(10); Food was delicious.(9).
5th class	I look forward to cooking next week.(10); Words were difficult.(10);
6th class	It was my first time to cook Malawi food.(7); Cooking was fun.(6)
7th class	I look forward to cooking next week (17); I could not understand well.(7)
8th class	Food was delicious.(14); Cooking was fun.(11)
9th class	This course was fun.(12); Group presentations were good.(9); I miss this course.(5)

Note: Comments made by more than five students were recorded; Figures in parentheses indicate the number of students; Multiple comments were allowed and counted separately.

The data gathered from each class in 2004 are presented in Tables 5 and 6. As seen in Table 5, the average percentage for satisfaction was 70.9, ranging from 56.8 to 81.5 percent. The average percentage for listening comprehension was 64.4, ranging from 50.0 to 77.3 percent. The average for speech rate was 2.2, ranging from 1.8 to 2.5.

Table 6 summarizes the students' comments on the class in 2004. The most frequent comment made by students was *It was fun* (34). Then comes the negative comment *I couldn't understand the content and the cooking expressions well* (28). Comments such as *Delicious* (17), *I enjoyed the last cooking* (15), *I could understand Philippine and Sri Lankan cultures* (14), and *I could learn cooking expressions* (13) also showed high frequency.

Table 5: Means for Satisfaction, Listening Comprehension, and Speech Rate in Home Economics, 2004

	satisfaction	listening comprehension	speech rate
1st class	73.3 (80)	56.0 (60)	2.0 (2)
2nd class	63.0 (80)	61.5 (60)	2.3 (2)
3rd class	72.8 (80)	65.3 (80)	2.4 (2)
4th class	81.5 (100)	76.0. (80)	2.3 (2)
5th class	56.8 (50)	50.0 (40)	1.8 (2)
6th class	77.8 (80)	77.3 (80)	2.5 (3)
average	70.9	64.4	2.2

Note: Satisfaction and listening comprehension were rated from 0% to 100% by 10 percent intervals; Speech rate was rated from 1 (very fast) to 4 (slow); Figures in parentheses indicate modes.

Table 6: Students' Comments on Home Economics Classes, 2004

	Students' comments
1st class	I could understand Philippine and Sri Lankan cultures.(14); It was fun.(6)
2nd class	It was fun.(10); It was easy to understand table manners through demonstration.(9); I could understand the class better than last time.(6)
3rd class	I could learn cooking expressions.(13); I look forward to the next cooking class.(9); It was fun.(6)
4th class	Delicious.(17); It was fun.(12)
5th class	I couldn't understand the content and the cooking expressions well.(28)
6th class	I enjoyed the last cooking.(15); Food was spicy. (10)

Note: Comments made by more than five students were recorded; Figures in parentheses indicate the number of students; Multiple comments were allowed and counted separately.

Discussion

For discussion, Table 7 presents the average percentages for satisfaction, listening comprehension, and speech rate over the three years.

Table 7: Average Percentages for Satisfaction, Listening Comprehension and Speech Rate in 2002, 2003, and 2004

	2002	2003	2004
satisfaction	73.9	68.6	70.9
listening comprehension	70.8	65.2	64.4
speech rate	2.7	2.6	2.2

The average percentages for satisfaction were maintained at a high level during the three years, suggesting that the students were fairly satisfied with the course. It should be noted that hands-on experiences always recorded 80 percent or more satisfaction (See Appendix for instruction mode). In contrast, lectures generally scored low percentages, and most notably, the lowest percentages were all found in the lectures (61. 8 percent in 2002, 52.5 percent in 2003, and 56.8 percent in 2004, respectively). In short, their psychological satisfaction seems to derive mainly from their actual cooking and eating rather than lecture-oriented classes.

The average percentages for listening comprehension were also relatively high, but the average percentages went down year by year from 70.8 through 65.2 to 64.4. This decrease corresponds with the ratio of lectures per course. To be more specific, three full lectures were given out of eleven classes in 2002; four full lectures out of nine classes in 2003; three full lectures out of six classes (See Appendix for instruction mode). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that students had difficulty in comprehending English through lectures.

As for the teachers' speech rate, 2002 and 2003 indicated almost the same speed, each marking 2.7 and 2.6. That is, the teacher's English was rated as not so fast. However, 2004 saw the average teacher's speech rate at 2.2, meaning the students thought that the teacher talked relatively fast. This speech rate difference, which might have contributed to the lowest listening comprehension in 2004 besides the high ratio of lectures, probably comes from the fact the teacher in 2002 and 2003 was different from the teacher in 2004.

It is widely believed that listening comprehension involves two operations; top-down processing and bottom-up processing (Peterson, 1991). The former is driven by listeners' expectations and understanding of the nature of text and the nature of the world (e.g., rhetorical conventions and previous knowledge), and the latter is driven by the sounds, words, and phrases which listeners hear. If this is the case, the overall success of this course primarily rests on the rather simple content centering around hands-on experiences in which students could utilize top-down processing efficiently, compensating for their relative lack of linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, the teacher's slow rate of English helps to activate bottom-up processing as identified in 2002.

Conclusion

Home Economics was characterized as a "fun and delicious" course. It achieved relative success in giving students a sense of satisfaction. This owes to the fact that the students were comfortable with the teachers' English and the content of the course. Also, hands-on experiences appeared to be an effective way to boost both students' satisfaction and listening comprehension, while their satisfaction and listening comprehension were always low when lectures were conducted.

The first pedagogical implication drawn from this study is that the courses which do not require heavy cognitive load, like Home Economics, seem to be appropriate to be taught in a second language (also, see Takagaki & Tanabe, 2003). As far as instruction modes are concerned, classes which emphasize hands-on experiences are likely to be more successful than lecture-oriented classes.

Second, teachers should attempt to speak at a slower rate to promote students' bottom-up processing, especially at the initial stage of a course. As identified in 2002, many students appreciated the Filipino teacher for speaking slowly.

Third, some useful listening strategies must be taught to help with students' listening comprehension (Mendelsohn, 1995). For example, students need to learn to focus on key points in lectures and make informed guesses instead of trying to catch every word the teacher says. Likewise, they should be taught that stressed words are usually more important than unstressed words to determine the essence of the meaning of an utterance. These strategies are expected to help students' listening comprehension as well as note-taking.

Finally, it would be beneficial for the students to study basic linguistic features of non-native varieties of English, such as Philippine English, before the start of the course or during the course. For instance, Filipino speakers of English tend to replace / f /with / p / (e.g. *pact* for *fact*), have no aspiration of /p, t, k/, and lack release of all final stops (Gramley & Pätzold, 1992). Knowing these features may help students improve listening comprehension, as well as help raise students' awareness of non-native varieties of English. As a matter of fact, it was a little surprising that no students complained that the teachers were not native English speakers. This is a sign that these high school freshmen have not developed a sense of primacy about native-varieties of English. If so, introducing non-native varieties of English to this age group can be helpful to further facilitate healthy attitudes toward non-native varieties of English.

The teaching implications above should be implemented carefully due to the following limitations. First, the findings should not be generalized out of one school's research as reported here. Second, it would have been better if other data sources, such as interviewing students, had been utilized to triangulate the data and make the findings more valid. Third, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the use of non-native English varieties contributed to the findings compared to that of native varieties. Fourth, it is also not clear as to what aspects of their overall English proficiency these courses helped to develop if at all.

Nevertheless, the attempt of offering content-based instruction in a non-native variety of English was considerably ambitious and significant in the history of high school English teaching in Japan, where even content-based instruction by native English speakers is still almost non-existent. We hope that the present three-year survey will be of use for researchers and practitioners to critically examine the current Anglophile English teaching programs at high schools in Japan and elsewhere and to gear them toward a more "*Englishes*-conscious" classroom.

Notes

1. Content-based instruction is defined as teaching subject matter in a second language to provide students with opportunities for second language acquisition (Snow 1991).
2. In 2002, Politics and Economics, as well as Home Economics, was offered in non-native variety of English (For details, see Takagaki & Tanabe, 2003). The course was closed afterwards because the instructor returned to his home country and no substitute teacher was available.
3. Classes were generally conducted once a week, but occasionally once in two weeks.
4. The students were also enrolled in regular English courses concurrently.
5. Benesse's English Proficiency Test consists of listening, reading, and writing, and the total score is 800. In 2002, the freshmen's average score was 376 versus a national average of 374. In 2003, the freshmen's average score was 466 versus a national average of 390. In 2004, the freshmen's average score was 495 versus a national average of 407.

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Appendix

A. Course topics and instruction in Home Economics, 2002

	Topic	Instruction mode
1st class	introduction	lecture
2nd class	basic cooking terms	lecture
3rd class	cooking	hands-on experience
4th class	nutrition	lecture
5th class	table manners	lecture & hands-on experience
6th class	cooking recipe	lecture & group work
7th class	table manners	lecture & hands-on experience
8th class	cooking	hands-on experience
9th class	cooking recipe	lecture & group work
10thclass	cooking	hands-on experience
11thclass	Japanese culture	group presentations

B. Course topics and instruction modes in Home Economics, 2003

	Topic	Instruction mode
1st class	introduction	lecture
2nd class	table manners	lecture& hands-on experience
3rd class	cooking recipe	lecture
4th class	cooking	hands-on experience
5th class	cooking recipe	lecture
6th class	cooking	hands-on experience
7th class	cooking recipe	lecture
8th class	cooking	hands-on experience
9th class	Japanese food	group presentations

C. Course topics and instruction modes in Home Economics, 2004

	Topic	Instruction mode
1st class	introduction	lecture
2nd class	table manners	lecture& hands-on experience
3rd class	cooking recipe	lecture
4th class	cooking	hands-on experience
5th class	cooking recipe	lecture
6th class	cooking	hands-on experience

Refusal Strategies by Yemeni EFL Learners

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Abstract

This is a pragmalinguistic investigation into the speech act of refusing as made by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language. For this study, 20 Yemeni learners of English were asked to respond in English to six different situations in which they carry out the speech act of refusal. Their English performances were compared to those of Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers in order to find out whether the refusal given by the group in question, i.e., Yemeni learners of English, correspond more closely with those of the Yemeni Arabic native speakers or with speakers of the target language, the American English native speakers. The data, collected from a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), were analyzed in terms of semantic formula sequences and were categorized according to the refusal taxonomy by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). Results indicate that although a similar range of refusal strategies were available to the two language groups, cross-cultural variation was evident in the frequency and content of semantic formulas used by each language group in relation to the contextual variables, which include the status of interlocutors (higher, equal, or lower status) and eliciting acts i.e., requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions). For instance, Yemeni Arabic native speakers tended to be less direct in their refusals by offering preceding “reasons” or “explanations” (in the first position of the semantic formula order) other than their own desire in refusing. American English native speakers, on the other hand, used different semantic order by preceding “regret” in the first position giving more direct refusals. Due to their high proficiency in English, Yemeni learners of English showed evidence of pragmatic competence of the target language in constructing their refusal styles in three areas: the order in which semantic formulas for refusing were used, the frequency of semantic formula and the content of semantic formulas. However, they at times displayed some of their native speech community norms, falling back on their cultural background when formulating refusals.

Key words: Interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic competence; pragmatic transfer; speech act of refusal, Yemeni learners of English.

Introduction

Much of the work in interlanguage pragmatics has been conducted within the framework of speech acts. Speech acts can be thought of as ‘functions’ of language, such as complaining, thanking, apologizing, refusing, requesting, and inviting. Within this view, the minimal unit of communication is the performance of linguistic act. All languages have a means of performing speech acts and presumably speech acts themselves are universals, yet the 'form' used in specific speech acts varies from culture to culture. Thus, the study of second language speech acts is concerned with the linguistic possibilities available in languages for speech act realization and the effect of cross-cultural differences on second language performance and on the interpretation by native speakers of second language speech acts (Wolfson, 1989, p.183).

Numerous studies in interlanguage pragmatics have recognized that the learners' ability to use appropriate speech acts in a given speech act event and to use appropriate linguistic forms to realize this speech act is a main component of pragmatic competence. Fraser (1983) describes pragmatic competence as "the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes" (p.30). Rintell (1997) also pointed out that "pragmatics is the study of speech acts", arguing that L2 learner pragmatic ability is reflected in how learners produce utterances in the target language to communicate specific intentions and conversely, how they interpret the intentions which their utterances convey. One of the consistent findings in the empirical studies of speech act behavior is that, although the typology of speech acts appears to be universal, their conceptualization and verbalization can vary to a great extent across cultures and languages. In other words, L2 learners may have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies as do native speakers (NSs), but they can differ from in the strategies that they choose. Therefore, it is clear that L2 learners must be aware of L2 sociocultural constraints on speech acts in order to be pragmatically competent.

When second language learners engage in conversations with native speakers, difficulties may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in the production of speech acts. Such conversational difficulties may in turn cause breakdowns in interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1990). When the native speakers violate speech acts realization patterns typically used by native speakers of a target language, they often suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating conversational and politeness norms thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated by their interactants as social equals (Kasper, 1990). Communication difficulties are resulted when conversationalists do not share the same knowledge of the subtle rules governing conversations. Scarcella (1990) ascribes high frequency of such difficulties to the fact that "nonnative speakers, when conversing, often transfer the conversational rules of their first language into the second" (p.338).

The use of rules of speaking from one's speech act community when interacting or when speaking in a second or a foreign language is known as pragmatic transfer. Uriel Weinreich (1953) says "Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech act of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact, will be referred to as interference phenomena. It is these phenomena of speech, and their impact on the norms of either language exposed to contact, that invite the interest of the linguist" (as cited in Wolfson, 1989, p.141).

What L2 learners must know for successful speech act performance has been presented in a "top-down processing" manner (Kasper, 1984): "Learners first have to recognize the extra-linguistic, cultural constraints that operate in a NS's choice of a particular speech act appropriate to the context. They also have to know how to realize this speech act at the linguistic level and in accordance with L2 sociocultural norms" (p.3). Cohen (1996) terms this "Sociocultural knowledge" as " speakers ability to determine whether it is acceptable to perform the speech act at all in the given situation and, so far, to select one or more semantic formulas that would be appropriate in the realization of the given speech act" (p.254).

The speech act of refusal

Refusals, as all the other speech acts, occur in all languages. However, not all languages/ cultures refuse in the same way nor do they feel comfortable refusing the same invitation or suggestion. The speech act of refusal occur when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to request or invitation. Refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/ requester/ inviter, because it contradicts his or her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Thus, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence. Chen (1996) used semantic formula to analyze speech act sets of refusal (refusing requests, invitations, offers and suggestions), and concluded that direct refusal as "NO" was not a common strategy for any of the subjects, regardless of their language background. For example, an expression of regret, common in Americans' refusals, was generally produced by the Chinese speakers, which might lead to unpleasant feelings between speakers in an American context.

Speakers who may be considered fluent in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. In cross-cultural communication, refusals are known as 'striking points' for many non native speakers (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliz-Weltz 1990). Refusals can be tricky speech acts to perform linguistically and psychologically since the possibility of offending the interlocutor is inherent in the act itself (Know, 2004). As a face-threatening act, a sensitive pragmatic task and high pragmatic competence concern constructing refusals. As a failure to refuse appropriately can risk the interpersonal relations of the speakers, refusals usually include various strategies to avoid offending one's interlocutors. However, the choice of these strategies may vary across languages and cultures. For example, in refusing invitations, offers and suggestions, gratitude was regularly expressed by American English speakers, but rarely by Egyptian Arabic speakers (Nelson, Al-batal, and Echols, 1996). When Mandarian Chinese speakers wanted to refuse requests, they expressed positive opinion (e.g., 'I would like to….') much less frequently than American English since Chinese informants were concerned that if they ever expressed positive opinions, they would be forced to comply (Liao and Bressnahan, 1996).

Related Literature

Several major investigations into the speech ac of refusing have been conducted by (Beebe, 1985; Beebe. et al., 1985; Beebe and Takahashi, 1987) cited in Wolfson (1989). The finding of their study (Beebe et al., 1985) demonstrates that Japanese learners of English manifest sociolinguistic transfer in refusals by the sequencing of formulas for refusing the actual frequency in use of formulas, and their specific content. One significant finding was that the status of the addressee is a much stronger conditioning factor in the speech of Japanese speaking both in English and in their native language. An example of the related differences status in the behavior of the Japanese is that, unlike English speaking Americans, they did not apologize or express regret in responses to those of lower position. Additional evidence of status-related differences is manifested in the Japanese responses to invitations from higher-as opposed to lower-status interlocutors. In contrast, Americans in these situations make a distinction along the lines of social distance by responding in a brief and unelaborated fashion to both higher- and lower-status unequal while offering much longer and more detailed responses to peers. In their analysis of strategies for refusing, they classify refusals into direct and indirect refusals. Direct refusals such as "I refuse" or "no" were found to be used by Americans mainly in response to intimates and status unequal or strangers. Indirect refusals, used by Americans primarily to acquaintances of equal status, included three major strategies which were usually found to be used in sequence at the beginning of a refusal. These were (1) an expression of positive opinion such as "I'd like to," (2) an expression of regret such as "I'm sorry," and excuse, reason, or explanation such as "My children will be home that night" or "I have a headache". Other strategies included a statement expressing a wish to be able to comply with the request, the statement of an alternative, a condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier…."), a promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"), a statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends") , a statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful"), an attempt to dissuade the interlocutor, a criticism of the request, a request for empathy, a statement letting the interlocutor off the hook (e.g., “Don’t worry about it”), self-defense (e.g., “I’m doing my best”), an unspecific or indefinite reply, a display of lack enthusiasm, and verbal or nonverbal avoidance such as silence or a topic switch, a hedge, or a joke. In another study of refusals as made by Japanese ESL learners at tow levels of proficiency, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) found that low and high proficiency learners differed in the order and frequency of semantic formulas they use.

The lower proficiency learners were also more direct in their refusals than higher-level ESL learners. To investigate the evidence of pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL learners’ refusals, Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared refusal strategies used by Japanese ESL learners to those used by Americans. They also tested the differences in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas used by Japanese and Americans. They found evidence of transfer in all three areas (Beebe et al., 1990). Chen (1996) used semantic formula to analyze speech act sets of refusal(refusing requests, invitations, offers and suggestions) produced by American and Chinese speakers of English. She found that direct refusal was not a common strategy for any of the subjects, regardless of their language background.

There are few empirical studies on speech act behavior involving the Arabic language or even native speakers of Arabic. Umar (2004) studied the request strategies as used by Advanced Arab learners of English as a foreign language as compared to those strategies used by British native speakers of English. He found that the two groups adopted similar strategies when addressing their request to equals or people in higher positions. In this case, the subjects rely heavily on conventionally indirect strategies. However, when requests are addressed to people in lower positions the Arabic sample shows a marked tendency towards using more direct request strategies in performing their request than the British sample.

El-Shazly (1993) studies the request strategies in American English, Egyptian Arabic, and English as spoken by Egyptian second language learners. The results of this study have indicated that there are differences in the requesting strategies used by these groups. The Arab speakers of English demonstrate a high tendency towards using conventional indirectness which depends on the use of interrogatives. Modifiers are also examined among the groups. No differences are found with respect to use of “Upgraders’. “Downgraders”, however, are found to be more frequently used by native Arabic speakers. They display a noticeable tendency to use more than one downgrader in a single utterance. This group is also found to be unique in using religious expressions as downgraders.

Al-Shawali (1997) studies the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male

Undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The finding of his study shows that Americans and Saudis use similar refusal formulas except in the use of direct refusal. Saudi and Americans also differ in the use of semantic formulas in the content of their refusals; Saudis are found to use avoidance strategies (e.g., postponement and hedge) or they give unspecified answers.

This is a sociolinguistic study into the speech act of refusal. This study investigates the strategies of refusal as used by the following subject groups:

-Yemeni learners of English, (YELs)

-Yemeni native speakers of Arabic, (YANSs), and

-American native speakers of English (AENSs)

The intention is to elicit the pragmatic performance of the YELs as compared to those of YANSs and AENSs. By tackling the used semantic formulas with its orders and contents in constructing the refusals styles, this study is intended to address the following questions:

1- When YELs perform the speech act of refusal, are their refusal strategies similar to those used by native speakers of English, AENSs?
2- Does pragmatic transfer occur when YELs make refusals in English?

In this study some of the situations in Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's Discourse completion Test (1996) have been reproduced.

Method

Subjects

The participants were 30 graduate students divided to three groups as following:

-Twenty Yemeni native speakers of Arabic (YANSs),

-Twenty Yemeni learners of English (YELs), and

-Twenty Americans native speakers of English (AENSs)

The study included only male subjects because it was conducted abroad, in Delhi, in a context with very few females. The written role-playing questionnaire consists of six situations. The questionnaire on refusal was divided into four categories: refusals to (1) requests, (2) invitations, (3) offers, and (4) suggestions. In each case, the questionnaire was designed so that one refusal will be made to someone of higher status, lower status, or a status equal. The responses of the three groups will be compared to each other to find out to what extent the YELs manipulate their pragmatic competence of the target language to refuse in English.

Procedure

All the subjects were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Appendix A). The

DCT is a form of questionnaire depicting some natural situations to which the respondents are expected to respond making refusals. This test was originally designed by Blum-Kulka in 1982 and has been widely used since then in collecting data on speech acts realization both within and across language groups. The questionnaire used in this investigation involves six written situations. They were divided into four groups: two requests, two invitations, one offer and one suggestion. Each type included a status differential: higher, equal, or lower (Appendix B). Each situation could only be answered by a refusal. For the YANSs, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic with the necessary changes in the names of people and places to make them more familiar with the situations.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the Discourse-Completion-Test are analyzed. The analysis was based on an independent examination of each response. The same semantic formulas as employed by Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (Appendix C) are used. For example, if a respondent refused an invitation to a friend's house for dinner, saying "I'm sorry, I already have plans. Maybe next time," this was coded as: [expression of regret] [excuse] [offer of alternative] (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990, p.57). I then coded the order of semantic formulas used in each refusal. In the above example, [expression of regret] was first, [excuse] second, and [offer of an alternative] third (ibid). The total number of semantic formulas of any kind used for each situation was obtained for each of the three subject groups. Then, I counted the frequency of each formula for each situation and listed them. Finally, the similarities between YANSs and YELs responses and the similarities between YELs and AENSs on the other hand were counted and analyzed.

Discussion of the Results

Table (1) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Request

Refuser status=Higher

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (6) can't (6) positive opinion (2)	future acceptance (2) excuse (3) alternative (2)		
YE	excuse (2) positive opinion (2) regret (4) pause filler (12)	can't (8) positive opinion (2) future acceptance (2) regret(2) excuse (6)	regret (2) excuse (8) future acceptance (2)	excuse (2)

AE	positive opinion (6) regret (14)	positive opinion (2) can't (4)	excuse (8)	can't (4)

All the three groups used excuses in their refusals of requests. The order in which excuse was used is not the same. It varied according to the social status of the requester as in the analysis in tables (1 & 2).

According to the data in table (1) the responses of all groups YANSs, YELs, and AENSs slightly differ in the order of the semantic formulas. YANSs used excuses in the first and the second positions of the semantic formulas; the YELs used excuses in all positions, whereas AENSs used excuses only in the third position. In higher status, the YANSs refusals tended to be more direct than the other two groups. Three responses by the YANSs included direct refusal "can't" in the first position. The other two groups preferred to use the direct form of refusal "can't" in the second positions by YELs and in fourth position by AENSs. On the other hand, YELs and mostly AENSs used regret "sorry" to start their refusal styles. YANSs tended to be briefer than the other two groups who extended their strategies to three and sometimes four parts.

Table (2) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Request

Refuser status=lower

	Order of semantic formulas			
Group	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
YA	excuse (12) positive opinion (6) regret (2)	Future acceptance (2) can't (8) regret (2)	excuse (2)	
YE	regret (16) excuse (2) empathy (2)	can't (8) excuse (10) future acceptance (2)	excuse (4)	
AE	regret (14) positive opinion (2) excuse (2) empathy (2)	excuse (8) alternative (4)	alternative (4)	

In table (2) where the refuser has a lower status, the YELs showed a mixture of pragmatic transfer and pragmatic competence. Pragmatic transfer occurred by the use of the direct refusal "can't" in the second position by four respondents in each group i.e., YANSs and YELs. On the other hand, none of the AENSs responses included direct refusal in any position of the semantic formula. But in the first position we have something different. From the results in table 2, we find that regret "I'm sorry" was used by most of the YELs and AENSs respondents. This means that the YELs have used the same refusal strategies of the AENSs in refusal. Again with excuse expression, while the YANSs used this expression in the first position, we find that both of YELs and AENSs postponed their excuses to the second position which gives another hint of pragmatic competence of the YELs.

Table (3) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations
Refuser status=Higher

Group	Order of semantic formulas			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
YA	excuse (14) positive opinion (6)	excuse (6) alternative (6)		
YE	regret (14) positive opinion (4) pause filler (2)	excuse (10) can’t (4) positive opinion (2) future acceptance (2)	future acceptance (2) excuse (4) regret (2)	
AE	positive opinion (4) regret (6) Gratitude (4) “no” (4) empathy (2)	excuse (10) regret (4)	excuse (4) regret (2)	alternative (2)

According to the results in table (3) YELs and AENSs tended to be more similar by using the expression of regret “I’m sorry” in the first position, excuse in the second position and extended their excuse expressions to the third position of their refusal styles. The YANSs did not use any form of regret in their refusal at all. They tried to show politeness through excuse in the first and second positions which is indirect refusal. In comparison of the YELs responses among those of YANSs and AENSs, we find that they tried to follow the strategies used by AENSs rather than their native counterparts. The researcher assumes here that the use of “excuse” and not “regret” by the YANSs respondents in refusing and invitation is yielded to the sociocultural norms of the community. Again the YELs give more inclinations of L2 pragmatic competence.

Table (4) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations
Refuser status=Equal

Group	Order of semantic formulas			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
YA	excuse (4) regret (10) no (2)	excuse (8) gratitude (4)	excuse (4)	
YE	gratitude (4) excuse (4)	gratitude (2) regret (4)	excuse (8)	

	pause filler (4) regret (4) positive opinion (4)	excuse (8) positive opinion (2)		
AE	regret (12) gratitude (8)	excuse (14)	gratitude (6) alternative (4)	

When they are in equal status, YELs tended to use their native speech community norms of refusal. Table (4) shows that YANSs and YELs usually use the same content and order of the semantic formula when refusing invitations by peers. However; YANSs' responses in this situation were somehow unique. For example, the over use of excuse by some respondents such as "I'm busy, I have to visit my parents" or "Oh, I'm tied up. I have an appointment with my doctor". Sometimes YANSs were vague with their interlocutors of the same status. For example, "Tomorrow I have something to do" or "Sorry, next Sunday I'll be busy". Generally speaking, in equal status all the three groups have more similarities than in the other status. They might share some of the sociocultural norms.

Table (5) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Suggestions

Refuser status=Equal

Group	**Order of semantic formulas**			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
YA	positive opinion (4) future acceptance (2) excuse (4) no (6) regret (4)	excuse (8) regret (4) gratitude (4)	excuse (6) gratitude (2)	
YE	no (6) regret (4) excuse (4) negative willingness (4) gratitude (1)	excuse (12) can't (4)	negative willingness (2)	
AE	excuse (12) no (8)	excuse (10) gratitude (4)	Gratitude (2)	

Again in equal status, all the three groups YANSs, YELs and AENSs tended to use the same strategies for refusal. They used 'excuse' expressions in the first and second positions without differences, neither in the content nor in the order of the semantic formula. "No" the direct refusal expression was also used by all the groups in the first positions and almost by the same number of respondents. Four YELs used their native norms to express 'regret' as YANSs did so. Expression of 'gratitude' for example, "thank you" appeared in all positions but in different order.

Table (6) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Offer

Refuser status=Lower

Group	Order of semantic formulas			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
YA	excuse (6) regret (6) title (6) can’t (2)	excuse (12) can’t (4)	excuse (4) can’t (2)	
YE	regret (10) appreciation (4) pause filler (4) excuse (2)	Negative willingness (2) regret (2) excuse (10) statement of alternative (4) appreciation (2)	negative willingness (2) excuse (6)	
AE	regret (12) positive opinion (4) excuse (4)	excuse (10) alternative (6)	alternative (4)	

In table (6) where the refuser is of lower status rejected an offer by his boss, higher status., the content, order, and frequency of the semantic formula varied from one group to another. The main finding here is that the responses of the YANSs contain the direct refusal “can’t” in different orders. On the other side, some of the YANSs used the title “Sir”, with their interlocutors as a reference to the latter’s superiority as a politeness illusion. Sometimes the YANSs, extended their excuses in two positions as explained in table (4). From the results in table (6) we find that YELs and AENSs tended to use the same styles of refusal by avoiding directness. However; there are similarities among the three groups. Most of the respondents started their refusals using ‘regret’ expression “I’m sorry”, in the first position and then they gave their explanations or reasons in the second and sometimes third position.

Conclusion

Different cultures have different perceptions and interpretations of appropriateness and politeness. This study is a contribution to cross-cultural understanding in that it identifies cross-cultural and linguistic differences between Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers in the speech act of refuse. Learners of a second language and in an advanced level of their performance of the target language are highly assumed to share some of the two languages’, i.e., native language and target language, norms of appropriateness and politeness. From this study, it appeared that both of pragmatic transfer and pragmatic competence occurred by the YELs. That was occurred in their refusal strategies according to their social status in the situation, higher, equal, or lower and according to the situation itself, a request, an offer, an invitation or a suggestion. Generally speaking, all the three groups participated in this study mostly used similar strategies of politeness in rejecting offers, invitations, requests, and suggestions except in the higher status of refuser. We find that YANSs used 'excuse' in the first position of the semantic formula in rejecting an invitation of lower status. On the other hand, neither YELs nor AENSs used the same expression in the first position which gives inclinations of the L2 pragmatic competence of the YELs. YELs and AENSs tended to use similar contents and orders of the semantic formula. They used 'regret' expressions "I'm sorry" or 'positive opinion' "It's nice of you to invite us" in the first position, and 'excuse' or 'regret' in the second and third positions.

The less use of direct refusal "no" or "can't" in the first position by all the three groups refers to the same perception of adopting politeness strategies. They tended to be more direct with peers in rejecting their suggestions. However; YANSs used direct refusal style in the first position when they are in higher status. Hints of pragmatic transfer appeared in the lower status situation of the refuser. There we find the use of direct refusal expressions in the first position followed by statements of excuse in the second and third positions of the refusal semantic formula.

The main finding of the study is that the subject in question, YELs, afforded enough indications of pragmatic competence of the target language. English Grammatical accuracy of the YELs was not examined as the main concern of the present study was the sociolinguistic behavior of the subjects.

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Appendix A

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Instruction: Please read the following 12 situations. After each situation you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "you." Respond as you would be in actual conversation.

1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

   Worker: as you know. I've been here just over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be honest, I really need an increase in pay.

   You: ____

   Worker: then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

2. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a printing machine company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants in New York.

   Salesman: we have met several times to discuss your purchase of my company's product. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest at Lutece in order to firm up a contract.

   You:

   ____

   Salesman: Perhaps another time.

3. You're at a friend's house watching TV. He/She offers you a snack.

   You: Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My clothes don't even fit me.

   Friend: Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about.

   You: ____

   Friend: You should try it anyway.

4. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this friend's husband/wife.

   Friend: how about coming over for dinner Sunday night? We're having a small dinner party.

   You: ____

   Friend: O.K., maybe another time.

5. You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

   Boss: I'd like to offer you an excusive position in our new office in Hicktown. It's a great town-only 3 hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position.

You: ____

Boss: Well, maybe you should give it more thought before turning it down.

6. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave work.

   Boss: If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up this work.

   You: ____

   Boss: That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

Appendix B

Classification of Discourse Completion Test (DTC)

Stimulus According to Status of Refuser

Stimulus type	**Refuser Status (relative to interlocutor)**	**DCT item**	**situation**
Request	Lower Higher	#12 #1	Stay late at night Request raise
Invitation	Equal Higher	#10 #3	Dinner at friend's house Fancy restaurant (bribe)
Offer	Lower	#11	Promotion with move to small town
Suggestion	Equal	#5	Try a new diet

Appendix C

Classification of Refusals

I- Direct

A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
B. Nonperformative statement
1. "No"
2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

II- Indirect

A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry…", "I feel terrible…")
B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you….")
C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")
D. Statement of alternative
   1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather do…""I'd prefer")
   2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have…")
F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time";" I promise I'll…" or "Next time I'll…"- using "will" of promise or "promise")
G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")
I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
    1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
    2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")
    3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")
    4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
    5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")
    6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can."
J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
    1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
    2. Lack of enthusiasm
K. Avoidance
    1. Nonverbal
        a. Silence
        b. Hesitation
        c. Do nothing
        d. Physical departure
    2. Verbal
        a. Topic switch
        b. Joke
        c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
        d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
        e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

Adjuncts to refusals

1. Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea…"; "I'd love to…")
2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
3. Pause filler (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "uhm")
4. Gratitude/appreciation

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Language Learning Strategies for Junior College Students in Taiwan: Investigating Ethnicity and Proficiency

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the effects of ethnicity and language proficiency on the use of language learning strategies by junior college students. Specifically, the study aimed to find out whether the frequency of strategy use across aboriginal and non-aboriginal junior college students and across high, intermediate and low English proficiency groups varies significantly. To identify the learning strategies that different ethnic and proficiency groups use, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was administrated to 451 junior college students. It was found that ethnicity did play a significant role in the selection of language learning strategies. Language proficiency influenced learners' use of language learning strategies. More proficient students reported using strategies more often than less proficient students. In addition, the most and least favored strategies of various ethnic and proficiency groups were identified. Understanding students' strategy use may enable EFL teachers to incorporate language learning strategy training in English lessons at junior college levels and ultimately improve students' English language skills.

Key words: language learning strategy, ethnicity, language proficiency, junior college students

1. Introduction

Language learning strategies are specific actions or techniques that learners use to assist their progress in developing second or foreign language skills (Oxford, 1990). Language learning strategies are believed to play a vital role in learning a second language, as they may assist learners in mastering the forms and functions required for reception and production in the second language and thus affect achievement (Bialystok, 1979). Many researchers have suggested that the conscious use of language learning strategies makes good language learners (Naiman, Frohlich & Todesco, 1975; Oxford, 1985; Wenden, 1985). Researchers believe that strategies of successful language learners can provide a basis for aiding language learners (Rubin, 1975; Reiss, 1983). O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo & Kupper (1985) asserted that the learning strategies of good language learners, once identified and successfully taught to less proficient learners could have considerable effects on facilitating the development of second language skills. Therefore, if language teachers know more about effective strategies that successful learners use, they may be able to teach these effective strategies to less proficient learners to enhance these learners' language skills.

The types of strategies used by different learners vary due to different factors, such as degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language (Oxford, 1990). Of all the learner factors, the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and success in mastering a second or foreign language has been the focus of considerable research over the past two decades (Oxford, 1989; Rubin, 1987).

In search of cultural and ethnic factors contributing to differences in the choice of language learning strategies, Bedell (1993) used a Chinese translation of the SILL 5.0 with 353 students taking English classes at six secondary- and tertiary-level institutions in the People's Republic of China. The results indicated that compensation strategies are most frequently used not only by Chinese students in the study but also by Chinese students studying in the US (Chang, 1990) and in Taiwan (Yang, 1993a, 1993b). Memory strategies ranked the lowest in the study as well as among Chinese students in Yang's study (1993a), and Korean students in Oh's study (1992). Metacognitive strategies are often used moderately by Chinese students in Bedell's study (1993) and other investigations (Yang, 1993a, 1993b), but not used as often among Puerto Rican, Egyptian, Indonesian and Korean subjects. Social strategies were found to be generally unpopular among Chinese and Japanese subjects. This finding suggests that cultural factors play an important role in the selection of language learning strategy. Learners often behave in certain culturally approved and socially encouraged ways as they learn.

Grainger (1997) also studied ethnic differences in language learning strategy use. Using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), version 5, the findings indicated that no significant differences in overall strategy use emerged among Asian, English and European background students. Within strategy categories, however, significant differences did emerge and in terms of individual strategy use major differences also emerged. Additionally, the results revealed that learners with Asian backgrounds did not follow traditional patterns of strategy use as identified in other studies of language learning strategies. However, in Grainger's study, the number of subjects of each ethnic subgroup was not large enough. For example, there were only six subjects with European background. Large numbers of subjects were, therefore, needed to ensure the validity of the research findings.

McGroarty's study (1987) found that Spanish learners use highly traditional strategies such as using a dictionary to learn words. Correspondingly, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found that Asian students tend to prefer their own established rote learning strategies.

Chamot and Kupper (1989) asserted that high proficiency learners know how to use appropriate strategies to reach their learning goals, while low proficiency learners are less expert in their strategy use and choice. Oxford (1985) claimed that successful language learners use a wide range of strategies that are most appropriate for their learning tasks. MacIntyre (1994) also indicated that second language learners may use strategies that make their communication more effective, informative and persuasive when they attain certain proficiency. Yang (1994) stated that perceived proficiency levels have a significant effect on students' use of learning strategies. The better students perceive their language proficiency, the more often they use various learning strategies to assist them in learning English. It seems that language proficiency is commonly recognized as a determinant of strategy use by more and more studies.

However, of all the variables that affect the use of language learning strategies, ethnicity is the one that has not received due attention in the literature, although there is some indication that learners with different cultural backgrounds are predisposed to use different learning strategies. Over the past two decades, ethnicity has been neglected as a variable in most research on language learning strategies. Researchers, however, have regarded ethnicity as one of the salient variables that result in differences in strategy use. If the strategies employed by students with different ethnic backgrounds could be identified, more insights will be gained into the learning process of individual learners and the characteristics of learners with different ethnic backgrounds. Hence, a study of the relationship between language learners' ethnicity and their use of language strategies is necessary to provide more insight into this issue. In addition, since learners with different cultural backgrounds might use different learning strategies, the successful learners from different cultural background might use different effective learning strategies as well. Thus, it is also necessary to examine the relationship between language proficiency and language learning strategies. Moreover, in Taiwan, junior college students are a distinctive student population, quite different from four-year university students. Before entering the junior college, students usually had studied

English for three years in junior high schools. Generally speaking, most junior college students have lower English proficiency than their university counterparts. However, few studies have been done with junior college students' learning strategy use. Accordingly, research conducted with this group of students is imperatively needed.

Aborigines account for less than 2 percent of the entire population in Taiwan. Young aborigines, once entering academic settings, encounter many more difficulties than non-aboriginal students, since they come to school with unique cultural backgrounds. In order to help English teachers to overcome the challenge of teaching heterogeneous groups in an EFL classroom, the researcher is motivated to investigate aboriginal students' language learning strategies. It is hoped that this study will help English teachers understand students from different cultural backgrounds better, equip them with effective learning strategies, adjust their own teaching methodology and eventually improve their English skills. Therefore the aim of this paper is to identify the language learning strategies of high-beginning EFL nursing students in Taiwan from various cultural backgrounds (aboriginal and non-aboriginal) and the effect of language proficiency on language learning strategy use. The study tried to answer the following questions:

1. Does the overall language learning strategy use as revealed by the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) vary by ethnicity and language proficiency level of Taiwanese nursing students?
2. Does the use of six types of language learning strategies (including memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, affective and social strategies) on the SILL vary by ethnicity and language proficiency level of Taiwanese nursing students?

Findings of the study may help English teachers overcome the challenge of teaching heterogeneous groups in an EFL college classroom in Taiwan. Second, the learning strategies used by more proficient college learners might be instructed to less proficient college learners. By doing this, less proficient college learners may have more practical approaches to achieve successful language learning. Finally, findings of the study may help researchers gain insight into the effects of ethnicity and language proficiency.

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects

Ten second-year classes at Chang Gung Institute of Technology were the subjects of the study. They had a total of 461 students. These subjects were female nursing majors. General English Reading and English Listening are two required courses in this five-year nursing college program. So these participants were taking General English Reading (3 hours per week) and English Listening courses (1 hour per week). Having learned English as a foreign language for about five years in school, the subjects have approximately a high-beginning level of EFL.

Among the 461 students, there were 165 aboriginal students and 296 non-aboriginal students. These young aborigines lived and received their junior high school education in mountainous areas, in remote eastern Taiwan and the offshore Orchid Island before they were admitted to the junior college. In these wild surroundings, they have developed a culture vastly different from that of non-aboriginal people, with different languages, concepts, customs, values and lifestyles. For example, the collectivist spirit and the exchange of goods for goods by barter in the aboriginal society conflict with the emphasis on private property in the non-aboriginal society (Cheng, 1995). This unique cultural system has a considerable influence on aboriginal people's concepts of group cohesion, mutual reliance and cooperation. In aboriginal communities, many public services are undertaken cooperatively among the aboriginal people, such as road building, the maintenance and building of houses, defense, joint hunting, fishing and farming. The concept of collectivist spirit goes back to traditional fishing, hunting and farming. In those days people cooperated in these tasks, and the fruits of their efforts were shared by all those who shared the work and the danger. This traditional culture is still very common among aborigines.

While each of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples has its own individual language, none of them has a written language. Everything has been passed down by spoken language. Aboriginal languages are still spoken by some elders, but native speakers are declining in number and youngsters are more fluent in Mandarin. As far as education is concerned, the percentage of aboriginal people with junior high school education and below is 67.5%, compared with 40.2% of the non-aboriginal population. Only 6.2% of the aboriginal people have college and above education. By contrast, the percentage of non-aboriginal population with college degree and above 26% (Council of Indigenous Peoples, 2002). Obviously, aboriginal people have lower educational attainment than non-aboriginal population. With regard to their economic backgrounds, lack of job opportunities and low pay make it hard to earn a living in their original home areas. More than 40% of young aboriginal people are leaving their traditional occupations, and are taking up jobs in the cities. Of these, most work as technical laborers, machine operators and related workers (Council of Indigenous Peoples, 2002).

The once masters of Taiwan have now become a minority group. The aborigines are labeled a minority group not only in terms of population, but also in terms of cultural heritage, economic strength, social status, language and so on; all of which drag this population far behind the non-aboriginal majority group. As our government has acknowledged the necessity of empowering Taiwanese aborigines, a series of policies or programs were lunched to respond to the needs of these minority groups. One of the important policies is to give aboriginal students who wish to pursue education an apparent advantage over other students. For example, there is a 25% lower threshold for enrollment at senior high schools, colleges and universities. Some institutes and universities of technology admit junior-high-school aboriginal graduates into the five-year program under a separate admission system to upgrade their educational level. Thus, there are as many as 33% of aboriginal students in the institute where the author is teaching.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 Proficiency Test

The English reading and listening mid-term exams developed by the English teachers of Chang Gung Institute of Technology were used to evaluate the subjects' English proficiency level in the present study. The English and listening mid-term exams are curriculum-specific achievement tests, rather than general proficiency tests. There were 40 multiple choice questions in the English mid-term test. This test contained 4 parts: (1) a vocabulary test, (2) a grammar test (3) a cloze test and (4) a reading comprehension test. There were two sections in the listening comprehension test with 40 multiple choice questions each.

2.2.2 Test Reliability and Validity

In order to estimate how reliable the use of the English and listening mid-term tests are, the internal consistency reliability was computed based on 451 cases and Cronbach alpha was .82. The reliability of the test is acceptable based on Bobko (2001), and Litwin's (1995) criterion of 0.70 as a minimally acceptable alpha value. Thus the test is a reliable instrument to estimate students' English proficiency. Two experts in TESOL were invited to check the content validity. First, they checked whether all of the test items matched the contents of the textbooks. Then, they made sure that items in the first section of English mid-term test were testing students' vocabulary knowledge, items in the second section were testing grammar ability, items in the third and fourth sections were testing reading abilities and each item in the listening section was testing student's English listening comprehension ability.

2.2.3 Questionnaire

To collect data on language learners' learning strategies and individual background, an English learning strategy questionnaire, which was composed of Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) and author-designed questions were administered to the participants. Version 7.0 of the SILL is a self-report instrument that assesses the frequency with which the subjects use a variety of techniques for foreign language learning. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and was pilot-tested with 45 students comparable to the participants of the study. Section one consisted of five questions to collect subjects' age and English learning experiences. Section two included 48 items grouped into six categories: memory (9 items), cognitive (14 items), compensation (6 items), metacognitive (9 items), affective (6 items) and social strategies (6 items). Some items were slightly modified or deleted so that they are more compatible with the actual English learning situations in Taiwan (Appendix A).

2.2.4 Questionnaire Reliability and Validity

The ESL/EFL SILL has been used worldwide for students of second and foreign languages in settings such as university, school and government. The internal consistency reliability of the SILL is .94 based on a 505-person sample (Yang, 1992) and .92 based on a 315-person sample (Watanabe, 1990). Content validity is .99 based on independent raters (Oxford, 1986; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995).

Although the internal consistency of the SILL was tested worldwide, the questionnaire was tested and revised following a pilot study with 45 students comparable to the participants of the study. The Chinese SILL had a Cronbach alpha of 0.84.

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Administering the Test

The subjects were given the listening comprehension test first. One week before the mid-term exam week in November 2004, the ten classes took the listening test in language laboratories of the school during their regular class sessions. In the beginning, the English teachers gave the students a Chinese explanation of the purposes of the test, reminding them that they should write down their answers on the answer sheet. The audiotape of the listening test was 40 minutes long. The listening test took about 50 minutes for each class. Later, during the mid-term exam week, the subjects completed the reading test under the subjects' teachers' supervision. The reading test took approximately 50 minutes for each class.

2.3.2 Administering the SILL

The data on the language learning strategy questionnaire were collected after the mid-term week of fall 2004. A brief explanation of the purpose of the study was given. The questionnaire was administered to all subjects by the English teachers during the English class. The students were informed that their responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential and would have no effect on their course grades. The completed questionnaires were collected right after the subjects completed them.

Of the 461 completed questionnaires, ten were discarded: six had no corresponding scores on the English mid-term exam and four were incomplete. As a result, only 451 questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis. Among the subjects, 165 (36.6%) were aboriginal students and 286 (63.4%) weree non-aboriginal students

2.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered from the English proficiency test was analyzed. Each subject's responses to the test sentences were given scores. A correct response was given 2.5 points and an incorrect response was given no points. The total possible score was 200. On the basis of teaching objectives of the **General English Reading and English Listening** courses, these three groups stand for different levels of English achievement. Those students who scored higher than 160 had adequate vocabulary size, and syntactic knowledge to understand simple reading paragraphs, and were able to understand simple questions, answers, simple conversations. Those who scored from 120 to 160 were able to understand simple reading paragraphs, questions, answers, simple conversations, yet some misunderstandings still arose due to limited vocabulary size and syntactic knowledge. Those who scored lower than 120 did not have adequate vocabulary size and syntactic knowledge to understand simple reading paragraphs, and could not understand simple questions, answers, and simple conversations. Based on the scores of the subjects' English mid-term exam, they were divided into three proficiency groups. The high proficiency group refers to subjects who scored higher than 160, and the low proficiency group refers to those who scored lower than 120. Those who scored from 120 to 160 belonged to the intermediate proficiency group. Moreover, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed to summarize the students' responses to the English proficiency test.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the aboriginal and non-aboriginal students at each proficiency level.

Table 1 - The Distribution of the Subjects by Ethnic Group and Proficiency Level

Ethnicity/Level	High	Intermediate	Low	Total
Non-aborigines	98	174	14	286
Aborigines	16	99	50	165
Total	114	273	64	451

Subjects' responses to the items on the SILL were given scores on the basis of five-point Likert scale. Subjects who chose "never true of me" gained 1, "usually not" gained 2, "somewhat" gained 3, "usually" gained 4, "always" gained 5. Then the total scores for each student were calculated. Means and standard deviations were computed to determine the students' overall strategy use. Then, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to find out whether there were significant differences in the means of strategy use across the entire SILL by (the dependent variable) ethnicity and proficiency (the independent variables). Likewise, a two-way ANOVA was used to find out whether there were significant differences in means of strategy use in the six SILL categories by ethnicity and proficiency. Then, Scheffe test, a post hoc comparison procedure, was used to determine where the specific significant differences exist (for example, between which of the three proficiency levels). The probability level of significance for ANOVA was set at.05.

3. Results

3.1 Relationship between Language Learning Strategy Use and Ethnicity and Proficiency

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations and Range of Test Scores for the 2 Ethnic Groups and 3 Proficiency Levels

Ethnicity/Level	Low		Intermediate		High		Total		Range	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S. D.	Lower	Upper
Aborigines	100.1	12.04	136.8	9.70	170.7	7.17	129.0	23.8	72.5	182.5
Non-aborigines	106.6	6.76	144.0	8.68	178.3	9.29	153.9	21.24	97.5	195
Total	101.4	11.39	141.4	9.68	177.2	9.37	144.1	25.25	72.5	195

The test scores for the different groups of students are shown in Table 2. Table 2 average score of the aboriginal students is 129 out of 200, the SD is 23.8 and the range is 72.5 to 182.5. The average score of the non-aboriginal students is 153.9 out of 200, the SD is 21.24 and the range is 97.5 to 195. The mean of the high proficiency group was 177.2 out of 200, the SD is 9.37 and the range is 162.5 to 195. The mean of the intermediate proficiency group was 141.4 out of 200, and the SD is 9.68 and the range is 120 to 160. The mean of low proficiency group was 101.4 out of, and the SD is 11.39 and the range is 72.5 to 117.5. The standard deviation of the aboriginal students was 23.8; the standard deviation of the non-aboriginal students was 21.24. The scores for aboriginal students were more spread than those for non-aboriginal students.

Moreover, the means and standard deviations of overall strategy use are presented in Table 3. Table 3 shows that Non-aborigines employ overall language learning strategies more often than aborigines (means = 2.98 & 2.85 respectively). In each proficiency group, the means for non-aborigines in overall strategy use are consistently higher than those for aborigines. Moreover, the means of strategy use increase according to proficiency levels (means = 2.68, 2.89 and 3.18 respectively). In each ethnic group, the means of strategy use also increase according to the proficiency level. Although the results in Table 3 show a variation in strategy use by ethnicity and proficiency in favor of non-aborigines and high-proficiency level, all means fall between 2.5 and 3.4, the range which Oxford (1990) defines as medium use. Thus, strategies are “sometimes used” by all the subjects.

Table 3 - Means and Standard Deviations of Overall Strategy Use for the 2 Ethnic Groups and 3 Proficiency Levels

Ethnicity/Level	Low		Intermediate		High		Total	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.
Aborigines	2.61	0.48	2.84	0.49	3.1	0.55	2.85	0.51
Non-aborigines	2.75	0.47	2.94	0.48	3.26	0.46	2.98	0.49
Total	2.68	0.49	2.89	0.48	3.18	0.48	2.92	0.51

The two-way ANOVA results in Table 4 show that the strategy use on the entire SILL varies significantly between aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students ($F = 6$, $p < .05$). ANOVA also shows that there are significant differences among students with different proficiency levels ($F = 8.98$, $p < .05$). The post-hoc Scheffe test indicates no significant difference for overall strategy use between intermediate and low proficiency levels (means = 2.89 and 2.68 respectively), but significant differences do occur between each of those levels and the high proficiency level (mean = 3.18). As to interaction of the two independent variables (ethnicity and proficiency level), there is no significant difference ($F = 0.26$, $p > .05$). Thus language proficiency and ethnicity have effects on strategy use by the subjects in this study.

Table 4: A Two-way ANOVA of Overall Strategy Use by the 2 Ethnic Groups and 3 Proficiency Levels

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Ethnicity	1.39	1	1.39	6.0	.05*
Level	4.15	2	2.67	8.98	.05*
Interaction	0.52	2	0.26	1.13	.32
Total	4005.01	451			

3.2 Use of Six Language Learning Strategy Categories

An analysis of use of the six strategy categories was further conducted. As shown in Table 5, the means of strategy use for non-aborigines were higher than those for aborigines in all of the six categories. Non-aborigines tend to use these six strategy categories better than aborigines. In terms of proficiency level, the means of strategy use for higher proficiency students are higher than those for lower proficiency students in all of the six categories. On the whole, non-aborigines and high proficiency student tend to use these six categories of strategies more often than aborigines and low proficiency students.

ANOVA results in Table 6 also show that of all the six strategy categories, cognitive, compensation, and social categories show significant difference in the strategies used by students of different ethnic backgrounds ($F = 4.77$, 7.68 & 4.85 respectively, $p < .05$) and of different proficiency levels ($F = 13.15$, 8.57 & 3.33, $p < .05$). However, there is no interaction between ethnicity and proficiency levels. In memory strategies, differences in strategy use by ethnicity (means = 2.58 and 2.78 respectively) do show significant differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students ($F = 5.75$, $p < .05$). In metacognitive strategies, there are significant differences in strategy use by the different proficiency levels ($F = 8.51$, $p < .05$). The Scheffe post hoc procedure shows that there are significant differences between high and intermediate groups (means = 3.15 & 2.78 respectively) and high and low groups (means = 3.15 & 2.67 respectively). Similarly, the Scheffe post hoc test also reveals significant differences between high and intermediate groups and high and low groups in cognitive (means = 3.19, 2.87 and 2.64), compensation (means = 3.51, 3.18 and 2.99), and social categories (means = 3.15, 2.88 and 2.77).

Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations of the Six Strategy Categories As Used by the Two Ethnic Groups and Three Proficiency Levels

Category	Ethnicity	Proficiency Level							
		Low		Intermediate		High		Total	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Memory	Aborigines	2.46	0.54	2.58	0.55	2.71	0.73	2.58	0.57
	Non-aborigines	2.70	0.57	2.71	0.51	2.88	0.56	2.78	0.53
	Total	2.58	0.55	2.65	0.53	2.80	0.58	2.68	0.55
Cognitive	Aborigines	2.48	0.52	2.81	0.56	3.15	0.52	2.81	0.58
	Non-aborigines	2.79	0.38	2.93	0.55	3.22	0.54	2.98	0.55
	Total	2.64	0.51	2.87	0.55	3.19	0.53	2.90	0.58
Compen-sation	Aborigines	2.76	0.75	3.12	0.67	3.42	0.67	3.10	0.72
	Non-aborigines	3.22	0.57	3.24	0.62	3.59	0.58	3.35	0.63
	Total	2.99	0.73	3.18	0.64	3.51	0.59	3.23	0.68
Meta-cognitive	Aborigines	2.52	0.61	2.76	0.58	3.12	0.59	2.80	0.61
	Non-aborigines	2.82	0.53	2.80	0.61	3.09	0.58	2.90	0.61
	Total	2.67	0.60	2.78	0.60	3.15	0.58	2.85	0.62
Affective	Aborigines	2.65	0.64	2.78	0.63	2.91	0.63	2.78	0.64
	Non-aborigines	2.82	0.81	2.72	0.66	3.05	0.65	2.86	0.68
	Total	2.74	0.68	2.75	0.65	2.98	0.65	2.82	0.67
Social	Aborigines	2.61	0.48	2.84	0.49	3.1	0.55	2.85	0.51
	Non-aborigines	2.93	0.47	2.92	0.48	3.2	0.46	3.02	0.49
	Total	2.77	0.49	2.88	0.48	3.15	0.48	2.93	0.51

Table 6: A Two-way ANOVA of Strategy Use of the Six Categories by the 2 Ethnic Groups and 3 Proficiency Levels

Category	Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Significance
Memory	Ethnicity	1.69	1	1.69	5.75	*p= < .05
	Level	1.40	2	0.71	2.39	
	Interaction	0.13	2	0.07	0.23	
	Total	3409.93	451			
Cognitive	Ethnicity	1.39	1	1.39	4.77	*p= < .05
	Level	7.65	2	3.83	13.15	*p= < .05
	Interaction	0.38	2	0.19	0.65	
	Total	3995.11	451			
Compensation	Ethnicity	3.15	1	3.15	7.68	*p= < .05
	Level	7.02	2	3.51	8.57	*p= < .05
	Interaction	1.2	2	0.6	1.46	
	Total	4944.89	451			
Meta-Cognitive	Ethnicity	0.56	1	0.56	1.59	
	Level	5.99	2	2.99	8.51	*p= < .05
	Interaction	0.77	2	0.38	1.09	
	Total	3797.04	451	0.35		
Affective	Ethnicity	0.32	1	0.32	0.74	
	Level	2.47	2	1.24	2.88	
	Interaction	0.79	2	0.39	0.92	
	Total	3756.61	451			

Social	Ethnicity	2.56	1	2.26	4.85	*p= < .05
	Level	3.1	2	1.55	3.33	*p= < .05
	Interaction	0.72	2	0.36	0.77	
	Total	4618.42	451			

Table 6 shows that the preferred strategy category by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal students was compensation, followed by the social then cognitive category. The least preferred category was memory. In terms of proficiency level, there are not too many variations among the ranks of these categories. The most preferred strategy category for all three proficiency groups was the compensation category and the least preferred category was the memory category. The difference lies in the rank order of cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social category by three proficiency levels. For example, the cognitive category, which was ranked second by high proficiency group, was rated third by intermediate group and fifth by low proficiency group. The social category, which was rated third by high proficiency group, was ranked second by the intermediate and low proficiency groups.

The main difference lies in the frequency of using these six categories. The means show that there are not too many variations among the ranks of these six categories for aboriginal and non-aboriginal subjects and for different proficiency groups. Non-aboriginal students employed strategies with greater frequency than did aboriginal students. Successful language learners employed strategies with greater frequency than less successful language learners.

Table 7: The Rank of the Six Categories of Strategies by Ethnicity and Proficiency Level

	Aborigines		Non-aborigines		High		Intermediate		Low	
Category	mean	rank	mean	Rank	mean	rank	mean	rank	mean	Rank
Memory	2.58	6	2.78	6	2.80	6	2.65	6	2.58	6
Cognitive	2.81	3	2.98	3	3.19	2	2.87	3	2.64	5
Compensation	3.10	1	3.35	1	3.51	1	3.18	1	2.99	1
Metacognitive	2.80	4	2.90	4	3.15	3	2.78	4	2.67	4
Affective	2.78	5	2.86	5	2.98	5	2.75	5	2.74	3
Social	2.85	2	3.02	2	3.15	3	2.88	2	2.77	2

3.3 Discussion

Subjects of non-aboriginal background did employ overall language learning strategies more often than those of aboriginal background. The effects of ethnicity in the present study seem to support the findings in previous studies. Research has shown that ethnicity has a strong influence on the kinds of strategies used by learners of all languages (Ehrman and Oxford, 1995; Bedell, 1993; Grainger, 1997). The results confirmed the findings of two other studies (Bedell, 1993; Grainger, 1997), which showed that students with different ethnic backgrounds or cultural backgrounds employed strategies differently. It might be attributed to the following factors. First, aboriginal languages and culture are different from those of non-aboriginal students. Competition is the main focus of learning in non-aboriginal learning environment. Owing to the highly competitive high school and college entrance exams in Taiwan, classmates are usually regarded as competitors rather than cooperators. Teachers prefer to assess students' performance on the basis of individual work instead of teamwork. In order to get good grades, non-aborigines are eager to use study strategies or techniques that would help them acquire new things effectively. In the traditional Taiwanese aboriginal community, cooperation is one of the main characteristics of their lifestyle. As a result, Taiwanese aborigines may not exert more efforts to employ learning strategies to compete with their non-aboriginal peers.

Second, aboriginal students in Taiwan lack appropriate training in using language learning strategies because they do not have the same educational background as their non-aboriginal peers. Since the academic knowledge they acquire in school is out of touch with their actual lives in mountainous areas and offshore islands, they may take little interest in school education. In addition, there are problems with the quality and quantity of teachers available in mountainous areas. Most non-aboriginal teachers work in temporary positions and apply for transfer to schools on the plains after the first year. They are not able to understand these students' learning problems, such as, their English pronunciation problems, and help them acquire effective learning strategies in a short time. Moreover, their efforts are often wasted because these non-aboriginal teachers lack specialist knowledge of or training in the aboriginal culture (Cheng, 1995).

Third, the learning style of the aborigines in Taiwan may be different from non-aborigines, which may influence the employment of language learning strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Zhang, 1990). Finally, aborigines might have different motivation and attitudes from non-aborigines. Gardner (1985) claimed that the primary determining factor in language learning success is motivation because motivation, along with attitude, determines the extent of active personal engagement in language learning.

A second finding of this study was that junior college students in Taiwan who have high English proficiency levels did employ overall language learning strategies more often than those who have low English proficiency levels. This finding is also consistent with the evidence of other studies. Many researchers have found that that proficiency level had a strong effect on overall strategy use (Chen, 2001; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Luo, 1998; Oxford & Ehrman 1995; Park, 1997; Tsao, 2002; Wang, 2002; Yang, 1994).

Students in the present study were found to employ compensation strategies most often, followed by social, cognitive, metacognitive, affective and least frequently, memory strategies. The result that junior college students, no matter what ethnic background they belong to, employed compensation strategies most often is consistent with the findings of studies performed by Chang (1990), Yang (1993a), and Watanabe (1990) which showed that the compensation category was the highest ranking category. It is natural for students to make greater use of compensation strategies as these can allow them to guess the meaning of what they have heard or read or to remain in the conversation despite their limited grammatical and vocabulary knowledge. Some studies have found social strategies to be generally unpopular among Chinese and Japanese students (Noguchi, 1991; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985). This does not hold true in this study. English learners in Taiwan learn English in an environment where English is not used for communicative needs in their social and economic daily lives. Consequently, EFL learners are typically situated in what Kouraogo (1993) called an “input-poor” English learning environment, and are exposed to meager target language input. Moreover, in EFL contexts in Taiwan, English teaching focuses on rote memorization, translation of texts and recognition of correct grammatical forms in reading. Students are not encouraged to ask questions (Chang, 1990). Thus the less frequent use of social strategies in the study is expected. Contrary to our expectations, social strategies are the second most-preferred strategies by the subjects in this study. The high usage of social strategies could be attributed to the development of computer, multimedia and networking technologies, which has increased students’ exposure to foreign cultures and more English input. Further research should be conducted to find out whether this is the real cause of strategy preference.

Memory and affective strategies were found to be the least used categories by students in the current study. This was often the case in other studies among Chinese students in Yang’s study (1993a) and Koreans in Oh’s study (1992). The possible explanation is that Chinese students almost depend on rote learning, therefore, they know little about using visual imagery or linking verbal material with motion. Affective strategies are techniques that help learners control their emotions and attitudes towards language learning. All affective categories deal with how to combat fear or anxiety when speaking English. However, in traditional English classrooms in Taiwan where English teachers usually function as an information giver, students do not have many chances to speak English not to mention the chance to speak with native speakers. This shows why affective strategies ranked as the second least employed strategy category in the present study.

3.4 Conclusion

This study sought to provide some evidence on the language learning strategy use by junior college students in northern Taiwan, and to explore the kinds of relationship that exist between strategy use and ethnicity and proficiency levels. Significant differences were found in overall strategy use between aborigines and non-aborigines and among different proficiency groups. Significant differences were also found between the subjects of different ethnic backgrounds in four of the six strategy categories (memory, cognitive, compensation, and social). Students of different proficiency levels differed significantly in the use of cognitive, compensation, metacognitive and social learning strategies.

Teachers will not be able to teach all the language skills that students will need in the future. Consequently, it is important for English teachers to believe that effective strategy use can determine student success. As Weden (1985) pointed out, learner strategies are the key element to learner autonomy, and thus one of the most teaching goals is to facilitate autonomous learning. Besides, it has been found that students can benefit from the strategies-based instruction (MacIntyre & Noels 1996). To facilitate autonomous learning, training in learning strategies could, therefore, be one of the teaching goals in an English classroom in Taiwan.

Second, teachers can provide strategy instruction by offering examples of how they have used strategies for similar language tasks. After explaining a strategy, the teacher can then explain the purpose and importance of the strategy. They may explicitly discuss why a strategy works and when it might be used. Explicit instruction in strategies can make students use the learned strategy more frequently and more effectively, help them become better language learners, help them add strategies to their repertoire of learning tools, make them more aware of the strategies available to them and encourage them to decide which strategies are most effective for particular tasks (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999).

Third, once a few strategies have been introduced, instruction should emphasize the coordination of strategies. The teacher can explain the importance of having a repertoire of strategies for language learning. Students can be reminded that different strategies can work for the same task and that good learners plan, monitor, problem-solve and evaluate recursively during a given task (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1999).

Fourth, encouraging students to talk about their thought processes helps make them more aware of the strategies they are already using. This awareness is important because it enables them to call on those strategies whenever they face challenging tasks. Finally, these learning strategies should be practiced in different learning tasks. Only through practice will students become more familiar with these learning strategies.

In conclusion, only the effects of ethnicity on learning strategy use were examined in this study. To view the whole picture of the language learning strategy of aboriginal students in Taiwan, it is suggested that the effects of learning style on other affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, attitude and learners' beliefs about language learning be explored by future studies. Future studies may be conducted with male students to obtain a comprehensive view of language learning strategy preferences by Taiwanese college students. Many researchers believed that sex makes a difference in strategy use (Politzer, 1983; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Oh, 1996). Moreover, interviews can be used to obtain more in-depth information about the use of strategies with individual tasks.

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Appendix A

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Section One:

A. Age: _______________

B. How long have you studied English (including self-study and taking private English courses) ?

________ Year(s)   __________ Month(s)

C. In general, do you like learning English?

(1) Not at all   (2) Not much   (3) Medium   (4) Much   (5) Very much

D. In general, how much effort do you spend in learning English?

(1) None   (2) Not much   (3) Medium   (4) Much   (5) Very much

E. Have you ever stayed in a country where English is the native language ?

Yes _____ which country ________ how long ___year (s) ____ month (s) No_____

Section Two:

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

Read the following items, and choose a response (1 through 5 as above)

(i) Memory

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.

(ii) Cognitive

9. I say or write new English words several times.
10. I try to talk like native English speakers.

11. I practice the sounds of English.
12. I use the English words I know in different ways.
13. I start conversation in English.
14. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.
15. I read for pleasure in English.
16. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.
17. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
18. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
19. I try to find patterns in English.
20. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
21. I try not to translate word-for-word.
22. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

(iii) Compensation

23. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
24. When I can’t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.
25. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.
26. I read English without looking up every new word.
27. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.
28. If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

(iv) Metacognitive

29. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.
30. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
31. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.
32. I try to find how to be a better learner of English.
33. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.
34. I look for people I can talk to in English.
35. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.
36. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.
37. I think about my progress in learning English.

(v) Affective

38. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.
39. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
40. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
41. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
42. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

(vi) Social

43. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
44. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
45. I practice English with other students.
46. I ask for help from English speakers.
47. I ask questions in English.
48. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

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Reactive and Preemptive Language Related Episodes and Uptake in an EFL Class

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Abstract

This study investigates how frequently reactive and preemptive Language Related Episodes (LREs) are used in communicative classes. The study also examines the potential of the two types of focus on form in leading to uptake. To this end, all LREs were identified and transcribed from the audio-recordings of 24 hours of instruction from one class with two qualified instructors. The LREs were then categorized in terms of reactive vs. preemptive episodes, and learner- vs. teacher-initiated preemptive episodes. The findings indicated a significant difference in the frequency of reactive and preemptive LREs and between two types of preemptive episodes. Based on the low amount of uptake in the findings, a new definition of uptake is suggested which encapsulates '*camouflaged*' uptakes as well as learners' immediate responses to focus on form. The paper highlights the necessity of raising EFL teachers' awareness to make informed decisions in using different types of focus on form.

Keywords: focus on form, reactive & preemptive LRE, uptake

1. Introduction

The role of interaction in L2 learning gained considerable importance through the work of Hatch (1978) who stressed the need to study the nature of the input given to L2 learners and its possible role in second language acquisition (SLA). This growing interest in the role of interaction emerged as a result of a reaction to Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis. The Input Hypothesis by Krashen (1982, 1998) states that in order for input to be available for acquisition, it must be comprehensible. On the other hand, Long (1983, 1996) claims that comprehensible input is necessary but not sufficient for language learning to take place. Long argues that input shaped through interaction contributes directly and powerfully to acquisition, and that modifications to the interactional structure of conversation are important to make input comprehensible.

Central to all these studies may be the role of output in L2 acquisition. Comprehensible input alone is not adequate for language acquisition. Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (1985 a, b; 1995) deals with this inadequacy. This hypothesis proposes that comprehensible input may not be sufficient for certain aspects of L2 acquisition and that comprehensible output may be needed. Based on this hypothesis, learners must also be given the opportunity to produce comprehensible output. According to this hypothesis, the role of output is to provide opportunities for contextualized and meaningful use of language, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to its syntactic analysis (Swain, 1995).

Long's Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis are closely associated with attention to linguistic forms within the context of performing communicative activities which has been termed "focus on form" (Long, 1991). Focus on form contrasts with more traditional types of form-focused instruction (referred to by Long, 1991 as "focus on forms"), where specific linguistic features are isolated for intensive treatment, often in non-communicative activities. In contrast, in focus on form instruction the primary focus of attention is on meaning. The attention to form arises out of meaning-centered activity derived from the performance of a communicative task (Long and Robinson, 1998; Doughty and Williams, 1998b; Ellis, 2001). Long and Robinson (1998) defined focus on form as follows: “an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one or more of the learners – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production” (p. 23).

The interest in focus on form stems, in part, from the suggestion that it can enable learners to develop linguistic accuracy because it creates the conditions for interlanguage restructuring to take place (Doughty, 2001; Long and Robinson, 1998). Focus on form allows learners to take time out from a focus on meaning to notice linguistic items in the input, thereby overcoming a potential obstacle of purely meaning-focused lessons in which linguistic forms may go unnoticed. Such noticing, Schmidt (1990, 1995, 2001) argues, is necessary for L2 learning. Not only does focus on form provide learners with an opportunity to notice linguistic items, but it may also help them to ‘notice the gap’ (Schmidt and Frota, 1986) between models of the target language and their own language production. Furthermore, focus on form provides opportunities for ‘pushed output’ which stretches learners’ competence through the need to express themselves in language that is accurate and appropriate (Swain, 1995, 2000; Swain and Lapkin, 1995). For these reasons, focus on form is seen as potentially beneficial for L2 learners and these theoretical explanations provide a compelling rationale for including focus on form in second/foreign language curricula.

1.1. Planned vs. incidental focus on form

Various studies have examined focus on form leading to several distinctions in this respect. One is between planned and incidental focus on form (Ellis 2001, 2005). In planned focus on form, there is an a priori decision made on the part of teacher to target specific linguistic items during meaning-focused activities. This targeting may take the form of enhanced input, targeted output or both (Doughty & Williams, 1998b). Previous studies of planned focus on form have targeted, among other linguistic forms, past tense (Doughty and Varela, 1998) and question formation in English (Mackey and Philp, 1998), adjective ordering and locative construction in Japanese, and direct object topicalization and adverb placement in Spanish (Long *et al.*, 1998). Thus, in these studies, focus on form was the result of prior planning on the part of the researcher/teacher. In contrast, incidental focus on form (Ellis, 2001) occurs spontaneously, without prior intention, during meaning-focused activities and targets a variety of linguistic items. While planned focus on form is intensive, focusing frequently on the same linguistic structure, incidental focus on form has a more extensive focus, with many linguistic structures being targeted but on only one or two occasions (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a). It is incidental focus on form which is explored in the present study.

1.2. Reactive vs. pre-emptive focus on form

Another distinction that has been made is between reactive and pre-emptive focus on form (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b; Long and Robinson 1998). Reactive focus on form has also been known as error correction, corrective feedback, or negative evidence/feedback (Long 1996), and occurs when, in the context of meaning-focused activities, learners' attention is drawn to errors in their production. Thus, the error is the trigger which begins the discourse targeting a specific linguistic item (Ellis *et al.*, 2001b).

Lyster & Ranta (1997) investigated the different types of reactive focus on form that French immersion teachers provide when learners produce utterances that contain a linguistic error. They distinguished six types of feedback, namely explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition.

A considerable number of studies on reactive focus on form, mostly referred to as corrective feedback in the literature, have been conducted so far including a number of major descriptive studies by Lyster (1998a, 1998b), Lyster & Ranta (1997), Oliver (2000), and an extensive review by Seedhouse (1997b). These studies have explored the effect of corrective feedback on short-term and long-term second language development (Doughty & Williams, 1998a; Lyster, 2004; Radwan, 2005), the corrective feedback that leads to successful uptake as an immediate response to feedback (Panova & Lyster, 2002; Farrokhi, 2003; Tsang, 2004; Loewen, 2004a; Sheen, 2004), how learners perceive negative feedback (Mackey *et al.*, 2000) and the relationship between input and interaction (Oliver,1995, 2000; Gass, 2003; Mackey *et* *al.*, 2003; Mackey & Silver, 2005). This research tradition explored some important aspects such as feedback types and the degree of their success in the short term in various learning contexts and ages. The studies have also each examined particular instructional contexts, immersion classes (Swain, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 2002), adult ESL settings (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a, 2001b; Panova and Lyster, 2002; Loewen, 2004a), child ESL settings (Oliver, 1995, 2000; Oliver and Mackey, 2003), adult EFL settings (Sheen, 2004; Tsang, 2004; Radwan, 2005), or laboratory contexts (Izumi, 2002; Iwashita, 2003; Shehadeh, 2003; Mackey et al, 2003). These studies show that corrective feedback is a common event in meaning-focused settings even in immersion classes; that teachers typically favor indirect, implicit correction rather than direct, explicit correction; and that learners often do not uptake correction (i.e., they usually do not try to produce the correct utterance that has been modeled for them).

While reactive focus on form has been investigated fairly extensively (e.g., Doughty and Williams 1998a), pre-emptive focus on form has received much less attention. Ellis *et al.* (2001b) raised concern over the lack of empirical studies on pre-emptive focus on form and the necessity to examine pre-emptive episodes as well as reactive ones. Ellis *et al*. (2001b: 414) define pre-emptive focus on form as occurring when either the teacher or a learner initiates attention to form even though no actual problem in production has arisen. They argue that pre-emptive focus on form addresses an actual or perceived gap in the learners' knowledge, and in their study of two ESL classes in New Zealand they found that pre-emptive focus on form constituted 52% of the focus on form that occurred in 12 hours of meaning-focused instruction. Furthermore, they distinguished between learner-initiated focus on form in which learners raised questions about linguistic items and teacher-initiated focus on form in which the teacher either asked questions or provided unsolicited information about specific linguistic items. In their study, learner-initiated focus on form accounted for just over 38% of the episodes while teacher-initiated episodes were just over 9% (ibid).

Regarding teacher-initiated pre-emptive LREs, Borg (1998) has shown that the experienced teacher he studied often pre-empted language problems. He notes that this teacher's approach to grammar was largely unplanned and that he made decisions about what language points to focus on incidentally. Some of the strategies this teacher utilized were clearly pre-emptive rather than reactive in nature. They involved asking whether the learners had any problems, relating a grammar point to the learners' L1, giving rules, guides, clues for the use of a grammatical feature, using metalingual terminology, and eliciting rules from the learners (Borg, 1998, p. 23–24).

Williams's (1999) study of learner-initiated focus on form in the context of collaborative group work included consideration of pre-emptive focus on form. This study examined how learners in an academically oriented ESL course focus on form in collaborative group work involving various kinds of form- and meaning-focused activities. It found that the learners did initiate focus on form but not very often, that more proficient learners paid more attention to form than less proficient, that focus on form arose most frequently in learner-generated requests to the teacher about language, and that the type of form that the learners focused on was "overwhelmingly lexical" (p. 610). A similar finding is reported by Poole (2005) in his study of forms learners attend to during focus on form instruction in an advanced ESL writing class with international students. While acknowledging the differences between his study and that of Williams (1999) in terms of design, Poole also found the vast majority of forms learners attended to were lexical in nature.

2. Aims of the Study

This study involved the observation of communicatively-oriented classroom activities, identification and analysis of incidental Language Related Episodes (LREs) in teacher-learner interactions. The prime objective was to investigate how frequently different types of focus on form are used in Iranian EFL classes. The second major aspect of this study is concerned with the analysis of pre-emptive language related episodes and its comparison with reactive ones. As Ellis e*t al.* (2002) and Ellis (2005) maintain, any consideration of teacher- or learner-initiated pre-emptive focus on form is almost completely missing from current accounts of focus on form studies. It seems that these types of form-focused instruction have eluded research enquiries. Almost all studies of this nature have dealt with one single type of focus on form, namely reactive episodes. However, pre-emptive language related episodes are also an indispensable part of focus on form instruction and are at least as important and effective as reactive ones in leading to uptake (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a). Any operational definition and categorization of form-focused episodes within meaning-oriented classes should take both into account. Therefore, the second objective was to categorize and compare both teacher- and learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs as well as reactive ones quantitatively and qualitatively to develop a better understanding of their potentials vis-à-vis. Finally, this study investigated the occurrence of uptake following focus on form instruction. To meet these objectives, the following research questions were formulated:

(1) To what extent does focus on form occur in a meaning-centered intermediate EFL class with adult learners?
(2) Are there any significant differences in the use of reactive and pre-emptive types of focus on form in the observed class?
(3) Are there any significant differences in the frequencies of teacher-initiated and learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs in the observed class?
(4) How frequently does uptake occur in incidental LREs in general , and in reactive and preemptive LREs in particular in the observed class?

3. Method

To address these questions, interactions between teachers and EFL learners were audio-recorded, transcribed, categorized and compared in terms of the frequency of reactive and pre-emptive episodes, and the amount of uptake following them.

3.1. Participants

3.1.1. Teachers

Two teachers participated in this study. Teacher one (female, 35 years old) had been teaching at language schools including the one where this study was conducted for 12 years. She completed her M.A. studies in TEFL 6 years before this study. Her professional background suggested that she had been teaching in a nation-wide popular language school which advocates a strong adherence to the principles of structural/synthetic syllabuses as defined by Wilkins (1976). Teacher two (male, 32 years old), a PhD student in TEFL, had 4 years of EFL teaching experience and has been mainly involved in syllabus designing and teaching International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparatory classes according to the school manager. They taught the same group of learners in two consecutive semesters covering the same book, namely *Focus on IELTS* (O'Connell, 2002). The book contains 20 chapters and was to be covered in two 20-session semesters. Every session lasted for 90 minutes. The first teacher covered the first 10 units, and the second teacher went through the last 10 ones.

3.1.2. Learners

The learners consisted of 12 university learners, 5 males and 7 females who were majoring in medicine or engineering. They all shared Turkish as their mother tongue and were quite fluent in Persian as the official language in Iran. Their ages ranged between 19 and 34 years. The learners paid tuition and were generally highly motivated. Based on the information collected at the time of the registration for IELTS classes in this school, most of them were attending these IELTS preparation courses with a view to sitting for the IELTS exam and eventually applying to overseas universities to further their studies, whereas nearly a quarter of these learners were interested in developing their academic English for pursuing their studies in masters or doctoral programs in medicine and engineering in Iran

3.3. Instructional Setting

One intact class in a private English language school in Tabriz, Iran was selected as a suitable site for data collection based on the objectives of the study, and the fact that learners' shared a linguistic and cultural background. In this language school, preparatory classes for IELTS exam, which is one of the major language proficiency tests required by academic institutions, were divided into 7 proficiency levels with pre-intermediate and intermediate representing levels 4 and 5 respectively. According to an in-house placement test used for placing learners in these IELTS preparation classes, the participants' command of English was rated as pre-intermediate representing level 4. The class was observed during their studies at IELTS level 4 and level 5.

In this private language school, the observed class met twice per week, and every session lasted 90 minutes. The course book was *Focus on IELTS* (O'Connell, 2002) which is about introducing different sample sections and questions of academic version of IELTS. The course book provides practice on listening, reading, writing and speaking tasks similar to the real IELTS exam. Most of the content of the lessons are taken from authentic sources and are primarily meaning focused in that they have no predetermined linguistic focus. Preceding and following any reading and listening, there are some tasks or discussion questions developed to involve learners more with the topics and simulate the subsections of the IELTS exam. In some units, there are explicit references to some common mistakes in English along with their correct forms and some exercises to be practiced with answer keys. In the observed classes, they were all assigned as homework and were not covered during classes.

The classroom activities included role plays similar to the ones in IELTS interviews, jigsaw tasks (e.g., solving an environmental problem or some social problems such as unemployment or child labor), general class discussions (e.g., discussion on a movie, a historical monument), opinion-gap tasks (e.g., making predictions about the future), reading comprehension activities (e.g., using information in a passage to complete the missing words in a summary paragraph, paragraph heading matching, true/false/not-given statements). Learners went through the reading passages at home and discussed their understandings, opinions on the topic and their answers to the various types of tasks following a reading passage in class. Listening activities included table, diagram, or map completion, multiple choice questions and fill in the blanks. The listening tasks were all based on some dialogs or mini-lectures on social and academic English in authentic contexts. These tasks were completed during the class and teachers tried to devise some pre-listening and post-listening activities to engage their learners with the topic thematically and get them to express their own ideas on the topic. There were some content-based questions based on the reading passage or the listening material in every unit. Teachers spent some time on checking the correct answers on the basis of the ideas stated in the reading or listening material. Regarding writings, there was a brainstorming activity on the writing topic in class. The participants were encouraged to share their views on the topic as teachers wrote most of the key ideas or expressions on the board. Then, learners were asked to develop and write an essay at home using their notes and ideas they picked up from the class discussion on the topic for the next class. As the most common class activities, IELTS preparatory teachers in this language school used pair-work, group-work and whole class discussions.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected entirely from the meaning-focused activities from the same class in IELTS level 4 and 5 with two instructors. Two mini-size MP3 wireless recorders were employed to record whole-class interactions between the teachers and their learners. This procedure provided data relating to any interaction involving the teachers and the whole class. Therefore, interactions between learners in pairs or between the teachers and individual learners in pair works were not audible, and thus not captured for analysis. This constitutes a limitation of this study. All the analyzed data and quantification are solely based on the recorded interactions between the teachers and their learners which were audible to all of the learners and thus recoverable for the researchers.

Using this method and during 18 sessions of instruction, the authors collected 24 hours of classroom instruction, 12 hours from each teacher’s class. In every session, the first and last 5 minutes when the teachers mostly greeted and roll called the learners or gave instructions for the homework or the next class, were not included in the analysis. Moreover, there were some focus on forms or grammar-oriented interactions which were also excluded from analysis. Finally, to obtain a balanced rate of data for comparison, the researchers came up with 10 hours of meaning-oriented instruction per each class, totaling 20 hours of naturally-occurring data in which teachers and their learners were involved in communicatively-oriented interaction on topics of general interest raised in that unit.

Moreover, to collect further qualitative and confirmatory data in order to cross-check and interpret the audio-recorded data, one of the researchers was present in the class as a non-participant observer for 9 hours (3 sessions in each teacher's class) and took field notes while trying to minimize any interference in the teaching process.

Six hours of instruction were also videotaped for the same purpose. There were already two wall-mounted mini-video recorders placed in the top corners of the classroom, one at the front overlooking the learners, and the other at the back, zooming in on the frontal sections of the class. The school had a quality assurance department and the supervisory staff unobtrusively used these mini-cameras to monitor and optimize the quality of the ongoing instruction. Having obtained the permission of the participating teachers, the researchers used these cams to videotape 6 hours of instruction, 3 hours from each teacher's class. Since this was an observational instrument established and practiced well before the implementation of this study, teachers and learners in this school generally got used to having them in their classes. Thus, it is assumed that the recordings did not interfere in the teaching process.

Finally, after the completion of the lessons on two occasions and upon getting learners' consent, their books and notebooks were checked to collect any notes they took during their attendance in that particular class. Both teachers and learners were briefed that this is just to associate their notes with the ongoing interaction, and the recording of their notes is to be kept confidential and will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.

It should be noted that no effort was made to manipulate the frequency or characteristics of incidental focus on form. The teachers were not aware that the researchers intended to examine reactive and pre-emptive LREs. They were simply told that the aim of the study was to analyze classroom interaction during meaning-centered lessons. Thus, these observations can be representative of what normally takes place in these EFL classes.

3.5. Data Analysis

Long and Robinson (1998) classified focus on form into two major types: reactive and pre-emptive. Reactive focus on form happens when learners produce an utterance containing an actual non-target utterance, which is then addressed usually by the teacher but sometimes by another learner. Thus, it supplies learners with negative evidence. Reactive focus on form involves negotiation and is triggered by something problematic on the part of a learner. Reactive focus on form addresses a performance problem which may or may not reflect a competence problem. According to Varonis & Gass (1985), the discourse in reactive focus on form takes the form of sequences involving a trigger, an indicator of a problem, and a resolution. The following is an example of a reactive Language Related Episode taken from the data in the present study:

Extract 1: Reactive LRE with uptake

S: so he is in the university for 8 years
T: *he has*
S: =*has been* in the university for 8 years
T: yes

As the above extract illustrates, the teacher reformulates a learner's erroneous utterance in the form of recast as one type of reactive LRE.

The second major category in focus on form instruction is pre-emptive LREs. According to Ellis et al (2001), pre-emptive focus on form deals with a problem similar to reactive focus on form. Pre-emptive focus on form involves the teacher or learner initiating attention to form even though no actual problem in production has happened (Ellis et al., 2001b). In other words, pre-emptive focus on form addresses an actual or a perceived gap in the learners' knowledge. According to Varonis & Gass (1985), the type of discourse that takes place in pre-emptive focus on form consists typically of exchanges involving a query and response. Some instances of pre-emptive focus on form will make this distinction clear. Teachers sometimes predict a gap in their learners' knowledge and seek to address it, as shown in this extract taken from the present study:

Extract 2: Teacher-initiated Pre-emptive LRE

T: ...Look at the diagram on page 35. There are 6 cities. It is about population, homes with electricity, crime rate, level of ambient noise. *What is ambient noise*?
Ss: *environment, atmosphere*.

T: *in this context, noise pollution, the rate or amount of noise in different cities*, han!

Here the class is talking about mega-cities. The teacher takes time out from focusing on meaning to address a perceived gap in the learners' lexical knowledge—the item "ambient noise". Although such decisions interrupt the flow of a communicative activity and disrupt the meaning-centeredness of an activity, they highlight a specific form, assuming that this is justified on the grounds that the form in question will be problematic to the learners in some way. Teacher-initiated focus on form is initiated either by a query directed at the learners or by an advisory statement (Ellis et al., 2002).

One of the problems of such teacher-initiated pre-emption is that the perceived gap may not be an actual gap (Ellis *et al.*, 2001b). In learner-initiated pre-emption's, however, the gap is presumably real. In the next extract, it seems reasonable to assume that the learner does not know the meaning of '*rush hour*':

Extract 3: Learner-initiated pre-emptive LRE

T: In rush hours, the rate of speed is very low.
S: *Rush hour means?*
T: *the noisy hour, I mean, for example, at, from 5:30 to 6.*
S: Yes
T: *in Ramadan, it is the rush hour; people are rushing home to break their fast as quickly as possible, ha!* (*Ss laugh*)

Another important concept used in this study is uptake. In a series of studies, Lyster uses it to refer to learners' response to the feedback they receive from teachers on their own efforts to communicate. Lyster and Ranta (1997, p. 49) have provided the following definition: "Uptake refers to a learner's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the learner's initial utterance." Whereas Lyster and Ranta have related uptake to the provision of corrective feedback, Ellis *et al*. (2001a, 2001b, 2002) take a broader perspective on uptake. They argue that uptake can occur even when the previous move does not involve corrective feedback. For example, there are occasions in communicative lessons where learners themselves pre-empt attention to a linguistic feature (e.g., by asking a question), thus eliciting not a teacher feedback move but a teacher response move. In such learner-initiated focus on form, learners still have the opportunity to react, for example, by simply acknowledging the previous move or by attempting to use the feature in focus in their own speech. The researchers adopted this expanded definition in counting the frequency of uptake moves in the present study.

Following the above mentioned categorization system adopted from Ellis *et al.* (2002), the data were subjected to a detailed analysis. In so doing, the researchers first listened to the audio-recordings, identified and then transcribed episodes in the classroom interactions in which participants made a departure from meaning-focused activities to deal with issues of a linguistic nature termed Language Related Episodes (LREs). Whenever the teachers or their learners incidentally interrupted a communicatively-oriented interaction and temporarily shifted their attention to formal aspects of language reactively or pre-emptively, these episodes were singled out as an LRE episode. LRE instances comprise the unit of analysis in this study. An LRE was operationally defined as consisting of the discourse from the point where the attention to linguistic form starts to the point where it ends (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a). Every unit of analysis starts from the time when either the teacher or a learner makes a momentary departure from the ongoing communicative activity to focus on a linguistic issue, whether phonological, orthographical, lexical, syntactic, discoursal or pragmatic in nature. Next, LREs were categorized as reactive or pre-emptive as defined above. A further distinction was also made between pre-emptive LREs initiated by learners and pre-emptive LREs initiated by teachers. Finally, every LRE was analyzed in terms of whether it resulted in uptake or not.

The following example taken from Ellis *et al.* (2001a: 300) illustrates an LRE in which a learner asks a question about the meaning of a word in a discussion activity. All of these utterances pertain to the lexical item '*spoil*' ; consequently, they constitute one LRE.

S: *excuse me, T, what's spoil means?*
T: spoil means=
S: =spoil
T: if you are my child

S: mhm
T: and you keep saying give me, give me sweets, give me money, give me a football, let me watch TV, and I say yes all the time, yes, I spoil you. I give you too much because you always get what you want.
S: ah, ah
T: so
S: *they spoil them, mm, they always get whatever*

This example also illustrates uptake in a learner-initiated LRE. The learner has asked the meaning of *spoil* (line 1), and the teacher provides a response (lines 4, 6–8). In lines 9 and 11, the learner responds to the provision of linguistic information by incorporating part of the teacher's definition into his own production, so this utterance by the learner is identified as an uptake move. Likewise, extracts 1, 2, 3 taken from the data in this study represent instances of different types of LREs with or without uptake.

Because the study was limited to focus on form that was interactionally and incidentally accomplished, the researchers excluded episodes involving a problem or query concerned with content such as erroneous answers and corrections to questions about geographical locations, dates, key political or artistic figures, or any other content knowledge.

Once identified, the LREs were transcribed. Due to the large amount of the audio-taped data, only episodes involving focus on form episodes were transcribed. The researchers subsequently listened to the recordings one more time to check the accuracy of their transcriptions. Afterwards, raw frequencies as well as percentages of LRE types and uptake occurrences were calculated. Since the data consisted of frequency counts of categorical data, Pearson's chi-square analysis was used in order to test whether the similarities and differences in the frequency of LRE types were statistically significant.

Moreover, the findings from audio-recorded data were checked against the information collected from video-recordings, field notes from the observer and learner notes. The qualitative data were used to analyze and interpret the quantitative findings.

To check the inter-rater reliability in coding the data into reactive and pre-emptive LREs, teacher- or learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs, and finally the occurrence of uptake, another researcher (an assistant professor in applied linguistics who was briefed about the study, its objectives and data analysis procedure, reviewed examples from other similar studies, and received demonstration on the coding procedure based on Ellis *et al*, 2001) independently coded 10 percent of the data with a resulting 86% agreement rate in the identification of LREs and their categorization.

4. Results

4.1. Focus on form as reactive vs. pre-emptive LREs

A total of 641 LREs were identified in the 20 hours of meaning-focused lessons, 334 and 307 LREs in IELTS level 4 and 5 respectively. This means that an average of one instance of LRE took place every 1.9 minutes as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Reactive vs. Pre-emptive LREs

LRE Category / IELTS Levels	Reactive LREs		Preemptive LREs		Grand Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Teacher 1 (Level 4)	112	(33.6%)	222	(66.4%)	334
Teacher 2 (Level 5)	56	(18.2%)	251	(81.8%)	307
Total LREs	168	(26.2%)	473	(73.8%)	641

Moreover, the findings in Table 1 show the frequencies and percentages of reactive and pre-emptive LREs in general and between two teachers in particular. In general, 168 (26.2%) instances of reactive episodes occurred while there were 473 instances (73.8%) of pre-emptive LREs. Thus, the frequency of pre-emptive LREs is remarkably more than that of reactive LREs.

With regard to the proportion of reactive and pre-emptive LREs, the first teacher in level 4 used twice as many reactive LREs as the second teacher in level 5. However, the proportion of pre-emptive LREs in both levels was found to be similar i.e., 222 and 251 in level 4 and level 5 respectively. The findings represent a substantial discrepancy in the frequency of reactive and pre-emptive LREs. A Chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant difference, $X^2 = 19.34$ (1df, $p<.05$).

4.2. Teacher-initiated vs. learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs

The results on the frequency of teacher- vs. learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs are presented in Table 2. There are far more instances of teacher-initiated pre-emptive LREs than learner-initiated ones in general, namely 398 (84.1%) and 75 (15.9%). Chi-square analysis shows a statistically significant difference, $X^2 = 3.87$ (1df, $p<.05$).

Moreover, the second teacher in level 5 used more pre-emptive LREs than the first one in level 4. Unlike their teacher, the learners in level 4 felt the need to raise more queries about language than they did in level 5. However, teacher-initiated pre-emptive LREs were found to be 5 times as many as learner-initiated LREs in general.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Teacher- vs. Learner-initiated Pre-emptive LREs

Preemptive LREs / IELTS Levels	Teacher-initiated		Learner-initiated	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher 1 (Level 4)	179	(80.6%)	43	(19.4%)
Teacher 2 (Level 5)	219	(87.2%)	32	(12.8%)
Total	398	(84.1%)	75	(15.9%)

4.3. Uptake Moves

The last research question in this study dealt with uptake. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the results. Table 3 presents the number of all LREs which were found to lead to uptake. Of 334 LREs in level 4, 71 (17.5%) LREs resulted in uptake. On the other hand, uptake took place even less frequently in level 5. At that level, there were 44 (12.5%) uptake moves. The overall number of uptakes indicates that the learners verbally acknowledged and signaled their understanding of the LREs merely in 15.2% of the cases. Chi-square analysis did not show any significant difference between LREs and uptake in level 4 and 5, $X^2 = 3.63$ (1df, $p<.05$).

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Uptake Moves

LRE & Uptake / IELTS Levels	LREs	Uptake	
	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher 1 (Level 4)	334	71	(17.5%)
Teacher 2 (Level 5)	307	44	(12.5 %)
Total	641	115	(15.2%)

In this study, the amount of uptake in reactive and preemptive LREs is also investigated. The objective was to see whether there was a significant relationship between LRE type and uptake moves. Table 4 shows that there were 72 (62.6%) and 43 (37.4%) uptakes following reactive and preemptive LREs respectively. Reactive episodes resulted in uptake more frequently than preemptive ones at both levels. Nevertheless, the chi-square analysis on the relationship between LRE types and the amount of uptake did not result in a significant difference, $X^2 = 3.12$ (1df, $p<.05$).

Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages of Uptake in Reactive and Preemptive LREs

Uptake / IELTS Levels	Uptake in Reactive LREs		Uptake in Preemptive LREs	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher 1 (Level 4)	40	(56.3%)	31	(43.7%)
Teacher 2 (Level 5)	32	(72.7%)	12	(27.3%)
Total	72	(62.6%)	43	(37.4%)

Qualitative findings are elaborated in the following section to interpret and justify the findings on the frequency of LRE type and uptake moves.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine incidental focus on form as it arose naturally in the course of meaning-focused IELTS preparatory lessons involving adult learners from the same language background in an EFL context, namely Iran. A total of 641 LREs were identified in the 20 hours of meaning-focused lessons, a rate of one LRE every 1.9 minutes. The overall numbers of LRES in level 4 and level 5 were 334 and 307 respectively, demonstrating a slight difference in the frequency of LREs at two levels. In a similar study, Ellis *et al*. (2001b) identified 448 instances of focus on form in 12 hours in an ESL context (New Zealand) with language learners from multiple nationalities mostly East Asian. In their study, there was a focus on form episode (FFE), as they called it, at a rate of every 1.6 minutes. Also, Lyster (1998b) reports 558 responding FFEs in 18.5 hours of immersion instruction, a rate of one LRE every 1.97 minutes. Lyster, however, only examined reactive LREs. Oliver (2000) found 614 teacher responses to erroneous learner turns (i.e., reactive focus on form) in four meaning-centered ESL lessons (two with adults and two with children). She did not mention the duration of the lessons, but from the descriptions provided it is unlikely they exceeded 12 hours i.e., approximately one LRE per 1.2 minutes.

In the present study, the overall occurrence of LREs was not as frequent as it was in Ellis et al. (2001b), Lyster (1998b), and Oliver (2000). However, the differences do not seem to be outstanding. The overall LRE frequency in this study indicates that there are a substantial number of LREs in the observed lessons. Both teachers tried to integrate focus on form instruction and meaning-oriented learning in their teaching. Focus on form is found to be a common occurrence in this EFL class. As Loewen (2004a) observed, currently there is little guidance for teachers regarding the optimal number of LREs in a meaning-focused lesson. Decisions about focusing on form in an activity may hinge on how comfortable the teacher and learners are with the frequency of it. This study has not directly addressed the optimal frequency of LREs but offers a descriptive picture of the amount of focus on form in an EFL class with intermediate EFL adult learners. As in ESL and immersion contexts, incidental focus on form occurred frequently in this EFL context. However, there are some differences in the distribution of LRE types and their effectiveness measured as uptake with similar studies in the literature.

The second research question was concerned with the proportion of pre-emptive and reactive LREs in the data. Based on the findings in Table 1, this study has also revealed that incidental focus on form is as likely to be pre-emptive as reactive in communicative EFL classes. However, the results indicate that there were far more pre-emptive LREs than reactive ones in general, and Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference in the distribution of reactive and pre-emptive LREs. It means that in all of the observed lessons, both teachers and learners felt the need to raise attention to linguistic forms (pre-emptive LREs) while there was not any actual error. The equal rate of reactive and pre-emptive LREs in Ellis *et al.* (2001b) contrasts sharply with the findings of this study. In their study, the LREs were evenly divided between reactive and pre-emptive (223 and 225, respectively) and there was a small difference between the two classes.

Moreover, this study explored the frequency of teacher- and learner-initiated pre-emptive LREs as expressed in the third research question. As noted above, there were far more cases of teacher-initiated LREs than learner-initiated ones, and the difference is statistically significant. Surprisingly, the two teachers initiated attention to form 398 times (roughly 84%) while the learners raised questions about language 72 times (16%) out of the total 473 pre-emptive episodes in this study. Such a huge discrepancy between the proportions of the teacher- and learner-initiated LREs is comparatively similar to the findings in Loewen (2004b) and Williams (1999) but very different from the ones in Ellis et al. (2001). Loewen (2004b) found a low rate of learner-initiated LREs in his study of pre-emptive LREs in 32 hours of communicative activities in 12 ESL classes in a private language school in New Zealand. Of 1373 LREs identified in his data, just 365 (26.5%) were learner-initiated. Likewise, Williams (1999) in her study of learner-generated focus on form in the context of collaborative group work found that the learners did initiate focus on form but not very often. In contrast, Ellis *et al*. (2001b) reported that the majority of pre-emptive LREs in their study were learner-initiated in both classes they observed (76 out of 99 in class 1, and 89 out of 126 in class 2).

The question remains as to why such variation in the frequency and characteristics of incidental LREs should occur in the observed lessons and among various instructional contexts. In light of the following empirical and theoretical studies in the literature, the findings in this study will be analyzed and interpreted. One explanation for the variation in this study may stem from teachers' attitude to the use of incidental focus on form. It is likely that some teachers regard incidental focus on form as an effective means of addressing linguistic items within meaning-focused lessons, and therefore incorporate it frequently into their lessons (Borg, 1998). On the other hand, other teachers may not opt to raise issues of linguistic form in meaning-focused activities on the grounds that it may disrupt the flow of communication. As Lyster and Ranta (1997) have pointed out, these teachers may fear that the "side shows" involving focus on form may damage conversational coherence. Furthermore, Ellis *et al.* (2002) maintain that teachers probably vary enormously in the extent to which they engage in teacher-initiated focus on form, reflecting their orientation to a communicative task. In some cases, they hardly interject at all, preferring to maintain the communicative flow of the task. Other teachers intervene frequently, presumably because they feel the need to manufacture explicit learning opportunities out of the communication that evolves from a task (ibid). Such perspectives can have an impact on the frequency of LREs. On the other hand, Mackey *et al.* (2004) demonstrated that experienced ESL teachers used more incidental focus on form techniques than inexperienced teachers, and inexperienced teachers are less likely to deviate from their planned lessons to exploit spontaneous learning opportunities mostly in the form of preemptive LREs.

The above-mentioned points may partially account for the high frequency of teacher-initiated preemptive LREs in the present study. Both teachers in this study had a rich professional and academic background in ELT and therefore could manage making momentary departures from an ongoing communicative activity to focus on form. The videotaped data and field notes confirm that the teachers intervened frequently and provided preemptive LREs, thus assuming that they could predict the gaps in the learners' linguistic command before they produced any error.

As noted before, the first teacher had some years of language teaching experience in a language school which prescribed a grammar-oriented approach to language teaching. Tentatively, a high rate of reactive LREs in level 4 class may be attributed to her *focus on forms* teaching experience in the past (Mackey *et al.*, 2004). Like teachers' beliefs on focus on form, their role in the class activities could affect the proportion of the LREs (Loewen, 2003). In the IELTS level 4, it was observed that the first teacher played an active role as a conversational partner, asking and answering discussion questions with the learners. Such interaction provided the teacher with the opportunity to focus on form in the course of conversation with individual learners. She repeatedly offered reactive LREs or in some cases preemptive ones during these interactions. As a result, she offered twice as many reactive LREs as did the second teacher in level 5. Additionally, the context of the activities, whether conducted with the whole class, small groups or pairs may account for some of the variation (Loewen, 2004a). A qualitative analysis of the videotaped data from these classes showed that the second teacher in level 5 made an extensive use of pair work activities and offered a lot of tips and preemptive LREs before involving the learners in a pair-work activity or following it.

For learner-initiated LREs, this study found a very low frequency. The previous research has identified several individual differences that may affect learners' participation in learner-generated incidental focus on form, such as proficiency level (Leeser, 2004; Williams, 1999; Yule and Macdonald, 1990), task roles (Yule and Macdonald, 1990) and pair and group dynamics (Morris and Tarone, 2003; Storch, 2002). It is also possible that cultural differences in the norms of classroom conduct in general and in the predisposition to ask questions in particular could affect the number of LREs. For example, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) discuss Chinese learners' negative perceptions of asking questions in class. Regarding the Iranian socio-cultural context, it seems more plausible to assume that Iranian adult EFL learners tend to shun away from asking too many questions which may reveal their gaps in knowledge, admitting their mistakes and verbally acknowledging it publicly particularly in a co-educational setting as was the case in this study. The same may hold true for the low frequency of uptake in this study.

Loewen (2004a) suggest that characteristics of the learning context, such as age of the learners, previous years of L2 grammatical instruction, and primary pedagogical focus of the current language program may have influenced the amount of focus on form and learners' production of uptake in his study. Similarly, the last point for a partial explanation of the low rate of learner-initiated LREs in this study might lie in the primary pedagogical focus of the current language program. The observed class was aimed at preparing and acclimating learners with the format of IELTS exam. Like any other preparation program for proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS, teachers and learners try to tailor the class activities to meet the requirements of the proficiency test. This is referred to as washback effect of testing on teaching, learning, and broadly on education system (Hughes, 1989; Cohen, 1994). Since IELTS is a skill-based test which gauges applicants' communicative rather than linguistic competence per se, this may have a beneficial backwash impact on the learners (Saville, 2000; Alderson and Banerjee, 2001). In the context of this study, the pedagogical focus of the course may have encouraged learners to become more engaged in communicatively-oriented activities while being cautious whether to disrupt the natural flow of information by raising attention to formal aspects of language or not. Moreover, the high occurrence of teacher-initiated LREs may have obviated the need for learner queries.

Although further investigation of these issues is warranted, these explanations may go some way in justifying the findings in terms of the distribution of LRE types in this study. Of course, the researchers postulated on these findings based on their experience and knowledge on EFL practices in Iran in general, this language school in particular, and qualitative evidence collected from the observations of these lessons. In this respect, the authors feel the need to emphasize the fact that there was not any systematic survey of the teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes to focus on form in this study, and these comments should be interpreted and generalized with caution.

Finally, it is important to consider the effectiveness of the various types of LREs. While few studies have directly addressed the link between incidental focus on form and L2 learning, the majority of these studies have used uptake as an indication of the effectiveness of incidental focus on form (Lyster and Ranta, 1997; Oliver, 2000; Mackey *et al*, 2003; Ellis *et al*., 2001 a, 2001b, 2002; Loewen, 2003, 2004 to name but a few). The last research question in this study was concerned with uptake moves in response to incidental focus on form. The findings in Tables 3 and 4 show that uptake moves following incidental focus on form were very low in this study. The overall number of uptakes indicates that the learners verbally incorporated LREs in their immediate productions merely in 15.2% of the cases. Moreover, there was not any significant difference in the amount of uptake in two levels. Of course, uptake moves were more common following reactive episodes than pre-emptive ones. Out of 168 reactive episodes, 72 (44%) resulted in uptake whereas only 43 (9%) of 473 pre-emptive episodes led to learner uptake.

The low occurrence of uptake found in this study contrasts sharply with the findings of Ellis *et al*. (2001a). They reported much higher levels of uptake in their study of 12 hours of meaning-focused lessons in two ESL classes. They found that uptake occurred in 74% of the LREs in these classes. Additionally, unlike the findings in this study which did not show any significant association between LRE types and the occurrence of uptake, Ellis *et al.* (2001a) found that uptake was more frequent in reactive and learner-initiated LREs, whereas teacher-initiated LREs had significantly lower levels of successful uptake.

Other studies of uptake also demonstrate varying levels of uptake production. Lyster and Ranta (1997), in a study of four classes (18.3 hours) of Grade 4 French immersion lessons in Canada, found that only 27% of the reactive LREs resulted in successful uptake. Similarly, Mackey and Philp (1998), in their study of planned focus on form, found that only 33% of the recasts were repeated or modified, leaving 67% of the recasts to be followed by topic continuation on the part of the learner. Similarly, Oliver (1995), in a study of primary school children involved in an information exchange task, found that nonnative speakers incorporated just fewer than 10% of recasts into their own production. She argues, however, that 16% of the time it was not possible to incorporate recasts, and 55% of the time it was not appropriate to do so (such as after a yes/no question). Thus, she claims an uptake rate of 35%. Finally, Pica (2002), in an investigation of discussion activities in two content based classes in a university-based English language institute, found that limited opportunities existed for either negative feedback or modified learner output (uptake). Ellis *et al*. (2001a) suggest that the differing contexts of the research may account for these differences. They argue that some of the reported studies involved school-aged children rather than university learners, with the suggestion that younger learners might be less likely to produce uptake. Also, the immersion context of several of the studies may be responsible for decreased attention to linguistic form and more attention to meaning, since ‘‘the emphasis in an immersion program is not on studying the language, but on studying the content of the curriculum in the second language’’ (de Courcy, 2002, p. 5). These diverse findings suggest that the benefit of incidental focus on form in terms of successful uptake may vary considerably depending on the context.

Ellis *et al*. (2001a) contends that private language school settings (like the context of the present study) may make learners more inclined to notice linguistic form, even if they engage in meaning-focused activities during their studies. However, such statement is not supported by the findings of this study if uptake is considered as an indication of such noticing. In the present study, uptake moves were very low although lessons were observed in private language school with highly motivated learners. Does it mean that EFL learners in this class did not benefit from focus on form as it was reported in the literature?

Because uptake is an optional move (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a), it does not necessarily occur after the provision of linguistic feedback. Learners may opt not to produce uptake, even if there is the opportunity for them to do so. Furthermore, there may not always be a chance for learners to produce uptake as immediate verbal responses to an LRE. Oliver (2000) maintains that learners may have no opportunity to react to teachers' feedback if the teacher continues his or her turn. That does not mean, however, that if a learner fails to produce uptake, the linguistic form has not been noticed. Mackey and Philp (1998) suggest that ''noticing/learning'' is possible without the production of uptake. Their experimental study indicates that some learners can benefit acquisitionally even if they do not uptake recasts of their deviant utterances. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that uptake is not necessarily indicative of L2 acquisition, although it may be facilitative of it (Ellis *et al.*, 2001a; Lightbown, 1998).

Although such explanation may partially account for the low frequency of uptake moves in this study, a very low occurrence of uptake prompted the authors to proceed with a detailed analysis of the data from audio and video recordings, and field notes. The qualitative analysis of LREs revealed that a good number of uptake moves are not encapsulated in the current definition of the uptake. For example, the researchers found that there were many instances that the learners took notes whenever an LRE took place in the lessons. On two occasions, one of the authors checked learners' notes after the completion of the class to confirm that their notes contained the LREs identified in the field notes and audio-recordings. Such evidence proved that there were a substantial number of teacher-initiated and some instances of learner-initiated preemptive LREs in which none of the learners acknowledged uptake verbally or explicitly while some decided to note it down in their books. The researchers call these instances “*camouflaged*” uptake moves.

Moreover, preemptive and reactive LREs were sometimes contextually so prominent and clearly illustrated that the researchers could unanimously conclude that every one in that class understood the point irrespective of the fact that they manifested their noticing explicitly in the form of uptake (for instance, see Extracts 4 and 5). Loewen (2004a) also raised this issue. He contends that when learners initiate an LRE, they are often looking for explicit information about a linguistic item, such as a vocabulary definition or an explanation of a grammatical item. The response to the provision of such information is very often likely to be an acknowledgment token, such as ‘oh’ or ‘yeah’. For example, in learner-initiated LREs about vocabulary (e.g., see Extract 3), learners did not often repeat all or even part of the definition provided for them so uptake, the way it is defined in the literature, did not take place. In the cited learner-initiated preemptive LRE in Extract 3, the teacher decided to depart from the ongoing meaningful interaction to teach the meaning of ‘*rush hour’* and raised the context of fasting month (the holy month of Ramadan) in Islamic countries and the evening time when most of the fasting people are in a hurry to return home and break their fast. After activating learners’ schematic knowledge through this crystal-clear example, there was no need and in fact little expectation or opportunity for the students to acknowledge their incorporation of that vocabulary item as uptake. Conversely, in the case of reactive LREs, the classroom environment may have created an expectation that learner errors would be pointed out, and that when this occurred, learners should produce the correct form (Loewen, 2004a). Although further investigation of these points is warranted, they may go some way in explaining why uptake was found to be very low in general, and why reactive LREs resulted more in successful uptake than did preemptive LREs.

Considering the recent critical notions on the role of uptake as an index of language acquisition and the conflicting findings in the literature on the amount of uptake moves, it seems necessary to find more accountable measures of noticing form and its integration. SLA researchers need to find some other measures or use multiple indices to examine the effectiveness of focus on form. It seems that uptake needs to be redefined and expanded to take into account multiple sources of learners’ incorporation of LREs. In the modified definition of uptake, the researchers recommend that learners' notes and non-verbal acknowledgements such as nodding following an LRE instance, intra-session immediate and delayed incorporation of LREs in the form of verbal or written responses by the learners be taken into account as indices of uptake. Videotaping interactions seems to be essential for this purpose. Then, analyzing uptake in terms of both verbal and non-verbal clues, oral as well as written incorporation of the LREs on the part of the learners along with retrospective data elicitation means such as stimulated recall procedures (Gass and Mackey, 2000) can be much more elucidating on estimating an accountable rate of uptake.

6. Implications for further research

This study provides further support for the incorporation of focus on form as the incidental attention that teachers and L2 learners pay to form in the context of meaning-focused instruction without disturbing the flow of communication in EFL classes. Whereas previous research addressed reactive focus on form (i.e., corrective feedback), the study reported in this article also included preemptive focus on form. One of the main findings of the study is that in the observed lessons preemptive focus on form occurred more frequently than reactive focus on form. This finding is important because it suggests that researchers and teachers need to pay more attention to preemptive focus on form than has been the case to date.

The findings demonstrate that teacher-initiated preemptive episodes took place more frequently than learner-initiated and reactive LREs. Both of the teachers in this study have had graduate studies in English language teaching and have been professionally teaching English for many years. The decisions they made regarding the use of focus on form techniques especially preemptive ones can be adopted by other EFL teachers. The researchers emphasize the fact that educated and experienced teachers can tap their learners' linguistic gaps collaboratively (i.e., fill the holes in learners' interlanguage as described by Swain,1998; Swain and Lapkin, 1995) and deal with form in the context of meaning-focused lessons by raising them preemptively. As mentioned earlier, Mackey *et al.*'s (2004) study on experienced and inexperienced teachers' use of incidental focus on form supports this notion. Teacher-initiated preemptive LREs can lubricate the learning process by focusing on diverse linguistic structures as they arise spontaneously during meaning-focused activities. Thus, the use of teacher-initiated LREs can pave the way for learners to move to a higher proficiency, minimize the number of non-target utterances by the learners, and consequently alleviate the need for reactive/learner-initiated focus on form as the findings in this study show. Furthermore, unlike reactive or student-initiated LREs, this type of LREs is not face-threatening, and students will not be embarrassed or negatively affected especially in co-educational contexts in some Asian countries.

Another implication of this study is concerned with the adoption of uptake to gauge the effectiveness of focus on form. It is too premature to make pedagogic decisions on the implementation of different types of focus on form according to this definition. Clearly further investigation into the relationship between uptake and learners' ability to subsequently use the targeted linguistic items is warranted.

This study also raised some questions which require further examination. Future research studies are suggested to investigate preemptive and reactive LREs in elementary and advanced proficiency levels, particularly in general English classes as opposed to IELTS or TOEFL preparation classes. Moreover, given that the body of previous research on preemptive LREs and the amount of uptake following them is relatively small, additional research on this matter is clearly warranted. A detailed study on the frequency of preemptive LREs in the terms of their linguistic focus and the amount of uptake following teacher- and learner-initiated preemptive LREs would be a fruitful line of inquiry. This study did not investigate teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the use of focus on form in general and LRE types in particular. Future studies can examine the relationship between teachers' beliefs and educational background, and its relationship with their attention to form and use of LRE types within meaning-oriented classes. Finally, this study calls for a redefinition of uptake. As pointed out earlier, uptake can be further analyzed and measured using multiple indices.

7. Conclusions

In summary, incidental focus on form appears to be pedagogically significant due to its potential in creating opportunities for learners to attend to linguistic elements in a meaningful context as they arise incidentally within a broader framework of communication. This study has shown that incidental LREs are frequently utilized in meaning-focused EFL classes, although their frequency and characteristics can vary considerably. Most of the focus on form studies carried out so far have almost exclusively concentrated on reactive LREs. The study has indicated the importance of widening the scope of research to include pre-emptive LREs as well. It explored the frequency of pre-emptive LREs and compared them with the reactive ones. The results revealed a significantly higher rate of pre-emptive focus on form, particularly teacher-initiated LREs than reactive ones. This is indicative of the fact that pre-emptive LREs deserve more attention than they have received so far. Moreover, based on the low frequency of the observed uptake, a new definition of uptake is suggested to incorporate not only uptakes resulting from verbal instances but also other non-verbal written manifestations of uptake such as learner notes. The variations in the findings of this study, in conjunction with those of previous studies of LREs and uptake, show the importance of taking the instructional context into account. The researchers have made some speculations about the findings based on qualitative data collected as part of this study and the Iranian EFL context. Finally, this study raised some interesting questions on pre-emptive LREs and uptake to broaden our understanding of focus on form and its optimal integration into meaning-centered EFL classes.

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An Examination of Vocabulary Learning of College-level Learners of English in China

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Abstract

This paper reports on the learning of English vocabulary by college students (N=60) in mainland China. The purpose of this study was three fold: 1) to identify the pattern of vocabulary learning strategies; 2) to look at the differences in vocabulary learning strategy by gender, major, and self-rated English proficiency; and 3) to find out the vocabulary learning problems, attitudes and beliefs in relation to strategy use. A vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire was used for data collection. Statistical analysis revealed that contextualized activation and management strategies were seldom used. This may lead to difficulties in long-term retention and use of vocabulary, the top two problematic areas in vocabulary learning rated by the participants. Significant differences existed in strategy use by field of study and self-rated proficiency level, not by gender. While strategy use was closely related to students' attitude, there were discrepancies between strategy use and beliefs about vocabulary learning.

Key words: vocabulary learning strategies; gender; attitude; beliefs; problems

Introduction

Since the mid 1980s, vocabulary learning (VL) has been drawing growing attention from ESL researchers. Particularly, the 1990s witnessed a noticeable number of publications;

vocabulary is now a current focus in ESL pedagogy and research. Vocabulary has been increasingly recognized as essential to language use; inadequate vocabulary could lead to learner difficulties in language reception and production. Previous research, which mostly focuses either on specific VL strategies or the overall pattern of VL strategy use, has yielded insightful results. However, what seems to have been neglected is that vocabulary learning is a multidimensional construct, often intertwined with various psycho-physiological, affective and cultural variables.

This paper reports the findings of an empirical investigation of vocabulary learning carried out in mainland China. This study is based on the perspective that vocabulary learning is a complex construct. Specifically, it examined the strategies used by Chinese college learners in relation to learners' fields of study, beliefs, attitudes and problems in VL. It was hoped that this study could get us closer to a comprehensive understanding of vocabulary learning practices of Chinese learners and provide some implications for both the learning and teaching of VL in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts.

Research Review

Construct of knowing a word

The notion of "context" is central to current research on vocabulary learning, which allows us to see that word learning is not simply a matter of memorization chore. The complexity of knowing an L2 word involves not just the ability to recognize its form (pronunciation, spelling, derivations), or knowing its dictionary meaning; it also entails knowledge of its specific grammatical properties, and collocations, functions (frequency and appropriateness), and the ability to use the word appropriately for actual interaction (Nation, 1990; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Oxford and Scarcella (1994) categorize vocabulary learning activities into three types: decontextualized (e.g. word lists, flashcards, dictionary-lookup), partially contextualized (e.g. word grouping, word association/elaboration, physical response) and fully contextualized (i.e. practicing the four language skills in authentic communication activities), which provides a more systematic and research-based approach to vocabulary instruction.

Context is perceived by Beheydt (1987) to be of utmost importance to vocabulary learning from the perspective that learning words is a process of "semantization", i.e. "a continuing process of getting acquainted with verbal forms in their polysemous diversity within varying contexts" (p.56). What matters in retention of memorized material is neither the ability to remember nor frequency of repetition, but depth and variety of processing. The more varied the processing is, the better learners can remember. Beheydt points out that the semantization process in vocabulary learning is based on a provision of a number of concrete representative usages of each word, the meanings of which are more easily semantized if they are embedded in a meaningful context and stimulated by repetitive mental practice. The more extensive the context, the greater the cognitive support for the semantization to take place. This view of word learning calls upon taking into account the construct of knowing a word and the cognitive process involved in the examination of vocabulary learning.

Strategies and outcomes

Along the lines of the contextualized approach to VL, the concept of "semantic field" challenged the word-by-word approach in vocabulary study. Semantic field is a network of associations, each word of which can be the center of the network radiating in all directions (Crow & Quigley, 1985). Crow and Quigley (1985) claimed that information organized into some type of cognitive categories works better than randomly presented material in terms of the effect on long-term retention. They based this claim on a comparison with the traditional approach to vocabulary instruction. However, Tinkham (1993) warned that grouping new vocabulary in sets of semantically similar words might in fact impede the learning of the words rather than facilitate it.

Another contextualized method that has been discussed by researchers concerns guessing. This technique has been shown to be useful by some researchers (e.g. Lawson & Hogben, 1996; Hulstijin, 1993; Oxford and Scarcella, 1994). However, more authors are cautious in espousing it for vocabulary learning. For example, Laufer and Osimo (1991) and Kelly (2000) maintain that guessing is no substitute for systematic learning of lexis and we have to look at the amount of learning that would result. Luppescu and Day (1993) found that students who used a dictionary scored significantly better on a vocabulary test than students who did not use one. Lawson and Hogben (1996) contended that generating possible meanings for the target words by using cues in the sentence did not establish representations for the meanings of the words. They reasonably argued for the need to distinguish "between the use of context for generation of meaning of a new word and the use of context for acquisition of the meaning for subsequent recall" (p.101). This distinction is a valuable compromise between the two opposing views regarding guessing, which makes it possible for us to examine the actual effect of guessing on word learning.

Although the grammar-translation approach to language learning is no longer a major trend in second language acquisition research, some researchers continue to show concerns about the involvement of first language semantic structures in L2 processing (e.g. Jiang, 2004). There has been an ongoing discussion as to whether translation learning affects VL positively or otherwise. Prince's experimental study (1996) reveals that translation learning is superior in quantity, but weaker learners are relatively unable to transfer their knowledge into L2 contexts. Grace (2000) notes that L1 translation seems to have a positive effect on both short-term and long-term retention of words. No conclusion has yet been drawn regarding using L1 for semantization.

Long-term retention has received wide attention as one of the greatest problems in learning new words (e.g. Crow & Quigley, 1985; Leeke & Shaw, 2000). The inability to recall known words is experienced not only in the production of spoken or written discourse, but also in comprehension. Laufer and Osimo (1991) grouped methods that reinforce vocabulary retention into four categories: frequency of use; meaningful activities; mnemonic techniques and elaborate processing of words. They suggest that the combination of the quantitative and qualitative methods and establishment of both interlingual and intralingual links contribute to better memory performance.

There seems to be a consensus that both incidental and intentional vocabulary learning are needed for language development (Crow & Quigley, 1985; Hollander & Greidanus, 1996; Leeke & Shaw, 2000; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Comprehensive input can improve vocabulary learning; however, in order to yield more productive learning results, conscious effort will help produce greater gains. For example, although Leeke and Shaw (2000) has provided some proof of the usefulness of recordkeeping of vocabulary, Hulstijn (1993) notes that making a note of unknown words alone is often not enough.

The pattern of strategy use has been examined in connection with its effect on learning outcomes. Fan (2003) conducted a large-scale investigation on college students in Hong Kong and discovered that those who were the most proficient in English vocabulary used strategies more often than the less proficient students. However, the results of the vocabulary test used in the study may reflect only the students' passive vocabulary knowledge. Sanaoui (1995) argues that consistent use of certain types of strategies forms an approach to vocabulary learning that may considerably influence the effectiveness of L2 learning. He put VL strategies into two categories: structured and unstructured approach. More recently, Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) found that more frequent and elaborate strategy use was associated with higher levels of achievement in vocabulary learning. Five criterion variables were identified that distinguished among various learner types in terms of their approach to vocabulary study: time; learner independence; vocabulary notes review and dictionary use. Although some individual strategies, such as recordkeeping (Leeke & Shaw, 2000), have been shown to be useful, the consensus is that the combination of strategies is a more powerful approach to vocabulary learning (Hulstijn, 1997).

Vocabulary learning in mainland China

English is regarded as an indispensable tool for academic and career advancement in mainland China, a typical EFL environment characterized by learners who "frequently encounter unknown words in text materials and need to learn and retain the meanings of some of these words for later use"(Lawson & Hogben,1996, p.272). With the growing awareness of communicative competence, along with the wash-back effect of the inclusion of speaking tests in major national English exams, Chinese college learners are increasingly concerned about the effectiveness of their vocabulary learning. However, as observed by Kelly (1990), lexical ignorance is still the single largest obstacle to foreign language learning at the intermediate and advanced stage.

Gu and Johnson (1996) administered a VL questionnaire in mainland China and correlated questionnaire responses with test results. They identified self-initiation and selective attention, contextual guessing, skillful use of dictionaries, note taking, paying attention to word formation, contextual encoding, and activation of newly learned words as positively correlate with the test scores, while visual repetition of new words was found to be the strongest negative predictor of both vocabulary size and general proficiency. This study confirms that strategies aiming at vocabulary retention relate more to vocabulary size than to English proficiency, which raises the issue of the appropriateness of using vocabulary size as the major criterion to assess vocabulary learning effectiveness. Chiang (2004) found through his research work in Taiwan that Chinese learners there tended to use more dictionary strategies and contextual guessing strategies.

The existing evidence indicates that the belief that vocabulary is simply the memorization of separate word forms with fixed meanings is too simplistic and inadequate for the learner to build up his/her lexical knowledge. However, what has been neglected is that the actual beliefs, needs and problems of learners might be connected with strategy use, which in turn will affect effectiveness of the learning process. It was hoped that this study, by taking these factors into account, could present a more comprehensive, context-specific and interpretative framework for vocabulary learning; meanwhile, the scarcity of relevant literature about vocabulary learning in mainland China also necessitates additional research effort in order to obtain a more up-to-date and fuller picture of vocabulary learning practice there.

The Present Study

Research questions

The study described in this article was designed to investigate the current practice of vocabulary learning in China and to examine the approaches to VL. It set out to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the overall pattern of VL strategy use of Chinese college learners?
2. Are there any differences in the use of VL strategies among these students in relation to field of study, self-rated English proficiency and attitude toward VL?

3. Are the problems experienced in VL by Chinese college learners related to the strategy use of VL?
4. Are learner beliefs about VL consistent with their strategy use?

Method

Participants

A total of 60 Chinese students from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, a major Chinese university, participated in the study. Half the students majored in automation (n = 30) and the others majored in English (n = 30). Twenty three were males and thirty seven were females. The age of the students, who were all sophomores, ranged from 18 to 22, with a mean of 20.18. The participants had been studying English between 6 and 12 years, with a mean of 8.33 years (See Table 1 in Appendices).

Instruments for data collection

The data for this study were collected through an instrument consisting of two sections. The first section was a vocabulary learning questionnaire adapted from Gu and Johnson (1996) and Fan (2003). It contained 28 items pertaining to students' approaches to vocabulary learning, which were divided into eight categories: dictionary use, rehearsal, management, sources, guessing, encoding, activation and vocabulary perceptions The respondents were asked to rate each strategy statement on a 5-point interval Likert scale in terms of their frequency of use in ascending order ranging from 1("almost never") to 5("almost always"); the intermediate levels were unlabeled. This instrument, as measured by *Cronbach's alpha*, showed an overall internal consistency of .87 (see Table 2 in Appendices). The second section, in addition to a series of demographic questions about their age, sex, field of study, also contained questions about students' self-rated proficiency, beliefs, attitudes towards vocabulary and vocabulary learning.

Data collection procedures

The instrument required about 15 minutes to complete and was administered in the students' regular English class. Before filling out the questionnaire, students were told that their participation was voluntary and their responses would remain confidential; they were also asked to give their opinions as honestly as possible, which was crucial to the success of this investigation.

Data analysis procedures

The data gathered through the questionnaire were coded for statistical analysis to answer the research questions indicated above. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 11.0) was used for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, etc.) were applied to obtain patterns of demographic information from the background questionnaire and strategy use. Pearson correlations were computed to evaluate the strategy use in relation to self-rated proficiency and perceptions of VL problems. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in strategy use by gender, self-rated proficiency and attitude to VL.

Results

Overall strategy use

A preliminary examination of the data showed that the average mean of frequency of strategy use ranged from 1.77 to 4.15, with a mean of 3.02 (SD = .52), which indicated an overall medium strategy use. The mean values of all the 28 strategies are presented in Table 3 (see Appendices) in descending order. The most frequently used strategy, also the only one with a mean above 4 was “I pay attention to the pronunciation of a new word” (M = 4.15; SD = .91). Only one strategy item (“I look up new words in an English-English dictionary”) had a mean value below 2 (M =1.77; SD = .95).

Strategy use by field of study

In order to evaluate whether there are significant differences in strategy use between the English majors and non-English majors, an independent-samples t test was calculated to compare the means of these two groups. The test was significant, $t(58) = 3.39$, $p < .05$. The English majors (M=3.22; SD= .54) used VL strategies more often than the non-English majors (M=2.81; SD= .40). In addition, the means of English majors for all the eight categories were greater than those of non-English majors (see Table 4 in Appendices). Specifically, the means of four categories were significantly different: perceptions (M=3.84 vs. 3.20; p< .05); activation (M=2.83 vs. 2.28; p< .05); management (M=2.81 vs. 2.32; p< .05); dictionary (M=3.08 vs. 2.53; p <.05). In general, the English majors reported making more use of strategies in vocabulary learning than the non-English majors.

Strategy use by self-rated proficiency

The proficiency of English was self-rated on a five-point scale ("excellent", "above average", "average", "below average", "poor"). The students were divided into three groups: those with high English proficiency ("excellent" or "above average"; n = 12), those with low English proficiency ("below average" or "poor"; n = 11) and the rest who rated their English proficiency as average (n = 27). An independent samples t test was conducted to assess the difference in VL strategy use between the high-proficiency group and the low-proficiency group. The test was significant, t(21) = -2.00, p <.05 . The high-proficiency group (M = 3.44, SD = .61) on the average used VL strategies more than the low-proficiency group (M = 2.88, SD = .58). The high-proficiency group exceeded the low-proficiency group in all categories (see Table 5 in Appendixes), significantly in dictionary (M =3.40 vs. 2.65 respectively; p< .05) and guessing (M=3.59 vs. 3.00 respectively; p< .05). In general, the results indicated a more frequent use of strategies by students with high English proficiency than those with low proficiency in English.

Relationship between attitude and strategy use

To evaluate the relationship between attitude toward vocabulary learning and strategy use as measured by this survey, a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the attitude rating and frequency of strategy use. The results indicated a moderate positive correlation, r = .427; p< .05. Independent samples t test showed that the participants with a positive attitude (4 "I like it" or 5 "I like it very much") had a significantly higher use of strategies than those with a negative attitude (1"I don't like it" or 2 "I hate it") in the four following categories (see Table 6 in Appendixes): dictionary, guessing, activation and management. Overall, students who were more positive towards VL used VL strategies more frequently than those who had a negative attitude towards VL.

Perceptions of problems in relation to strategy use

In order to identify the problems experienced by Chinese college students in vocabulary learning, the participants were asked to rate the degree to which the five problems affected them on a five-point interval scale, ranging from 1(“not a problem”) to 5 (“a major problem”). The overall mean rating of the five problems was 3.10 (SD = .63), indicating an overall medium rating. In descending order by their means, the ratings of the problems were as follows: “I have difficulties increasing my vocabulary” (M = 3.43; SD =1.18); “I forget words I’ve learned” (M = 3.35; SD = .99); “I cannot use words properly” (M = 3.17; SD =1.09); “I cannot handle multiple meanings of words” (M = 2.97; SD =1.12); “I cannot remember new words” (M = 2.57; SD =1.00). Correlation coefficients were computed between the average rating of the problems and the mean strategy use. The results of the correlational analyses show that the correlation was significant, r =-.335; p<.05, which suggested a moderately negative relationship between problem rating and strategy use. Meanwhile, there were moderate negative correlations between the problem rating and the following two categories of VL strategies respectively: activation (r =-.381; p< .05); management (r =-0.376; p< .05). This proved that the more frequently the students used VL strategies, the lower they rated VL problems.

Beliefs of knowing a word

To examine Chinese students’ perceptions of knowing a word, the participants were asked to choose from six statements what they believed word learning entailed. The top two statements were: “I can use the word in speaking and writing” (n = 43; 72%), and “I can use the word in appropriate social situations” (n =36; 60%). The results for the other four in descending order were: “I know the pronunciation of the word” (n =32; 53%); “I know the meaning of the word” (n =30; 50%); “I can spell the word” (n =25; 42%); “I can make sentences with the word” (n =22; 37%). Generally, the meaning and form of a word were not regarded as important as the ability to use the word.

Discussion

The VL strategy pattern of Chinese college learners

The results of the study reveal that the students reported the use of most strategies at the medium level, with perceptions strategies at the highest end of the frequency scale and activation strategies at the lowest end. The least attention paid to activation has also been observed by Gu and Johnson (1996). In contrast, mechanical rehearsal strategies have been widely used among learners. This contrast suggests that decontextualized rote learning is still predominant in VL compared to contextualized processing. Within the category of rehearsal, the more frequent use of oral repetition (*M*=3.58; *SD*=1.18) than visual repetition (*M*=3.32; SD=1.24) is consistent with the findings of Gu and Johnson (1996). Management is another area that has been neglected, which is noteworthy as planning and structured learning can affect the overall effectiveness of vocabulary learning.

The data exposed an excessive dependence on textbooks (*M*=3.70; *SD*=1.00), the second top rated strategy, as the source for vocabulary. Learners are less likely to use extracurricular sources (such as listening to English songs, radio programs, watching English movies, reading stories, magazines etc.). As incidental and intentional learning are both essential for language learning, a more balanced structure of vocabulary sources seems more helpful in improving learners' VL (Hollander & Greidanus, 1996; and Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). This is particularly important for a foreign language learning setting where exposure to the target language is limited.

The sharp contrast between the use of English-English dictionary (*M*=1.77; *SD*=0.95) and English-Chinese dictionary (*M*=3.05; *SD*=1.14) implies that Chinese learners are not used to thinking in the target language; they are more inclined to turn to L1 for semantization. Similar findings have also been observed by Gu and Johnson (1996) and Fan (2003). Though previous research (Prince, 1996; Jiang, 2004; Grace, 2000) generated inconsistent findings regarding the effect of L1 on word retention, excessive dependence on first language is not beneficial. In addition, the unbalanced attention paid to word form as compared to word usage also exacerbates the disadvantage of limited exposure to a genuine target language situation.

VL strategy use in relation to VL problems and attitude

The negative correlation between overall problem rating and strategy use indicates that the more frequently learners use VL strategies, the fewer problems they will experience in VL. The rating of vocabulary size as the greatest difficulty reflects a pressing need of college learners to enhance the effectiveness of their word learning. The negative correlation between this problem and the frequency of strategy use reveals that conscious vocabulary learning helps increase the number of words at the command of learners. What is also worth mentioning is that problem rating was negatively related with activation and management strategies. The relatively low use of these two types of strategies could have an adverse impact on long-term retention of words while rote learning embodied by rehearsal strategy use might only lead to short-term retention.

It would be helpful to look at the attitude toward VL in order to understand the problems learners encounter. This study reveals that learner attitude directly affects the learning process. While participants with a positive attitude expressed a frequent strategy use in all categories, those with a negative attitude showed a remarkably low use of management, activation and dictionary use. In spite of a strong instrumental motivation to study English for career and educational development, many Chinese college students regard English learning as a formidable task, which prevents them from taking positive measures to improve their VL.

Strategy use by field of study

The results of this study correspond with those of Chiang (2004) in that the English majors generally exceeded non-English majors in their report of overall vocabulary use. A possible explanation is that English majors have a stronger motivation to enhance their VL, which can be proven at least partly by the significant difference in the way the attitude towards vocabulary learning was rated.

At the micro level, we should note that both majors rated the use of English-English dictionary as the least-used strategy. However, the differences in VL strategy use between English majors and non-English majors are conspicuous. Even for rehearsal strategies, the only category where there was not a significant difference, these two groups of learners demonstrated different preferences: the former used more oral repetition while the latter preferred more visual repetition. In general, non-English majors rely more on decontextualized mechanical repetition in VL. Although non-English majors are more likely to use contextual cues to guess (*M*=3.10 for English majors vs. *M*=3.40 for non-English majors, $p < .05$), they checked the correctness of their guessing significantly less (*M*=3.47 for English majors vs. *M*=2.67 for non-English majors, $p < .05$). This indicates that guessing alone does not necessarily yield good learning outcomes; more cognitive procedure is needed to enhance learning effectiveness.

Strategy use by self-rated proficiency

The ultimate goal of VL is to improve target language proficiency. This study replicates several previous studies (e.g. Sanaoui, 1994; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999; Gu & Johnson, 1996) by proving that VL strategy use is related to learning outcomes. Self-rated proficiency is closely connected with the overall level of effort in VL. Low-proficiency students seem to engage more in short-term retention achieved through the use of rehearsal, particularly visual repetition, which, according to Gu and Johnson (1996), “was the strongest negative predicator of both vocabulary size and general proficiency” (p.463). Comparatively speaking, learners are less willing to activate the newly-learnt words by using them and they seldom manage their learning in a structured manner, which, as discussed earlier, may pose an obstacle to their VL and will in turn influence their overall English performance. Also, dictionary use and contextual guessing distinguish between proficient learners and less proficient ones, which is consistent with the finding of Gu and Johnson (1996) that skillful use of these two strategies is advantageous to English proficiency.

VL strategy use in relation to learners’ beliefs about vocabulary learning

Gu and Johnson (1996) point out that “students consistently adopt types of strategies based either on their beliefs about vocabulary and vocabulary learning, or on other preexisting cognitive or social factors” (p.679). The results of the present study indicate that Chinese students are generally aware of the importance of the ability to use words in speaking and writing in appropriate contexts. This is encouraging evidence that students understand that knowing a word involves not only knowing the form and meaning, but also the ability to use it.

However, beliefs about what knowing a word entails contradict the actual learning practice. Although learners are well aware that the ultimate goal of learning English is to be able to use it, the lack of contextualized practice to activate what they've learned impedes their progress towards this goal. Vocabulary learning is not only a matter of retention. Its importance lies in its ability to empower learners to communicate in the target language. Learners still concentrate too much on isolated short-term retention of form and meaning in spite of their increasing awareness that passive knowledge of them alone does not help much in achieving communicative competence. Therefore, the input-poor EFL environment makes it desirable not only for learners to make a conscious effort to seek and create opportunities for contextualized processing of vocabulary, but also for teachers to provide adequate guidance.

Summary and Implications

The results of the study indicate an overall medium use of VL strategies of Chinese students, with high-proficiency students learning vocabulary in a more systematic and organized way. This study also shows that Chinese female students make insignificantly more use of VL strategies than male learners; in addition, there are some important differences at the micro level, and female students are more aware of the importance of management in VL. Similar results were also found between English majors and non-English majors, which is consistent with the results of Chiang's study (2004) on learners in Taiwan. Furthermore, this study suggests that strategy use is closely related to the problems that Chinese students encounter in VL, particularly long-term retention and the ability of using vocabulary.

This study also generated interesting findings regarding learners' attitude, beliefs and problems in relation to vocabulary learning. Learners' attitude towards VL significantly is related to the use of VL strategies. Meanwhile, this investigation indicates a balanced awareness of the importance of meaning, form and function of words in students' beliefs of what knowing a word means. However, the contradiction between learners' beliefs and their actual strategy use suggests that the students are undergoing a dilemma: they are well aware that they should be able to use a word, but they do not know how to achieve this objective. This is reflected partly in the common low use of their management and activation strategies.

In China, a typical EFL environment, words are primarily taught through decontextualized activities in English classes. A considerable amount of instructional time is devoted to presenting, explaining, and defining terms. In addition, students are usually expected to learn vocabulary on their own, mostly by mechanical memorization, without much guidance from teachers. Little effort has been made to teach students strategies to improve their vocabulary learning. However, merely giving students lists of words to learn does not result in effective learning, despite the growing awareness on the part of learners of the importance of enhancing their communicative competence of the target language and the recognition that a much larger vocabulary is needed to this end.

It is important for curriculum designers, teachers and students alike to acknowledge that a balanced and integrated approach is important particularly for foreign language learners in input-poor EFL environments. Since learning words individually will not necessarily take care of other aspects of communicative competence, vocabulary knowledge, to be of real use, must become integrated into discourse. English textbooks in China should be revised in such a way that they address this crucial aspect of vocabulary learning. Pedagogically, it is important and feasible that teachers play a more active role in students' vocabulary learning, as pointed out by Oxford and Scarcella (1994), by providing learners with systematic L2 vocabulary instruction, offering contextualized learning opportunities, helping students learn specific strategies for acquiring words, and showing students how to learn words outside of their L2 classes. The ultimate purpose is to encourage learner autonomy so that students can learn vocabulary wisely both inside and outside of class for more productive outcomes.

This was an exploratory study that only caught a glimpse of the present status of vocabulary learning by Chinese college students. A larger sample with more diverse backgrounds would be desirable in order to yield more generalizable findings. Furthermore, as with other similar studies, the data for the study were based on the self reports of the participants. Since the extent to which self reports reflect reality is an issue, this study is not meant to offer any conclusive findings about vocabulary learning in China. However, its intention is to be part of a discussion on the complex construct of vocabulary learning, particularly in EFL contexts. Hopefully, this will lead to more thorough investigations in the field.

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Appendixes

Table 1 Background Information of the Respondents

		Gender		Field of Study		Total
		Male (n=23)	Female (n=37)	Automation (n=30)	English (n=30)	
Age	Minimum	18	18	19	18	18
	Maximum	22	21	22	20	22
	Average	20.32	19.98	20.46	20.17	20.18
Years of English Learning	Minimum	6	8	6	8	6
	Maximum	12	11	10	12	12
	Average	8.51	9.44	8.98	9.21	8.33

Table 2 Eight Categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Category	Number of Items	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
Dictionary use (DIC)	4	.4835
Guessing (GUE)	2	.2976
Perceptions (PER)	4	.7250
Encoding (ENC)	5	.6335
Rehearsal (REH)	2	.4508
Activation (ACT)	2	.6885
Management (MAN)	5	.6829
Sources (SOU)	4	.4508
OVERALL	28	.8701

Table 3 Means of Vocabulary Learning Strategy in Descending Order

Category	Strategy	Rank	Mean	SD
PER	I pay attention to the pronunciation of a new word.	1	4.15	.906
SOU	I use my textbook to learn new words.	2	3.70	.997
ENC	I try to remember the sentence in which the word is used to remember the word.	3	3.70	.997
REH	I repeat a new word out loud several times to remember it.	4	3.58	1.177
PER	I pay attention to the examples of how a word is used in English.	5	3.51	.917
DIC	I carry a pocket dictionary (including an electronic dictionary) to look up the words I don't know.	6	3.34	1.469
PER	I pay attention to the grammatical patterns (e.g. parts of speech, countable/uncountable) of a new word.	7	3.30	1.013
ENC	I analyze the structure (root and affix) of a new word to remember it (e.g. in-formal, color-less).	8	3.28	1.250
ENC	I associate new words with those I already know.	9	3.27	1.087
GUE	I guess the meaning of words I don't know.	10	3.25	.856
PER	I pay attention to the unfamiliar usage of a known word.	12	3.15	1.055
MAN	I highlight the words that seem important to me.	13	3.10	1.145
DIC	When I look up a word in the dictionary, I read all the meanings of new words.	14	3.10	1.285
GUE	I check to see if my guesses about the words are right or wrong.	15	3.07	1.006
DIC	I look up new words in an English-Chinese dictionary.	16	3.05	1.141
ENC	I try to remember the Chinese equivalent of the word.	17	3.00	1.221
ENC	I distinguish words with similar meanings.	18	2.92	.996
SOU	I listen to English songs, radio programs, watch English movies etc. to increase my vocabulary.	19	2.85	1.102
SOU	I read stories, magazines etc. outside class to increase my vocabulary.	20	2.75	1.019
ACT	I use the newly-learned words as much as possible in speaking and writing.	21	2.72	1.151

Category	Strategy	Rank	Mean	SD
SOU	When I come across a new word, I make a note of it.	22	2.65	1.287
MAN	I review my vocabulary regularly.	23	2.65	1.176
MAN	I make plans for my vocabulary learning.	24	2.60	1.224
ACT	I make up my own sentences using the words I just learnt.	25	2.40	.960
MAN	I group words in my own way to remember them.	26	2.32	1.112
MAN	I keep a vocabulary notebook to jot down new words I want to learn.	27	2.17	1.330
DIC	I look up new words in an English-English dictionary.	28	1.77	.945
OVERALL			3.02	.515

Table 4 Comparisons of Strategy Use by Field of Study

Category	Field of Study	Mean	SD	*t*	Sig. (2-tailed)
DIC	English	3.2833	.71539	1.362	.178
	Automation	3.0333	.70629		
GUE	English	3.8417	.60266	3.847	*.000
	Automation	3.2000	.68670		
PER	English	3.4167	1.00072	-.267	.790
	Automation	3.4833	.93295		
ENC	English	2.8333	1.00287	2.392	*.020
	Automation	2.2833	.76207		
REH	English	2.8133	.88190	2.503	*.015
	Automation	2.3200	.62279		
ACT	English	3.1000	.78125	1.288	.203
	Automation	2.8750	.55223		
MAN	English	3.4067	.74738	1.933	.058
	Automation	3.0600	.63713		
SOU	English	3.0833	.77218	2.919	*.005
	Automation	2.5278	.70007		

* $p < .05$

Table 5 Comparisons of Strategy Use by Proficiency

Category	Proficiency	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
DIC	High	3.0000	.71539	-2.237	*.036
	Low	3.5909	.70629		
GUE	High	3.4167	.60266	-1.740	.096
	Low	4.0000	.68670		
PER	High	3.3333	1.00072	-.536	.598
	Low	3.5455	.93295		
ENC	High	2.4167	1.00287	-1.713	.101
	Low	3.1818	.76207		
REH	High	2.3500	.88190	-1.644	.115
	Low	2.9636	.62279		
ACT	High	2.7500	.78125	-1.972	.062
	Low	3.2667	.55223		
MAN	High	3.5636	.74738	-.889	.384
	Low	2.6458	.63713		
SOU	High	3.4091	.77218	-2.410	*.025
	Low	3.0000	.71539		

* $p < .05$

Table 6 Comparisons of Strategy Use by Attitude

Category	Attitude	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
DIC	High	3.0000	.50000	1.880	.073
	Low	3.4688	.64469		
GUE	High	3.5370	.69736	1.193	.245
	Low	3.8438	.56917		
PER	High	3.3889	1.21906	-.522	.607
	Low	3.6250	1.00830		
ENC	High	2.2222	.66667	3.093	*.005
	Low	3.3438	.96123		
REH	High	1.9778	.47376	3.843	*.001
	Low	3.1125	.80654		
ACT	High	2.5833	.48412	3.086	*.005
	Low	3.4531	.75949		
MAN	High	3.3111	.76884	1.147	.263
	Low	3.6000	.49531		
SOU	High	2.4722	.88780	2.111	*.046
	Low	3.0000	.50000		

* $p < .05$

Cultivating a Reading Habit: Silent Reading at School

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Abstract

In most EFL settings, reading is seen as related to language subjects only. Students rarely read for pleasure; they think that reading is part of the textbook-related activity. With the implementation of an extensive reading scheme and school-based assessment, students in Hong Kong begin to see reading a little differently. This paper investigates the effectiveness of a new whole-school approach reading scheme in a Chinese school in Hong Kong. Students read at least 15 minutes every school day in either Chinese or English. Results of the questionnaires and the interviews, conducted for teachers and students, indicate that teachers and students see the role of reading differently. It concludes that junior level students who have less public examination pressure enjoy reading better than the senior students. The paper informs educators in non-Asian countries as well; they will know why students from Asia are reluctant to read. The implication is that when reading has not been formed as a habit, holding up a book will be considered just part of school work.

Key Words: Reading, silent reading, extensive reading

Background

In many EFL situations, English is, more often than not, learnt as an examination subject rather than a tool for life. The reason is plain: most students need not use English outside the language classroom. Although lessons on ordering in the restaurant or asking for directions have been taught, students never apply the use of skills because the real need is not there off campus. This phenomenon is acute in many Asian cities. In Hong Kong, for example, students attend about eight 40-minute English lessons every week, a little bit more than 60 minutes per school day, if the teacher is efficient and is free from conducting class business: disciplining, collecting books, etc. In 114 out of 400+ secondary schools in Hong Kong, students enjoy a better English environment because these schools are considered English medium of instruction (EMI) schools. That means all other subjects, except Chinese language, are taught in English in terms of lectures, textbooks and homework, by mostly local Chinese. The rest of the secondary schools are Chinese medium of instruction (CMI) schools where lessons are conducted mostly in Cantonese (the local dialect), and occasionally Putonghua (the national language).

Despite the tongues, language teachers still maintain that languages are the basis of communication, be it spoken or written. A new senior secondary syllabus has been in place; an oral component has been implemented for the Chinese language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, the public examinations in Hong Kong for all grade 11 students. The oral component of the English language in the same examination has been strengthened; it now carries a total of 30% of the subject marks. Half of this 30% comes from a school-based assessment, where teachers evaluate students at least four times when they are in grades 10 and 11. Students are supposed to read/watch four texts: print fiction, print non-fiction, film fiction, and film documentary (HKEAA, 2005). At the assessment, students should report on the materials read/watched, and interact with students who read/watched the same materials at the level. All these are done in order to encourage students to read more and to expose themselves more in the language.

Aside from the change of the language syllabus, there have been changes in other subjects, mathematics, chemistry, etc. where open-ended questions are now given. Students are asked to write a short essay explaining a phenomenon or situation, rather than plainly giving numerical answers. All these involve language skills, in addition to the technical knowledge of the subjects. Language issues are the concerns not only for language teachers, but also content subject teachers. Seeing the change, many schools in Hong Kong find it important to cultivate students' reading habits, using a whole-school approach, so that students' communication skills will improve. Schools strengthen the Silent Reading Activities (SRA), Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS), and class library ideas for junior students in language lessons, to a much larger scale which involves all teachers and students of the school. This paper investigates how a school responded to the change of teaching and examination syllabuses; and it implemented a morning reading session activity, soliciting assistance from most teaching staff. Reading in the morning at school carried a strong message to students that the school intended to boost overall language proficiency, not only through language teachers, but through all subject teachers with every means, including making slight adjustment to the time table. Past research focused on the importance of reading, but seldom considered its practicality.

This research permitted students to voice their opinion on the implementation of the reading scheme, as well as their progress. The purpose of the investigation was to find out how fruitful students find the morning reading session. The writer's assumption is: students would endeavor to read because the session was scheduled in the time table, but it would be difficult for students to see the links between leisure reading and school work. The findings are encouraging and will provide a model for schools needing such reforms. Educators outside Asia will also understand better why some Asian teenagers do not enjoy reading books for pleasure.

Literature review

The term Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) was introduced in 1960. Though terminologies vary, basic rules are the same across SSR practices (McCracken, 1971). Students read a lot of easy, enjoyable books (Helgesen, 2005). Bomford and Day (2004) suggest that easy books build speed and reading fluency. Extensive reading seems to support all four skills, even speaking and listening, because of the increased exposure to English vocabulary and discourse. McCracken (1971) states that no student, able or remedial, should be chided for reading an easy book. A student in an SSR class wrote in his journal that in the past, the only time he read was when it was required and he knew that he would be tested on the material (Valeri-Gold, 1995). With SSR, books were read for pleasure.

Success of SSR depends on the support of the principal, teachers, and other staff members in the school. Wiesendanger and Birlem (1984) hold the view that the attitude of the teacher toward SSR may be very significant. Teachers' enthusiasm or lack of interest in reading is easily communicated to students. Creating a quiet, relaxing and non-evaluative classroom environment is also a key element for successful SSR (Chow and Chou, 2000). Campbell (1989) argues that what the teacher does during and after the reading time is crucial. Teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate their interest in and enjoyment of reading by providing a role model of silent reading. Coley (1983) reported that over the six-month period of the project, gains in reading achievement occurred in both 7th and 8th grades.

Although there have been successful studies (see Herbert, 1987; Dwyer and Reed, 1989), an earlier suggestion was made by Wiesendanger and Birlem (1984): while the effect of SSR on word recognition and reading comprehension appears inconclusive, the relationship between SSR and positive reading attitudes seems clearly established in most studies. Wiesendanger and Birlem (1984) observed only after a period of at least six months, improvement may be seen. From her experience of implementing a successful high school SSR program, Ozburn (1995) agrees that it will take over four months for an SSR program to show results. She points out that the time may be longer. It takes many students four or five months to become hooked on books.

Fielding, Wilson, and Anderson (1986) agree that reading the wide range of topics in trade books can provide insights into different kinds of people, interpersonal relationships, and moral dilemmas that can be difficult to learn from real life. Grubaugh (1986) stresses that students learn reading is laughing, crying, adventuring, exploring, or finding out how to do things. Students will discover reading as a worthwhile pastime and begin to develop an appreciation of the magic of books. In doing so, Valeri-Gold (1995) incorporated SSR in her reading classes and found that the majority of students felt that SSR had a positive influence on their attitudes about reading. To gain the best results, Campbell (1989) suggests that teachers should comment upon, talk about books they read. Students in class will become eager to do the same. "If we want our adolescent students to grow to appreciate literature, the first step is allowing them to exert ownership and choose the literature they will read" (Atwell, 1987, p. 161).

Because of the differences seen in the previous studies, and the need of hearing students' voice in the reading activity, the present research was conducted. It is assumed that although teachers and students both believe reading is important for education, they hold very different attitudes as to how reading sessions should be conducted. Allowing students to select their own reading materials will enhance students' motivation to read. Implementing a program is to allow students to cultivate a reading habit on their own. To carry out this study, the design of research methods is provided below.

Procedures

The morning reading session was implemented in early-September 2004 in a Chinese medium of instruction secondary school in Hong Kong. Every school day, all students (grades 7 to 13, age 12 to 18) read for at least 20 minutes in class, under the supervision of the class teacher, before the first lesson. Students chose their own books according to the designated language of the month; they chose English or Chinese books in alternate months. Class teachers were asked to role model at the same time, as far as possible.

Students kept their reading progress in a log book. At the end of each 20 minutes, students jotted down some useful phrases learnt in the log book; in every fortnight, students wrote brief comments on the portion read in a few sentences in the same log book. The class teacher would collect the log books at the end of each month, and have an overall idea on the class reading progress. This is to make sure students were reading progressively; the checking on the log book did not affect grades on student report cards.

At the end of September 2004, all 36 class teachers were asked to invite any three students (108 students in total) to fill out a 20-item questionnaire in Chinese (Appendix 1); the 36 teachers filled out the same questionnaire as well. The questionnaire had been set on a modified Likert-scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree); readers responded to the reading activity, what they had learnt, their reading attitudes, and how the activity promoted learning. The results were compared against the same questionnaire conducted in late-May 2005 to 27 classes (grades 11 and 13 classes had left school for sitting for public examinations in March 2005), with five additional items on the possible improvement over the year. Instead of three, four students in each class were chosen randomly to fill out the May questionnaire (108 students in total); teachers also responded to the same questionnaire (27 teachers in total). All questionnaires were tallied and analyzed.

Evaluations were done through four instruments. The log book served as a continuous qualitative comment source from students. Upon completion of the questionnaire, students were asked to respond freely to other aspects not addressed in the questionnaire. They were invited randomly to attend comment sessions where open-ended questions were asked regarding the activity and their language attitudes. The interview sessions were audio-taped; the relevant materials were transcribed for reference. Teachers' observation contributed to the qualitative input of the writing up of this paper.

Analysis and discussions on the questionnaire results

The results of the questionnaires were tallied in five categories: all respondents, students only, junior form students only, senior form students only, and teachers only. It is surprising to see that the rankings of Q1 and Q2 in the five categories are almost identical; this is especially true to the five items most agreed and disagreed (see Table 1).

Respondents	← agreed Items disagreed →
All (Q1)	9, 16, 18, 2, 1 14, 17, 13, 12, 11
All (Q2)	9, 18, 16, 2, (1, 15) 14, 11, 12, 13, 17
Junior (Q1)	9, 15, 18, 16, 19 14, 13, 12, 17, 11
Junior (Q2)	9, 15, 16, 18, (2, 19) 14, 11, 12, 13, 17
Senior (Q1)	18, 9, 2, 1, 10 11, 13, 17, 12, 5
Senior (Q2)	18, 9, 2, 1, 10 (5, 11), 17, 13, 12
All students (Q1)	18, 9, 15, 2, 16 5, 13, 12, 17, 11

All students (Q2)	9, 18, 15, 2, 16	5, 11, 12, 13, 17
Teachers (Q1)	16, (1, 5), 4, (8, 9)	10, 11, 13, 12, 17
Teachers (Q2)	16, 23, 4, (1, 5)	10, 11, (12, 13), 17

Table 1: The rankings of the top five and the bottom agreed items

(Item numbers in brackets indicate same ranking)

Most respondents agreed that students should choose their own reading materials (mostly fiction) and read quietly for at least 15 minutes every day, in addition to the reading they do on their own (items 9, 16, 18, 2, 1, 15, see Table 2). However, preferences in other areas varied. Senior form students believed that teachers should prepare more loan reading materials for them (item 10); junior form students thought that reading sessions were generally useful (item 19). Teachers thought that students could concentrate more on reading in the morning under supervision; students gradually developed reading habits; they also believed reading made people more cultured (items 5, 4, 8, 23).

Items	53 Counts
9. Students choose their own reading materials.	9
16. I think reading sessions should be at least 15 minutes.	8
18. Students should schedule reading time on their own.	8
2. Students bring their own reading materials.	7
1. Students read quietly in the reading session.	6
15. I like to read fiction in reading sessions.	5
10. Teachers should prepare more loan reading materials for students.	2
5. Readers concentrate more in the morning.	2
4. I think reading sessions allow students to develop reading habits.	2
19. I think reading sessions are useful for me.	2
8. Students in this class need teacher’s supervision while reading.	1
23. Reading makes people more cultured.	1

Table 2: Most frequently-appeared top five agreed items in Q1 and Q2 (53 counts)

In most primary schools and junior secondary schools, there is a class library in the classroom; about 100 books at the level are stocked in the classroom for student’s perusal.

In a way, students are used to getting recommended materials from the school. This explains why junior form students voted for confidence in item 19. Although all students brought their own books for the morning reading sessions, senior form students wanted more suggested titles or even loan materials from the teachers (see item 10 below). This phenomenon suggested that students read, but they might not be able to choose their own materials. The situation is more so for older teenagers for they have to face public examinations. Studying for the examinations already takes up much of their time; if and when they find time to read, they want the materials to be ready, rather than spending time exploring the readability of the books.

Teachers' opinions on *what, how,* and *when* regarding reading were a bit conservative and were not shared among students in the top five items. This may reflect that there was a difference of the daily habits between the two generations. Teachers believed that turning in and getting up early was essential for a healthy life. However, most students at the voluntary interviews expressed that it was not at all possible. Many of them slept for less than six hours per night; they sleep between 1am and 7am. It was easy to picture the dozing off situation in some of the classrooms for the morning reading sessions (see item 5 below). A few students found it easier to do leisure reading before bedtime.

Items	50 Counts
11. Students record reading progress properly.	10
12. Students write reading reflections properly.	10
13. Reading materials should be related in lessons.	10
17. I think reading sessions should be scheduled in lunch time.	10
5. Readers concentrate more in the morning.	4
14. I like to read shorter materials in reading sessions.	4
10. Teachers should prepare more loan reading materials for students.	2

Table 3: Most frequently-appeared bottom five agreed items in Q1 and Q2 (50 counts)

Respondents reflected very strongly on the recording of reading progress. In all sets of questionnaires, none of the respondents thought that students had recorded properly; neither did they think that reading materials should be related to lessons, nor scheduled the reading sessions in lunch time (items 11, 12, 13, 17). Contrarily to the teachers' belief, students did not think they concentrated better in the morning for reading (item 5); this was more so among senior students. Junior students also disagreed that they liked reading shorter materials. This is perhaps partly contributed to the stocks of the class library where novellas and novels are stocked, rather than short prose passages or short stories.

The very small changes seen in Q1 and Q2 in the same respondent groups indicate that readers have a set of expectations, and the expectations become beliefs. However, the beliefs may not be shared between teachers and students. The assumptions of assigned workload and the actual workload may not be the same; so teachers do not have a clear picture on how students use their time. This is more so with the senior students who have a dire need to prepare for the public examinations; their reading habits are different from the years when they were in primary or junior secondary.

Items 21-25	All	Junior	Senior	All students	Teachers
Highest	23	21	21	21	23
	21	23	23	22	21
	22	22	22	23	22
	24	24	24	24	24
Lowest	25	25	25	25	25

21. Reading in Chinese is helpful for learning non-language subjects.
22. Reading in English is helpful for learning non-language subjects.
23. Reading makes people more cultured.
24. Chinese reading improves students’ Chinese communication skills.
25. English reading improves students’ English communication skills.

Table 4: The rankings of the newly-added items in Q2

Five items were added in Q2; none of them made the top or bottom five lists except item 23: Reading makes people more cultured (ranked 2^{nd}) with the teachers. Respondents are not sure about how the reading sessions help them in their non-language subjects, and hardly do they see the relevance of how reading improves one’s communication skills in languages. This phenomenon probably is due to the fact that most people, including teachers, see languages as subjects rather than communication tools. For years, students had to read designated passages for the Chinese language public examinations (this practice will be ceased in 2007). For English examinations, students are trained to tackle different tasks with examination strategies, rather than responding to questions with daily communication skills.

In addition, pleasure reading had long been associated with language subjects. Book reports were done as part of the assignments in Chinese and English lessons only; social or science subject teachers seldom asked students to do pleasure reading and write book reports. Because of this, students, as well as some non-language subject teachers, failed to see the relationship between reading and non-language subjects. While Chinese and English subjects required students to write with proper language structures and grammar items, the requirement was more lax in other subjects. Oral examinations were exclusive for the language subjects. Therefore, many respondents failed to link the dots between reading and communicative skills with non-language subjects.

More than half of the junior student respondents provided comments in Q1 and Q2; some excerpts have been loosely translated as follows:

- *I think we need more reading time, about 40 minutes.*
- *I think Chinese books are more interesting than English books.*
- *I would like teachers to tell me what books to read.*
- *I hope my science teachers will introduce some books to me.*
- *English books are too difficult.*
- *I cannot finish reading a book in a month. I don’t want to start the English book at once.*
- *Recording reading progress and writing reflections are useless.*

Teachers also provided some comments:

- *Junior form students responded better in morning reading sessions.*
- *Most students bring their own books; those without books are those who don’t care about their education.*
- *Students cannot complete their reading records properly.*
- *Students are quieter when they see the teacher reads as well.*
- *Sometimes, I had to use the reading time to do housekeeping, for example, collecting money for school functions.*
- *Students seem to be more interested in reading Chinese books than English books.*
- *Perhaps the school should consider asking students to read English books in the first term, and Chinese the second. The language switching poses some problems for the forgetful students.*

Interview summary

A total of seven students (2 grade 7, 1 grade 8, 2 grade 9, and 2 grade 10) volunteered to attend the interview session. The questions asked were loosely based on the findings and attempted to follow-up and clarify points made. Students' comments confirmed the findings above: (1) that reading was only associated with the language subjects; (2) that the two languages were examination subjects; (3) that reading in English took up too much time; (4) that long stories were for book report purposes; (5) that some classmates pretended to read; therefore they failed to complete their reading entries.

Three teachers (1 Chinese, 1 English, and 1 Physics) attended an informal interview; they were more positive than the students. They believed that reading did students good, but it would take time before teachers and students see the results. However, the Chinese teacher commented that she saw a larger range of vocabulary in the class she was then teaching, comparing with the one she taught the year before (both upper intermediate). She sometimes saw sophisticated expressions used in students' essays. She asked the students and was told that the expressions were learnt from the reading session books. The teacher said that this encouraged the whole class.

The English teacher commented that her students knew the importance of learning the language, but they just could not see the relationship between reading story books and the English subject. Students preferred to read English newspapers rather than fiction. The Physics teacher commented similarly. He confessed that when he read with the students in the second term, he felt that students concentrated more; he was not able to read with the students during the same reading session in the first term because of the overwhelming of clerical and administrative work for the class.

Conclusions

The absence of the two levels of students who took part in the public examination rather than filling out Q2 might distort the findings. However, the two levels were simply too busy preparing for the public examinations. In addition, the arrangement of reading pleasure books in two languages in alternate months might upset students' reading schedule. A few students complained to their teachers that when they were forced to read in the language they did not choose, they lost interest in the book at once. However, it is agreed that students should have a balance of language input.

Although the school had only put the whole school approach reading scheme into practice for a year, members of the school seem positive, except for the writing of the reading entries. The school has reported that students should spend time reading, rather than writing. As long as students continue to read, the writing training will be done in other tasks. With the government-mandated Extensive Reading Scheme and the newly-implemented School-based Assessment in September 2005 which focuses heavily on reading skills and discussing materials from pleasure books, students have to change their mindset and start reading for everyday knowledge. Students in the junior level will benefit further from the morning reading session; a reading habit will be formed sooner. It is the school's intention that students should read on their own.

This paper concludes that students find it fruitful reading during school time, because it allows them to cultivate a reading habit, and they can find time to do leisure reading when they grow older. Although there are different expectations of reading between teachers and students, they agree that reading promotes language proficiency. Reading indicates the motivation level of learners; it increases readers' vocabulary and language pattern power. With better knowledge, readers may be able to communicate with others with better ease, and in more sophisticated structures. A mandatory reading session may not work such miracles overnight. However, a habit may be formed when teenagers are doing it under supervision. Teenagers may enjoy reading better, at home or abroad; teachers around the world will also appreciate the environment some Asian students are in as they grow up, and provide proper reading strategies for them.

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Appendix 1

Please take a moment to respond to the following items. Put a tick in the box most represents your comment for the statement (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree). You comments are very important for the curriculum development of the school; please take your time to fill out this questionnaire. Thank you.

Item	1	2	3	4
1. Students read quietly in the reading session.				
2. Students bring their own reading materials.				
3. Students assume a good sitting posture while reading.				
4. I think reading sessions allow students to develop reading habits.				
5. Readers concentrate more in the morning.				
6. I think students learn to read faster in reading sessions.				
7. Students learn new words and phrases in reading.				
8. Students in this class need teacher's supervision while reading.				
9. Students choose their own reading materials.				
10. Teachers should prepare more loan reading materials for students.				
11. Students record reading progress properly.				
12. Students write reading reflections properly.				
13. Reading materials should be related in lessons.				
14. I like to read shorter materials in reading sessions.				
15. I like to read fiction in reading sessions.				
16. I think reading sessions should be at least 15 minutes.				
17. I think reading sessions should be scheduled in lunch time.				
18. Students should schedule reading time on their own.				
19. I think reading sessions are useful for me.				
20. I think the school arrangement on reading sessions is proper.				
21. Reading in Chinese is helpful for learning non-language subjects.				
22. Reading in English is helpful for learning non-language subjects.				
23. Reading makes people more cultured.				
24. Chinese reading improves students' Chinese communication skills.				
25. English reading improves students' English communication skills.				

Please comment freely on the morning reading sessions below:

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____

Thank you for answering the questionnaire.

** Items 21-25 appear only in Q2.*

Evaluation of EFL Materials Taught at Iranian Public High Schools

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Abstract

This article evaluates four EFL textbooks which have been prescribed for use in the Iranian high schools by the Ministry of Education. The merits and demerits of the textbooks are discussed in detail with reference to 13 common criterial features extracted from different materials evaluation checklists. The paper then gives some suggestions as to how to alleviate some of the shortcomings encountered in the textbooks.

Key Words: EFL curriculum, materials evaluation.

Introduction

The researcher has been teaching English for more than 8 years throughout which time his mind has almost always been occupied with the question, “Why does the TEFL curriculum in Iranian public high schools meet neither the expectations of the learners/teachers nor those of the specialists who were involved in the developing of the curriculum?” This apparent lack of success can be attributed to a plethora of factors involved in the various stages of curriculum planning.

According to Johnson (1989, pp.1-23) the following stages are involved in the process of curriculum development:

1. Policy determination

2. Means/ends specification (syllabus design)
3. Program implementation
4. Classroom implementation

The writer of the paper will examine the materials, among others, which are in fact the realization of the process of syllabus design subsumed under the heading of means/ends specification quoted above and will exclude other factors because it is beyond the scope of the current paper to include them.

Literature Review

Sheldon (1988) has offered several reasons for textbook evaluation. He suggests that the selection of an ELT textbook often signals an important administrative and educational decision in which there is considerable professional, financial, or even political investment. A thorough evaluation, therefore, would enable the managerial and teaching staff of a specific institution or organization to discriminate between all of the available textbooks on the market. Moreover, it would provide for a sense of familiarity with a book's content thus assisting educators in identifying the particular strengths and weaknesses in textbooks already in use. This would go a long way in ultimately assisting teachers with making optimum use of a book's strong points and recognizing the shortcomings of certain exercises, tasks, and entire texts.

If one accepts the value of textbooks in ELT then it must surely be with the qualification that they are of an acceptable level of quality, usefulness, and appropriateness for the context and people with whom they are being used. While the literature on the subject of textbook evaluation is not particularly extensive, various writers have suggested ways of helping teachers to be more sophisticated in their evaluative approach, by presenting evaluation 'checklists' based on supposedly generalizable criteria that can be used by both teachers and students in many different situations. Although Sheldon (1988) suggests that no general list of criteria can ever really be applied to all teaching and learning contexts without considerable modification, most of these standardized evaluation checklists contain similar components that can be used as helpful starting points for ELT practitioners in a wide variety of situations. Preeminent theorists in the field of ELT textbook design and analysis such as

Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1996) all agree, for instance, that evaluation checklists should have some criteria pertaining to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organizational, and logistical characteristics. Other important criteria that should be incorporated are those that assess a textbook's methodology, aims, and approaches and the degree to which a set of materials is not only teachable but also fits the needs of the individual teacher's approach as well as the organization's overall curriculum. Moreover, criteria should analyze the specific language, functions, grammar, and skills content that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing socio-cultural environment. Finally, textbook evaluations should include criteria that pertain to representation of cultural and gender components in addition to the extent to which the linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up to students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and/or institution. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) have suggested that there are three different types of material evaluation. They argue that the most common form is probably the ‘predictive’ or ‘pre-use’ evaluation that is designed to examine the future or potential performance of a textbook. The other types of textbook evaluation are the ‘in-use’ evaluation designed to examine material that is currently being used and the ‘retrospective’ or ‘post-use’ (reflective) evaluation of a textbook that has been used in any respective institution. This particular paper can be classified as the ‘retrospective’ type of evaluation in which an attempt is made to check the characteristics of the textbooks under study against a collection of criteria proposed by various researchers.

Method

Here I would like to document the materials that were used and the procedures that were followed to support the intent of this study.

Materials

I browsed about 10 checklists proposed by different authors and selected 13 features which were common to most of these checklists to do the evaluation .The following 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation schemes were consulted to evaluate the 4 EFL textbooks under study.

<u>The List of 10 Textbook-evaluation Checklists:</u>

- Chastain, K. (1971). *The development of modern language skills: Theory to practice* (pp. 376-384). Philadelphia. The Center for Curriculum Development, Inc.
- Tucker, C. A. (1975). Evaluating beginning textbooks. *English Teaching Forum*, 13, 355-361.
- Cowles, H. (1976). Textbook, materials evaluation: A comprehensive checksheet. *Foreign Language Annals*, 9 (4), 300-303.
- Daoud, A. & Celce-Murcia, M. (1979). Selecting and evaluating a textbook. In M. Celce-Murcia and L. McIntosh (Eds.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 302-307).Cambridge, MA: Newbury House Publishers.
- Candlin, C.N. & Breen, M.P. (1979). Evaluating, adapting and innovating language teaching materials. In C. Yorio, K. Perkins and J. Schacter (Eds.) On TESOL '79: The learner in focus (pp. 86-108). Washington, D.C.: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Rivers, W. (1981). *Teaching foreign-language skills* (pp. 475-483). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, D. (1983). Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37(2), 251-255.
- Sheldon, L. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42 (4), 237-246.
- Skierso, A. (1991). Textbook selection and evaluation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), Teaching English as a second or foreign language (pp. 432-453). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Ur, P. (1996). A course in language teaching: Practice & Theory (pp. 184-187). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

After a close examination of the checklists, these criteria were found to be almost common to all the schemes proposed by the above mentioned materials:

1. Are objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material?
2. Good vocabulary explanation and practice
3. Approaches educationally and socially acceptable to target community
4. Periodic review and test sections
5. Appropriate visual materials available
6. Interesting topics and tasks
7. Clear instructions
8. Clear attractive layout, print easy to read
9. Content clearly organized and graded
10. Plenty of authentic language

11. Good grammar presentation and practice
12. Fluency practice in all four skills
13. Encourage learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning

The Textbooks under Study

- Birjandy et al., (2003). English Book 1.Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran.
- Birjandy et al., (2003). *English Book 2*.Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran.
- Birjandy et al., (2004). *English Book 3*.Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran.
- Birjandy et al., (2004). *Learning to Read English for Pre-University Students*.Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran.

Procedure

I scrutinized the four EFL textbooks against each one of the features in the checklist one by one. The results of the scrutiny of all the four textbooks on every feature are combined under common headings to save space and time.

Results

Are objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material?

At the beginning of book 1 there is an introduction that attempts to clarify the intended teaching objectives .However, there is a state of indeterminacy as to the goals toward which the teachers and the learners are to set out. The ultimate goals of the curriculum are not clarified. The authors of the book do not clearly specify the final objectives of the curriculum in vivid words so that the stake holders know what they are expected to have learnt at the end of the program (long term objectives). Likewise, the short term objectives remain unspecified in the introduction. We do not know what the learners should be able to do to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended objectives at the end of each course e.g. at the end of each year in the educational program.

‘Introduction section’ is totally omitted from books 2 and 3, probably on the grounds that it is included in book 1. The authors might have assumed that if a teacher teaches book 2 or 3, he/she must definitely be aware of the contents of book 1. There is an introduction section in book 4 which is totally different from that of book 1 in terms of the objectives that it specifies as the goals of the lessons and the course.

Part (A) of the Introduction is concerned with why the section “New Words” is included in the book and how it must be instructed by the teachers .It reads, “The purpose of this section is to familiarize learners with the new vocabulary in the Reading Comprehension section.” However, this is not implemented in the books because the number of the new words introduced in the New Words Section is considerably less than the number of the new words in the Reading Comprehension section. The question that rises is how and where those missing words are to be taught? For example, in book (B) 1, lesson (L) 1, 22 new words are introduced in the Reading Comprehension but only 10 of them are included in the New Words Section. Likewise, in B2-L3, almost 24 new words are introduced, whereas, only 12 of them are included in the New Words Section. B3-L4 contains almost 43 new words in the Reading Comprehension and only 11 of them are clarified and practiced in the New Words Section. The New Words Section is totally excluded from B4 and nowhere in the introduction have the authors explained why. Other parts of the Introduction related to objectives specification mainly concern the activities and techniques that the teachers should not do and is less concerned with what they should do.

In sum, the final goals of the EFL program as well as the behavioral objectives which are aimed at by the curriculum designers are obscure and remain to be delineated. This may have various ramifications across the different phases of the curriculum i.e. classroom implementation and evaluation. Teachers actually dissent as to what teaching methodology to be employed, which skills and psycholinguistic abilities to emphasize and what to include in their exams. Now, the nationwide exams which are administered by the officials for third graders is playing the role of an agreement document among teachers which, in turn, has its own negative effects known as the ‘washback effect’.

Consequently, teachers teach in a way that their students can pass the tests which are administered at the final year of high school education and University Entrance Examination rather than executing the actual curriculum worked out by the academic specialists. In fact, there is now a hidden curriculum among learners and teachers which determines what they must do in the classroom.

Except for the inconsistencies mentioned above there is an acceptable degree of concordance between the objectives set in the introduction of the books for each section of the lessons in the series and their implementation in the material.

Good vocabulary explanation and practice

Two types of problem are observed in the explanation and use of the new vocabulary in the series. One is concerned with the lack of correspondence between the different senses of the word introduced in the New Words Sections and the senses which are used in the Reading Comprehensions. The other type is attributable to the poor contextualization of the new vocabulary in the New Words Sections.

At some points the New Words Section in B1 ignores the fact that a word might have several different senses. In some cases, the meaning for which a particular word is introduced in the New Words Section is not consistent with the meaning of the same word used in the Reading Comprehension, and this probably bewilders the students. For example, in B1-L1, the word "*pay*" is used as a part of the expression "*pay attention to*" in the Reading Comprehension whereas introduced as "*pay for sth*" in the New Words Section which are incompatible in meaning. In the same lesson the expression "*grow up*" is used in the Reading Comprehension meaning "*to become older*" and in New Words it is used as "*to raise farm produce*". Likewise, in B1- L3, the word "*find*" is used with two different senses in the Reading Comprehension and the New Words Section: it is introduced in the New Words Section as follows: "*Maryam can't <u>find</u> her notebook.*" whereas in the Reading Comprehension it is used in the following sentence: "*She returned an hour later and <u>found</u> Newton standing by the fire.*" '*Find*' which is used in the New Words Section means '*to get back after a search*' but in the Reading Comprehension it means '*to come across*'. As you see the meanings in the Reading Comprehension and the New Words Section do not converge. The word "*land*" in L2 is used in the Reading Comprehension to mean "*a country*" and it is introduced in the New Words Section to mean "a *farm or field*". Fortunately, this problem is limited to only B1and L1-L3 and no such cases can be traced in the remainder of the book and nor in other books of the series. In addition, in B4, explanation of the new vocabulary as an independent section is omitted from the book and is integrated into the Reading Comprehension section.

Some of the new vocabularies which the authors might have assumed to be more significant in carrying the semantic load of the related sentence have been included in the margins of the Reading Comprehension passages with some synonyms or definitions. No specific place is designed to practice the new words in B4. It might be more useful to include some more vocabulary exercises in each lesson so that learners can integrate the new words into their mental lexicon.

The second type of problem is probably 'poor contextualization of the new vocabulary' in the New Words Sections of the series from B1 to B3. In B1, L2, three new words are introduced in a single sentence: *"The <u>cows</u> are eating* <u>grass</u> *in the <u>field</u>."*

Likewise, in B2, L1, *"There are a <u>banana</u> and a <u>slice</u> of cake on the <u>plate.</u>"* or in the same lesson one encounters: *"When she <u>does</u> the <u>puzzle</u> <u>right</u>, the man gives her a <u>reward</u>."* This problem recurs in B2, L3 .Fortunately; these cases are restricted to the aforementioned cases and do not come up in other lessons. There are no such cases of poor contextualization in B3, and interestingly, a considerable improvement is observed in this book compared to B1 and B2 in this regard. However, the imbalance between the number of the new words included in the New Words Sections and those used in the Reading Comprehensions and other sections of the book becomes more substantial, e.g. in B3, L1, there are 56 new words included, but only 5 of them are explained in the New Words Section. These imbalances persist throughout the book and the writer of the article hopes they will be eliminated in the later revisions of the book.

Approaches educationally and socially acceptable to target community

According to White (1988, p.92) "A complete syllabus specification will include all five aspects: structure, function, situation, topic, skills. The difference between syllabuses will lie in the priority given to each of these aspects."

It seems that the authors of the books have sequenced the linguistic content of the materials according to the structural complexity, starting from less complex structures to more demanding ones. Even the reading passages are selected or, probably manipulated, so that they reinforce a particular grammatical point included in the grammar section of the books. However, the question of how and in what order the structures must be arranged in a structural syllabus is a controversial issue. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 88) pose the same question as writing, “what assumptions underlie the ordering in the structural syllabus? Does the verb ‘to be’ come first, because it is easier to learn? If so, in what sense? Structurally, it is the most complex verb in English. Does it come first because it is needed for later structures, for example the present continuous? Is it considered to be conceptually simpler? For many students, for example Indonesian students, it causes conceptual problems, since in Bahasa Indonesian it is frequently omitted. Alternatively, is the syllabus ordered according to usefulness? The verb ‘to be’ is more useful than, say, the present simple tense of the verb ‘to go’. If we are operating the criterion of usefulness, what context are we referring to? Do we mean usefulness in the outside world or usefulness in the classroom?”

Nevertheless, my personal experience in teaching these books shows that students learn ‘present perfect tense’ with less effort than ‘the passive structure’. Moreover, they learn the ‘passive structure’ better if they are introduced the ‘present perfect’ earlier. Thus, I suggest that the ‘present perfect’ which is introduced in B1, L9, be transposed to L8 and the ‘passive’ be moved to L9.

Although the reading skill, among others, looks to be of first priority in the design of the books, a big share of the lessons is devoted to grammar drills and the various forms of grammatical exercises throughout B1, B2 and B3. Fortunately, this problem is rectified in B4 of the series. About 50% of the content of each lesson in B1 to B3 is occupied with grammatical drills. This allocation seems to be unjustified as far as the findings of research on SL reading is concerned. Researchers have noticed the need for extensive vocabulary for reading and that grammatical knowledge is called upon in advanced levels of reading proficiency for complex and embedded structures as a last resort. (See Alderson and Urquhart, 1984a; Singer, 1981). Also, Lewis (1993, p. 17) says that “vocabulary (or lexis) carries more of the meaning of a text than does the grammar”.

Periodic review and test sections

At the beginning and the end of B1, 2, 3, there are review exercises. However, they are not enough. It seems better to include tests and review tests at the end of each one of the lessons. It is worth mentioning that the tests should be comparable and compatible with the format and the testing methods which will be employed in the mid- term and final exams. To compensate for this shortcoming of the textbooks teachers had developed supplementary workbooks for each one of the books. The final exams of this grade are designed, administered and corrected by state officials and the teachers play no direct roles in these processes. Therefore, despite many teachers' will and standards of teaching, with their hands up, they had to surrender to the strong negative washback effect of the exams, and spend some time and energy of the class on answering questions and tests similar to those which are administered by the officials of the Bureau of Education every year. In B4, surprisingly, there is no review or quiz whatsoever.

Clear attractive layout, print easy to read

Most often the paper of the books in the series is of low quality and in some cases is more like papers which are used for daily newspapers. If this is due to factors of economy or shortage of fund then how is it that for other books in the curriculum other than English like biology, physics, etc. there is no such a problem?

The books are acceptable regarding the clarity and orthographic beauty. However, it would be more appealing if colorful pictures of real people and real environment were used.

Appropriate visual materials available

Visual materials can be defined as the facilities that can be employed by teachers and learners to enhance language learning in classrooms. They may range from simple hand-made realia, charts and pictures to electronic and digital materials. For the series in question, there are VHS films and also the required electronic hardware available at schools for teachers and learners.

However, the content of the films whose primary goal is assumed to help the users promote their language skills and enhance learning processes is not effectively addressed. For instance, all the films developed for book 2 of the series, almost most of them, start with vocabulary teaching. A word, generally speaking, may have various properties worthy of attention for a learner. These can be, namely, phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties. To teach a word, means to provide information, implicitly or explicitly, on these properties for the learners and also to provide opportunities for them to rehearse the given words to store them in their minds. Or, at least, one or two of the mentioned lexical properties may be focused on, depending on the limitations one faces in terms of time and money. However, the vocabularies in the film episodes are introduced only in the orthographic form with no sounds or pictures accompanying. No attempt is made to clarify the meaning of the words which appear on the screen. The film producers could have designed pictures or maybe some other graphic materials to illustrate the intended meanings of the introduced words. They could also have provided the pronunciation of the words with some pauses between, to let the learners repeat the words orally. For this section of the film scripts to gain any practical value and use, wide changes are required to be made by the producers.

The second section in the film episodes seems to have been designed to help the learners improve their reading skills. They start with very brief scenes of two or more people with no clear verbal interactions, very similar to a pantomime, probably with the intention of motivating the learners to activate their related background world knowledge about the topic to be discussed in the reading passage of the books. There are some problems worthy of mention concerning these sections. First, the scenes are vague and obscure regarding the messages they are trying to communicate. The learners usually get confused in catching on to the meanings the scenes intend to convey. Consequently, different learners are lead to different interpretations of the scenes and therefore distracted from the main theme of the reading passages. Second, there is very little correspondence between the majority of the scenes which are shown and the lines the narrator or the actor in the film reads aloud, i.e., in the film something is shown which is not directly related to the lines of the passage which are read. This problem is most evident in the episode designed for Lesson 5, Book 2. Nevertheless, with a bit of creativity on the part of teachers, these sections can be used as a sort of pre- reading activity to motivate the learners to think of what is going to be discussed in the related reading passages. Third, another source of difficulty is the relatively fast rate of speech of the narrator in reading aloud the reading comprehension passages. Due to the nature of written texts, it is more difficult to process them as fast as the texts produced in oral interactions. Written texts include more embedded sentences and more instances of subordination, which results in longer sentences than oral texts. Written texts are thought to have more information density per utterance than oral texts. Consequently, as a result of these factors plus some others not mentioned here, written discourse requires more mental effort and thus more time to be processed. A slower rate of speech and inclusion of short pauses between the phrases and sentences might be quite helpful in this case. At the same time, this can provide the opportunity for the learners to repeat the phrases and sentences they hear to improve their pronunciation.

The third section in the episodes starts with a dialogue which seems to have been produced to delineate the use of the new structural patterns in actual communication. The dialogues are usually acted out at a normal rate of speech by the actors who seem to be native speakers of English. Again, very fast rate of speech and lack of space for any kind of practice are the problems that are faced in this section. Despite of all these problems, the teachers who want to use them can modify the procession rate of the work by manually stopping the device and having the learners repeat the sentences spot-check their understanding. However, the practicality of these sections can possibly be enhanced if these modifications are built into them so that less experienced teachers and maybe the learners could make more effective use of them.

The last sections of the episodes are aimed at teaching the new phones included in the related lessons. The new sounds are introduced through a series of words having a particular sound segment in common. They are pronounced in the by the teacher in the film with an exaggerated emphasis on the new sound patterns with the intention of making them conspicuous to the learners' attention. However, no exercise is included. The producers could, at least, include some parts for the learners to repeat the new sounds.

On the whole, the film can possibly be improved in practicality and pedagogical value for classroom use if the above mentioned modifications are made to it.

Interesting topics and tasks

The topics of readings vary from factual to anecdotal ones and sometimes are funny stories. It is difficult to judge on behalf of the learners whether those are interesting for them or not and it needs research. Nevertheless, the majority of the topics are attractive to the learners in my EFL classes. However, it seems that it would be better if the topics are updated to become more congruent with the taste of the new generation which might be a bit different from that of the authors who designed the books at least ten years ago. Nowadays, learners' needs are different from what they used to be and; hence it looks better to include texts more related to computer games, internet, and satellite programs. For instance, it is possible to take and adapt some of the texts, words and jargons which are currently used in the software such as the Windows and Linux. It is also possible to include adapted and simplified versions of quotations and sayings of scholars renowned for their wisdom and eloquence in line with higher culturally valued objectives of education such as trustworthiness, sacrifice, courage, punctuality, patience, honesty, etc. My personal experience shows that the meaning and content of the materials taught in English classes have strong and long lasting effects on the minds of the learners. This is a valuable opportunity if we want to educate them mentally and spiritually. I have observed that the story of Oliver Twist in B2 attracts the students more than the story of a monkey known as Washoe. We should bear in mind that as teachers ,our professional and social responsibility do not boil down to imparting a handful of factual information concerning the grammar or meaning of a series of words and sentences in our classes, rather we should care for the transfer of cultural values to the new generations.

Clear instructions

Most of the instructions are clear and easy to understand for the learners in the books in the series. Even if the learners might not be familiar with the structures and the lexis used in the instructions, the models given for each group of exercises provide contextual clues for the learners as to what they are expected to do. However, some of the instructions are lacking in the required contextual information and in the meantime, are beyond many of the learners' English language proficiency in terms of linguistic complexity. For instance, in B1, L4, the instruction reads: "Now *look at the pictures in your book or the things around you and make* *some sentences like the ones in Speaking 1 and Speaking 3."* In addition, in the same book in L8 we encounter the same problem of complexity in the instruction that follows: "*Write six sentences in the passive form. Three about what happened in the past and three about what will happen in the future."* This problem exists in B2, too. One possible solution might be to use the learners' native language instead of the target language in the instructions, particularly for B1 and B2 where the learners are not able to understand such sentences.

Content clearly organized and graded

Some of the Reading Comprehension texts tend to be more difficult for the learners to understand than others due to their structural complexity. In working with learners from different proficiency levels I realized that the learners misunderstood or did not comprehend some parts of the Reading Comprehension texts not because they did not know the meaning of the new words included in them but simply because those sentences were too complex for them to parse. After I applied the Readability formula developed by Fog (cited in Farhady et al. 1998, p.82), to my surprise, I found that there was a logical sequencing of the texts according to the obtained text difficulty. The obvious question to ask is how is it possible for two texts which are of roughly the same readability indices to be perceived as unequally difficult by the learners? There might be many possible factors which render a text difficult or easy to understand. Content of the passage, the background knowledge of the reader, rhetorical organization, information density, number of unfamiliar words, and length and complexity of the sentences in a text are all possible candidates to make a text difficult or easy to understand.

There are different versions of Fog's formula which make use of factors such as number of syllables or words, length of sentences, or the syntactic complexity of sentences. If you utilize the one which is based on the number of words and sentences, you will find a logical sequencing of the reading materials in the book, but if you apply the formula which is sensitive to the number of sentences and number of complex sentences you will find a differential outcome. On the basis of the latter formula, - i.e. **number of words ÷ number of sentences + (number of compound sentences ÷ number of sentences) × 40** - the text containing more compound and longer sentences will have greater readability indices indicating more text difficulty. Considering the fact that most of the unknown words in the texts are taught prior to teaching the Reading Comprehension texts in the books, therefore, it is quite plausible to conclude that the number of new words can play no major role in making the text difficult or easy to understand for the learners, rather it is the number of longer and more compound and complex sentences that probably determine the difficulty or easiness of the texts. Thus, the authors of the book should have used the sentence-complexity-sensitive formula to sequence the Reading Comprehension texts in the series. However, to solve the problem two solutions are available: the first one is to 're-organize' the texts according to the readability indices obtained form the sentence-complexity-sensitive formula. This solution needs more modifications and tuning of the texts because most of the Reading Comprehension texts have been selected according to the prominence of the particular grammatical structures which they had and the writers had intended to include them in the lessons. Moreover, it requires a close reconsideration of the new vocabulary that the transposed texts include. The second solution is to break long and complex sentences down into shorter and less complex ones. This solution has its own particular problems and challenges, too. In many cases it is not possible to break a compound sentence down into its constituent clauses and phrases and assemble them into simple sentences without spoiling the meaning of the original sentence. For example, in B2, L2, there are at least 8 compound sentences which are perceived as challenging to the learners. One of the sentences which is used at the very beginning of the text reads: ***"Did you know that the same side of the moon faces the earth all the time?"*** As you see it is not so easy to change this sentence into some simpler sentences which convey the same idea or range of meanings. Likewise, at the ending line of the same text you come across: ***"So now you know what people who lived before 1959 didn't know."*** At the first glance one might conclude that sentence simplification is the least troublesome solution, however, in practice, it proves most challenging. In sum, the former solution, however strenuous, feels more practical and easier to manage.

Plenty of authentic language

Authenticity is defined as follows by Johnson and Johnson (1999):

> Texts are said to be authentic if they are genuine instances of

> language use as opposed to exemplars devised specially for language teaching purposes. The question of authenticity emerged as an important issue within communicative language teaching and in relation to notional/functional syllabuses, where emphasis was placed on ensuring that the classroom contained natural language behavior, with content identified as relevant to the learner through the process of needs analysis. There are various other reasons why authenticity may be regarded as important. One is that it presents learners with language exposure similar to that enjoyed by native speakers, including all the characteristics of natural language which may be necessary for the learner properly to interpret texts. In addition, there is motivational attraction for insisting on authentic texts, created as means of communicating content and not for some pedagogic purpose. (p.24)

If we base our discussion on the definition of authenticity which is given above, and see it as the degree the materials concord with actual instances of language the learners will encounter in real situations, the materials can be considered as authentic. In fact, the learners' main use of English language will be limited to reading texts and passages they come up with in academic contexts in future in case they continue their education in universities. In other cases, depending upon the learners' personal needs, their application of their knowledge of English will be limited to other instances of language used in catalogues, manuals or magazines. In few cases, they might need to listen to English programs on satellites or other media in their everyday life and, in rare cases, to communicate verbally with a foreigner who speaks English. Considering the fact that the bulk of materials is devoted to reading activities, and some space is given to dialogues to provide opportunities for the learners to practice verbal communication, the materials can, to certain extent, be regarded as authentic.

Good grammar presentation and practice

Grammar drills occupy the lion's share of each lesson and range from repetition, substitution to transformational ones. They are aimed at providing the learners with oral practice of the intended grammatical points. The oral drills are techniques which were mainly utilized in Audio-Lingual method and similar approaches to second language teaching for various pedagogical purposes one of which was automatization of the grammatical patterns. Automatization can be viewed from two perspectives: One is to develop the ability to give quick and in-time responses to particular verbal stimuli mainly in phatic communion. The second one is to develop the ability to process a given piece of information without awareness or attention, making relatively more use of long-term memory. For example, to produce a particular sentence according to the grammatical rules of a language. However, because the so called standard tests which are usually administered by the officials of the Ministry of Education are almost completely lacking in tests items measuring the productive ability of the learners, the teachers, for this or maybe some other reasons, usually skip the drills and replace them with the explicit explanation of the rules and formulas underlying the patterns at issue *(strong negative washback effect).* Frankly speaking, in regular English classes at high schools they are most often ***disregarded*** by the majority of the teachers.

Fluency practice in all four skills

The books have devoted extravagant space of the lessons to materials which primarily aim at developing and enhancing the reading ability of the learners. Considering the idea that the main needs of the learners might be to acquire an acceptable degree of mastery and skill in reading materials written in English, this allocation looks justified. However, neither in the introduction nor in the lessons has it been explicitly mentioned by the writers of the books how to treat listening comprehension and writing skills. It is totally left to the teachers to decide whether to practice it or not. There is no section in the lessons specifically designed to develop and enhance listening skills in the learners. However, the teachers can probably work on this skill through having the learners listen to the reading passages read aloud by the teachers or other learners in the classroom. To involve the learners actively and attentively to listen to the passages read aloud, the teacher can ask various comprehension questions at different points or at the end of the listening activity to check their understanding. Speaking skill is also taken into account though indirectly and as a marginal activity. There are certain questions at the end of each reading passage which require the learners to give oral answers.

The last and not the least is the writing skill. If we define the writing skill as the ability to communicate one's thoughts and ideas to a particular person or group of addressees through the orthographic form of a language, it is possible to claim that it is somehow neglected in the series. Although, some exercises of the lessons are intended to enhance the writing skills of the learners, they are limited to a few isolated sentence production activities in a decontextualized and sterile milieu of communication. Nowhere in the book, are the learners assigned writing activities to the sense which was proposed above. The authors could have included writing activities in different formats varying from *controlled* to *free* writing according to the proficiency levels of the learner groups.

Encourage learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning

Regarding the components of the learner training in the series, the revised edition of book 4, characterizes the features of a good reader in the Introduction section as follows: *"A good reader is the one who is active and has specific goals in mind before starting to read. He/She continuously checks his/her understanding of the text and the text itself against the predetermined goals." [Translated from Persian]*. The authors continue, *"A good reader usually browses the whole text before starting to read and pays attention to the organization and structure of the text as well as other parts which are relevant and compatible to the goals of the reading. In the process of reading, he/she often tries to predict the incoming data in the text. He/She reads selectively, and continuously revises his decisions as to what to read with close attention, what to read quickly, what to read again, and what not to read and etc. [ibid. translated from Persain]*

From the above quotation it is understood that the authors are attempting to familiarize the learners with cognitive and behavioral strategies or, at least, raise their consciousness about learning strategies. Moreover, throughout the lessons learners occasionally come up with certain vocabulary learning strategies such as building up semantic trees which relate different words from a common semantic field. It is worth mentioning that nowhere in the books 1-3 is there a part explicitly addressing the issue of strategy training whatsoever.

The writer of the paper believes that learner training is helpful and valuable in pushing our learners toward the intended goals, of both the learners themselves and the teachers, but, after all, there are a number of unresolved issues to do with the application of learner strategy research to learner training (see Ellis, 1994, p. 530-533). It is not clear whether the meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies which are unconsciously applied by the good language learners are teachable in a conscious way. In the meantime, it is particularly vague whether strategies are sufficiently generalizable to be used with a range of learners who will themselves be affected by factors such as context, cognitive styles, and proficiency levels. Nor is there adequate evidence that strategy training leads to improvement in language learning outcomes. As McDonough (1995, p. 172-3) points out, ‘although learning strategies and strategy training are very important elements in the teaching/learning process, great care has to be exercised in moving from a descriptive and taxonomic position to an interventionist one.’

In conclusion, regarding the above mentioned criteria, B4 is considered to be qualified in helping the learners to develop some of the learning strategies found in good language learners, although the whole idea of strategy training appears to be a thorny and a controversial issue. Books 1, 2 and 3 in the series need much revision in this regard.

Conclusion

EFL textbooks can play an important role in the success of language programs. In fact, they are the realization of the processes of means/ends specification in the curriculum planning. Sheldon (1988) suggests that "textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237). They provide the objectives of language learning; they function as a lesson plan and working agenda for teachers and learners. Cunningsworth (1995) argues that textbooks are an effective resource for self-directed learning, an effective resource for presentation material, a source of ideas and activities, a reference source for students, a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who have yet to gain in confidence. He also contends that we should also ensure "that careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program." (p. 7).

One of the ways to amend and improve a curriculum is to improve the textbooks and the materials employed in the program. And this is not possible unless the consumers involved, systematically evaluate and assess them on the basis of some established criteria. The reports of these types of evaluations can be shared among teachers and the authors of the materials to gain more effective EFL textbooks. Moreover, as Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest, textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material.

The writer of the paper believes that the evaluation of the EFL materials currently taught at public high schools requires a deeper and more exhaustive analysis and scrutiny by a group of experienced teachers and that the viewpoints and the ideas of a single researcher might not be adequately reliable because however hard one tries, it is almost impossible to be unbiased and impartial in ones judgments.

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Setting EFL Reading Comprehension Questions in Learners' L1?

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Abstract
This paper tries to address the question 'Will it make a difference if reading comprehension questions are set in learners' L1 instead of English (L2)?' Past studies addressing this issue have produced contradictory findings. Through a cross-sectional investigation of 3,426 middle school EFL students' performance in English reading comprehension tests, this study shows that setting questions in learners' L1 or L2 will make no significant difference in learners' reading comprehension testing results if their competences in L1 and L2 are both sufficient for the task. However, if their competence in L2 is inadequate while their competence in L1 is not, they tend to perform better if the questions are set in L1. The author suggests that EFL reading comprehension tests, especially those for beginning learner, set the questions in learners' L1 whenever feasible.

Keywords: Assessing reading, language of the questions, L1 and L2.

Introduction

Assessing reading comprehension in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) involves a wide range of factors, ranging from the conception of reading (e.g. the nature of reading, reading process, reading outcome and levels of comprehension) to the framework for assessment (e.g. setting, assessment rubrics, the designed input and the expected response). This paper addresses issues concerning only the language of the questions, that is, the language that is used to present questions in testing ESL/EFL (English as a Second or Foreign Language) reading comprehension. The term 'language of the questions' may have two different senses: it may refer to the concrete use of language (i.e. the specific wording and structures) that presents the question; alternatively, it may also refer to the linguistic medium in which the questions are presented, that is, a natural language (e.g. English, French, Chinese etc). In this paper, the language of the questions refers to the second sense if it is not noted otherwise.

The language of the questions in an ESL/EFL reading comprehension test is open for two possible choices: 1) English, the same target language (L2) as the texts for reading; 2) the learners' first native language (L1). Using L1 or L2 as the language of the questions is a decision affected by a range of factors. It may be determined by the teaching method involved. For example, the Grammar-Translation method uses learners' native language as the medium of instruction and the language of the questions is usually the learners' native language (L1), especially for the beginners. However, the Direct Method uses the target language exclusively in teaching and the language of the questions has to be the target language (L2) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The decision on the language is also influenced by learners' L1 backgrounds and their prior knowledge of English (L2). For example, if the intended learners are illiterate in L1 or do not share the same L1, it is impossible for the language of the questions to be set in L1. However, if the difficulty of the language of the questions (Note: in the sense of the wording, structures and the expected type of response) will not exceed that of the text, the language of the questions may then be set in L2 (Alderson, 2000).

Since 1980s, according to Chen and Donin (1997), a concern has been evident among EFL teachers about the impact of the language of the questions on assessing learners' performance in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. The key issue is which language is better for presenting the questions, learners' L1 or L2 if learners share the same L1 and are already literate in their L1. An answer to the question will undoubtedly offer the designers of an ESL/EFL reading comprehension test a useful alternative, especially when the intended testees are beginning learners.

To answer this question, we need to examine what makes a good question in a reading comprehension test. According to Alderson (2000), the language of the questions (Note: in the sense of the wording, structures and the expected type of response) should not be harder to understand than the texts themselves. Therefore, if questions set in L1 are easier than those set in L2, the questions should be better set in L1. Furthermore, if ESL/EFL learners are likely to ask themselves some questions about the target L2 text in their native language, the language of the questions set in L1 will therefore be more authentic and better as it is more faithful to what is under examination (Shohamy, 1984). Finally, if learners' prior L1 knowledge is a pedagogical resource for TESOL, setting the language questions in L1 will have greater pedagogical advantage.

Shohamy (1984) found that multiple-choice questions in L1 were easier than the same questions translated into L2. However, contrary to those studies, Chen et al (1997) found in their study the use of the L1 or L2 as the index of comprehension of L2 texts did not make any significant difference in the students' L2 reading performance.

Why did the two studies differ in their findings? As noted earlier, many factors may affect a reading comprehension test. Statistically speaking, when all the variables are controlled and assume roughly the same value except for the designated variable – the language of the questions, the difference in the learners' performance in the test will then yield an answer to the question whether it is better to use L1 or L2 as the language of the questions. If this is so, what may account for the discrepancy between the two findings? A closer look at the two studies indicates that the possible cause of such a discrepancy lies not in the design of the tests but in their sampling. The two studies were based respectively on a particular cohort of learners whose competence in L2 was similar enough to participate respectively in the designated studies. Therefore their findings were true and applicable only with the populations from which their subjects were sampled. In other words, the discrepancy may be because their findings are applicable to different populations.

Secondly, is it more authentic to set the language of the questions in L1? This is a question that concerns the relationships between language and thought. According to Gray

(2001), we can survive in a wide range of conditions because we can think of ways to modify them to suit our needs. Thoughts, which serve to make sense of our environment and represent our knowledge of the world, are therefore crucial to our survival. Language, on the other hand, represents concepts and is fine-tuned with thought and knowledge to reflect our physical and social environments. It follows that language becomes central to human cognitive activities (Hampson & Morris, 1996). According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), L2 learning is closely related to learners' existing L1-referenced prior knowledge. In the course of meaning making in reading, beginning learners usually match the incoming information against prior knowledge and set up new connections between their existing L1-referenced concepts and the target L2 linguistic forms. L2 acquisition theories, no matter whether they follow a nativist, cognitive or sociocultural model, appear to agree that 'learners' performance in a second language is influenced by the language, or languages, that they already know' (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p.13). Such mediation by L1 at an early stage of L2 learning (Kroll & Sunderman, 2003) was also found in many earlier studies. Grabe (1991), for example, holds the view that learning L2 vocabulary may be considered 'largely a matter of remembering a second label' (p.387). Likewise, Jiang (2000) and Lin (2002) also found in their investigations that L2 learners often resorted to their L1-refrenced knowledge at their initial stages of L2 learning. Likewise, learners are also found to 'consciously and actively transfer information from their first language for use in the L2' (O'Malley et al, 1990, p.70) or to borrow from their L1 by translating and incorporating it with whatever implicit and explicit L2 knowledge available when they cope with an L2 learning task (Ellis, 1990).

It is clear from the discussion of the relationship between language and learning that presenting reading comprehension questions in learners' L1 is of particular pedagogical value in assessing their reading comprehension especially with the beginners. It coincides with learners' learning strategies, elicits what actually goes on in their minds and achieves its authenticity via its links to learners' L1-referenced mental presentation of the meanings of the text that takes shape in their process of reading.

Thirdly, according to Harbord (1992), Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) and Wigglesworth (2002), the potential of students' knowledge of L1 is a resource that should merit considerable attention in any attempt to develop a post-communicative approach to TESOL. Nation (2001) notes:

> There is a general feeling that first language translations should not be used in the teaching and testing of vocabulary. This is quite wrong. Translation is one of a number of means of conveying meaning and in general is no better or worse than the use of pictures, real objects, definitions, L2 synonyms and so on. (p. 351)

What is more, according to Nation (2001), using L1 has the pedagogical advantage of being quick, simple and easily understood and its use should be balanced with its disadvantage of reducing the time available for the use of the target language – English. It follows that setting the language of the questions in L1 is desirable in TESOL if it does not reduce seriously the time available for the use of English provided that the intended learners share the same L1 and are of similar proficiency in their L1.

Method

The purpose of this study is to address the question ‘Will it make a difference if reading comprehension questions are set in learners’ L1 instead of English (L2)?’ It intends to explore the reason for the discrepancy in the findings reported in literature and thus offer ESL/EFL teachers a framework of reference if they need one in deciding whether to set reading comprehension questions in learners’ L1 or L2.

Hypothetically, as we noted earlier in the paper, we may say that the discrepancy in the findings of the two earlier studies might be attributed to some difference in the variances of their samples. To indirectly confirm this hypothesis in this study, it is necessary for the study to adopt a cross-sectional sampling and test with differing samples the same H_0 hypothesis, that is, *setting EFL reading comprehension questions in L1 or L2 makes no difference in learners’ results in the test*. In other words, if the samples of the study are taken from different sections of the population and if these samples differ significantly from each other in their L2 competence, testing the H_0 hypothesis with these different samples may cast a new light on the issue because the findings of this study may help to interpret the difference in the findings reported in the existing literature.

In order to secure a cross-sectional approach in investigation, this study engaged EFL learners from four different year-levels: Junior Year 2, Junior Year 3, Senior Year 1 and Senior Year 2 in China. These four levels may map exactly onto Years 8-11 in western education systems and will be referred to as such in the remainder of the paper.

3,426 Chinese students at Years 8-11 from four different middle schools took eight different reading comprehension tests: 812 from Year 8; 947 from Year 9; 841 from Year 10 and 826 from Year 11. They have formally studied English as a foreign language respectively for 1.5, 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 years and their proficiencies in English cannot be compared to any established framework like TOEFL or IELTS because there is no such information available.

Each of the eight tests used in the study comprised six English texts and each text is followed by five questions. Four of the eight tests have their questions set in L1 and will be referred to as Series I tests while the other four have the questions set in L2 and will be referred to as Series II tests hereafter. The two tests for the same year-level in Series I and II use identical English texts and the questions following them are also the same except for the language of the questions, that is, one in L1 and the other in L2.

Results

The answers to the questions in the tests were categorical in nature: T or F for True/False questions; A, B, C or D for multiple-choice questions. To prepare for a statistic analysis, they were quantified: the incorrect answers were assigned a value of *0* and the correct ones took the value of *1*.

The test scores were then tested for reliability, using SPSS Alpha (Version 11.5 for Windows) to examine their internal consistency. The statistics are presented in Table 1. It is clear from the table that the Alpha estimates of Series I and II tests demonstrate a clear internal consistency.

Table 1: *Coefficient Alpha* estimates (Series I & II)

	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Series I	0.7488	0.7654	0.6373	0.6620
Series II	0.7925	0.7831	0.7456	0.6694

Having confirmed the reliability of the tests, the test scores were then used to test the H_0 hypothesis that the two cohorts of participants who participated in the tests at each of the four year-levels have the same variance. In other words, H_0 hypothesis is that the students who did Series I test and those who did Series II test belonged to the same population and demonstrated the same variance in their performance in English reading comprehension. If H_0 hypothesis is sustained by the data, the difference between the means of the test scores is statistically insignificant and the finding is sustained that setting the language of the questions in L1 or L2 will not lead to significant difference in learners' performance in their ESL/EFL reading comprehension tests and vice versa.

To test H_0 hypothesis, the homogeneity of variance test is used to find out whether the means of the test scores collected for Series I and II tests have the same variance and thus belong to the same population. Since such a test is embedded in t-test in SPSS, an independent-sample t-test was conducted at each of the four year-levels although we were not interested in the statistic outcome of the t-tests (e.g. the t-values, degrees of freedom, means of variables, 95% confidence intervals of difference, etc) because the H_0 hypothesis to be tested was about the homogeneity of variance of those variables not the prediction of the values that the means of those variables might take. For the sake of clarity and better relevance, the statistics of t-test of the means have been left out and, for the sake of convenience in comparison, the results of the four homogeneity of variance tests are presented together in Table 2. ANOVA was not used because it is designed for comparing means from more than two samples (SPSS, 1999) and the comparison required for this study was comparing two means from the same year-level doing EFL reading comprehension tests with the questions set in L1 or L2.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test

Series I & Series II	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
	F	Significance
Year 8	3.207	.074
Year 9	.349	.555
Year 10	21.189	.000
Year 11	1.511	.019

It is clear from Table 2 that the significance levels of the *F* statistics of the Levene's tests vary at the four years. Two are larger than .05 while the other two are smaller. According to the theory of homogeneity of variance test, H_0 hypothesis of equal variance is sustained if the significance level of *F* larger than .05 and it is discarded if it is smaller than .05. The significance values of *F* for Years 8 and 9 are larger than .05, indicating that the students doing Series I and II tests at Years 8 and 9 demonstrated the same variances. The significance values of *F* for Years 10 and 11 are smaller than .05, indicating that those students at Years 10 and 11 performed differently when the language of the questions was changed from L1 to L2. In other words, setting questions in L1 or L2 made no significant difference in Years 8 and 9 students' test results and the H_0 hypothesis was statistically sustained. However, the same hypothesis was not supported at Years 10 or 11, and the H_0 hypothesis had to be discarded accordingly.

Statistically speaking, the homogeneity of variance test is designed to test whether the means of quantitative variables are equal in their variance or their spread differ significantly (SPSS, 1999). To find out more about the relationships between the variables themselves, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to examine if there exists any linearity in their relationships. The underlying assumption for using Pearson Correlation Coefficient was that there would be a strong linear relationship between Series I and II test results if the questions set in L1 or L2 made no significant difference in learners' reading comprehension. That is to say, one who did well when the questions were set in L1 would do equally well when they were set in L2.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient could not be applied directly to individual test scores, because, in order to avoid any unwanted influence of prior knowledge of the test, the participating students were asked to do only one test. Consequently, Series I and II tests results came respectively from two different cohorts of students and they were not paired. Therefore the means of the scores had to be used instead. As an illustration, consider Year 8 Series I and II tests. 440 Year 8 students did Series I and another 372 Year 8 did Series II. The means (i.e. *MeansI* and *MeansII*) *of* the scores of the two groups for the comprehension of the six texts in their Series I and II tests are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Means of Series I and II Tests Scores at Year 8

	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6
Series I (*MeansI*)	4.93	4.66	3.72	4.52	4.16	3.64
Series II (*MeansII*)	4.85	4.40	2.98	4.04	4.01	3.85

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was then used to analyse the relationship between these two groups of 6 means (i.e. *MeansI* and *MeansII*). The correlations coefficients of the four years are thus calculated respectively and for the sake of convenience in comparison, they are presented together in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients between Series I and II Score Means

		***MeansI* (Questions set in L1) and *MeansII* (Questions set in L2)**
Year 8	Pearson Correlation	.849(*)
	Significant (2-tailed)	.033
	Number	6
Year 9	Pearson Correlation	.781
	Significant (2-tailed)	.067
	Number	6
Year 10	Pearson Correlation	.482
	Significant (2-tailed)	.333
	Number	6
Year 11	Pearson Correlation	.237
	Significant (2-tailed)	.652
	Number	6

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

It is clear from Table 4 that the correlation coefficients vary considerably from one year-level to another. At Year 8, the correlation coefficient is as high as .849. However, the linearity diminishes when the year-level increases. The correlation coefficient for Year 9 is lower at .781 and yet still demonstrates a linear relationship. However, such linearity disappears when it comes to Years 10 and 11 as .482 and .237 do not indicate obvious linearity in their relationships.

Discussion

The homogeneity of variance tests of the means of the participating students' test results revealed an interesting finding – Years 8 and 9 students appeared to perform equally well disregarding the questions were set in L1 or L2 while Years 10 and 11 students' performance differed significantly when the language of the questions was switched from L1 to L2. Similarly, the Pearson correlation coefficients of the means of those students' test results also indicated that Year 8 and 9 tended to perform equally well no matter the language of the questions was L1 or L2 while Year 10 and 11 students had significantly different results when the language of the questions changed from L1 to L2.

The conflicting analytic results posed two questions the study had to address: Why did Years 8 and 9 students differ significantly from Years 10 and 11 students? Why did linearity diminish when the year-level increased? The discrepancy could not be attributed to the design of the study, which was based on a census type of sampling and whose samples were sufficiently large: 1688 subjects for Series I tests and 1738 subjects for Series II tests, about 400 at each year-level. With so large a sample size, such factors as idiosyncratic differences among participating students in terms of their L2 reading abilities can be ignored statistically, and the analyses conducted through the Independent Samples T-Tests and Pearson Correlation Coefficient in SPSS are widely accepted in statistical studies.

Why can the H_0 hypothesis find support at Years 8 and 9 but not at Years 10 or 11? To answer this question, we may look at the texts used in the tests. Due to the limitation of space, we shall look at 4 of the 24 texts used in the tests, that is, the first text in each of the four tests across the four year-levels (see Texts 1-4 in Appendix).

It is clear that the four texts differ in what Alderson (2000) called the topic, content, type and genre of a text. Text 1 (Year 8) is a dialogue on a bus, presuming on the part of the reader some prior knowledge of the commencement of a new semester at school and the protocol of greeting among fellow students. Text 2 (Year 9) is a story and expects the reader to have some prior knowledge of travelling by train. When it comes to Text 3 (Year 10) and Text 4 (Year 11), they become demanding in terms of presumed prior conceptual and sociocultural knowledge: Text 3 requires a prior knowledge of machinery and its functions in modern society while Text 4 assumes the reader has some prior knowledge of America and American culture such as the Statue of Liberty may be referred to as Miss Liberty.

Similarly, the comparison of the questions associated with the four texts also indicates a variety in difficulty. According to Alderson (2000), textually explicit, textually implicit and script-based questions vary in difficulty: from the least difficult to the most difficult. The questions for Texts 1 and 2 are either textually explicit or textually implicit and their expected responses are basically a matter of matching the responses with the texts as most of the expected information for the responses can be found in the texts. In contrast, those for Texts 3 and 4 are largely script-based and their expected responses require more inferential reasoning processes and more background knowledge. Therefore, the questions are of less difficulty for Years 8 and 9 students while those for Years 10 and 11 students are of greater difficulty.

According to Alderson (2000), texts that differ in topic, content, type and genre may facilitate or impede the reading process and thus vary in their demand on readers' L2 competence. If a text is simple, students tend to respond equally well disregarding the questions are set in L1 or L2, as they can access the necessary knowledge and learning strategies through either L1 or L2. Following the theory of transfer, the L1 affects L2 learning through its influence on the hypotheses that learners construct (Ellis, 1994). During the process of reading, the L2 readers needs to construct constantly their hypotheses of the meanings of the text (Rumelhart, 1994) and the L1-referenced knowledge is accessible when the L2 text is comprehensible. However, when the L2 text becomes linguistically and conceptually complex and less comprehensible, students who are more competent in L1 and less so in L2 will respond to the L1 questions better because they may make use of the clues hidden in the more comprehensible questions, but such a L1 transfer will not be possible if the questions are set in L2. That is why the H_0 hypothesis was statistically sustained at Years 8 and 9 but not at Years 10 or 11. Likewise, the increasing difficulty and challenge imposed by the texts across the four years may also account for the diminishment of linearity in the relationship between *MeansI* and *MeansII* because, as the year-level increased, the availability of the L2-referenced knowledge decreased more rapidly than that of the L1-referenced knowledge and the discrepancy between students' L2 competence and the difficulty of the reading tasks increased accordingly.

In comparison with the findings of other studies, the findings of this study about Years 8 and 9 students' performance in the reading comprehension tests agreed with Chen and Donin's (1997), that is, readers do not perform better in L1 than in L2. However, the findings of this study about Years 10 and 11 students' performance in the tests confirmed Shohamy's findings (1984) that the questions set in L1 were easier than in L2. It appears that, apart from the influence of the linguistic distance between the L1 and L2 as indicated in Chen and Donin's study (1997), the nature of the L2 reading tasks also played a very important role. This was particularly obvious in this study, that is, when the linguistic distance between the L1 and the L2 was the same across the four year-levels, it was the difference in the nature of the reading tasks and their varying demands on the readers' responses that led to the difference in the students' performance in their L2 reading comprehension tests.

Conclusion

This investigation of 3,426 EFL students' responses to reading comprehension questions set in L1 or L2 showed that setting the questions in L1 or L2 would not make significant difference in students' responses if the students' competence in L1 and L2 was equally sufficient to meet the challenge imposed by the reading task. However, if they were more competent in L1 and if their competence in L2 was inadequate, they tended to score better if the questions were set in L1 as the additional clues in L1 enabled them to apply their L1-referenced prior knowledge and strategies to the new task, which would be impossible if the language of the questions was set in L2.

It must be noted that, although this study represents a step toward a better understanding of the impact of setting the language of the questions in learners' L1 and L2 and has yielded an account for the discrepancy in the past findings about the language of the questions in

ESL/EFL reading comprehension tests, it has its limitations. It is still unclear about the relationships between the language of the questions and the three question types. Further studies need to find out whether setting the language of the questions to L1 or L2 would make any significant difference in learners' responses if the questions were textually explicit, textually implicit or script-based.

For all its limitations, this study has shown that, when the intended learners, especially EFL beginners, shared the same L1 and are of similar proficiency in L1, it would be pedagogically better to set the reading comprehension questions in L1 than in L2 as it would be more authentic in matching learners' reading strategies and it might elicit more truthful and better responses. It would also be educationally beneficial as more positive feedbacks are believed to be more constructive and more encouraging to language learners, especially the beginners.

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Appendix

Text 1 (Year 8)

There are many students on the bus. They are going to school. Today is the first day of the term.

Now the students are in school.

'Hello, Lucy and Lily,' says Meimei. 'How are you?'

'We're fine, thank you,' say the twins.

Jim meets Li Lei. 'Hi, Li Lei! It's good to see you again!' says Jim.

'It's good to see you, too,' says Li Lei. 'How's Polly?'

'She's fine, thanks,' says Jim.

Questions 1-5 are based on Text 1. They are all multiple choice questions.

1. Who are on the bus?

   a) Workers. b) Farmers. c) Teachers. d) Students.
2. Where are these people going?

   a) To work. b) To the farm. c) To teach. d) To school.
3. What kind of day is today?

   a) Monday.

   b) March 1.

   c) The first day when a new term begins.

   d) The first day to go to work.
4. How are Lucy and Lily related?

   a) Good friends. b) Sisters. c) Brothers. d) Classmates.
5. How does Jim feel when he sees Li Lei again?

   a) Happy. b) Excited. c) Sorry. d) Just so-so.

Text 2 (Year 9)

One day, Lei Feng was going to take a train to Dandong from Shenyang Station. He saw some people standing and talking in front of the gate. Lei Feng went over and saw a woman sitting there. She looked very worried.

Lei Feng went up to her and asked, 'What's the matter, madam? Can I help you?'

'I'm from Shandong,' the woman said, 'and I'm on my way to Jilin to see my husband. I bought a ticket this morning, but I can't find it now.'

‘It's not in any of your pockets?’ asked Lei Feng.

‘No, I'm sure it's lost, and I have no money to buy another one. Oh, dear! What shall I do?’ Then she began to cry.

‘Don't worry. Let's see what we can do.’

Lei Feng took the woman to the ticket office. There were still some tickets left. He bought her a ticket and said, ‘The train is going to leave in a minute. Let's hurry.’

The woman did not know what to say, she said ‘Thank you’ again and again.

When the train started moving, she waved to the kind young man. Then she suddenly remembered that she did not even know his name.

Questions 1-5 are based on Text 2. 1 and 5 are multiple choice questions while 2-4 are True/False questions.

1. Why was that woman worried?

   a) Because she had lost her money. b) Because she had lost her way.

   c) Because she missed her family. d) Because she had lost her train ticket.

2. ________ Lei Feng asked her if the ticket was in her pocket
3. ________ Lei Feng took that woman to see an officer.
4. ________ Lei Feng used his own money to buy a train ticket for the woman.
5. What did the woman suddenly think of when the train started to move?

   a) She did not even know that young man's name.

   b) That young man did not even know her name.

   c) She had forgotten that young man's name.

   d) She could not remember if she had asked the young man his name.

Text 3 (Year 10)

Machines and Future

In the future, machines will improve and do more and more work for us. Few people have to work long hours. People will have more time for leisure. How will he use this leisure in the world of tomorrow? Certainly they will still need holidays. We often hear people say, ‘Oh, I'd like a holiday in a place where there's a lot of sun and sea.’ Or perhaps, ‘I'd like a holiday in a place where I can climb mountains and enjoy myself in the snow.’

In the future, the computer will help people to find the right place. The computer will ask them questions which they will answer by pressing a button. It'll also show them pictures and they will say which ones they like. Then the computer will tell them where to find the place for holiday they want.

TV will be used more in education. It will also help people to use their leisure time well. There will be more programmes on how to make and how to do things.

In today's world, children are mostly given education for work. Most of the things they learn at school are used to help them in their adult life. In the future, children will probably have to be taught for a life without work.

Some scientists say that people of the future will be able to get enough pleasure and enjoyment on their own without going anywhere. Some scientists say that by the year 2010, people may be able to wear a small board on which there will be a lot of buttons. Each of the buttons will be joined to one of the brain's pleasure centres. We will only need to press these buttons in different ways to enjoy ourselves.

According to other scientists, we may put on a small cap, which will let us see, feel and hear all kinds of enjoyable things. There may even be dream machines! With these machines people will be able to see the most beautiful things that they have never seen.

Questions 1-5 are based on Text 3. They are all multiple choice questions.

1. In the future, … work will be done by machine.
   a) less and less b) heavier and heavier
   c) more and more d) slighter and slighter
2. What will people do when they are free in the future?
   a) Have holidays. b) Play with the computer.
   c) Use machines to kill time. d) Do nothing at all.
3. In the future, people will spend more and more time on …
   a) having fun b) studying c) work d) bringing up children
4. At present, children receive education mainly for …
   a) work b) study c) having fun d) making a living
5. In the future, people may … without leaving home.
   a) work b) experience kinds of pleasure and enjoyment
   c) put on a cap d) undergo all kinds of hardships

Text 4 (Year 11)

The Wonderful Visit to Miss Liberty

‘This is a special day,’ Daddy said. ‘Today we're going to visit the Statue of Liberty. Liberty means freedom. One hundred years after we became a free country, the people of France gave us the Statue of Liberty.’

‘Like a sort of birthday present?’ Thomas asked.

‘That's right,’ Daddy agreed. ‘People in France made the big statue out of thin sheets of copper. But it was too large to send in one piece, so it was sent over in many pieces. Then workmen put the pieces of copper together over an iron framework right on the island called Liberty Island.’

Daddy parked the car near the ferry that would take them to the island. Across the water, the Lady stood on the island with a torch in her right hand.

‘What is she holding in her left hand?’ Bessie wondered. ‘It looks like a book.’

‘It's a stone tablet,’ said Mother. ‘The letters on it say, “July 4, 1776” - the date America became a free country.’

‘Ships come through here from nearly every country in the world,’ Daddy said. ‘When the people in the ships see the Statue of Liberty, they know they've reached America.’

The ferry pulled alongside the dock. Mother and Daddy and Bessie and Thomas all hurried ashore. Now they were behind the statue.

‘The whole island is no bigger than two or three blocks at home!’ Bessie cried.

Questions 1-5 are based on Text 4. They are all True/False questions.

1. ________ The Statue of Liberty was made of pieces of copper welded together.
2. ________ The Statue of Liberty was a birthday present that the French people gave to the president of America.
3. ________ The Statue of Liberty was sent to America in one piece by ship.
4. ________ There is a torch on the head of Miss Liberty.
5. ________ To visit the Statue of Liberty, one has to take a ferry.

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Medical Students' Most Frequent Errors at Mahidol University, Thailand

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Abstract

This study focuses on error analysis of first year medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University. A total of 44% of enrolled students participated, about 237. They were asked to translate sentences from Thai into English, translate a paragraph from Thai into English, and write an opinion paragraph in English on medical ethics. Data collected from the sentence-level translation, paragraph level translation, and opinion paragraph writing were analyzed to find the most frequent errors of these medical students by using the distribution of frequency. The top-ten errors of each medical school and of all medical schools were identified and the chi-square was used to find dependency among the three types of writing. The findings show that there is dependency between sentence level translation and paragraph level translation, and between paragraph level translation and opinion paragraph writing. The results will be of benefit for material development, especially in the provision of materials in the Language Learning Centre.

Keywords: error analysis, medical student, sentence level, paragraph level, translation.

Introduction

This study is one of four research projects derived from the need to collect data for preparing materials in the Language Learning Center and for developing a more student-centered teaching and learning process.

The four projects include:

1. Should paragraph writing be taught to first year medical students at Mahidol University? (Phase I was disseminated at the Thai TESOL International Conference in Bangkok in January 2003 and both phases were published in Thai TESOL Bulletin in 2004. Honsa, Jr. and Clark (2004)
2. Be more student-centered with the implementation of portfolio assessment and the Language Clinic (Disseminated at the CULI 5th International Conference in Bangkok in December 2003. Honsa, Jr. and Ratanapinyowong (2003)
3. Medical students' most frequent errors at Mahidol University. (Disseminated at the Thai TESOL International Conference in Khon Kaen in January 2004). Sattayatham and Honsa. (2004)
4. Boosting students' autonomy as well as writing accuracy and fluency through journal writing (Disseminated at the Asia TEFL International Conference in Seoul in November 2004 and published in Asia TEFL Journal in June 2005). Honsa, Jr. and Rtanapinyowong (2005)

This research was conducted with first year medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University: namely, Siriraj Medical School, Ramathibodi Medical School, Bangkok Metropolitan Medical School, and Praboromchanok Medical School. These students are required to take two compulsory Introductory University English courses, the emphasis of which is on reading skills. As far as writing skills are concerned, these students are required to write an opinion paragraph on medical ethics based on a reading passage chosen from 30 passages from the Internet. Once they write a paragraph, 30 marks are given without grading their paragraphs. The fact that there is not enough writing practice, no grading, and 30 free marks given to all students who complete the paragraph, has prompted the researchers to make systemic amendments to the syllabus.

This study attempts to answer the following questions.

1. What are the most frequent errors of all medical students' writing?
2. Is there any dependency among sentence level translation, paragraph-level translation and opinion-paragraph writing?

Literature Review

For this review of the literature, it is necessary to study the characteristics of the language errors, the pattern of the common errors, and the situation involved in the errors to help analyse errors systematically, as well as to understand, and find the causes of such errors. In addition, the study of error analysis will improve the process of second language learning and develop more information for developing the second language acquisition theory. In the past, it is believed that most language errors were caused by the transformation from one language to another language. Later, it was found that the influence of native language on the second language is quite minimal; that is, it affects only 3-25% of such errors.

Kitao and Kitao (2000) suggest that error analysis in language use can predict the learners' type of errors which will be useful for developing teaching materials and selecting teaching methods. Moreover, the result of such analysis can be used as an indicator of the learners' achievement. It can also be used for researching language acquisition and learners' strategy in language learning. Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982) say the result of error analysis can be used as an indicator of learning achievement and guidance for teaching.

One of the difficulties of error analysis is how to define and scope the 'errors' as there are many definitions of errors. Corder (1981) differentiates errors from mistakes in the way that errors are systematic in nature being "errors of competence" which occur in the continuum of the learning process. They are the result of the learners' transitional competence. On the other hand, mistakes are "errors of performance" which are not systematic.

Edge (1989) defines errors as forms that language users cannot correct by themselves even though they have been taught. James (1998) adds that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. These errors occur in the course of the learner's study because they haven't acquired enough knowledge. Once they acquire additional knowledge, they will be able to correct their errors and the more errors the learners correct the more conscious of language they will become. James (1998) studied Error Taxonomies and classified errors into two types:

1. Linguistic category classification

This type of taxonomy specifies errors in terms of linguistic categories and in terms of where the error is located in the overall system of the TL. First, it indicates at what **level** of language the error is located: in phonology, grammar, lexis, text or discourse and if it is at grammar level, what particular grammatical construction does it involve? Some possibilities they list are: the auxiliary system and passive sentence complements. Having established the level of the error, one next asks about its **class**. Given that it is a grammar error, does it involve the class of a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, or determiner? which leads to the assignment of a **rank** to the error, in terms of where it lies on the hierarchy of **units** that constitute its level. Finally, we need to specify the grammatical system that the error affects such as tense, number, voice, countability transitivity.

2. The surface structure taxonomy

This is the second type of descriptive taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) who describe this taxonomy as being based on "the way surface structures are altered" (1982, p. 150). Errors can occur because of change in surface structure in specific and systematic ways (1982, p. 150). There are four ways in which learners "modify" target forms in specific and systematic ways.

2.1 Omission

Learners in the early stages of learning tend to omit function words rather than content words. More advanced learners tend to be aware of their ignorance of content words and rather than omit one, they resort to compensatory strategies to express their idea (Kasper and Kellerman, 1997).

2.2 Addition

This manifestation of error, according to Dulay, Burt and Krashen, is the 'result of all-too-faithful use of certain rules' (1982, p.156) and they suggest there are subtypes. First is regularization, which involves overlooking exceptions and spreading rules to domains where they do not apply, for example producing the incorrect "buyed" for "bought." Second, is double marking, defined as 'failure to delete certain items which are required in some linguistic constructions but not in others'. Here is an example: *He doesn't knows me*.

2.3 Misformation

Dulay, Burt and Krashen define misinformation as use of the wrong form of a structure or morpheme, and give examples like:

I* seen her yesterday.

He hurt* himself.

2.4 Misordering

This category is relatively uncontroversial. The learners can select the right forms to use in the right context, but they arrange them in the wrong order, for instance, adverbials, interrogatives and adjectives, yielding errors as in:

*He every time come late home.

*Tell me where did you go.

*The words little

As Dulay, Burt and Krashen observe, misordering is often the result of learners relying on carrying out 'word for word translations of native language surface structure' (1982, p.162) when producing written or spoken utterances in the TL.

James (1998) classified errors into five patterns as follows:

1. omission
2. over inclusion
3. misselection (use wrong words not wrong forms)
4. misordering
5. blends: (Blending arises when two alternative grammatical forms are combined to

produce an ungrammatical blend.)

Richards (1974) classifies errors, according to their causes, into two categories:

1. Interlingual Errors: These are errors that are caused by mother tongue interference.
2. Intralingual & Developmental Errors: These kinds of error occur during the learning process of the second language at a stage when they haven't really acquired the knowledge. In addition, the errors are also caused by the difficulty or the problem of language itself. For as Dulay and Burt (1974) say almost 90% of errors are intralingual errors.

James (1998) states that there are four causes of errors:

1. **Interlingual errors** (Mother-tongue influence). These kinds of errors are influenced by the native languages which interfere with target language learning. Learners translate word by word idiomatic expressions, vocabulary and even the grammatical rules of the learners' first language into the second language. In contrastive analysis, it is believed that the type of errors made by the learners of the target language can be predicted and their causes can be determined. In order to prevent and eliminate these errors, Richards (1974) has given the following figures: Between 3-25 per cent of all errors are errors of mother tongue influence and 75 per cent of errors are 'non-contrastive' errors.
2. **Intralingual errors**: These types of error are caused by the target language (TL) itself. Apart from recourse to L1 transfer, the learners in ignorance of a TL form on any level and any class can do either of two things: either they can set about learning the needed item, engaging their learning strategies, or they can try to fill the gap by resorting to communication strategies. Learning strategies are used for code breaking while communication strategies are encoding and decoding strategies. Both types of strategy can be the source of error.

Errors caused by learning strategies include:

2.1 **False analogy:** Learners assume that the new item B behaves like A: they know that "boy" (A) has its plural "boys" and assume that "child" (B) behaves likewise, so pluralizes to "*childs."

2.2 **Misanalysis**: Learners form a wrong hypothesis. An example of this strategy occurs in: *they are carnivorous plants and *its (✓ their) name comes from*. The false concept in operation here is that *its* is the **s** pluralized form of *it*. A false concept is the result of the learners misanalysing the TL.

2.3 **Incomplete rule application**: This is the converse of overgeneralization or one might call it undergeneralization as the learners do not use all the rules. They change or decrease the complicated rules to simpler rules as they aim at simplification rather than attempt to get the whole complex structure. An example is seen in the deviant order of subject and verb 'be' in: *Nobody knew where* was Barbie (✓ Barbie was)*. The learners have applied only two components of the interrogative formation rule: they have selected and fronted a wh-element (rule components 1 and 2), but have omitted to invert the subject and verb.

2.4 **Exploiting redundancy:** This error occurs by carrying considerable redundancy. This is shown throughout the system in the form of unnecessary morphology and double signalling.

2.5 **Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions**: This error is caused by overlooking the exceptional rules. An example of this is *I would enjoy *to learn (✓ learning) about America* caused by ignorance of the fact that the verb *enjoy* should be followed by a gerund complement.

2.6 H**ypercorrection (monitor overuse):** This results from the learners' over cautious and strict observance of the rules. One might say that the learners' deliberate suppression of a potential L1 transfer, for fear of being wrong, is another form of hypercorrection: an example of this is *the seventeen year*s old girl*.

2.7 **Overgeneralization or system-simplification:** This error is caused by the misuse of words or grammatical rules. An example is the generalization of the relative pronoun *that* as in:

Bill, *that had a great sense of unconventional morality…

The learners use *that* to the exclusion of *who* which can not be used here.

3. **Communication strategy-based errors**

3.1 **Holistic strategies or approximation**: The term ‘holistic’ refers to the learners’ assumption that if you can say X in the L2, then you must be able to say Y. Lacking the required form, it must be all right to use another near-equivalent L2 item which they have learnt. It takes on a number of forms, the first of which is to use a synonym; The second is to use an antonym or opposite: *not happy for ✓sad*. The third is to coin a word. *Until you be unconscious to lose your *sensities*. (✓ senses)

3.2 **Analytic strategies or circumlocution:** Analytic strategies express the concept indirectly, by allusion rather than by direct reference. This kind of error comes from the students’ experience. James (1994) finds that the learners in the classroom used the L1 transfer strategy much more than the acquirers. (Acquirers are people who are self-directed learning, such as a taxi driver, a foreigner’s house keeper.)

4. **Induced Errors:** These errors are the result of being misled by the way in which the teachers give definitions, examples, explanations and arrange practice opportunities. In other words, the errors are caused mostly by the teaching and learning process as follows:

4.1 **Materials-induced errors**: Teaching materials with errors will make the learners confused, and they will make similar errors again and again.

4.2 **Teacher-talk induced errors**: This kind of error might be caused by both native or non-native teachers, if they do not provide models of the standard TL in class.

4.3 **Exercise-based induced errors**: The learners make errors while doing exercises on sentence combining, for example, the teacher feeds to the learners the raw ingredients: simple sentences that the learners must combine. Conditionals linked by *if* or *unless* are examples:

I can’t afford a new car combined with I *shall win the lottery.*

should yield

I can’t afford a new car unless I win the lottery.

but will also yield at times from at least one learner forms like

**Unless I can afford a new car I shall win the lottery.*

The likelihood is especially great when the students have been told
that *unless* is equivalent to *if…not,* which will suggest to them the possibility of replacing the negative element in *can't* with *unless*.

4.4 **Errors induced by pedagogical priorities:** Learners' achievement tends to match other teacher expectations of what they will achieve. Some teachers choose to prioritize one of the following: accuracy, fluency or the idiomatic in teaching communication, thus if fluency is considered as superior, accuracy would have lower priority or vice versa.

4.5 **Look-up errors:** There have been many learners' dictionaries and grammar books in recent years, and these publications usually come with useful guidelines on how to look up aspects of the L2 about which one is in doubt. But, strangely, learners do not like to read such user-instruction, and as a result they frequently misuse these reference aids. In addition, the learners sometimes use the new words from the dictionary inaccurately or get incorrect references from the grammar books.

There are many studies on error analysis because error analysis helps to improve the teaching and learning process. If learners' errors and the causes of those errors are identified, errors can be corrected, though not all. Moreover, error analysis helps direct the focus of the teaching and learning process. For example, Angwatanakul (1980) finds that the most frequent errors of Thai learners are verb forms, articles and prepositions. Paster (1986) finds that most common interlingual errors are using the present simple tense in the place of the past simple tense, using the wrong verb form after modal, no inversion of auxiliary verb in questions, and using the wrong subject verb agreement. Michaeldes (1990) analyzes and puts errors into eight domains according to importance and frequency, such as wrong order of words, wrong tense, wrong use of articles and prepositions. Cumming and Mellow (1990) study errors at the grammatical morpheme level and find that they can indicate second language learning ability. Polio (1997) studies second language writing, and error free writing, the use of the holistic scale, T-units and numbers of errors as criteria and finds that counting error numbers may be better for homogeneous population. Newmark and Reibel (1968) propose another approach to ignorance hypothesis which emphasizes avoidance strategy. Duskova (1969) also supports this same idea that learners who avoid using certain structures and have no errors in those errors may not know how to use those structures. Rujikiatkumjorn and Chiewkul (1989) analyzed errors of students at Khon Kaen University to find frequent errors made by students from each faculty and discovered that there is a dependency between errors and each faculty.

Methodology

This study consists of two parts. The first aim is to find the most frequent errors of medical students from the four medical schools at Mahidol University. The second aim is to identify the student's dependency among three types of writing: including sentence level translation, paragraph level translation, and opinion paragraph writing.

Part I: Finding the most frequent errors of medical students

44% of all first year medical students in the year 2001 participated in the study (about 237 students). Three pieces of writing by each subject were collected at the end of the second semester. The details of the three pieces of writing are as follows:

1. Sentence level translation.

Each subject had to translate 32 sentences from Thai into English. In each sentence, we analyzed the errors in terms of grammar points, in other words, grammar points to be tested are determined in each sentence. There were 48 grammar points to be corrected in the sentence level translation. These grammar points are based on the previous study of error analysis of students at Khon Kaen University which won an award from National Research Institute of Thailand and on the research done by Chulalongkorn University researchers. Also, these grammar points cover most essential grammar points that might affect Thai students in reading and writing. The 48 grammar points are presented below.

Errors from sentence level (48 test points)

1. Order of adj.
2. There (is, are)
3. Subject-verb agreement
4. Direct-indirect object
5. Verbs of feeling
6. Past tense

7. Present perfect
8. Reported speech
9. Passive voice
10. Question tag
11. Question word (whom)
12. Relative clause (who)
13. Imperative
14. Comparative (the same as)
15. Comparative (adj.)
16. Comparative (adv.)
17. Comparative (the….er, the….er)
18. Superlative
19. Connector (as)
20. How much + n.
21. Conditional sentence (Unreal present)
22. Conditional sentence (Unreal past)
23. Suggest / recommend + V_1
24. Relative pronoun (possessive / whose)
25. Possessive (of, s')
26. Subordinate clause
27. Present participle
28. Past simple + past continuous
29. Expression
30. Infinitive (purpose)
31. Have something-done
32. Articles
33. Modal (ability-can)
34. Modal (probability = may, might)
35. Wh-clause as subject (what she wants)
36. Reflexive pronoun (themselves/yourself)
37. Possessive adj.
38. Connector (when)
39. Wrong choice of vocabulary
40. Punctuation
41. Capitalization
42. Spelling mistake
43. Preposition
44. Wrong use of pronoun
45. Omission of preposition
46. Wrong order of part of speech
47. Omission of a) verb b) noun
48. No subject

2. Paragraph level translation

Each subject had to translate a paragraph of about 80 words from Thai into English. There were 24 grammar points to be tested which covered the most essential grammar points that might affect Thai students in paragraph translation. The 24 grammar points are presented below.

Errors from paragraph level: (24 test points)

1. Connector showing contrast (but, even though)
2. Describing people (height, face, age, hair)
3. Time sequence words (First, next…)
4. How to do something
5. Punctuation (…but She…)

6. Capitalization (.first…)
7. Verb + ing
8. Subj – verb agreement
9. Article
10. Spelling mistake
11. Be + adj.
12. Modal + V_1
13. Wrong choice of words
14. Relative pronoun (possessive: whose)
15. Subordinate clause (that…)
16. Uncountable noun + plural ending
17. There be
18. Preposition
19. Omission of main verb
20. Past tense
21. Infinitive
22. Mother tongue interference (mistakes influenced by Thai sentence structure)
23. Reported speech
24. No subject

3. Opinion paragraph writing

Each subject had to write an opinion paragraph based on one reading passage from the Internet which was an external reading assignment in class. The medical students were asked to read three medical ethics passages among thirty selected passages from the Internet. Each student had to choose one of these passages and express their opinion about medical ethics in one paragraph. There are 28 test points that are usually found in paragraphs written by most Thai students.

Errors from opinion paragraph Writing: (28 test points)

1. Tense (Non-parallel form of verb)
2. Wrong use of verb to be
3. Spelling mistake
4. Wrong use of verb
5. Article
6. Omission of subject
7. Tense (present continuous / present perfect)
8. Subject – Verb agreement
9. Direct translation
10. Conditional sentence (unreal present, unreal past)
11. Connector
12. Wrong choice of vocabulary
13. Wrong plural form
14. Infinitive (purpose)
15. Capitalization
16. Punctuation
17. Wrong use of pronoun
18. Fragment of sentence (incomplete sentences punctuated as complete sentences)
19. Wrong order of adverb
20. Passive voice
21. Possessive (of, is)

22. Run-on sentence (two complete sentence joined by a comma)
23. Omission of verb
24. Relative pronoun (whose / who)
25. Wrong form of noun
26. Complex sentence without conjunction
27. Comparative & superlative
28. Question tag (wrong use of “tag”)

After analyzing the errors from sentence level (48 test points), paragraph level translation (24 test points), and opinion paragraph writing (28 test points), the researchers used the percentage and distribution of frequency to get the most frequent errors. The top ten errors made by each group of medical students were selected. Then the top ten errors made by the four medical schools were put in order from the most frequent errors to the least frequent errors. We got this data by multiplying the total number of errors of each item by 100 and dividing these by the total number of subjects:

$$= \frac{\text{total number of errors of each item} \times 100}{\text{total number of subjects (237)}}$$

Part II: Identifying the dependency among sentence level translation, paragraph level translation, and opinion paragraph writing

The researchers applied Pearson's Chi-square to the data collected to check the dependency among three types of errors at the significance level of 0.05. The three pairs of data to be applied with Chi-square formula are:

1. Errors from sentence level translation and errors from paragraph level translation
2. Errors from paragraph level translation and errors from opinion paragraph writing
3. Errors from sentence level translation and errors from opinion paragraph writing

Findings

The researchers obtained the medical students' frequency of errors and the dependency among three types of writing.

Part I: The medical students' frequency of errors

There are three parts to the medical students' frequency of errors compilations: sentence level translation, paragraph level translation and, opinion paragraph writing.

1. Sentence level translation.

The top ten errors made by the four medical schools are put in order from the most frequent errors to the least frequent errors as follows:

Order	Errors	%
1	Conditional Sentence (Unreal past)	85.23%
2	Articles	78.48%
3	Question tag	75.94%
4	Past tense	66.66%
5a	Connector (as)	62.86%
5b	Have something done	
6	Present Participle	62.02%
7	Wh – clause as subject	58.64%
8a	Suggest/recommend+V1	56.96%
8b	Question word (whom)	
9	Comparative (adv)	56.11%
10	Past simple + past continuous	54.85%

The findings show that the use of tense-sequence troubles the students most. This includes the overgeneralization of tense-sequence in *the conditional sentence showing past unreal* as in item 22 "* If John is alive, he is 80 next year." and the wrong tense-sequence in coordinate structure as in item 28 "* When I arrived home, it has still raining." These errors are mostly due to the overgeneralization of the target-language restrictions on tense-sequence as James (1998) mentioned. Other prominent errors are *the articles* and *the question tag*. We do not have articles and question tag in Thai system, so the students tend to omit them or use them wrongly.

2. Paragraph Level translation

In this part, the top ten errors made by the four medical schools were put in order of the most frequent errors to the least frequent errors as follows:

order	errors	Percentage
1	Wrong choice of words	57.8%
2a	Connectors showing contrast	53.5%
2b	How to do something	
2c	Describing people (height, face, age, hair)	
3	Reported speech	51.6%
4	Omission of main verb	36.28%
5	Articles	34.59%
6	Spelling Mistake	28.27%
7	Punctuation	17.29%
8	Subordinate clause	16.87%
9	There (is, are)	15.18%
10	Infinitive	14.34%

The findings show that the area which causes difficulty is *the vocabulary*. The students cannot choose the right word to fit the content as in item 13 "*Although she's aged, she still looks beautiful." These types of error are interlingual errors which are caused by mother-tongue interference in the form of translating Thai into English, word by word. Another error is the students' failure to use *the connector showing contrast* as in item 1 "*Although she is old, but she is beautiful." The students have the tendency to keep rules of their native language, even though they had been taught the correct forms of the target language. They still make the same errors. In Thai, we use both "although" and "but" in the contrast statements. The failure to describe people in terms of height, face, age and hair is another error which is due to ignorance of rule restriction as in item 2"* Her face is egg. She tall 160 cm. She is long hair. My teacher is a 55 woman". *Reported speech* is another prominent error as in item 23 "*You must know how taste each food." The students do not follow all the rules. They select a wh-element, but omit to invert the subject and verb. They make the incomplete rule application.

3. Opinion Paragraph Writing

In this part, top ten errors made by the four medical schools were put in order from the most frequent to the least frequent as follows:

order	errors	Percentage
1	Wrong choice of vocabulary	64.90%
2	Articles	62.40%
3	Wrong plural form	38.90%
4	Wrong use of verb "to be"	36.29%
5a	Conditional sentence (unreal present, unreal past)	34.18%
5b	Punctuation	
6	Connector	33.33%
7	Fragment	32.40%
8	Subject-verb-agreement	30.38%
9	Spelling mistake	29.10%
10	Omission of subject	21.10%

The findings show that the error that figured prominently is *the wrong choice of vocabulary* as in item 12 "*Their daughter recover from leukemia and this baby is harmless." The students use the word inappropriately and their English vocabulary does not meet the standard. Also, mother-tongue interference is a likely cause of this error. *The articles* are still the prominent errors in the opinion paragraph writing. This is also a case of omission because there are no "articles" in the Thai system. Another prominent error is *the wrong use of verb to be* as in item 2 "*Genetic screening doesn't correct." This error is not a case of mother-tongue interference, but it can be attributed to intralingual errors. The students misuse the verb *to do* instead of using the verb *to be* in front of adjectives.

Part II: The finding of dependency among sentence level translation, paragraph level translation and opinion paragraph writing

The researchers applied Pearson's Chi-square to the data collected to check the dependency among the three sets of errors at the significance level of 0.05.

1. Errors from sentence level translation and errors from paragraph level translation. (See Table 1)

Table 1:Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Sentence & Paragraph	237	100.0%	0	0%	237	100.0%

Sentence & Paragraph Cross tabulation Count

		Paragraph			Total
		F	G	V	
Sentence	F	-	1	-	1
	G	2	25	124	151
	V	1	-	84	85
Total		3	26	208	237

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.477[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	28.466	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	237		

a. 5 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01
Note: F = fair, G = good, V = Very good

By using the Chi-Square test, we conclude that there is a dependency between sentence level translation and paragraph level translation at 0.05 level of significance. This means that if the students can translate from Thai into English very well at sentence level, they can also translate into English very well at paragraph level as well.

2. Errors from paragraph level translation and errors from opinion paragraph writing. (see Table 2)

Table 2: Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Paragraph & Essay	237	100.0%	0	0%	237	100.0%

Paragraph & Essay Cross tabulation Count

		Essay F	Essay G	Essay V	Total
Paragraph	F	2	-	1	3
	G	-	2	24	26
	V	22	16	170	208
Total		24	18	195	237

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.575[a]	4	.009
Likelihood Ratio	11.364	4	.023
N of Valid Cases	237		

a. 5 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .23

By using the Chi-Square test, we concluded that there is a dependency between paragraph level translation and opinion paragraph writing at 0.05 level of significance. This means that if the students can translate into English very well at paragraph level, they can write a good opinion paragraph as well.

3. Errors from sentence level translation and errors from opinion paragraph writing (See Table 3)

Table 3:Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Sentence & Essay	237	100.0%	0	0%	237	100.0%

Sentence & opinion paragraph writing cross tabulation count

		Paragraph F	Paragraph G	Paragraph V	Total
Sentence	F	-	-	1	1
	G	13	14	124	151
	V	11	4	70	85
Total		24	18	195	237

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.717[a]	4	.606
Likelihood Ratio	2.967	4	.563
N of Valid Cases	237		

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08

By using the Chi-Square test, we concluded that the performance in sentence level translation and that in opinion paragraph writing are independent at 0.05 significance level. This means that if the students can translate from Thai into English very well at sentence level, they still cannot write a good essay.

Conclusions

It was found that the most frequent errors from this data were on the syntactic and lexical levels with inadequate lexical and syntaxtic knowledge leading to the errors of overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, omission, and building of false concepts. Within these errors, we detected mother-tongue interference. However, some linguistic items, such as articles, tense, and verb forms appeared to be the source of frequent errors. The errors may result from inadequate learning as well as the complexity of English structure which our native language structure does not have.

We might conclude that the errors made by the students are both from the interlanguage and mother tongue interference. The errors caused by mother tongue interference are in a small proportion. For the dependency test, it was found as follows:

1. There is a dependency between sentence level translation and paragraph level translation at 0.05 level of significance.

2. There is a dependency between paragraph level translation and opinion paragraph writing at 0.05 level of significance.

3. The performance in sentence level translation and the performance in opinion paragraph writing are independent at 0.05 significance level. It may be that the student might not know how to use transitional words properly to convey a coherent idea when writing their own paragraph. In contrast to paragraph translation, the students do not have to think about coherence. The transitional words and the coherence already exist in the paragraph. The students just translate from one language to another.

Suggestions

Upon reviewing students’ essay writing, the researchers discovered that most of the students still make other kinds of serious errors. For example, they do not use a topic sentence with clear transition words in writing an opinion paragraph when they are not told and guided to do so. There are a lot of fragmented sentences and run-on sentences in their paragraph writing. They do not know how to use punctuation correctly. Only a small percentage of students have organizational skills. Therefore, the students should be taught to write topic sentences, supporting details, transition words and concluding sentences when writing a paragraph.

The afore-mentioned problems occur because writing is not incorporated into the two Introductory University English Courses for medical students at Mahidol University, these students do not have a chance to practice writing in class. At the end of the semester these students have to write an opinion paragraph on medical ethics without having been taught how to do it. As writing experts (Weigle, 2002; Hamp-Lyons and Cordon, 2000) say writing skills and assessment should be a continuous process. To equip these medical students with a more efficient approach to writing, a writing lab should be established and fully and efficiently utilized to facilitate and supplement the writing process and assessment. The research finding can be used as criteria for material development both in the writing lab and other corners in the Language Learning Centre. It would enable us to isolate the errors these students make, then we could provide the proper teaching materials and method to correct their errors. It would help to improve the English ability of future Thai doctors to communicate better with fewer errors. Most medical students' English, which is at intermediate level, can be upgraded to advanced level if their errors are reduced. The findings will be useful for providing materials in the language learning center where these medical students can equip themselves with higher language proficiency even after they leave the classroom. We hope that these doctors will be well prepared to communicate with foreign patients who come to Thailand for medical services at a lower medical expenses compared to their home countries.

In a broader context, the research findings, about dependency, at significant level, between paragraph level translation and paragraph writing, suggest that if students practice frequent translation at a paragraph level, they will eventually be able to write a good paragraph. Thus, more research is needed to find empirical evidence to support these findings. If these findings can be generalized, it will greatly benefit the EFL teaching and learning process in the near future.

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Appendix 1

Sentence level translation

จงแปลประโยคต่อไปนี้เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ

1. เขามีหมาสีดำตัวเล็กๆน่ารักมากอยู่ตัวหนึ่ง
   <u>He has a very cute little black dog.</u>
2. มีนก 10 ตัว
   <u>There are 10 birds.</u>
3. เด็กหญิงวิ่ง
   <u>Girls run. / A girl runs.</u>
4. ขาให้เงินเด็กไป 10 บาท
   <u>He gives/gave a child 10 baht.</u>
5. แดงบอกว่าเขาไม่ผิด

   <u>Dang said he was not { wrong. / guilty.</u>
6. ป้าของฉันอยู่ที่ลอนดอนมา 25 ปีแล้ว
   <u>My aunt has been/lived in London for 25 years.</u>
7. หนังเรื่อง 101 Dalmatians น่าตื่นเต้นมาก
   <u>101 Dalmatians is very exciting.</u>
8. เขาทำการบ้านแล้วเมื่อวานนี้
   <u>He already did his homework (already) yesterday.</u>
9. ขโมยคนนั้นถูกตำรวจยิ่ง
   <u>That thief was shot by the police.</u>
10. คุณไปตลาดมาแล้วใช่ไหม
    <u>You went to the market, didn't you?</u>
11. เขาให้ปืนใครไป
    <u>To whom did he give the gun?</u>
12. ดูนกตัวนั้นสิ มันเป็นนกที่สวยที่สุดเลย
    <u>Look at the bird. It's the most beautiful bird.</u>
13. เขาทำได้แต่เขาอาจจะไม่ทำ
    <u>He can but he may not do it.</u>
14. คุณมีเงินเท่าไหร่

How much money	**have**	**you got?**
	do	**have**

15. ทำอย่างที่คุณต้องการเถอะ
Do as you please?

16. ฉันไม่ชอบคนที่ไม่ช่วยเหลือตัวเอง

I don't like	**those**	**who don't help themselves.**
	people	

17. ถ้าหากฉันเป็นเธอฉันจะไม่ช่วยเขา
If I were you I wouldn't help him.

18. ถ้าหากจอห์นยังมีชีวิตอยู่ ปีหน้าเขาก็จะอายุ 80
If John had been alive, he would have been 80 next year.

19. เราแนะนำให้คุณเขียนจดหมายถึงภรรยาคุณทันทีที่จะทำได้
We suggest/recommend you write to your wife as soon as possible.

20. สิ่งที่เธอต้องการคือชีวิตที่มั่นคง
What she wants is life with security.

21. ผู้หญิงคนที่ถูกขโมยรถเมื่อคืนก่อนเป็นเพื่อนบ้านฉัน
The woman whose car was stolen last night is my neighbor.

22. ตาของเธอสีเดียวกับตาของน้องสาวเธอ
The color of her eyes is the same as he sister's.

23. น้อยเหมือนพ่อมากกว่าแม่
Noi looks more like her father (more) them her mother.

24. เธอเป็นหนึ่งในบรรดาคนที่รวยที่สุดในเมืองนี้
She is one of the richest in town.

25. ยิ่งเรียนมากเขายิ่งรู้น้อย
The more he studies, the less he knows.

26. คุณเดินช้ากว่านี้ได้ไหม
Can you walk more slowly?

27. ผู้ชายอ้วนที่นั่งอยู่ตรงมุมคือใคร
Who is that fat man sitting at the corner?

28. เราจะต้องเอารถไปซ่อมก่อนวันอังคาร
We must have the car fixed before Tuesday.

29. หลังจากที่โดนยิง 2 นัด เธอจึงหมดสติไป
After being short twice, she became unconscious.

30. ตอนที่ฉันกลับถึงบ้าน ฝนกำลังตกอยู่
    It was raining when I arrived home.
31. ฉันขอโทษที่โกหกเธอเมื่อวานนี้
    I'm sorry I lied to you yesterday.
32. สมศรีอยากไปกรุงเทพเพื่อหางาน
    Somsri wants to go to Bangkok to find a job.

Appendix 2

Paragraph level translation

ฉันทำอาหารไม่เป็นแต่เป็นคนชอบกิน เมื่อ 2 เดือนก่อนฉันจึงตัดสินใจเรียนทำอาหาร ครูสอนทำอาหารเป็นผู้หญิงอายุประมาณ 55 แม้จะอายุมากแต่เธอก็ยังดูสวย เธอสูงประมาณ 160 ซม. ใบหน้ารูปไข่ไว้ผมยาว เธอบอกฉันว่าการจำทำอาหารให้อร่อยนั้นเราต้องรู้เทคนิค 2-3 อย่าง อย่างแรกคือต้องรู้จักวิธีเลือกซื้ออาหารสด อย่างที่ 2

คือต้องรู้จักวิธีปรุงอาหารแต่ละอย่าง

และอย่างสุดท้ายก็คือต้องรู้ว่าอาหารแต่ละชนิดควรจะมีรสชาติอย่างไร

I don't know how to cook but I like to eat. Two months ago I decided to study cooking. The teacher is a woman who is 55 years old. Even though she is old, she is beautiful. She is 160 cm. Tall. Her face is oval. She has long hair. She told me we need to know 2-3 techniques to cook delicious food. first is how to select fresh food. Second is how to cook each dish and finally how each dish tastes like.

Appendix 3

Medical students are asked to read 40 selected passages from the Internet. Each student has to choose one of those passages to express their opinion, usually on medical ethics, in one paragraph.

Example:

Passage 30 Life-Saving Embryo?

What do YOU think?

Read the story about the Colorado parents whose daughter has an incurable genetic disease.

(1) Do you think that they did the correct thing in creating a test tube baby which had been screened to ensure it did not have the same genetic disease as their daughter?

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Plagiarism or intertextuality?: Approaches to Teaching EFL Academic Writing

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Abstract

EFL students' problems in using textual sources in academic writing have been considered negatively as plagiarism and more positively as a manifestation of intertextuality. This paper argues that treating plagiarism from the perspective of intertextuality is a productive approach to teaching writing skills, as it can help to foster student writers' self confidence. After examining the theoretical status of both concepts, practical suggestions for teaching academic writing are made with reference to the relation of writing to reading, the writer's assumptions about the reader, the writer's development of an individual identity, formulating a topic and the need for careful planning. Academic writing is best taught as a process through which teachers monitor development from a reproduction to an incorporation of textual sources.

Keywords: academic writing, intertextuality, plagiarism, tertiary education

Introduction

How university students deal with textual sources in academic writing poses particular problems for EFL pedagogy. These have been considered from a number of perspectives. At one extreme is the notion of plagiarism, usually defined as the unattributed reproduction of the language, information and/or ideas of other writers. The term is pejorative, and the practice is viewed by scholars as intellectual dishonesty and by teachers as a barrier to academic development. This point of view can be contrasted with the postmodern theory of intertextuality, which postulates that since all texts are necessarily related to prior texts through a network of links, writers (often unwittingly) make use of what has previously been written and thus some degree of borrowing is inevitable. Indeed, it is seen to be a necessary requirement for successful communication since a text is always in a "dialogue" with other texts. A comparison between these two perspectives and their implications can offer some helpful insights to the teacher of academic writing.

Plagiarism

Teachers respond to plagiarism in different ways (Angelil-Carter, 2000). At one extreme, they are censorious and sententious; at another they are tolerant or indifferent. The typical stages of reaction are succinctly summarized by Wolff (2006): "outrage, frenetic activity, resignation". Plagiarism has been considered a "crime," and various methods have been used to "police" it (Chandrasoma *et al.,* 2004) - most recently, by using internet searches through websites and software packages specifically designed to uncover the practice. Official university statements and guidelines to students are intended to help them avoid plagiarism (for example, DePauw University, 2003; Georgetown University Honor Council, n.d.; Indiana University, 2004a and b; Moravian College, 2004). Often though, official warnings are issued, in formal legal language, concentrating on the dire consequences that can result from this practice. Such policies may work for some students, but they can be intimidating to the novice EFL writer who may lack a clear understanding of what plagiarism involves. Many of these exhortations assume that avoiding plagiarism is the responsibility of the student; little attention is given to the complementary role of the writing teacher. But at least the problem is acknowledged. Sometimes academics ignore plagiarism in students' work, preferring not to spend the time and effort involved in finding sources, making accusations and following institutional disciplinary procedures to deal with infringements.

Several writers who have confronted this phenomenon in the classroom take a different approach to plagiarism. Most radically, the validity of traditional assumptions has been questioned altogether, and responsibility for plagiarism is placed on educational and social structures. Hunt (2002), for example, views plagiarism in students' writing as symptomatic of what he considers to be such ineffective educational practices as essay assignments, grades and the view of knowledge as "stored information". Adopting a wider perspective, Scollon (1994, 1997) tries to deconstruct the concept by probing the underlying social, political, cultural and intellectual power relationships that underpin it. He doubts that ideas can be considered as individual "property" at all.

More practically perhaps, Howard (2004 a and b) uses the notion of plagiarism to develop a teaching strategy. For her, plagiarism is less a crime than a "learning issue to be addressed". She concludes that academic writing is "not a reflex of morality or property but a complex intellectual skill" (2004a, p. 9). In this sense the tendency of students to plagiarize is a necessary stage in learning how to write and can become incorporated into a practical teaching methodology. Howard (2004b, p. 2) coins the term patchwriting for what is involved: putting the ideas of another writer into one's own language, through deletions and substitutions of vocabulary and changes in grammatical construction. Patchwriting is taken to be a transitional form, in which the writer is reproducing the ideas but not the language of her sources.

Plagiarism, as usually applied to students' writing, raises several unresolved issues. When confronted, for instance, with the problem of referencing, students are often advised that what is "common knowledge" need not be attributed to a source. Yet, if common knowledge is taken to be basic information members of a group (e.g., academics) can be assumed to know in order to discuss an issue of mutual interest, then it is clear that the knowledge of one group may be different from that of another (Chandrasoma *et al.*, 2004, p.181). If the student writer is not fully integrated into an academic discourse community (which, by definition, she is not), then she will be confused about when to reference and when not to. The problem is exacerbated for EFL students, since "what constitutes 'common knowledge' for diverse student populations [in different cultures and with varying degrees of language proficiency] is … difficult to establish" (Thompson, n.d., p. 6).

Plagiarism can be intentional or careless, and intentional plagiarism may involve copying from either published works or from assignments of other students. But intentionality is relative. Whether or not sources have been plagiarized can have more to do with the interpretation of a reader than with the conscious intention of a writer. What is accepted, and even expected, by readers with respect to unattributed information varies among genres. Some genres-- and readers' schemata-- show a greater tolerance for unattributed information than do others. For example, newspapers commonly do not reference sources, and their readers accept this as normal journalistic practice. Yet ambiguities can arise. The following paragraphs appeared consecutively in a report on the front page of the Doha *Peninsula* (3 April 2006):

> "Qatargas 3 and Qatargas 4 will be shipping most of their volumes to the US markets. Our partners in these projects have put strong emphasis on the development of infrastructure…," the Minister said.
>
> Qatargas 3 is an integrated project, jointly owned by QP (68.5 per cent), ConocoPhillips (30 per cent) and Mitsui (1.5 per cent)….

Is the second paragraph here a continuation of what the minister said, the words of a press release, or the comments of the journalist? It can be read in any of these ways. Such failures to show attribution clearly go unremarked in journalism. But in an academic article, they might be considered plagiarism.

Plagiarism, then, seems inadequate as a way to deal with infelicities in students' academic writing. A number of ironies arise when students and teachers consider writing from this perspective. Plagiarism detection websites-- in contrast to their ostensible purpose-- have not only made it easier for students to plagiarize, but they have also exposed academics and universities as doing the same. Disgruntled students have turned the tables on their teachers and submitted lecture notes and handouts to internet search engines with "interesting results" (Share, 2004, p. 6). Some universities have been found to have plagiarized their rules and guidelines for plagiarism by copying those of other institutions (Howard, 2004a, p. 9). Teachers can be forced into a position of double-think and students into a Catch 22 situation. Angelil-Carter's (2000, p. 122) research has shown that an overmonitoring of students' work to detect plagiarism discourages them from using their own original ideas for fear that they will be accused of copying, since they have been told that every idea must be clearly referenced. And other investigations suggest that teachers search for language errors in an essay as evidence that it has *not* been copied (Chandrasoma *et al.*, 2004, p. 179).

Intertextuality

Approaching writing from the perspective of plagiarism, then, has led to confusions about common knowledge, intentionality, genre conventions and originality. For such reasons, intertextuality seems to be a more productive way to consider how student writers deal with textual information. Chandrasoma *et al.* (2004) replace the notion of plagiarism with that of transgressive intertextuality, which they contrast with nontransgressive intertextuality. By including these two concepts under one superordinate term, they acknowledge that textual borrowings are endemic to all writing. This dichotomy also helps overcome ambiguities about intentionality. It makes the subtle distinction that what matters is the way texts are constructed rather than whether they infringe against institutional regulations against plagiarism. The writers point out (p. 174) that, "… textual borrowing is more of an issue of academic literacy [i.e., engagement with the conventions of a scholarly community] than academic dishonesty." Thus, intertextuality can provide a lens through which plagiarism may be observed from a pedagogical perspective. The potential for plagiarism is a presence in all writing, especially academic writing. So, from the student's perspective, the phenomenon can be interpreted as less an aberration than an extreme manifestation of a natural tendency.

Since the reuse and borrowing of images, ideas and language has become "routinised within both popular culture and a range of institutional practices," Share (2004) proposes that avoiding plagiarism is a matter of "managing" intertextuality. This idea decenters the contrast between originality and copying and foregrounds the manner in which ideas are organized, arranged and used. What should be original in a students' essay, according to Share, is the realignment of previously existing knowledge in new combinations. Scollon (1994, p. 33) sees a recent change in the nature of writing, away from an "emphasis on the presentation of a unique, individual author who is the 'owner' of a text" to the concept of a text as composed by a community, a formulation that resembles authorship in oral traditions. What is original in traditional story telling is not the events themselves but the ways they are combined by a particular teller and used to achieve specific ends. Thus, information is less important than the writer's stance in relation to the information. In a similar way, Penrose and Geisler (1994) consider the question of how university students write academic essays by exploring the connections between the terms author and authority. They conclude that authority in writing is an aspect of manipulating and controlling intertextuality. Student writers are engaged not so much in creating ideas, as in offering new perspectives on the links between them and their relationship to a reader.

The way students write is related to the way they read. If readers assume that texts present definitive and unassailable knowledge, then they may develop an unhealthy respect for the absolute authority of texts, which can in turn result in the reproduction of these texts in their own writing. An alternative way of reading involves considering texts as "authored and negotiable" (Penrose and, Geisler, 1994, p. 507). This means that knowledge is presented not as facts but as claims offered to be questioned, tested, and evaluated by a reader. Thus, the model for reading centers less on the transfer of information than on the reader's constructing a dialogic position in relation to the text: reader and writer are engaged in an imaginary conversation with one another. The implication of this for the student academic writer (who is also of course a reader) is that in asserting her own authority, she should understand that academic knowledge involves a continuous process of interactive engagement with a reader, and that meaning must be negotiated, not simply reproduced.

Fairclough (1995), in considering how texts are incorporated into other texts, proposes two types of intertextuality, both of which are relevant to students' writing skills. Manifest intertextuality (pp. 117ff) occurs when previous texts are explicitly present, either by the use of direct quotation (as in the first paragraph of the excerpt from the newspaper article quoted above), or, more complexly, in presuppositions of previous-- and perhaps imagined-- "texts". Examples of the latter would be the use of the otherwise unexplained word *terrorist* in a speech by George Bush and (perhaps) the second paragraph quoted from the Qatargas report. They would also include various markers by which writers distance themselves from the texts they allude to-- for example, expressions such as "metaphorically speaking…," "in scientific terms…," or "as X might have put it".

Fairclough's idea of constitutive intertertextuality (pp. 124ff) is more global. It refers to the way old genres are used and combined to constitute new ones. A genre is taken to be a stable set of communicative conventions determined by social practice, implying not merely a type of text but also the processes involved in its production, distribution and consumption. New genres are formed through intertextual chains, by means of which they are linked to other previously existing genres. When we apply this theoretical framework to the genre of student academic writing, several questions arise. What are the other genres to which the academic essay is related? It seems to have features of a scholarly essay (as published in a journal) as well as those of a class exercise. If we learn to write mainly through reading, then what genres should students read in order to acquire the skills to produce an academic essay? EFL students cannot be expected to observe all the conventions of scholarly academic writing (even if they have read widely in a field). Which conventions, then, should they observe? Academic articles are written for a community of scholars; the student's essay is written for a teacher who may be a scholar too. In which role does the student writer address her reader? A failure to resolve such issues underlies much of the uncertainty about not only the nature of academic writing but also how it should be taught.

Scholarly writing, like newspapers and advertisements, can be a prime source for investigating intertextuality. The way academic writers use, recycle and reorganize other writers' ideas is pervasive, even a defining feature of this genre. Student writers need to acknowledge the intertextual dimensions of their enterprise. This, of course, is not to suggest that they can plagiarize with impunity. However, when seen in the context of intertextuality, plagiarism in the traditional sense becomes retrogressive not because it is criminal or immoral but because it impedes students' intellectual development. The plagiarist misunderstands the nature of academic writing and prevents herself from revealing her own intellectual abilities in an essay. She fails to perceive that scholarship largely involves applying other people's ideas to a new problem or situation. What is original is the relationships asserted between ideas and the results of their application.

Recommendations

Considering plagiarism in terms of intertextuality can contribute to the teaching of academic writing skills. Dealing with the mechanics of plagiarism is fairly straightforward: the teacher checks whether students are copying directly from sources and metes out punishments and rewards accordingly. But this approach is unlikely to provide students with insights into the nature of academic work. In the remainder of the discussion, practical ways are suggested for implementing the theoretical observations outlined above. They emphasize how teachers, through taking into account the intertextual nature of academic writing, can help make students aware and self confident to *use* what other writers say without being *used by* them, surely a *sine qua non* in the training of effective scholars. These recommendations are not made in order of importance, and there is overlap among them. Some are teacher-centered; others are student-centered. But all are all proactive, since they involve students and teachers working together in an effort to avoid plagiarism, in contrast to teachers taking unilateral punitive action after it occurs.

1. Students learn to write from reading not just by becoming familiar with the content and generic features of relevant texts. They should also acquire a critical attitude towards them. To refer to a text as discourse implies that what is being read presents not undisputed facts but one side of an imagined conversation in which a reader is interactively engaged: questioning, doubting, elaborating, developing what a writer says. Angelil-Carter (2000) points out how EFL students' previous experience can militate against the assertion of their own identity when reading: "The study and respect for religious texts, such as the Bible or the Koran, reinforced by the notion of the school textbook …, may lead to a particularly entrenched notion of the text as fact" (p. 103). Students also need to determine whether they are the intended reader. This is especially important when EFL students read from the internet, where most texts are clearly meant for a western (and specifically American) readership. In an essay on the European Renaissance an Arab student wrote that it has changed "our" culture significantly. By staying too close to her source and failing to understand that she was not the intended reader, the writer made a contentious assertion. Teachers need to develop strategies to overcome such barriers to effective reading. A course in academic writing, then, presupposes a course in academic reading. Curriculum planners do not always take this into consideration.

2. Students learn best to engage in academic discourse through observing others doing it. Teachers cannot assume that students internalize schema knowledge without having read widely and analyzed a number of examples of a genre. But where are suitable models of academic writing to be found? Although students obviously need to be familiar with professional scholarship in their fields, it is not advisable for them to base their writing exclusively on published work. What they ought to read too are successful essays written by their peers. Over time, writing teachers can build up a collection of student essays from previous years and provide them as texts for class discussion. Rocklin (1996, pp. 5-6) suggests how internet websites that offer students ready-made papers to

download, plagiarize and submit can be co-opted for more respectable academic purposes. A teacher might identify from these sources several relevant papers of good quality and analyze them with a class. Alternatively, students could be asked to download a paper of their choice and critique it. In such ways students are reading and engaging with examples of academic writing that are within their own competence to produce.

3. Often in academic writing done as a class assignment, the identity of the assumed reader is obscured. But effective writing depends upon a clear notion of the reader for whom the text is intended. As Hunt (2002, p. 1) observes, "Having something to say is… absolutely indistinguishable from having someone to say it to, and an authentic reason for saying it." The model of reading as a dialogue means that a writer (no less than a reader) needs to imagine an interlocutor. There are two possible assumed readers of academic writing. First, and most immediately obvious, is the actual reader-- the teacher to whom the essay is presented and who will assess it and give it a grade. But this reader can be problematic; some teachers try to efface themselves by pretending that the essay is for a nebulous general reader. The more general the assumed reader, however, the less effective the writing is likely to be. A more productive concept of the student writer's assumed readers are the writers whose texts are being used and referenced. In other words, the student writing an academic essay can be thought of as extending the conversation in which she has been engaged when reading the source material: she is continuing to react to, disagree with and/or develop what these writers have said. As in a conversation, both participants in the discourse exchange roles and interact. This formulation resolves the problem of common knowledge, which can now be defined as what the parties to the interaction are assumed mutually to know.

4. Focusing on the reader can help student writers develop a unique writing voice, so that what they are saying is distinguished from what their sources are saying. If the writer sees herself as engaged in a discourse with her sources, she is more likely to find an individual way of expressing herself when putting forward her own views. This involves what Penrose and Geisler (1994, p. 517) refer to as rhetorical knowledge and Leki (1991) terms textual orientation: the writer's awareness of the discourse expectations of the readers, particularly an understanding of how "structures promote meanings in texts" (Leki, p. 135). A reader who is also a nascent writer examines the organization, methods of argumentation and tone of a text, not just its content or domain (Penrose and Geisler,

p. 516). Liki points out that the development of this ability, difficult enough for L1 writers, is contingent upon EFL students' understanding that rhetorical traditions they are used to may be different from those of an essay in English (p. 138). It may even involve them in temporarily adopting a parallel "English self," to fulfill the expectations of an assumed reader.

5. A consideration of the reader-writer relationship presents referencing skills in a new light. Angelil-Carter (2000, p. 43) points out that attributing sources is one way to control the voices of others so that the student writer's own voice can speak through them. Competent citing of information will not only identify clearly who the student writer is conversing with, but it can also help the writer to clarify her own position in relation to her sources (Penrose and Geisler, 1994). Thus, accurate referencing is not just an optional extra in an academic essay-- something to be added on at the end of the process, when the main text is complete-- but it is, rather, an integral and constitutive component, since knowing who said what and when and where it was said is essential to understanding the nature of knowledge as something constructed, debated and contested (Angelil-Carter, 2000, p. 114).

6. Students need to learn how to patchwrite, as both a transitional phase in the development of writing skills (Howard, 2004) and as an end in itself. Many Qatar University students, in spite of the work they have done in reading, vocabulary and grammar courses, lack resources to put the language of a text into their own words. For example, a student wanted to use the following text (part of a newspaper article) as a source for her essay on causes and effects of the increased numbers of unmarried women in the Gulf.

The number of spinsters in the UAE is increasing at an alarming rate, calling for the involvement of all segments of society, as well as the authorities, to find a practical solution, according to a study conducted by the Police Research Centre of the Ministry of Interior. (Ibrahim, 2004)

Three interrelated skills are involved here: finding simpler synonyms for some of the words, using alternative grammatical constructions and summarizing the information. A considerable amount of class time was taken to produce the following sentence:

> The UAE is trying to find a solution to the serious problem of growing numbers of unmarried women.

And yet in the final essay, reference to the information may need to be even shorter than this; perhaps it will be synthesized into a single point including several other countries. Patchwriting is not a general skill but is related to how the information fits into the overall structure of an essay.

7. If the topic of the academic essay is carefully chosen (by the student or the teacher or by both working together), then the possibilities for plagiarism are reduced. The wording of a topic is crucial, as it will determine how information is selected and organized. Precise language in a topic is essential for constructing a logical argument. “Should Qatari women have plastic surgery?” (all of them? forced to?) is a different proposition from the more considered “Should Qatari women choose to have plastic surgery in order to improve their appearance?” Standard, perennial topics, which are assigned regularly, invite plagiarism, since essays on them are likely to be available on the internet and/or from students who have previously taken a course. So teachers need to be imaginative enough to ensure that topics are sufficiently different from year to year. Topics ought to be new in two senses: they should not have been written on before, and they should reflect the student’s unique approach to an issue. The ideal topic relates existing literature to a student’s own experience and opinion. A student in Qatar once chose to write on the history of women’s fashion. The essay she presented was almost entirely copied from the internet, and it was exclusively about changing styles in nineteenth and twentieth century American and European dress. Never once was Qatar or the Arab world mentioned. What prevented the student from exploring this obvious aspect of the topic? Did she find it inappropriate to write about Arab fashions in English? Was there a lack of available written information? (But it had been explained that one source of information is what one already knows.) Was there a barrier in her mind separating old (what she knew) from new (what she read) information? Was this reinforced by a language gap between what she knew in Arabic and what she was writing about in English? What was missing in this rather futile exercise was an assertion of the writer’s own identity in relation to her topic, which in turn led to an undefined purpose and an uncritical use of sources. What could have been supporting information (one side of a contrast between Arab and European fashion, perhaps) became the main point of the essay.

8. Teachers need to articulate their expectations to students, including their views on what counts as plagiarism and what does not. There is a good deal of variation

among teachers and how they mark essays in this regard, as Angelil-Carter (2000, pp. 61ff) shows. It may be advisable to adopt a general departmental and/or institutional policy on plagiarism (including agreed-upon punitive measures for various types of infringements), which teachers enforce and students follow. But whatever the individual teacher's or institution's attitude to plagiarism is and however it is defined, both need to be communicated clearly to students before they submit assignments, preferably through specific examples discussed in class.

9. One result of the pervasiveness of information technology is that for some students searching for and finding information on the internet takes priority over what they do with it after it is found. Thus, the use and referencing of sources may seem to be of secondary importance. But processing "raw" into "cooked" information is a major writing task. A writer needs to understand how to make other writers' ideas serve her own purposes. In this respect, judging what to leave out of an essay is at least as important as deciding what to put in. The text in the Appendix is an extract from what was found on the internet (Keel, 2000) by a student whose topic was harassment of women in Qatar. It is from a Canadian magazine for use in schools (although the student did not record this information). References to the "Criminal Code" are obviously to the laws of another country, not Qatar. Much of the text is not directly relevant to the student's topic. This does not mean, though, that the source is inappropriate or useless. The categories and subdivisions given in the first paragraph are apt, as well as the ways of resolving harassment cases outlined in the third paragraph. The student needed to read the whole text carefully and to decide about the relevance of each part. All academic writing involves "recontextualization" (Angelil-Carter, 2000, p. 27), the selection and transformation of information as focused on topic, purpose and theme. Most published scholars are aware of how various writers may use the same information in different ways. (This is one reason why the personal ownership of ideas is a complex issue.) But what for the experienced scholar entails recontextualizing ideas may seem to the novice writer to be falsifying or distorting them. From the reader's perspective, Fairclough (1995) views this process of recontextualization as central to all interpretation. He claims that coherence resides not in the text itself but, rather, is imposed by readers when they decode the text for their own purposes, with "different interpreters…generating different coherent readings of the same text" (p. 134). This, of course, is as much a concern for writers as it is for readers, and, once again, it can be helpful for students to realize that in selecting information they are extending to another level the strategies they use in reading.

10. The production of the final essay is a painstaking process for both students and teachers. There are challenges at every stage. Students must be prepared to make mistakes, revise and try again. Teachers need to be patient and able to engage in one-to-one discussions, to critique and advise. (And administrators are responsible for ensuring that teachers of writing have sufficient time to carry out these tasks effectively.) Teachers and students should agree on a timetable for producing the essay, consisting of the following stages. Ideally, teachers could monitor students' progress by requiring assignments at each stage, except perhaps for (c). These assignments can provide a record of the process of writing, which has been recommended as a means of monitoring and avoiding both intentional and careless plagiarism (Hunt, 2002; Rocklin, 1996; Wolff, 2006).
    - (a) formulate the topic, in consultation with and approved by the teacher;
    - (b) locate the possible sources of information related to the topic and prepare a working bibliography;
    - (c) undertake an initial and general reading of the sources in order to gain an impression of their contents and the way discourse is conducted in a particular field;
    - (d) make a general format for the essay (the main headings for what will become the plan);
    - (e) prepare a detailed plan for the essay by considering the format in conjunction with the information found;
    - (f) take detailed notes on the sources, using summary and patchwriting skills and selecting from the sources only that information which fits into the plan made in stage (e);
    - (g) integrate the notes into the plan to produce the completed essay, following appropriate referencing conventions.

Conclusions

The use of information sources is a central, vital aspect of academic writing, not a burdensome convention to which teachers and students must pay lip service before moving on to more important concerns. Showing and explaining the reasons why this is so is an important function of the writing teacher. The pursuit of academic work, in whatever guise (as student, teacher or researcher), is a matter of engaging in a discourse with others in the field. The academic essay is a record of that discourse. Hence, information sources are not merely reproduced; they must be incorporated into the argument that is being made. One can agree, disagree, elaborate, support, accept, or reject; but without reference to the views of others, there can be no discussion.

Sometimes students in Qatar have not understood, for instance, why, in presenting a case, one would want to refer to a source with which one disagrees. An explanation for this attitude may lie in the discourse structures of Arabic. There has been much discussion of the hypotheses of contrastive rhetoric. (See Brown 1998, Connor 2002 and Spack, 1997 for contributions to and summaries of this debate.) Do Arabic speakers really argue through repeating, reinforcing and paraphrasing a thesis they support, in contrast to the "western" method, which is supposed to involve giving equal attention to counter arguments? To the extent that this view is valid, students may need to acquire English discourse structures just as they do grammatical and lexical structures. It is not remarkable in academic life to pay tribute to a scholar with whose views one is engaged in disputing. Without the initial ideas, there can be no reaction against them. On the other hand, students have justified plagiarizing sources by claiming that they say "exactly what I think," so there is no need to say anything else. This attitude also involves a misconception about academic writing. If scholarship is to develop, then each writer must add something unique to the on-going project—however humble it might appear. What has Qatar contributed to the history of women's fashion? What particular forms does sexual harassment take in Doha? (See Recommendations 6 and 7 above and the Appendix.)

Perhaps this is the best self image to impart to the student academic writer: as a contributor to a developing body of knowledge. And, as with most developmental processes, we can never be sure of what the end results might be: it is a foolhardy writer indeed who predicts with certainty how her ideas will be used by others. In the end, the mechanics of referencing, attribution and appropriate use of sources matter less than understanding the reasons for writing an academic essay. Acquiring the ability to engage in academic discourse is not merely a matter of mastering its defining characteristics (Price, 1999, p. 593). Particular conventions may change (as any writer knows who is expected to conform to the different house styles of various journals), but what remains constant is the process through which writers engage with their material and their readers to produce a unique contribution to scholarship.

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Appendix

The Spectre of Parental and Intruder Harassment

By R.G. Keel

There are two categories of harassment recognized by law: criminal harassment and civil harassment. Within each of these categories, there are four types of harassment: oral, physical, telephone, and written. In some cases, an individual criminal or civil harassment depends on the facts of each case. As defined more fully below, there are sections in the Criminal Code dealing with nuisance and harassing telephone calls. In general, fear for one's safety is an essential element in a criminal harassment charge. On the other hand, the factual components for nuisance and harassing telephone calls are completely different. On the other side of the spectrum are the civil harassment cases which do not require fear for one's safety.

Whether the conduct constitutes criminal harassment, again, depends on the facts of the case and the impact on the "victim." This is reviewed in more detail under the Criminal Code below. All of the forms of civil harassment are recognized by the courts as constituting nuisance. The remedies fashioned in the courts include interim injunctions pending trial, permanent injunctions, as well as damages.

In the majority of cases involving disruption or harassment, the matter can be resolved without recourse to more serious forms of intervention such as the police or the courts. In some cases, a letter from the supervisory officer or director or even a trustee explaining the circumstances can resolve the issues. In other cases, referral to mediation can solve a real or perceived dispute. For example, in a number of special education situations, we have used mediation to resolve the conflict and avoid judicial review and possible human rights complaints. In many cases, the individual is looking for a way to vent their anger and, once this is done can participate in resolving the substantive issues.

One reality that cannot be overlooked is the necessity to teach teachers and administrators how to recognize and deal with disruptive parents or individual harassment. Recognition of the problem can sometimes lead to an effective resolution before the matter escalates. Many directors have commented that educators are not well trained to deal with such confrontations. With appropriate professional development, strategies can be developed to deal with both criminal and civil forms of harassment. In many cases of civil harassment, the strategies may effectively resolve the matter.

One complaint we have heard from administrators is that quite often the board considers these issues to be the responsibility of the principal alone, and does not provide sufficient back-up. Senior administrators should remember that the principal is acting on behalf of the board. As a result, the strategy that is utilized should be developed consensually between the principal and the appropriate supervisory officer. Otherwise, principals are left to fend for themselves. In such cases, the methods of dealing with the issues will differ from school to school, thereby creating inconsistency within the board's jurisdiction. Moreover, principals might act inappropriately, causing greater friction or even placing a principal in some jeopardy of liability for inappropriate action. Working together as a "team" and developing appropriate strategies should eliminate this risk.

Douglas Biber
University language: A Corpus-based Study of Spoken and Written Registers.
Philadelphia: Benjamins, 2006. Pp. 261.

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Biber's *University Language: A study of spoken and written registers* is one of several publications which examine the corpus produced for the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language Project (T2K-SWAL), a result of two Educational Testing Service (ETS) grants. In this book, Biber reexamines the corpus and offers entirely new descriptions and extensions to those prior publications.

The book's focus is on reporting research of academic and non-academic spoken and written registers which students encounter while they study in American universities and offers a great deal of new and insightful information about L1 academic language for various audiences: graduate students studying TEFL/SL or Applied Linguistics, teachers of pre-university students and ESP and EAP students, course designers, and textbook writers.

To set up the importance of this research, Biber gives an example of the gap between written (textbook) and spoken (lecture) language in chapter 1. He then backgrounds the recent research of academic language very completely. Afterwards, he reviews recent research concerning register and offers his working definition of register as "situationally defined lexico-grammatical features (p. 11)."

Co-authors of chapter 2, Susan Conrad, Randi Reppen, Pat Byrd, and Marie Helt, offer a summary of the corpus's design and construction. In this chapter they explain the corpus's sampling of academic language as natural discourse and describe how the corpus was gathered. They then describe the nuts and bolts of the process and rationale of transcription and grammatical tagging by computer. What is particular about this corpus, they note, is that for spoken register it not only has the expected classroom teaching register but also includes classroom management, office hour and service encounters, and study groups, as well as other academic conversations. Also for written registers, the expected textbook register is present, along with syllabi, university catalogues, and course reading packets. These are real texts in real situations which students encounter while studying, but researchers do not often analyze them this rigorously.

In chapter 3, Biber surveys the previous research of vocabulary use in university registers and gives the methodology of this study. Biber depicts vocabulary use in terms of the distribution of all words in the corpus and their frequency. He then compares the parts of speech and their use across classroom teaching and textbook registers of various fields of study.

Chapter 4 reports on aspects of grammatical variation: content word classes, semantic classes for nouns and verbs, tense aspect and voice, discourse connectors, and dependent clauses. Biber does this by comparing their frequency in various spoken and written registers and across academic disciplines. Chapter 5 looks at the academic concept of stance across spoken and written registers and discusses the features of stance, their grammatical, lexical, and paralinguistic markings, along with their distribution.

The next chapter discusses lexical bundles, or multiword sequences of words (e.g. an important part of, tells us that, on the basis of, etc.), in both academic and non-academic, spoken and written registers. Here, Biber outlines the functional classification and distribution of these lexical bundles with the main nodes being stance, discourse organizers, referential expressions and special functions (politeness, longer expressions in service encounters).

In chapter 7, Biber uses a factor analysis statistical method, first used in his 1988 monumental study on language variation, and looks at the overall patterns in university texts. He then identifies specific registers in this specific corpus along continuum line graphs of oral/literate discourse, procedural/content-focused discourse, reconstructed account of events, and teacher centered stance. The final chapter summarizes the six major findings of the study and future research directions and possible applications.

This book is not without its difficulties. For readers new to corpus linguistics, it will most likely be a difficult read, or rather a slow read--one which requires careful thought and time to digest new concepts, somewhat dry analyses, and many tables. Also, the corpus is only from US rather than English medium universities throughout the world, thereby possibly limiting its appeal. Despite these minor challenges, this is an important book which contributes greatly to corpus linguistics and helps to further define and exemplify just what academic language truly is in real world settings.

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International Legal English
Amy Krois-Lindner and TransLegal.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 320.

Reviewed by Ruth Breeze
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The need for textbooks that equip students with the language skills needed to cope with legal English has been growing considerably over recent years. In a globalized world, lawyers from different legal cultures and language backgrounds are increasingly likely to use the medium of English to communicate professionally. However, the intrinsic problem of the mismatch between national legal systems, on the one hand, and common and civil law systems on the other, has meant that many excellent legal English textbooks are successful because they serve as introductions to English or American law, rather than because they give students a working knowledge of legal language. Teachers involved in teaching legal English know that the problem is a very real one, which is best expressed in two questions: How can we teach legal language without filling in the background about common law systems? And how can we provide the right amount of background information without turning our course into a course on English or US law, rather than language?

International Legal English (ILE), authored by Amy Krois-Lindner and TransLegal, a European legal translation agency, fills this need, by negotiating the delicate balance between legal content knowledge and language skills. With the pragmatic aim of teaching practising lawyers to function in English in international contexts, and the concrete objective of preparing them for Cambridge ESOL's new ILEC examination, the book focuses on the key area of commercial law. Within this field, a number of major topics are covered, including company and contract law, real estate and intellectual property.

What makes this book uniquely useful is that the authors, who work in a European rather than British or American context, start from the premise that lawyers chiefly need to provide advice about their own legal system in English, rather than gain mastery of US or UK legal concepts. Although abundant background information concerning common-law countries is provided, particularly concerning legal practice and key concepts in company and contract law, the book wisely steers away from teaching students content knowledge, moving forcefully in the direction of enabling students to acquire active language skills.

This means that each of the 15 units of the book provides reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities related to the main theme. For example, the unit on company formation provides a brief introduction to the essential elements in company formation in the UK and USA, giving the main terminology used in each case. It then moves on to listening activities about how companies are formed, which give students an opportunity to practise the vocabulary they have just encountered. After introducing students to the linguistic conventions of the legal letter of advice, the book provides a practical example in which students read about some new legislation and write a letter to a client advising him or her about what type of company to set up. Like all the units in the book, it ends with a "Language focus" section in which new vocabulary is practised in various typical EFL exercise formats. Some of the units then offer "internet research activities" at the book's website, which provide an interesting option for more open-ended homework. Other units centre on legal practice in the UK and USA; capitalisation issues; mergers and spin-offs; contract formation, remedies and third-party rights; employment law; sale of goods; real property and intellectual property; negotiable instruments; secured transactions; debtors and creditors; and competition law.

One final aspect of *ILE* which is worthy of mention is the way in which material that tends to be dry and complex is made palatable by the use of examples and situations. The book takes the best of current language teaching methodology and applies it to legal situations, without ever losing the serious professional focus. On the debit side, the eight-page glossary of legal terms provided at the back of the book, and the footnote explanations of key UK and US terminology, might benefit from being lengthened. Some of the brief definitions are definitely somewhat sketchy, and, since lawyers the world over are the kind of people who believe that the small print is important, teachers may find themselves having to fall back on their own resources to provide more detailed explanations.

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