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The EFL Professional's Written Forum

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# Foreword

We are happy to present the March edition of the *Asian EFL Journal*, an issue that largely concerns itself with teaching practices based on sound academic theory. As we prepare for our second international conference at Dongseo University in Pusan, Korea in late April, many of the contributions presented here are relevant to this year's Task-based Learning theme as well as to last year's conference and the continuing theme of competence we seek to debate through the Journal.

In the first piece, Ya-Ling Chen provides us with a detailed and fascinating study of partial immersion, a theme of last year's conference. After examining the Influence of Partial English Immersion Programs in Taiwan on Kindergartners' Perceptions of Chinese and English Languages and Cultures, Chen dispels many of the myths about immersion, providing us with a very realistic yet positive conclusion. This study deserves to be seen as essential reading for anyone considering immersion for a monolingual and monocultural Asian context.

David R. Litz & Allison K. Smith provide us with a useful contribution to research into a practical aspect of administering cloze test procedure. Their evidence suggests that an exact replacement scoring method (ERS) might be just as reliable as SEMAC (semantically acceptable scoring procedure). Before rushing to drop SEMAC for the sake of expediency, however, readers should carefully consider Litz and Smith's own recommendations of caution and the need for corroboration from further research.

With a study from Taiwan, Yuh-Mei Chen provides us with an interesting contribution to our knowledge on portfolio use, concluding that portfolios are a useful and successful pedagogical tool but might not be appropriate for assessment, a conclusion that should provide food for thought for those of us who use portfolios for assessment in other contexts.

Our fourth contribution is from Darren Lingley who describes a teaching procedure for developing intercultural awareness skills in the Japanese university context. His paper relates theory to teaching practice, discussing a detailed example of a failed intercultural communication. He uses a real-life critical incident in which public apologies are the central issue to develop teaching procedures "to help students cope with culture's impact on language".

The *Asian EFL Journal* is about to hold its conference on the theme of Task-Based Learning. In-Jae Jeon and Jung-won Hahn give us a timely reminder of the fact that theoretical support for an approach in journals or conferences is less important than the knowledge, perceptions and abilities of teachers. Practical problems of the high-school

classroom, for example, cannot be excluded from curriculum decisions: “Many Korean EFL teachers retain some fear of adopting TBLT as an instructional method because of perceived disciplinary problems related to classroom practice.” Teachers need to have confidence in the approach they adopt, but Jeon points out that “one of the major reasons teachers avoid implementing TBLT is deeply related to a lack of confidence”.

A. H. Abdul Raof and Masdinah Alauyah Md. Yusof from Malaysia introduce some aspects of ESP Project Work which are partially rooted in a task-based learning approach. They provide a well-documented example from the world of ESP for Engineering students that supports their contention that “language acquisition would be most effectively facilitated if it could be embedded with the learners’ field of study or work. Through appropriate pedagogy for learning, the more the learners are exposed to real world tasks, the better language users they will become.” Their project-based approach and the design of activities that have real-world applications clearly has applications beyond the field of ESP.

From Japan, Mita, Shirao, Martin, Hatagaki and Dendo report on the positive impact of foreign Asian students in Japanese university EFL classrooms, an initiative that requires extensive organization but which is potentially replicable in other Asian contexts. They report “a positive effect on motivation and performance that went beyond improving students' cross-cultural understanding” having among other advantages “a profound effect on the strategic competence of the Japanese students”.

While many of the pieces in this issue have dealt with practical teaching approaches based on sound theory, the Asian EFL journal is still very interested in stimulating debate issues that affect Asian EFL. The last three contributions all stimulate thought and potential debate for future issues.

Mohammad Ali Salmani-Nodoushan attempts to impose some order on the often bewildering diversity of trends and paradigms in circulation in the field of EFL. He provides us with his summary of “recent trends” in language pedagogy identifying three recent aspects of the debate: “(1) a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method, (2) an emphasis on teacher autonomy, and (3) an attempt at principled pragmatism”.

In his paper, Ali Al-Issa from Oman provides a further angle to add to our knowledge of the cultural politics of EFL examining the extent to which Omani EFL is “culturally and educationally dependant on North America (USA and Canada), Britain and Australia (NABA) for its progress and development”. Al-Issa provides a meticulous description of the Omani situation to support his view and goes on to suggest ways in which this dependency can be reduced.

Finally, our opinion piece for this issue returns to a much-debated theme linked to our continuing concern with the notion of competence. In this case the theme is the kind of competence we are encouraging our students to achieve. Fenton and Terasawa challenge

the contention made in 2004 by Jarvis and Atsilarat in the *Asian EFL Journal*, in which they took issue with the suitability of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology for the Asian context. We would be happy to publish a response in a future issue.

**Roger Nunn**
**Senior Associate Editor**

# The Influence of Partial English Immersion Programs in Taiwan on Kindergartners' Perceptions of Chinese and English Languages and Cultures

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**Bio Data**

Dr Ya-Ling Chen is an assistant professor in the Early Childhood Education Department at Pingtung University of Education. He obtained his Masters degree in August, 1997 in the Curriculum & Instruction Department of Penn State University and his doctoral degree in May, 2002 from the Curriculum & Instruction Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Abstract:**
Many Taiwanese scholars and parents raise concerns about the influences of the partial English immersion programs (EIPs), indicating EIPs might lead children to devalue their Chinese language (L1) and Chinese culture (C1), and favor English (L2) and Western culture (C2). This study explores whether a typical partial English immersion program leads children to devalue their L1 and C1. Also, this study shows how linguistic and cultural values are implicitly and explicitly represented in the partial EIP, and how these representations influence children's attitude toward the English language (L2) and Western culture (C2), in addition to their L1 and C1. This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate these research concerns. The results show that, overall, the majority of partial EIP children do not devalue their L1 and C1.

**Key words**: language immersion program, EFL, bilingual education, ESL, culture identity, early childhood education

## Introduction

In Taiwan, kindergarten partial English immersion programs (EIPs) have become very popular choices for young children to learn English. In partial EIPs, English is the primary language used for communication and instruction. Except for some subjects (e.g., Chinese language class, art, and physical education), all subjects are taught mainly in English. Additionally, English is required as the primary communication language among teachers, students, and staff in the school. The rationale of partial EIPs is based upon the belief that one learns a second language by actually communicating through it. The integration of language instruction with content instruction helps children pick up a second language naturally and unconsciously (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2000; Genesee, 1994). Therefore, most partial EIPs in Taiwan adopted a so-called "no Chinese-speaking" policy. That is, children cannot speak Chinese in the school unless they get permission. The major goal of this policy is to construct an environment in which children will have motivation to use English in multiple contexts.

The "no Chinese-speaking" policy and its implementation has triggered many concerns about their influences on children's cultural and language identity. Many Taiwanese scholars and parents raised concerns about the influences of the partial English immersion programs (EIPs), indicating EIPs might lead children to devalue their Chinese language (L1) and Chinese culture (C1), and favor English (L2) and Western culture (C2) (Ruan, 1996; Zhuang, 2003; Chen, 2003). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether a typical kindergarten partial EIP leads children to devalue their L1 and C1.

## Literature Review

Immersion is defined as a method of foreign language instruction in which the foreign language is the major vehicle for content instruction and communication. The first immersion program was begun in 1965 in the community of St. Lambert, which is near Montreal, Quebec. The St. Lambert immersion program was the product of the joint efforts of parent groups, educational authorities, and researchers who sought to improve

French as a second-language teaching method for English-speaking children who live in Quebec (Doyle, 2005). Since then, extensive research has been conducted to study the influence of immersion programs. The research findings consistently demonstrate positive outcomes: students achieve high levels of proficiency in their second language (L2) without long-term cost to their progress in their first language (L1) and other academic subjects (Cummins, 2005; Genesee, 1994; Pagan, 2005; Vanderkelien, 1995). The apparent success of the immersion programs and the dissatisfaction with the traditional second language programs led immersion programs to grow internationally. Various forms of immersion education are operating worldwide and have been well researched. These include examples in Europe (Bel Gaya, 1994; Johnstone, 2001), Australia (Chappell & DeCourcy, 1993), Japan (Bostwick, 1994), and the U. S. (Zehr, 2005). In Taiwan, language immersion programs for young children have existed for more than 10 years. However, because teaching young children English is not suggested in the "Taiwanese kindergarten curriculum guideline", research studying English immersion programs was not available in Taiwan.

**Strategies of Dealing with Language and Cultural Confrontations**

If people view language practices in themselves as embodying acts of identity, learning an L2 may engage learners in identity construction and negotiation. When children are in the process of identity negotiation, they may shift their ways of viewing different languages (L1 and L2) and cultures (C1 and C2) and their ways of thinking about themselves in social context. Rudimin (2003) indicated that in the process of identity negotiation, some individuals may adopt three general cultural strategies: assimilation, acculturation, and preservation. In assimilation, children give up their C1 style and values and then adapt to C2. In acculturation, children adapt to the lifestyle and values of the C2, but at the same time maintain their own cultural styles and values. In preservation, children completely reject the styles and values of the C2 and preserve their C1. These categories help one to understand children's possible reactions when they have contact with different languages and cultures.

Meanwhile, a group of researchers suggest that learners' cultural strategies are not "either/or" but instead a matter of coexistence, hybridization, and blending. When children have contact with different cultures and languages, they are working through contradictions and dilemmas among different cultures. They are experiencing, reacting, and trying to move beyond these contradictions. In these processes, children need to project a centered culture where they can negotiate the differences between different cultures and languages. Some researchers refer to this centered culture a third culture (Kramsch, 1993), and some call it hybrid culture (Bhabha, 1994; Gutierrez, 1995; Kanno, 2003; Pieterse, 1994). Basically, these two concepts are very similar. Both concepts indicate that there is a third place to synthesize elements of different cultures and negotiate a mutual understanding of each culture. In other words, the third culture is a place for learners to negotiate cultural differences and construct their own understanding of the different cultures (Kramsch, 1993). Different from the concept of a third culture, which emphasizes the third place as a synthesis of two cultures, the concept of hybrid culture stresses that the third place is not the combination, accumulation, fusion, or synthesis of various components, but energy filled with different forces within which different cultures encounter and transform each other (Bhabha, 1994; Piller, 2002). Therefore, the concept of "hybridity" emphasizes the dynamism of the way learners deal with input, establish priority, and make decisions. In the EFL context, many researchers suggest that learners are more likely to adopt hybrid cultural strategy (Galindo, 1996; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

**Factors Affecting Cultural Strategies**

The elements that determine which strategy EIP children will adopt can be discussed in terms of psychological and social constructs. Tajfel (1982) claimed that a person's cultural identity and values are mainly affected by the psychological construct, which includes a cognitive component (a cognitive awareness of the culture's features), an evaluative component (a positive or negative value connotation attached to the culture) and an affective component (a sense of emotional attachment to the culture). The weight of these three constructs in determining children's cultural identity may vary, but children's attitudes toward culture can be seen as the product of the interplay among

these three constructs (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Mcnamara, 1997). Having a cognitive understanding of L1 and L2 and C1 and C2, children also have evaluative attitudes and affective emotions attached to these different languages and cultures. Although children's cultural strategies are influenced by the interaction of these three components, affective attachment to the culture seems to play the final determining role in deciding which cultural strategy children will adopt (Phinney, 2000, 2003). Children who evaluate L1 and C1 as having lower status than L2 and C2 may develop a stronger affective commitment to L2 and C2. However, the tendency for children to favor a culture or a language is primarily determined by their commitment to it (Ellemers, Korekas & Ouwerkerk, 1999).

In addition to psychological factors, Scovel (2000) suggested that social distance and psychological distance are two major constructs determining children's cultural attitudes. In Schumann's (1978) definition, social distance means the relationship between the social group to which learners belong to the target-language social group. Psychological distance means the distance between the learner and the target-language community, resulting from psychological factors. Factors affecting social factors include the status and congruence of two cultures, learners' attitudes toward the cultures, and the intended length of residency in the L2 areas. Factors affecting psychological distance include the resolution of language shock, culture shock, culture stress, and motivation. The stress and anxiety of coping with L2 difficulties and dealing with a new culture may result in EIP children's resistance to L2 and C2. When encountering conflicts between L1 and L2 and C1 and C2, EIP learners may feel discomfort, and they may either reject their C1 (to adapt to the new culture) or preserve their C1.

In addition, Baker (2002) indicated that children's understandings of a culture and the values attached to it may largely come from the family and community contexts. Because EIP children's cultural strategies are not only determined by schools but also by larger social contexts including family and community (Brofenbrenner, 1979), it is necessary to discuss the influential factors of cultural strategies in the family and community contexts. The distinction between notions of additive and subtractive

bilingualism is a useful one when considering the influence of families and community. If the native language (L1) is dominant or receives support from family and community, the acquisition of a second language (L2) is not likely to replace the individual's first language. If the native language (L1) has a low status and little support from the family and community, the acquisition of L2 and C2 may replace or undermine an individual's perception of L1 and C1 (Baker, 2000, 2002). Therefore, if the native culture is the mainstream culture and is supported by the family and community, EIP children will not easily assimilate to the new culture.

**Studies Regarding Immersion Students' Linguistic and Cultural Attitudes**

When young children acquire L2 and C2 in EIPs, will children devalue their L1 and C1? Several studies have been conducted to examine immersion learners' perceptions of L1 and L2 and of C1 and C2. This research studied immersion students' perceptions from a number of perspectives: (1) the participating students' perceptions of themselves, L1 speakers, and L2 speakers; (2) their attitudes toward L1 and L2; (3) their attitudes toward and actual use of L2 and C2.

For example, Genesee & Gandara (1999) summarized research and indicated that studies of immersion students' language and culture attitudes have yielded complex results. In 1972, Lambert & Tucker conducted a longitudinal evaluation of the St. Lambert Experiment immersion programs to evaluate French immersion students' attitudes toward L1 and L2 and C1 and C2. Students' attitudes were elicited by asking immersion students and non-immersion counterparts to rate themselves, English-Canadians (L1 speakers), French-Canadians (L2 speakers), and European French people (L2 speakers) on 13 bipolar dimensions of different types (e.g., friendly-unfriendly, ugly-good looking, etc.). The results showed that French immersion students' perceptions of themselves are very favorable and show no signs of ambiguity. Immersion students' views of their own ethnolinguistic groups reflect as much pride as do those of English group children. There is no sign that immersion students are socially lost or in search of an identity (Lambert & Tucker, 1972).

Cziko, Lambert, and Gutter (1979) and Genesee (1977), using multidimensional scaling techniques to examine the ethnic identity of immersion students in the different grades, also yielded a similar result. In these studies, the respondents were asked to make global assessments of similarities between different pairs of persons (e.g., English Canadian: myself, English Canadian: bilingual French Canadian, etc.). The findings suggested that immersion students develop positive attitudes towards the English Canadian culture and language (L1 and C1), as do students attending English language programs. At the same time, immersion students have been found to perceive English Canadians in general and themselves in particular as being more similar to French Canadians (L2 speakers) (Cziko, Lambert, Sidoti & Tucker, 1978). More recently, Cazabon, Lambert & Hall (1993) found that by third grade, immersion learners develop friendships in the classroom quite independent of race or ethnicity. In a follow-up study, Lambert & Cazabon (1994) indicated that one aspect of the effectiveness of the Amigos program (a two-way Spanish-English immersion program in the U.S.) is the immersion students' positive attitudes toward both the program and two languages (L1 and L2). Also, this study found that "a clear preference for having friends from both (Anglo and Hispanic) groups and for mixed ethnic/racial classrooms as opposed to ethnically segregated schoolings. Dowes (2001) investigated Japanese immersion students' attitude towards Japan and West cultures. The attitude towards Japan and the West Questionnaire (AJWQ) was constructed to examine how the English immersion students subjectively perceive themselves in relation to Japan and the West. The results of the subscale comparison indicated that in addition to more flexible cross-cultural attitudes, the immersion students display a stronger sense of Japanese cultural (C1) identity than the comparison group. Other studies that show gain in cross-cultural understanding and in appreciation of the other's culture and language in two-way immersion programs in the U.S. include Christian (1994), Macfarlane & Wesche, (1995), Rolstad (1997), and Cazabon, Nicoladis & Lambert (1998).

In summary, there have been positive social outcomes associated with participation in immersion programs as attested by immersion students' views and attitudes of L1, L2 and C1, C2. Research findings indicated that immersion learners display the same favorable

perceptions of their L1 and C1 as their non-immersion counterparts. Learning L2 in immersion programs does not seem to threaten students' valuations and attitudes toward L1 and C1. Further, immersion students tend to view L2, L2 speakers, and C2 more positively than non-immersion students. However, because most of the literature studying immersion students' linguistic and cultural attitudes is produced in Western countries (e.g., Canada, the U.S.), research studying language immersion in different cultural contexts has sometimes yielded different results. For example, Clachar (1997) found that the increase of students learning English is seen as a real threat to student's Puerto Rican culture and national identity.

In Taiwan, there are some similarities in the way immersion programs are established in Taiwan and in Western countries. For example, in Canada and in Taiwan, the status of L2 (English or French) is high. The L2 is a powerful asset for students in the workforce and is becoming more important with globalization. Language immersion programs fostering children's bilingual abilities help their students in becoming more eligible for future jobs. Also, most immersion programs in these countries are voluntary programs. Because of the high cost, students participating in immersion programs are mainly from middle-class families. In terms of these similarities, research results, derived from the studies conducted in western countries, may be applicable to Taiwan's EIPs. However, the socio-cultural and political conditions are different in Taiwan and in western countries. For example, in Canada, many French-speaking people have strived to maintain their language rights and the availability of French service. Therefore, French language (L2) learners have much access to the language and its culture. However, in Taiwan, English (L2) is only a foreign language, which is seldom used outside the school context. Differences of language condition and the contexts for the acquisition of L2 may result in children's different reactions. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research studying the influence of EIPs on children's perceptions of L1 and L2 and C1 and C2 in Taiwan's context.

**Methodology**

The research site of this study, Northwest school, is one of the most famous private partial EIP networks in Taiwan. One of the main reasons to choose this Northwest school as the research site is its typicality in Taiwan. There are about 10 large-scale EIPs for young children in Peach City (the second biggest city in Northern Taiwan). Most EIPs in Peach City had been created by staff left from a pioneering EIP, which is referred to here by the pseudonym EIP-Gift. These people made use of their experiences and combined their own ideas to create competitive EIPs or to help other people manage new EIPs. The nationwide network of Northwest schools is one of these offshoots. In fact, the nationwide network of Northwest schools can be seen as EIPs that split from the EIP-Gift because all key persons in Northwest schools are previous staff from the EIP-Gift school. Therefore, the training and the ways these persons run EIPs are very similar in many aspects. Because the local Northwest school in this study used the same teaching materials, curriculum planning, and teacher training as those of the nationwide network of Northwest schools, many scenes that happen at this Northwest school also happen in other EIPs. Therefore, the results deriving from this study have plausible applicability to other EIPs in Taiwan.

Not all classes in Northwest school participated in this study. I was only allowed to do observations and interviews regularly in four classes. I purposely chose four classes whose students were of different ages and had studied in Northwest for different lengths of time. The backgrounds of the four major participating classes are summarized as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Class 5-6A | Children are about 5 to 6 years old and have studied at Northwest for nearly 2 years. |
| Class 6-7A | Children are about 6 to 7 years old and have studied at Northwest for almost 3 years. |
| Class 6-7F | Children are about 6 to 7 years old and have studied at Northwest for nearly 1 year |
| Class 3-4B | Children are about 3 to 4 years old and have studied at Northwest for 5 months. |

Children, teachers, and parents in these four classes were the main participants in this study. My observations at this school were conducted from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM every school day for about six months. Except for being a substitute teacher when English teachers were absent, I did my observation regularly in different classrooms.

Data-gathering techniques used in this study include: extensive classroom observations, audio-taping, note-keeping, artifact-reviewing, and both structured and open interviews with teachers, parents, and children. I began with some general and important aspects in mind (i.e., language use, activities, interaction). As some important themes and issues emerged, I purposely observed different classrooms during different periods of time to gain more information about specific themes.

Focused and open-ended interviews have been suggested as very informative in investigating individual's feelings toward a language or its culture (Lambert, 1987). Interviews involved both formal, structured interviews, and informal conversation. To triangulate findings derived from observation and informal interviews, I conducted four main structured interviews: In the first and second interview, the language-preference interview, I asked children about their preferences for different activities conducted in L1 and L2, respectively. In the third and fourth interviews, the culture-preference interview, I asked children to compare their preferences for pictures from C1 and C2. Although some over-arching ("grand tour") structured questions were used to guide some interviews, interviewees were always allowed flexibility to express their opinions and to talk about topics they liked.

The four structured interviews were mostly conducted in the playground so that children would not feel pressured or anxious. Children would often approach me in the playground, and I would interview them when they did so. Most children approaching me were from classes in which I did my regular observations. To interview children who were underrepresented in my sample, I sometimes purposely approached children. Meanwhile, if several children approached me at the same time, I gave priority to children from classes that were underrepresented in my sample. The number of children

interviewed in each class was listed in Appendix A. Because some children did not have the patience to complete the whole interview, the total number of interviewees asked about each language and cultural preference was not the same.

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to do the analysis. Quantitative techniques were mainly used to analyze children's answers to the four structured interviews, which include: (1) two language-preference interviews, and (2) two culture-preference interviews. The quantitative results were then triangulated with findings derived from the qualitative analysis of other sources of data (e.g., observation of children's behavior, language use, activities and interviews of parents and teachers about their perceptions). Except for the structured interview, the rest of the analysis was mainly analyzed qualitatively.

To ensure interpretative validity, I took the data and tentative interpretation (i.e., vignette) back to the people from whom they were derived and asked them about the accuracy and completeness of the statements I made. I did this continuously throughout the study to ensure that I represented the participants' perspectives. Also, I gave each participant (including parents, teachers, and school staff) a sheet of paper describing the private web site in which I published my tentative findings. I encouraged them to visit the web site and to comment on my findings. Moreover, I obtained my data from multiple sources, used multiple methods to check my emerging findings, observed the same phenomena repeatedly, and checked for deviations from patterns to ensure that the conclusions drawn in this study are credible.

**Results**

Results and discussions of partial EIP children's preference for L1 and L2 and C1 and C2 are described in the following sections:

**First Interview: Children's Liking for L1 and L2 in Different Activities**

In this interview, I directly asked children how much they liked L1 and L2, respectively in the activities of watching TV, listening to songs, speaking, and listening to stories.

Language-related activities in these interviews are closely related to children's daily lives so that young children can construe interview questions easily. Based upon EIP opponents' concerns that partial EIP children would prefer L2 and devalue L1, children's responses were calculated in terms of L2-preference scores. The method of calculating the L2-preference score involved the following categories (Appendix B):

"+1": children preferred L2 to L1.

"0": children held no preference. They either liked both or disliked both L1 and L2.

"-1": children preferred L1 to L2.

These three ordinal categories were used to quantify children's preference for L2 compared to L1. Table A shows the sum of children's responses for each L2-preference score category.

**Table A**

**Summary of L2-Preference Scores in the Second Interview**

| Activity | L2-Preference Scores | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | +1 | 0 | -1 |
| Watching TV | 1 | 27 | 15 |
| Listening to songs | 5 | 31 | 7 |
| Speaking | 4 | 28 | 11 |
| Listening to stories | 1 | 34 | 7 |

A statistical test, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, was used in this study to test partial EIP opponents' concerns (i.e., Would children prefer L2 and devalue L1?). In this test, I set the null hypothesis as: $H_0$: $S(x) >= F(x)$, which means that children do not have a tendency to prefer L2 (or C2). The null hypothesis was expressed this way in order to explicitly test partial EIP opponents' concerns. If the concerns were supported by children's responses, the null hypothesis would be rejected, thereby yielding the alternative conclusion that children do have a tendency to prefer L2 [$H_A$: $S(x) < F(x)$].

Table B shows the data pattern from Table A translated into the theorized and observed cumulative proportions required by the K-S test. In Table B, F(x) represents the hypothesized theoretical distribution; and S(x) represents the observed distribution. The

paired rows of numbers under the heading "$H_0$" in F(x) and S(x) are the cumulative proportion of F(x) and S(x), respectively. Results of the K-S test for four activities are listed in Table B.

**Table B**

**K-S Test of Children's Preference for L2 over L1 in Different Activities**

| Activities | $H_0$ | T+ | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Watching TV | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 43 |
| | S-1=0.35 S0=0.98 S1=1.0 | | |
| Listening to songs | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 43 |
| | S-1=0.16 S0=0.88 S1=1.0 | | |
| Speaking | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.08 | 43 |
| | S-1=0.26 S0=0.91 S1=1 | | |
| Listening to stories | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 42 |
| | S-1=0.17 S0=0.98 S1=1 | | |

*p <.05. Note. To reject the $H_0$, the value of T+ needs to be larger than 0.186 (for n=43) or larger than 0.188 (for n=42)[1].

T+ =sup [F(x)-S(x)]

$H_0$: S(x)>=F(x) against the alternative hypothesis

$H_A$: S(x)<F(x) (tendency to prefer L2)

For none of the activities shown in Table B was the K-S test statistically significant. Thus, the results failed to reject $H_0$ in all activities. In other words, children who preferred L1 or held a neutral preference outnumbered those who preferred L2. Children did not show, as partial EIP opponents have worried, devaluing attitudes toward L1 in the activities of watching TV, listening to songs, speaking, and listening to stories.

**Second Interview: Children's Preference for L1 or L2 in Different Activities**

To provide more evidence to consolidate the above findings, I conducted another interview in which I explicitly asked children to express their preference for L1 or L2 in the same activities. Despite efforts to force a comparison, some children stated that they had no preference. Because of responses like that, the L2-preference score defined in Table L1 (Appendix B) was applicable here, too. The results of this interview were also

summarized in terms of the L2-preference scores. The numbers of children whose responses can be described with each L2-preference score are shown in Table C.

**Table C**

**Summary of the L2-Preference Scores in the Third Interview**

| Activity | L2-Preference Scores | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | +1 | 0 | -1 |
| Watching TV | 5 | 17 | 19 |
| Listening to songs | 8 | 24 | 9 |
| Speaking | 6 | 24 | 11 |
| Listening to stories | 7 | 19 | 15 |

Table D shows the data pattern from Table C translated into the theoretical and observed cumulative proportions required by the K-S test. Results of the K-S test for four activities are listed in Table D.

**Table D**

**K-S Test for Language Preference in Different Activities**

| Activities | $H_0$ | T+ | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Watching TV | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 41 |
| | S-1=0.44 S0=0.88 S1=1.0 | | |
| Listening to songs | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.113 | 41 |
| | S-1=0.22 S0=0.81 S1=1.0 | | |
| Speaking | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.065 | 41 |
| | S-1=0.27 S0=0.85 S1=1 | | |
| Listening to stories | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 41 |
| | S-1=0.37 S0=0.83 S1=1 | | |

*p <.05.

Note: To reject $H_0$, the value of T+ needs to be larger than 0.1905 for n=41

T+ =sup [F(x)-S(x)]

$H_0$: S(x)>=F(x) against the alternative hypothesis

$H_A$: S(x)<F(x) (tendency to prefer L2)

For none of the activities shown in Table D was the K-S test statistically significant. Thus, in the second interview, the results again failed to reject $H_0$ in all activities. Children do not show a tendency to prefer L2 to L1 in the activities of watching TV, listening to songs, speaking, and listening to stories. In other words, children did not show, as partial EIP opponents have feared, devaluing attitudes toward L1 in these activities.

To consolidate the activity-specific findings from the above interviews, I created a composite L2-preference score, which aggregates across all activities the information provided above. Three aggregations were formed. The first sums children's L2-preference scores across the four activities, utilizing children's responses in the first interview. The second does the same but utilizes children's responses in the second interview. The third, conceived as a grand aggregate, sums eight responses (first-interview responses to the four activities and second-interview responses to the four activities). For these three composites, an aggregate L2-preference score less than zero indicates that children preferred their first language in more activities than its second language. Table E summarizes these aggregate L2-preference scores across the 41 children interviewed, and it reports a statistical test addressed to the question of whether children in the population prefer L2 activities.

**Table E**

**Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the Aggregate L2-Preference Scores in the Second and Third Interviews**

| Measurement sources | N | N for Wilcoxon test | Observed Median of the sample data | Walsh average Estimate of the population median | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sum of the second interview | 41 | 24 | 0 | -0.50 | 64.5* |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sum of the third interview | 40 | 28 | -0.5 | -0.50 | 113* |
| Sum of the second and third interviews | 39 | 31 | -1.00 | -1.00 | 134* |

Note. $H_0$: Mdn=0 *p< .05.

T is the Wilcoxon statistic. The Walsh average, which is utilized in the Wilcoxon test, is even more resistant to outliers than the sample data median. As is evident in Table E, all estimates of population medians were negative (signifying a tendency to prefer the first language). In each of the three Wilcoxon tests presented in Table E, the null hypothesis is that the population's median equals zero was rejected as statistically untenable; in other words, the median differed significantly from zero (in the negative direction for the second interview, the third interview, and these two interviews combined). Because it would be improbable for such a pattern to occur in a sample drawn from a population whose median was zero or above, no support is given to the conclusion that, in the larger population, children prefer L2 activities. On the contrary, this finding is consistent with, but not proof of, a claim that children prefer L1 activities.

In addition to the data derived from the interviews with children, I also interviewed parents to get their perceptions of their children's preferences for L1 and L2. In the interviews, many parents (speaking in Mandarin) told me that their children did not like watching English TV or listening to English tapes after school. The following are examples of parents' comments:

M4-7F: "At the beginning, I will try to ask them to read English books, listen to English tapes, and watch English cartoons. However, they seem not to like it. Now, I do not do that anymore."
M3-7F: "Chinese books are more attractive to him."
M1-7F: "When they watch TV…I switch to 'English caption,' and they will say, 'Why is it in English?' Then they will ask me to switch back to Chinese captions and sounds. I switch to English caption purposely. Before they went to kindergarten, they did not react to it. Now that they are older, they object to it. They prefer to listen to Chinese…(laughter)…regarding this point...they are in Taiwan, not in a foreign country."
M1-6A: "I don't feel specifically that he likes [L2] or [C2]. But, I think he likes to watch [L1] programs."

In addition, Mandarin teachers also indicated that, compared to children in traditional kindergartens, children in this school tended to have more interest in Mandarin language classes. As the teacher of Mandarin explained (speaking in Mandarin):

"I feel that children here have more interest in learning Mandarin. In the traditional kindergarten, every class is conducted in Mandarin. So, they may feel it is nothing special. But, here, most classes use English, and children finally catch a chance to speak Mandarin in Mandarin class. Compared to children in traditional kindergartens, children are more willing to speak and participate in activities in Mandarin class."

I observed several scenes, which also demonstrated children's preference for Mandarin:

The Mandarin teacher gives children's homework to them. She calls children by their English names.

"But I want to be called in Chinese names" a child says.

"But, I don't know your Chinese name. It is not on the homework…Oh! Yes, it is here." Then the Mandarin teacher calls the child by his Chinese name.

According to Northwest parents, children tended to prefer L1 to L2 when they did activities at home. According to Mandarin teachers, children showed strong interest in learning Mandarin. In my observations, children did not want to be called by their English names in Chinese classes. Children often showed a strong interest in learning Chinese materials and speaking Chinese in Mandarin class. All these cases showed that partial EIP children do not devalue their L1.

**Third Interview: Children's Cultural Preference**

Another concern commonly raised by Taiwanese scholars is that partial EIP children will devalue their own culture. This section is mainly devoted to a discussion of this concern. Because children might not clearly understand the meaning of Chinese culture and Western culture, the method I used to discover children's cultural preference was to show children a set of pictures from C1 and C2, each pair of pictures representing a particular aspect of culture. I asked each child the following question: "Do you prefer Chinese (pointing to the C1 picture) or Western (pointing to the C2 picture)?" When I asked children their preference for a culture, I always pointed to pictures to help them understand my question. Then, I asked each child to explain his or her reasons by asking: "Why do you prefer this one?" Responses to this interview were calculated in terms of the C2-preference score. The way of calculating and categorizing this C2-preference score is in Table L2 (Appendix B). I attempted in the wording of my questions to elicit

from children an unambiguous preference between pictures from C1 and C2. Despite my attempts, many children stated that they liked (or disliked) both pictures from C1 and C2. Therefore, the category of "0" (no preference) in C2-preference score was still applicable in this interview. The numbers of children whose responses could be categorized with each C2-preference score are shown in Table F.

**Table F**

**Frequencies of C2-Preference Scores**

| Cultural Aspects | C2-Preference Score | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | +1 | 0 | -1 |
| Words | 26 | 9 | 13 |
| Flags | 16 | 8 | 24 |
| Religion | 25 | 8 | 13 |
| Food | 31 | 10 | 6 |
| People (Children) | 11 | 9 | 26 |
| Architecture | 21 | 7 | 19 |
| People (Adult) | 16 | 9 | 21 |
| Art | 27 | 8 | 10 |

Table G shows the data pattern from Table F translated into the theoretical and observed cumulative proportions required by the K-S test. Results of the K-S test for children's culture preference for eight cultural aspects [word, flag, religion, food, people (children), architecture, people (adult), and art] are also shown in Table G.

**Table G**

**K-S Test for Cultural Preferences in the Fourth Interview**

| Cultural Aspects | $H_0$ | T+ | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Word | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.21* | 48 |
| | S-1=0.27 S0=0.46 S1=1 | | |
| Flag | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 48 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | S-1=0.50 S0=0.67 S1=1 | | |
| Religion | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.21* | 46 |
| | S-1=0.28 S0=0.46 S1=1.0 | | |
| Food | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.33* | 47 |
| | S-1=0.13 S0=0.34 S1=1.0 | | |
| People (Children) | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0 | 46 |
| | S-1=0.57 S0=0.76 S1=1.0 | | |
| Architecture | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.11 | 47 |
| | S-1=0.40 S0=0.55 S1=1.0 | | |
| People (Adult) | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.01 | 46 |
| | S-1=0.46 S0=0.65 S1=1.0 | | |
| Art | F-1=0.33 F0=0.67 F1=1 | 0.27* | 45 |
| | S-1=0.22 S0=0.4 S1=1.0 | | |

*p <.05.

Note. T+ =sup [F(x)-S(x)]

$H_0$: S(x)>=F(x) against the alternative hypothesis

$H_A$: S(x)<F(x) (tendency to prefer C2)

With regard to word, religion, food, and art as cultural aspects, the null hypothesis ($H_0$) is rejected. That is, children have a tendency to prefer C2 to C1 in the aspects or word, religion, food, and art. In terms of these cultural aspects, children might devalue their C1 due to their preference for C2. To further investigate children's overall preferences for pictures from C1 and C2, I created a composite C2-preference score, which aggregates across all cultural aspects the information provided above. I summed children's C2-preference scores across all eight aspects, utilizing children's responses in the interview. For this composite, an aggregate C2-preference score less than zero indicates that a child preferred pictures from C1 in more cultural aspects than those from C2. Table H summarizes the aggregate C2-preference score.

**Table H**

**Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the Sum of the C2-Preference Score in the Fourth Interview**

| Measurement source | N | N for Wilcoxon test | Observed median of the sample data | Walsh average estimate of population Median | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sum of the fourth interview | 47 | 30 | 0 | 1.00 | 333.5* |

Note. $H_0$: Mdn=0 *p < .05. T is the Wilcoxon statistic

As is evident in Table H, an estimate of the population median was positive (signifying a tendency to prefer the pictures from C2). The median differed significantly from zero. Because it would be improbable for such a pattern to occur in a sample drawn from a population whose median was zero or below, support is given to the conclusion that, in the larger population, children prefer C2 in these cultural aspects.

However, these results should be viewed with caution. The pictures used in this cultural preference interview involved many variables that are confounded with culture (e.g., color, facial expression, gender, etc.). Children might prefer one picture to the other simply because they like the color, image, or shape of the picture. Thus, to understand children's reasons for preferring one picture, I also asked children to state their reasons for their preference. In their answers, some non-cultural reasons sometimes appeared in their answers (e.g., I like the American flag because it has more colors). Nevertheless, some children did reveal their unfamiliarity or negative perception toward C1 (e.g., I don't like Chinese lion dance because it is ugly; I don't like Chinese calligraphy because it is ugly). Some children showed their positive feeling toward L2 and C2 (e.g., I prefer American people to Chinese people because American people can speak English; I prefer American people to Taiwan people because American people are smarter). If non-cultural reasons were the major basis for children to prefer one culture over the other, the result might not completely represent children's cultural preference. In other words, to conclude that children prefer C2 to C1 in this interview is not completely realistic; more interviews

and observations regarding children's cultural preference need to be done to triangulate the finding.

**Fourth Interview: Children's C1-Evaluations in Pictures from C1**

In the above interview, because my questions were designed to force a comparison between C1 and C2, some children might choose pictures from C2 because they preferred them. Because the selection of a preference was forced, the choice of a picture from C2 did not necessarily indicate dislike of the corresponding picture from C1. Children's appreciation of C2 (or even a preference for it) might not diminish their liking for C1. To have a clearer idea of children's perceptions of C1, I conducted another interview in which I directly asked children whether they liked the pictures from C1. Children's responses on this interview were summarized in terms of a C1-devaluation score. The method of calculating and categorizing C1-devaluation score is similar in conception to the C2-preference score previously used in Table L3 (Appendix B). The numbers of children whose responses could be described with each C1-devaluation score are shown in Table I.

**Table I**

**Summary of C1-Devaluation Scores in the Fifth (C1-Evaluating) Interview**

| Cultural aspects | -1 (Like C1) | +1 (Dislike C1) |
|---|---|---|
| Words | 29 | 19 |
| Flag | 35 | 13 |
| Religion | 21 | 27 |
| Food | 25 | 23 |
| People (Children) | 24 | 24 |
| Architecture | 32 | 16 |
| Art | 28 | 20 |
| Toys | 44 | 4 |
| People (Adults) | 26 | 22 |

Table J shows the data pattern from Table I translated into the theoretical and observed cumulative proportions required by the K-S test. Results of the K-S test for children's culture preference for nine cultural aspects [words, flags, religion, food, people (children), architecture, art, toys, people (adults)] are also in Table J.

**Table J**

**K-S Test in the C1-Evaluating Interview**

| Cultural Aspects | $H_0$: | T+ | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Words | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.60 S1=1.0 | | |
| Flag | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.73 S1=1.0 | | |
| Religion | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0.06 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.44 S1=1.0 | | |
| Food | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.52 S1=1.0 | | |
| Children | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.5 S1=1.0 | | |
| Architecture | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.67 S1=1.0 | | |
| Art | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.58 S1=1.0 | | |
| Toys | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.92 S1=1.0 | | |
| Adults | F-1=0.5 F1=1.0 | 0 | 48 |
| | S-1=0.54 S1=1.0 | | |

*$p < .05$

Note. To reject $H_0$, the value of T+ needs to be larger than 0.176092 for n=48

T+=sup [F(x)-S(x)]

$H_0$: S(x)>=F(x) against the alternative hypothesis

$H_A$: S(x)<F(x) (tendency to prefer C2)

For none of the cultural aspects shown in Table J was the K-S test statistically significant. Thus, the results failed in all the cultural aspects to reject $H_0$. In terms of this interview, it means that children liking pictures from C1 outnumber those disliking them. Even though the result of the fourth interview showed that children preferred pictures from C2 in some aspects, children are not found devaluing C1 overall. Therefore, children's appreciation of C2 does not diminish their appreciation of C1.

To consolidate the various findings from the above interview, I created a composite C2-preference score, which aggregates across all cultural aspects the information provided above. I summed children's C2-preference score across nine cultural aspects, utilizing children's responses in the interview. For this composite, an aggregate C2-preference score less than zero indicates that a child liked its C1 in more cultural aspects than C2. Table K summarizes this aggregate C2-preference score.

**Table K**

**Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the Sum of the C2-Preference Score in the Fifth Interview**

| Measurement source | N | N for Wilcoxon test | Observed median of the sample data | Walsh average estimate of the population median | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sum of the fifth interview | 48 | 48 | 0 | -2.00 | 300.5* |

Note. $H_0$: Mdn=0 *p < .05. **p <.01. T is the Wilcoxon statistic.

As is evident in Table K, the estimate of the population median was negative (signifying a tendency to like pictures from C1). The median differed significantly from zero. Because it would be improbable for such a pattern to occur in a sample drawn from a population whose median was zero or above, no support is given to the conclusion that, in the larger population, children dislike C1 in these cultural aspects.

In summary, in terms of children's perceptions of C1 and C2, the results of my cultural preference interviews showed that even though children prefer C2 in some cultural

aspects, they do not devalue their C1. However, because some children answered these interviews based upon non-cultural factors in pictures, these findings need to be triangulated with other sources of data.

According to my interviews with Northwest parents, most parents did not perceive their children as devaluing L1 and C1. The following opinions of two parents resemble most interviewed Northwest parents' opinions (speaking in Mandarin):

F1-7A: "I can definitely say that the influence on their perception of L1 and C1 is almost zero. They can clearly divide the cultures into two--Chinese is Chinese, and English is English…after learning English for these years. My two children give me an impression. That is, Northwest is Northwest and home is home. The two are different. When they are at Northwest, they are at Northwest."
M1-4B: "Basically, children are very interested in everything…they will not divide them into Chinese or English. For them, if you can tell them a story, they will have an interest in the story no matter if it is in English or in Chinese. What attracts them is not due to the language or culture but due to the content…I do not think my children's attitudes toward L1 and C1 changed much."

Most Northwest parents thought that their children either divided domains clearly into L1 and C1 and L2 and C2 or that they were mainly interested in content regardless of the language and culture. No matter what the reason is, almost all Northwest parents told me that they did not perceive obvious devaluation in their children's attitudes toward L1and C1. In short, the results have shown that, overall, partial EIP children do not devalue their L1 and C1.

**Discussion**

This investigation has failed to find evidence that partial EIP children devalue their L1 and C1. On the contrary, this study found that EIP children have a tendency to prefer L1 to L2. In terms of children's attitudes toward C1 and C2, this study found that EIP children sometimes show more favorable attitude toward C2. However, their appreciation for C2 does not diminish their liking for C1. In other words, teaching English in partial EIPs is not a threat to children's valuation and perception of L1 and C1. Nevertheless, this study revealed that some L1 and C1 devaluing messages were transmitted implicitly and explicitly through the no-Chinese-speaking policy and its implementation in the

partial EIP. As to the question why partial EIP children do not devalue their L1 and C1, the following discussion offers an explanation in the Northwest school context.

In the partial EIP, many scenes suggested that children with good L2 abilities were highly valued, but children whose strengths were primarily in L1 abilities did not get the same attention and reward. Because of the no-Chinese-speaking policy, many teachers set up rules to reward children who often speak English and to punish children who speak Chinese at inappropriate times. As a result, speaking Chinese was often related to punishment, warnings, teasing, embarrassment, and shame. Children with good English abilities often gained power, high status, rewards, and respect. These different kinds of feedback and treatment could have given children a cognitive understanding that the status and value of Chinese and its culture are lower than those of English and its culture in partial EIP. Nevertheless, except for a few individual cases, a majority of the EIP children did not devalue their L1 and C1. The critical factors in discussing why Northwest children did not devalue their L1 and C1 are included below.

**Psychological Distance of L2**

The first reason that explains why partial EIP children do not devalue L1 and C1 might be due to children's psychological distance to the L2. That is, children's incapability, stress, and anxiety in using English. Several Northwest mothers told me that their children did not like to watch English videotapes or read English books because they could not understand them. In my observation, many cases showed that children had difficulty using English to express their feelings and opinions. The difficulty of comprehending and speaking English seemed to create psychological distance between Northwest children and L2 (or C2), and further prevent any preference for L2. In other words, in the structured language-preference interviews, children's preference for L1 might be due to their confidence in and capability of using L1 rather than their preference for the language itself.

**Affective Component of Language and Culture**

Compared to children's resistance and irritation regarding L2, children's affective feelings to L1 are mostly positive. In partial EIPs, children's use of English was often not voluntary in the school. Children used English simply to avoid punishment or warnings from their peers or teachers. In my observations, several scenes showed that children were punished, teased, or ignored simply because they could not use English to express their feelings. Hence, many children, who were incapable of English, sometimes showed anxiety when they were required to speak English. In this study, I found that some individual children, especially those who were incapable of speaking English and have studied at Northwest for a long time, revealed obvious resistance and irritation regarding L2 and things related to L2. These children often showed extreme devaluing attitudes toward L2 and things related to it. They liked everything regarding L1 and disliked everything regarding L2. This result echoed the findings of some previous immersion studies, which revealed that immersion students' attitudes toward L2 and C2 become less favorable after a long period of L2 intensive learning (Gardner & Lysynchuck, 1990).

Also, because of the no-Chinese-speaking policy, children were not allowed to speak Chinese in most situations. However, children were better able to use Chinese to articulate their opinion and to express their feelings. Thus, when children really wanted to say something but did not know how to say it in English, they would find intimate friends and converse with them in Chinese privately. Therefore, in terms of the affective feeling, Northwest children tended to prefer L1 because it was a language to which they had full access and a language that symbolized trust and intimacy.

**Lack of Cognitive Understanding of L2 and C2**

Because most Taiwanese partial EIP children study English for utilitarian reasons - to develop English communication ability for future academic and career success, English instruction in partial EIPs mainly focused on daily vocabulary and sentence patterns, which seldom touched the in-depth issue of culture. Also, Northwest is a partial English immersion program; many courses (e.g., art, physical education, Mandarin, music, etc.) were conducted in Mandarin. Children still had many chances to speak and to learn L1

and C1 (e.g., in Mandarin course). Without significant contact with L2 and C2 in multiple contexts, school experience itself might not be sufficient for partial EIP children to understand L2 and C2, and further to prefer L2 and C2.

**Supports of L1 and C1 in Family and Community**

Personnel in partial EIPs might convey the message that L2 and C2 had a higher status than L1 and C1. However, this kind of valuing could be enhanced or diluted if the family and community were to provide similar or different messages. In my interviews, partial EIP parents told me that they viewed English (L2) as important, but they also viewed Mandarin (L1) as important. They thought that the advantage of Taiwanese children was not only in their proficiency in English but also in their proficiency in Chinese languages (e.g., Mandarin and Minna). They sent children to Northwest simply because they thought their children did not have many chances to learn and to practice English outside the school. They thought that they were able to teach their children Chinese languages but were incapable of teaching them English. Furthermore, most parents believed that learning L2 had a critical period. Therefore, they sent their children to partial EIP to "catch up" the critical time.

With respect to attitudes toward C1 and C2, Northwest parents did not show obvious valuing or devaluing attitudes because they did not think teaching cultural knowledge was essential at school. They thought cultural knowledge could be gained outside the school context - both C1 and C2. They thought that although partial EIP children tended to have more time and occasions for learning C2 through English songs, stories, rhymes, and materials in the school, children could gain more understanding of C1 from the family and community[2] contexts. For example, they provided abundant opportunities for their children to gain an understanding of C1 through celebrating Chinese festivals, viewing Chinese films, socializing with Chinese friends, and reading Chinese storybooks. Hence, Northwest parents thought that the amount of contact with C1 and C2 for their children was comparable. In other words, most partial EIP parents viewed L1 and C1 as important as L2 and C2; they valued and provided children with abundant L1 and C1 knowledge at home or community context. So, in terms of an ecological view, the

devaluing messages regarding C1 and L1 transmitted in the Northwest were not supported in children's family and community contexts. So, the negative influence on children's preference for L1 and C1 became diluted.

**Hybrid Culture**

Finally, the most salient reason that partial EIP children did not devalue their L1 and C1 appears to stem from the hybrid nature of culture and language in the partial EIPs. This study found that the culture and language with which Northwest children had contact on a daily basis was not a pure form of a single culture or language but a hybrid form, which included components of L1 and L2 and C1 and C2, and meshing among them. In children's and teachers' use of language, code mixing (CM) and code switching (CS) among English, Chinese, and dialects (Minna or Hakka) were everywhere in both their oral and written texts. Also, the culture of Northwest involved the meshing features of C2 and C1. In Northwest, English names, English tags, English learning materials, and foreign teachers could be seen everywhere.

Nevertheless, because the majority of people at Northwest were Taiwanese, the culture constructed by these Taiwanese people was full of the features of Chinese culture - eating Chinese food, wearing Chinese-style clothing, celebrating Chinese festivals, and talking Chinese-community topics. In addition, because not all partial EIP people were capable of using English to communicate with each other completely, L1 was still commonly heard and spoken privately and publicly at Northwest. Therefore, in the partial EIP, the cultures and languages with which the partial EIP children had contact were not clearly separated ones but a hybrid form created through negotiation and transformation of components of L1 and C1 components of L2 and C2. Therefore, one explanation for partial EIP children to not devalue their L1 and C1 might be due to their difficulty in distinguishing components of L1 and C1 from components of L2 and C2. As one Northwest parent said:

" I don't think that my children can distinguish L1 and C1 from L2 and C2 clearly… as long as the activity is interesting..attractive…they will like it no matter what the language or culture is."

**Implications and Limitations**

Although this study showed that most partial EIP children do not devalue their L1 and C1, it would be too optimistic to conclude that partial EIPs in Taiwan have no negative influences on children's valuation of their L1 and C1. In this study, children studying in partial EIPs were mostly from middle- and upper-middle-class families. The applicability of these results to children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds needs further research. Also, in this study, most children's home language and culture were valued by their families and community members and were consequently resistant to devaluation. It cannot be assumed that the findings in this study would apply to children whose language is not strongly supported in their family and community contexts. Because staff members in this partial EIP used much Chinese for communication and instruction on some occasions, it is not as pure a dose of EIP as some programs may provide. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to a full-English immersion program, in which Chinese is mainly forbidden. Moreover, the target group of this study was kindergarteners. Children in this age range probably were less capable than older children of discerning differences between cultures and languages, making evaluation of them, and developing preference for them. As children proceed in their journey in the partial EIP, they continuously construct and re-construct their values, which may result in changing perceptions toward L1 and C1.

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a longitudinal study focusing on older children to gain deeper understanding of the longer-term influence of partial EIPs on children's perceptions of their L1 and C1. Finally, the focus of this study was on children's valuation of L1 and C1, and other aspects such as academic, linguistic, developmental, and social influences were not investigated. To give an in-depth and overall examination of partial EIPs in Taiwan, research regarding these aspects should be conducted.

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**Appendix A: The Number of Children Interviewed in Each Class**

The Number of Children Interviewed in Each Class

| Class | Number of Children Interviewed |
|---|---|
| 3-4B | 2 |
| 5-6A | 12 |
| 6-7A | 10 |
| 6-7F | 10 |
| Others | 9 |

**Appendix B: Analyses of Children's Language and Cultural Preference Language-, and culture--preference interviews**

Table L1: L2-Preference Scores of Responses on Two Language-Preference Interviews

| Child's Response | Score Given to L2 | Score Given to L1 | L2-Preference Score (L2-L1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prefer (or like) L2 | 1 | 0 | 1-0=+1 |
| Prefer (or like) L1 | 0 | 1 | 0-1=-1 |
| Like both L1 and L2 | 1 | 1 | 1-1=0 |
| Dislike both L1 and L2 | 0 | 0 | 0-0=0 |

Table L2: C2-Preference Scores of Responses on the Culture-Preference Interview

| Child's Response | Score Given to C2 | Score Given to C1 | C2-Preference Score (C2-C1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Prefer (or like) C2 | 1 | 0 | 1-0=+1 |
| Prefer (or like) C1 | 0 | 1 | 0-1=-1 |
| Like both C1 and C2 | 1 | 1 | 1-1=0 |
| Dislike both C1 and C2 | 0 | 0 | 0-0=0 |

Table L3: C1-Devaluation Scores of Responses on the C1-Evaluating Interview

| Child's Response | Score Given to C2 | Score Given to C1 | C1-Devaluation Score (C2-C1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dislike C1 | 1 | 0 | 1-0=+1 |
| Like C1 | 0 | 1 | 0-1=-1 |
| No liking or disliking for C1 | 1 | 1 | 1-1=0 |

[1] Adapted from Table I of Miller (1956). In W. J. Conover (1999). *Practical nonparametric statistics*. (pp. 547) New York: Wiley. [used by Conover with permission of the American Statistical Association].

[2] A few partial EIP parents used English to talk with their children at home. Some parents mainly bought books written in English for their children.

# Semantically Acceptable Scoring Procedures (SEMAC) Versus Exact Replacement Scoring Methods (ERS) For 'Cloze' Tests: A Case Study

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**Abstract**

It has been suggested by a number of theorists that a semantically acceptable scoring procedure (SEMAC) is preferable to an exact replacement scoring method (ERS) for 'Cloze' tests. They argue that the SEMAC procedure is fairer for testees and that it provides a better indication of communicative competency and the overall linguistic abilities of ESL/EFL students. While this may be the case, it has also been noted that SEMAC scoring requires considerable effort on the part of the scorers. Moreover, ERS and SEMAC scores have been shown, in some instances, to correlate highly when compared to one another. This demonstrates that it is possible, in some instances, for testees to rank similarly, whether one uses either the exact word or the SEMAC scoring procedure. This paper will report on an experiment that was conducted with a group of forty-five Korean EFL students in order to confirm the truth of the claim that SEMAC scoring and exact word scoring do, in fact, correlate very highly. The findings from this study show that these two scoring methods did correlate with high statistical significance. Thus, the decision of which method to use can be based on language learning objectives.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Integrative Testing and Cloze Tests

Integrative testing involves the testing of language in context. It is concerned, therefore, with overall meaning and proficiency, the total communicative effect of discourse, and the underlying linguistic competence of which it is argued that all learners possess (Oller,

1979). Proponents of integrative testing suggest that natural language processing and production requires making a highly complex series of decisions, which will inevitably involve knowledge of a number of important components such as grammatical structure, lexis, discourse structure and conventions, pronunciation and intonation. As such, they contend that tests should not seek to separate specific language skills into neat and ordered divisions, but should instead seek to assess the testee's ability to use two or more skills simultaneously (Cohen, 1980; Oller, 1979).

One of the most common types of integrative tests is the Cloze test. The principles behind Cloze testing are based on *Gestalt Psychology* and the *Information Processing Theory* of 'Closure' "which refers to the tendency of individuals to complete a pattern once they have grasped its overall significance" (Weir, 1998, p.46). Cloze tests are intended to measure the testee's ability to decode interrupted or mutilated messages by making the most acceptable substitutions from all the contextual clues available. Methods of deleting words on Cloze tests vary. Some researchers delete words randomly and others selectively, but Cloze tests have traditionally consisted of the regular or systematic deletion of words from a text (usually every 5 to 10 words) and their replacement by even-length blank lines. The testee's task is then to guess the words that have been deleted from the passage (Alderson, 1979a and 1979b; Brown, 1993; Oller 1972; Soudek and Soudek, 1983). Deciding upon the right type of Cloze test for a certain purpose is often difficult. Thankfully, Pikulski and Tobin (1982) have provided some useful guidelines for the construction and application of Cloze tests. They suggest that when teachers want to diagnose their students' ability to use various types of contextual clues, the words should be deleted on a rational basis rather than a mechanical basis. Alternatively, when teachers want to assess students' overall comprehension of a passage, the words should be deleted systematically.

Proponents of Cloze tests have claimed that they provide an excellent overall picture of proficiency since they reflect the degree to which language skills are used in a meaningful context, but a number of researchers have also found them to be particularly useful tools for the measuring of reading comprehension. Brown (1978) as cited in

(Brown, 1993), DeSanti (1989), Harris and Hodges (1995), Oller and Jonz (1994) and Sampson and Briggs (1983) have all suggested that the primary reason for this is the fact that the Cloze procedure assumes that reading is an interactive process and these tests are designed in such a way as to show whether the reader is familiar enough with the author's language and content to interact with the text in a way that preserves that author's meaning. In addition, Cloze tests measure the reader's ability to use contextual clues to derive meaning. Contextual clues can be ideas in the passage, words within the sentence or grammatical structures, and theorists have pointed out that the ability to use contextual clues in order to derive meaning is an important step in the development of overall reading comprehension (Pikulski and Tobin, 1982).

The Cloze procedure has several advantages over other types of reading assessments. For example, Cloze tests are very easily created and administered. They are also based on silent reading, which is the predominant and most natural form of reading. Moreover, they can be constructed from materials that teachers use for instructional purposes or from authentic texts and they do not require the writing of specific comprehension questions. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Cloze tests often exhibit a high degree of consistency; though this consistency may vary considerably depending on the text selected, the deletion starting point and gap rates that are employed (Alderson, 1979b; Sciarone and Schoorl, 1989; Soudek and Soudek, 1983; Weir, 1998).

### 1.2 Scoring Procedures for Cloze Tests:

One method for scoring Cloze tests is known as exact replacement scoring or exact word scoring (ERS) in which only the words that have been deleted from the text are counted as being the correct responses for replacement. Heaton (1997) and Pikulski and Tobin (1982) suggest that this method is particularly quick and efficient and since there is no question as to whether a given answer is correct, scorer inter-reliability is guaranteed. They also suggest that most researchers currently use ERS to establish functional reading levels in order to determine the grade or level of difficulty of texts (readability) or to evaluate content materials.

Another type of scoring method for Cloze tests that has evolved is called semantically acceptable scoring (SEMAC). Methods for coding correct answers with SEMAC vary. Traditionally, only exact replacements as well as direct synonyms to the deleted words were counted as being correct responses - known as the 'synonymic' approach to scoring. More recent methods, on the other hand, tend to accept other answers that preserve the meaning of the deleted word even if the answers are not always direct synonyms. Essentially, this latter method compares the students' answers with the context to see if the supplied word makes sense in the sentence and the overall passage, thus preserving the author's intended meaning. Bormuth (1975) reports that it takes between two to four times as long to score tests when semantically acceptable answers are scored. Nevertheless, a number of other theorists have argued that the acceptance of all semantically acceptable answers for scoring purposes is a very effective means of diagnosing students strengths and weaknesses and assessing how much each student has learned over a set period of time (Oller, 1972; Pikulski and Tobin, 1982).

Both SEMAC and ERS have been found to be reliable scoring procedures in earlier studies (Brown, 1978; Oller, 1972) but a number of researchers have reported that SEMAC has a better dispersion of scores and may, in fact, be more reliable, a fairer scoring method, and the superior scoring procedure of the two. Alderson (1979a), Brown (1978), Culhane (1973) DeSanti (1989) and Oller (1972) have all demonstrated that ERS fails to accept creative meaningful responses or other words supplied by the students that are perfectly acceptable synonyms and they argue that it is unfair to treat all non-exact answers in the same manner. They also suggest that SEMAC probably provides a better measure of communicative proficiency as this procedure provides testees with more possibilities to demonstrate their understanding of the text, recognise and understand ideas and to grasp the significance or importance of ideas.

Although the arguments in support of SEMAC seem well founded, a number of researchers have shown that SEMAC may not actually be preferable to ERS and that it does not really justify the additional work entailed in defining what constitutes an acceptable answer for each item (Henk, 1981; Ruddell, 1964).

> "[R]esearch seemed to indicate that in scoring Cloze tests, credit shouldbe allowed only for exact word replacements, because accepting synonyms did not improve the validity of the procedure but only increased the inefficiency and subjectivity in scoring." (Sampson and Briggs, 1983, p.177)

The most compelling evidence of the similarities between results produced by these methods stems from the fact that the correlation between SEMAC and ERS scoring procedures is actually very high when the results of tests are compared to one another (McKenna, 1976; Hadley & Naaykens, 1999). A high correlation suggests that both scoring systems may actually be providing language teachers with the same information, measuring the same qualities and placing students precisely in the same manner relative to each other whether a scorer uses the SEMAC method or the ERS method.

The goals of this study were to investigate the claim that SEMAC scoring and ERS scoring methods of Cloze passages do actually correlate very highly when compared with one another. In this study, SEMAC refers to a testee's response that indicates a total understanding of the author's intended meaning and provides a reconstruction of the sentence without altering the meaning, while ERS refers to exact replacements by the testees of the original words from the passage and credit is not awarded for any other types of responses. Typical correlation coefficient studies comparing the two scoring methods have used a rank correlation for the actual comparison of the scoring techniques (McKenna, 1976) or undertaken a correlational study between both SEMAC and ERS on the one hand, and the results of a concurrently validating proficiency test of the other (See Alderson, 1979a; Hadley & Naaykens, 1999; and Oller, 1972 for examples of this type of an experiment). As we were not interested in finding out which method compared more favourably with scores from a standardised test of ability, the tests in this study were simply scored using both methods and then the testees' raw scores as well as their final rankings were applied statistically to check for a significant and meaningful correlation between the two methods.

It is likely that a scoring correlational study of this nature will have important ramifications for language teaching pedagogy. If, for example, the correlation between SEMAC and ERS scores is statistically significant and meaningful then this implies that the ranked scores from either method are comparable and that teachers should feel free to

use the method that requires less effort - exact replacement scoring (ERS). Conversely, if they are found to correlate slightly or the results of the experiment are either statistically insignificant or meaningless then it would seem as though a scoring approach that gives students credit for exact answers as well as all semantically acceptable answers might be a truer indicator of a student's ability and represent a more comprehensive measurement procedure.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Subjects

A group of 45 Korean EFL students who were enrolled in Sungkyunkwan University's (SKKU; a South Korean university located in the city of Suwon) EFL programme volunteered to participate in this study. Two semesters of English is a graduation requirement for all SKKU students and a standardised placement test is conducted before they begin their English studies. All of the subjects in this study were volunteers from a 'Level 1B Intermediate' class. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to use students of comparable ability to decrease the likelihood of varying proficiency levels having an undue influence on the outcome of the experiment. Prior to undertaking the study, all volunteers were also asked to read and sign a ‘permission statement’ in Korean and English. This permission statement was based on The University of Michigan’s Human Subjects Consent Form.

### 2.2 Materials and Design

A 25-gap summary Cloze test was constructed and administered for the purpose of this study. The students were familiar with this technique and had been exposed to it on a few occasions in the past. The passage was approximately 500 words in length. The decision to use a summary Cloze test was prompted by the belief that it would be easier to select pertinent test items from a relatively short passage. In light of recent negative findings on the mechanical deletion of Cloze tests, as described by Hughes (1996) and Weir (1998), it was also decided that it would be advantageous to employ a selective-deletion gap filling procedure for this test. Selective-deletion gap filling on summary Cloze tests allows test constructors more freedom to select items for deletion based on what is

known about the language in general, about the difficulty of the text and about the way language works in a particular text (Hughes, 1996; Weir, 1998). It is easier, therefore, to specifically state what each test is intended to measure and to determine "where deletions should be made and to focus on those items which have been selected *a priori* as being important to a particular target audience." (Weir, 1998 p.48)

The deletions on the test were all drawn from the students' Level 1B course curriculum. They were all generally nouns and verbs for it was felt that most of them would have a wide assortment of potential synonyms or other semantically appropriate choices, and it was assumed that many of the students would be relatively familiar with most of the original words selected by the author as well as a few possible synonyms that could be used in each instance.

The selected passage was pre-tested on a total of 100 students in several other Level 1B EFL classes that were not included in this study. It was also pre-tested on six faculty members in the Sungkyunkwan University English Department. After the initial range of potential acceptable responses was recorded, the deletions were checked again for additional acceptable collocates with the Collins Cobuild Concordance software. While specific test-item facility and discrimination (item analysis) were not undertaken for the pre-selected reading passage and cloze items, it was expected that the thorough pre-test process would assist in the development of a full range of acceptable responses that could be used for SEMAC scoring purposes. It was also hoped that the scope of the pre-test process would ensure that an appropriate and efficient measurement device had been produced for the particular purposes of this study. The final Cloze test that was administered to the experimental group is located in Appendix I. All of the exact word replacements as well as the semantically acceptable alternatives can be found in Appendix III.

### 2.3 The Reading Passage

The process of selecting a suitable reading passage for testing purposes can be difficult and complicated. In this case it required the careful screening of a variety of expository

authentic text types that had been drawn from journals, books and newspapers. Passages that were potentially offensive were avoided and any that discussed modern political issues, religion, or sex were discarded. Moreover, passages that contained any other type of content-based issues that might have created emotional stress for some testees, and thereby increase their potential for poor test performance, were not used. It was felt that any score the candidates obtained should be a true measure of their respective ability, and as such, it was undesirable for a text topic to potentially influence their scores in any way.

Another important issue relating to the impact of text content on test scores that surfaced during the text selection process is the role of background knowledge or 'schemata' in the facilitation of textual comprehension. Johnson (1982), for example, has shown that in EFL reading comprehension, syntactic and lexical simplification is generally far less important than familiar content schemas. In addition, Carrell (1987) and Nunan (1985) have demonstrated that more than the provision of systemic knowledge, what makes a foreign language text easier to comprehend and process is actually the students' background knowledge and their degree of familiarity with the text's content and formal schemas. These findings, therefore, would seem to indicate that familiar schematic knowledge allows students to make more use of their knowledge of the world, logic and reasoning skills and inference competencies while processing textual information for comprehension. Unfortunately, if students in a testing situation are faced with a text for which they have considerable background knowledge of the topic then they will be likely to comprehend it more easily, make better inferences and answer the questions without completely understanding the overall meaning or the true contextual and linguistic nature of the text. Subsequently, topics that specifically dealt with South Korean or Asian issues were not used. Similarly, other passages that contained information or subject matter that might have favoured some candidates' background knowledge capacities over others were excluded and a great effort was made to select a passage that was equally unfamiliar or obscure to all candidates but also as general as possible [Alderson and Urquhart, 1988; McEldowney, 1976 as cited in (Owen, Rees and Wisener, 1997)].

The text that was selected for this test was thought to be appropriate and stylistically acceptable for the testees. It was also believed to be of an adequate level of difficulty for the testees' ability. The text was adapted and summarised from an on-line educational journal designed for children to practice their reading skills. It was probably suitable for sixth to eighth grade (Middle School) native speakers, and it was felt that the reading level required to comprehend the chosen text would be comparable to the reading ability of the subjects of this study. The original text is a fairly straightforward article about the history of house cats and it is located in Appendix II.

### 2.4 Data Collection & Scoring Procedures

A protocol for the administration of all instruments was designed to insure that procedures would be standard throughout data collection. Data for the study was collected through the administration of the reading passage cloze test. All of the testees were volunteers from the English Program. They were told that they were participating in a study and that their scores on the test would have no effect on their overall course grade. All pre-selected volunteer students were present in the pre-determined classroom at the designated time and once everyone was seated they were provided with the test instructions. The student volunteers were told that they would be reading a short passage about cats and undertaking a cloze exercise (i.e. filling-in-the-blanks; an example of this test-type was displayed at the front of the classroom). They were asked to fill-in each blank in the passage with the best possible answer. They were not provided with several answer choices and they were not informed about the nature or purpose of the experiment.

Following the test, the answer sheets were collected and scored using both the SEMAC and ERS scoring methods and a statistical analysis was then performed to interpret the findings accurately. The two categories of score responses were differentiated as follows: (a) by the restoration of original words/exact replacement scoring (ERS), and (b) by semantically acceptable fill-ins (SEMAC).

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

As mentioned previously, the Cloze test was scored using both SEMAC and ERS scoring methods and a statistical analysis was then performed to interpret the statistical significance and accurateness of the findings. The raw and ranked test scores obtained via the two scoring methods can be found in Appendix IV, Figures 1 and 2. *Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient* and *Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient* were calculated and tested for significance and meaningfulness in the hopes of supporting the claim that SEMAC and ERS scoring methods correlate highly.

*Frequency distribution* histograms for both sets of test scores were manufactured first to observe if the scores were distributed normally. The graphs for both sets of test scores are relatively exemplary of *normal distributions* (See Appendix IV, Figures 4 and 5). The fact that the means, medians, modes and midpoints obtained from each set of data have fairly similar values is another indicator of normal distribution (For exact values see Appendix IV, Figure 6). The normal distribution of data is a crucial factor for many statistical measures and subsequently is one of three basic assumptions that underlie Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient - along with *independence* and *linearity* (Brown, 1996). Independence requires that each score pair is distinct from all other score pairs, and care was taken in inputting and charting the data to prevent any systematic association between pairs of scores during the statistical analysis. A *scatterplot,* which provides a representation of two sets of scores for visual comparison, was produced to determine if the relationship between the two sets of scores was in fact linear, and the resultant graph demonstrates suitable linearity (See Appendix IV, Figure 3).

The *mean* gives information about the central tendency of a set of scores, the *standard deviation* is a measure of dispersion that gives information on the variance of all scores in relation to the mean, and *standard error* places a single observed sample mean in relation to its true population mean. All of these statistics are necessary for calculating a *confidence interval* which reveals whether or not scores from two different samples have actually come from two different populations (Bachman, 1997; Nunan, 1992). The means, standard deviations, and standard errors for the ERS and SEMAC sets of scores are

13.6/2.86/0.4312 and 16.3/3.54/0.5337 respectively. With a 95% level of confidence, the ERS confidence interval is 12.69-14.42 and the SEMAC confidence interval is 15.27-17.40, and thus these two samples are almost certainly drawn from two distinct populations. There is, however, a 5% chance that the true population mean from either sample will lie outside its established range. Another appropriate and relatively simple procedure that compares two sample means is the *t-test* (Nunan, 1992). A 'paired' t-test was conducted on the results since the samples contained identical subjects whom were measured under different treatment conditions (i.e. ERS vs. SEMAC) (Nunan, 1992). The t-test value (t = -16) was tested for significance at 44 degrees of freedom (df) and the critical value for 't' at this level indicates that the null hypothesis (that the results occurred due to chance alone) can be rejected absolutely. *Effect size* is yet another useful statistical tool that allows for the interpretation of the size of the difference between two means in terms of standard deviation units (Cohen, 1960). In this case, the effect size value indicates how much larger the SEMAC mean is than the ERS mean, and since the effect size value is 0.94, the SEMAC mean is nearly one entire standard deviation larger than the ERS mean. A relatively large difference between the sample means was to be expected. As the students had more opportunities to respond correctly with SEMAC scoring, the overall average of scores obtained from this method was presumed to be higher.

The final two statistical measures that were calculated - Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r) and Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho) - approximate the degree of association between two variables. Coefficient values may range from +1.0 (a perfect positive correlation) to -1.0 (a perfect negative correlation) (Brown, 1996; Nunan, 1992). In this study, the variables refer to the ERS and SEMAC test scores and the resultant coefficients provide information regarding the extent to which the two sets of scores vary in relation to each other. The ordinal-scale data was inputted into the Spearman's rho formula to provide an estimate of similarity between the test scores' two sets of ranks. The interval-scale data was inputted into the Pearson's r formula to show if the two scoring methods were dispersing the students in relatively the same way. Both of these measures were then tested for significance to

determine whether or not the results occurred purely by chance or by other factors. Finally, the Pearson's r coefficient was tested for meaningfulness. The *coefficient of determination* represents the proportion of overlapping variance between two sets of scores and thereby is an indicator of a correlation's meaningfulness. This coefficient can be calculated easily from Pearson's r, but unfortunately the process is rather arduous and complicated for Spearman's rho and since Spearman's rho should be interpreted carefully anyway - because it is a rather weak estimate of tendency - it was not computed. Moreover, the two correlation coefficients should be similar in any case since the Spearman's rho formula was developed to approximate the Pearon's r formula (Brown, 1996). The two correlation coefficients obtained from the data were indeed similar: Pearson's r = 0.9325 and Spearman's rho = 0.9553. Both correlation coefficients were also found to be statistically significant using a 'directional' decision at 99% certainty ($p<0.01$). The coefficient of determination for Pearson's r was equal to 0.87; this indicates a fairly high percentage of overlap between the two sets of scores. The culmination of this statistical analysis, along with evidence previously propounded, demonstrates that there is a very high correlation between the SEMAC and ERS scoring methods.

## 4.0 Pedagogic Implications

If it is merely a question of wanting to know which scoring system is more reliable for Cloze testing, this study lends credence to the view that ERS and SEMAC are similarly effective scoring methods as they correlate very highly with one another. As a diagnostic tool, ERS is certainly quicker and easier to design and score than SEMAC. It is important to consider, however, that when using ERS deleted items are often chosen in terms of their limited or minimal number of acceptable alternatives. As such, ERS scoring methods may only assess a partial area of language proficiency and simply test learners' knowledge of "key words" such as those found in textbook glossaries. If the goal is to assess a broader view of a learners' L2 proficiency or insight into learners' progress through stages of a course, complementary and alternative forms of testing such as SEMAC should be considered. Other recent alternatives such as Clozentrophy may also be examined. This is a procedure in which a cloze test is first given to a group of native speakers, and their responses are listed in frequency order. Afterwards, the test is given to

non-native speakers and a testee that responds with a high-frequency word would score higher than one who responds with a low frequency word (Richards, Platt and Platt, 1992). Similarly, the role of language corpuses (i.e. Collins Cobuild) in the design of SEMAC and other forms of Cloze testing might be expanded. Higher scores, for example, could be awarded for more commonly used collocates of relevant words in the immediate context of the deletion. Consequently, score results might show the degree of proximity of a learner's proficiency to native speaker linguistic competence.

Additional factors may also influence a teacher's decision of which particular scoring system to use. Hadley & Naaykens (1999) suggest that teachers may need to consider how the advantages and disadvantages of the ERS and SEMAC systems might compliment or clash with the values of their students' culture of learning. They point out that Japanese students prefer the ERS system because it gives the testee the impression that there is only **one** true correct answer whereby SEMAC scoring methods are distrusted by students who tend to resist the possibility that there can be communicative variation in test answers. Alternatively, teachers in other countries or regions may encounter different responses to tests based on their respective students' culture, situation, and individual learning styles and strategies. As such, there will not be any easy answers to these issues and researchers and teachers must make informed decisions based on careful considerations of the teaching and learning context as well as our students' individual needs as language learners.

## 5.0 Implications for Further Research

This particular study attempted to corroborate earlier correlational studies on ERS and SEMAC scoring methods / systems with a specific type of EFL learner – the Korean university student. It should be acknowledged, however, that it also brought forth some entirely new questions and possible avenues towards additional research.

First, a pre-test was carried out but an item analysis was not conducted on the test instrument, and as such, the selection of deletions and possible alternatives may have had an impact on the results of the study. More rigorous item facility and discrimination

analyses in future studies might provide more reliability and validity to similar experiments or even establish divergent or conflicting results. In addition, the inclusion of information from a language corpus might have also strengthened the test instrument in this particular study and could be included in the design of test instruments for use in research that is designed to identify stages of a student's L2 development on the basis of calculated statistical information about collocation with respect to testees' cloze test answers. Last, the goal of the study was to provide an overall comparison of the test scores and as such comparisons and illustrations of responses to specific test items that demonstrated the possible compatibility between SEMAC and ERS were not undertaken in this study. This would have undoubtedly supported to the correlational results of the study and similar research could address this shortcoming in the future.

Second, a correlation coefficient is not necessarily the best indicator of similarity between two scoring methods such as ERS and SEMAC. Appropriate statistical measures depend upon the types of decisions being made about the testees. For example, the Pearson's r and Spearman's rho correlation coefficients are used to make 'relative' as opposed to 'absolute' decisions about testee ability. These measures, therefore, describe a testee's relative position within a group and the evaluation of one's standing is made in relation to the performance of other testees in the comparison group. Relative testing decisions might involve adjusting program levels to suit students' abilities or making comparisons between various programs. In contrast, test scores may be interpreted absolutely; giving an indication of whether each testee's score falls above or below some pre-specified criterion. Testee performance in this instance is assessed on an individual basis - regardless of the performance of others. Absolute decisions might pertain to the testees' eligibility for admission into a program (Shavelson and Webb, 1991). If Cloze tests were used solely for making relative decisions, then the use of a correlation coefficient would be an acceptable means of summarising the similarity between scores produced by ERS and SEMAC scoring procedures. But assuming that Cloze tests are also sometimes used to make absolute decisions, other studies must be conducted to resolve whether ERS and SEMAC scoring methods are equally applicable for making these types of decisions. The *agreement coefficient* would serve this purpose since it estimates the

consistency of decisions that classify subjects as either 'masters' or 'non-masters' of an ability or skill and as such would describe the degree of classification agreement between ERS and SEMAC scoring procedures (Brown, 1996).

Third, this particular study presented findings from a particular homogeneous Korean context. Further research needs to address similar issues in different EFL/ESL contexts and the degree to which culture has an impact on Cloze tests. These studies might examine the relationship between scoring methods or systems and specific learner needs, behaviours, strategies, expectations or even students' particular cultures of learning. Likewise, data for this study was conducted under experimental conditions in a simulated testing situation. Alternative studies could examine Cloze scoring methods in actual authentic large scale and/or high-stakes testing situations such as standardized English language proficiency exams.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This experiment was conducted in order to investigate the claim that SEMAC and ERS scoring procedures correlate very highly. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient statistical formula was used in this study to compare the raw scores that were obtained from each scoring method. The final calculation revealed that there is an extremely significant statistical correlation between the raw scores obtained by both scoring methods. In addition, the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient statistical formula was used in order to compare the rankings or standing of the testees that were acquired via the two scoring methods. This measurement demonstrated that there is a very high statistically significant correlation between the final rankings obtained by each scoring method.

Admittedly, an item analysis was not conducted prior to the administration of the reading passage and this could have possibly had an impact on the results. Nevertheless, the statistical analyses that were undertaken on the test items in this study did, in fact, corroborate similar studies and demonstrated that SEMAC and ERS scoring procedures do, in some circumstances, correlate very highly. While we cannot assume that both

scoring methods always provide the same type of information about our students or the same measure of our students' relative ability, the fact that both types of scoring methods typically correlate highly would suggest that teachers might feel free to choose ERS over SEMAC in quick diagnostic situations where a relative decision is being made from the test results, as it requires less effort, it is more time efficient and it probably gives a reliable picture of each student's comparative ability within a limited range. Caution should be exercised, however, as future research must still be conducted to examine if the same conclusion holds true in different or alternate EFL/ESL contexts, for absolute or authentic, high-stakes testing scenarios or for situations where a 'broader' view of a learners' L2 proficiency is required.

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**Appendix I**

## MODIFIED CLOZE TEST

The cat has a _____1_____ as fascinating and mysterious as the creature itself. The true beginnings of the domestic cat are unknown, but the cat may have first appeared around 3000 B.C. in a _____2_____ called Nubia, which bordered Egypt. By 2500 B.C., the cat was domesticated in Egypt. The cat's first _____3_____ in Egypt was Mau. The mau's _____4_____ in Egypt grew rapidly; she was eventually considered guardian of the temple and was worshipped as a goddess. Besides being worshipped as goddesses, cats also had a practical _____5_____: they kept _____6_____ from overrunning the Egyptian grain storehouses.

The Greeks were probably the first _____7_____ to recognise cats for their mouse-catching talents. When Egyptians refused to sell or trade any of their cats, the Greeks _____8_____ several of the Egyptian cats and sold the _____9_____ of these stolen cats to Romans. The cat became the _____10_____ of liberty in ancient Rome.

By the end of the eleventh _____11_____ cats were popular among sailors because of their rat-catching skills. Sailors admired cats because they _____12_____ disease-infested rats which lived on ships. Many sailors believed that cats possessed special powers that could _____13_____ them at sea.

Although the cat was held in high regard and fancied during _____14_____ times, the cat didn't fare will in Europe in the Middle Ages. Cats were associated with evil, witchcraft, and black _____15_____. Many people believed that _____16_____ regularly transformed themselves into cats. Men and women were killed for helping a _____17_____ or injured cat. During the witch-hunts in Europe many innocent people were accused of witchcraft simply because they owned cats. Black cats were especially feared.

Some legends and _____18_____ about cats exist today, like that about the nine lives of cats. Another legend that survived from Europe's Middle Ages into the present states that a black cat crossing one's path brings bad _____19_____.

Today the elegant, graceful cat has become a popular house _____20_____ throughout the _____21_____. The cat is one of the smartest of tame animals, but they are independent and harder to train. Cats are valued for their gentle, affectionate natures. They have _____22_____ memories; they _____23_____ who treats them well and who treats them badly. A cat's loyalty is earned; a cat won't stay where it is _____24_____. They respond to loving owners with loyalty, affection, and respect. Cats are noted for their keen senses: their sharp hearing, sense of smell, and ability to _____25_____ in near darkness. Perhaps Leonardo DaVinci summed it up best when he referred to the cat as 'Nature's Masterpiece'.

***ANSWERS:***

**1.** _____ **11.** _____ **21.** _____

**2.** _____ **12.** _____ **22.** _____

**3.** _____ **13.** _____ **23.** _____

**4.** _____ **14.** _____ **24.** _____

**5.** _____ **15.** _____ **25.** _____

**6.** _____ **16.** _____

**7.** _____ **17.** _____

**8.** _____ **18.** _____

**9.** _____ **19.** _____

**10.** _____ **20.** _____

**KEY:**

**1.**history **2.**country **3.**name **4.**status **5.**function **6.**mice **7.**Europeans **8.**stole **9.**kittens **10.**symbol **11.**century **12.**destroyed **13.**protect **14.**ancient **15.**magic **16.**witches **17.**sick **18.**superstitions **19.**luck **20.**pet **21.**world **22.**good **23.**remember **24.** mistreated **25.**see

**Appendix II**

## THE FELINE: From Goddess to Pet

The cat has a history as fascinating and mysterious as the creature itself. The true beginnings of the domestic cat are unknown, but the cat may have first appeared around 3000 B.C. in a country called Nubia, which bordered Egypt. Egypt later conquered Nubie, and by 2500 B.C., the cat was domesticated in Egypt. The cat's first name in Egypt was Myeo or Mau. The mau's status in Egypt grew rapidly; she was eventually considered guardian of the temple and was worshipped as a goddess. Ancient Egyptians believed the cat was the daughter of Isis and Goddess of the Sun and the Moon. They also believed that the glow from a cat's eyes held captive the light of the sun. The goddess Bast, who controlled the life giving sun's heat, had the head of a cat. Besides being worshipped as goddesses, cats also had a practical function: they kept mice from overrunning the Egyptian grain storehouses. Ancient Egyptians carved wooden figures of cats and crafted furniture and jewellery in the shops of cats. Most of the larger art museums today have at least one life-size sculpture of a cat from ancient Egypt.

Killing a cat in ancient Egypt was a crime punishable by death. Cats were mummified when they died and saucers of milk along with mummified rats and mice were placed in the cat's tombs. Cat cemeteries existed along the Nile River and cat mummies have also been found in the tombs of ancient Egyptians.

Although law prevented exporting cats from Egypt, cats were frequently stolen by Phonecian traders and taken to Mediterranean countries. Egyptian soldiers were encouraged to take any cats they saw during their foreign travels and bring them back to Egypt, their true home.

When Persia attacked the Egyptian city of Pelusium, the Persian king was aware of the Egyptians' devotion and loyalty to the cat and he devised a plan: he ordered his soldiers to search the city and take any cat they found. During the next attack, his soldiers each held up a live cat as they came near the Egyptian borders. Rather than harm the cats, the Egyptians surrendered their city to Persia.

The Greeks were probably the first Europeans to recognise cats for their mouse-catching talents. When Egyptians refused to sell or trade any of their cats, the Greeks stole several of the Egyptian cats and sold the kittens of these stolen cats to Roman, Gauls, and Celts. The cat became the symbol of liberty in ancient Rome. Roman artists often showed Libertus, the Goddess of Liberty, with a cat lying at her feet.

Cats were domesticated in India and the Far East later than in Egypt, around 2000 B.C. People in India and China praised cats for their ability to catch rats and mice. Ancient Chinese believed that cats brought good fortune and that the glow from a cat's eyes frightened away evil spirits.

In Burma and Siam it was believed that the souls of departed people lived in the bodies of sacred cats before moving on to the next life. Cats lived in the temples and palaces of Siam) which is now Thailand). In Japan religious ceremonies were sometimes held for the souls of departed cats. Cats in Japan were required to be kept on leashes until 1602; a low was then passed to set the cats free to kill the rats, which were hurting the silkworms.

By the end of the eleventh century cats were popular among sailors because of their rat-catching skills. Sailors admired cats because they destroyed disease-infested rats, which lived on ships. Many sailors believed that cats possessed special powers that could protect them at sea.

Although the cat was held in high regard and fancied during ancient times, the cat didn't fare will in Europe during the Middle Ages. Leaders of the Christian church began a campaign against cats. They were slaughtered in masses in just about all of Europe, which led to the near extinction of cats in Europe by 1400. Cats were associated with evil, witchcraft, voodoo, and black magic. Many people believed that witches regularly transformed themselves into cats. Men and women were tortured or even killed for helping a sick or injured cat. During the witch-hunts in Europe many innocent people were accused of witchcraft simply because they owned cats. Black cats were especially feared.

Why were cats persecuted during Europe's Middle Ages? Possibly because they travelled at night, and often bonded with elderly women living alone who were frequently victims of witchcraft accusations by suspicious neighbours. The aloofness and independent nature of cats may have added to the belief that they were evil. This terrible period of persecution of cats lasted about 400 years, but never spread to India or the Middle and Far East. By the eighteenth century, cats were once again looked upon favourably. In 1835, a low was passed in England forbidding the mistreatment of any animals.

Traders from the Orient, explorers, and colonists brought cats to the Americas in the 1700's. Cats even travelled to North America with the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. Most of these immigrant cats are ancestors of cats living here today.

Cats have lived with kings as well as presidents. White cats were popular among royalty, like Louis XV of France. Japanese and Chinese emperors owned white cats. Cats lived with Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton. Napoleon may have hated cats but his conqueror, the Duke of Wellington, was a cat lover, as was Queen Victoria. France's Cardinal Richelieu provided for the future care of his fourteen cats in his will. In India today the Hindu religion urges followers to provide food and shelter for at least one cat.

Some legends and superstitions about cats exist today, like that about the nine lives of cats. Another legend that survived from Europe's Middle Ages into the present states that on every black cat there is a single hair that is white. If you remove it without the cat scratching, this white hair will bring you wealth of luck in love. One superstition states that a black cat crossing one's path brings bad luck, but in Great Britain black cats are thought to bring good luck.

Today the elegant, graceful cat has become a popular house pet throughout the world. The cat is one of the smartest of tame animals. They are independent and hard to train. Cats are valued for their gentle, affectionate natures. They have good memories; they remember who treats them well and who treats them badly. A cat's loyalty is earned; a cat won't stay where it is mistreated. They respond to loving owners with loyalty, affection, and respect.

Cats are noted for their keen senses: their sharp hearing, sense of smell, and ability to see in near darkness. Not only are the cat's eyes beautiful but their eyes are the largest in proportion to body size when compared to other animals. Cats are clean and have been praised for their mysterious, exotic looks. Perhaps Leonardo DaVinci summed it up best when he referred to the cat as "Nature's Masterpiece".

**SOURCE:** Coll, J. 2000. 'The Feline: From Goddess to Pet'. http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/fl/pcto/feline.htm.

# Appendix III

**SEMANTIC KEY:**

1. history, past, background, story, background, narrative, account
2. country, place, nation, locale, land, area, region, territory, realm
3. name, title, kind, breed, species, label
4. status, reputation, popularity, standing, fame, influence, importance, demand, population, numbers, stature, significance, prestige, prominence, eminence
5. function, use, purpose, role, ability, talent, skill, aspect, duty, mission, job, responsibility
6. mice, rats, rodents, vermin, pests, insects grasshoppers, bugs, birds
7. Europeans, Westerners, Whites
8. stole, took, captured, thieved
9. kittens, offspring, majority, litter, descendants, young, brood
10. symbol, sign, representative, representation, figure, image
11. century
12. destroyed, killed, ate, caught, captured, hunted, chased, eliminated, exterminated, ravaged
13. protect, preserve, guard, safeguard, shield
14. ancient, old, early, archaic
15. magic, sorcery, wizardry, occultism, devilry
16. witches, sorceresses, spirits, ghosts, wizards, hags, enchantresses
17. sick, dying, maimed, hurt, ill, wounded, cut, pregnant, lost, infected, hungry, starving, unwell, diseased, ailing, infirm
18. superstitions, myths, stories, legends, (folk) tales, proverbs, rumours, fears, fables
19. luck, karma, fate, happenings, events, fortune, fortuity, happenstance
20. pet, animal
21. world, globe, earth, planet
22. good, excellent, great, terrific, okay, large, special, accurate, outstanding, long, photographic, keen, sharp, spectacular, proficient, commendable, accomplished, efficient, competent, capable
23. remember, know, recognise , retain, recall
24. mistreated, unhappy, abused, disliked, unwanted, unwelcome, ignored, hated, unsafe, uncomfortable, maltreated, ill-treated, harmed
25. see

**EXACT-WORD KEY:**

1. history
2. country
3. name
4. status
5. function
6. mice
7. Europeans
8. stole
9. kittens
10. symbol
11. century
12. destroyed
13. protect
14. ancient
15. magic
16. witches
17. sick
18. superstitions
19. luck
20. pet
21. world
22. good
23. remember
24. mistreated
25. see

# Appendix IV

## Fig. 1 - RAW CLOZE-TEST SCORES:

**A = Testee Number B = ERS Score C = SEMAC Score**

| A | B | C |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 8 | 9 |
| **2.** | 8 | 10 |
| **3.** | 9 | 10 |
| **4.** | 10 | 11 |
| **5.** | 9 | 11 |
| **6.** | 11 | 12 |
| **7.** | 10 | 12 |
| **8.** | 10 | 13 |
| **9.** | 11 | 13 |
| **10.** | 12 | 13 |
| **11.** | 13 | 14 |
| **12.** | 11 | 14 |
| **13.** | 11 | 14 |
| **14.** | 12 | 14 |
| **15.** | 13 | 15 |
| **16.** | 12 | 15 |
| **17.** | 13 | 15 |
| **18.** | 11 | 15 |
| **19.** | 14 | 16 |
| **20.** | 14 | 16 |
| **21.** | 14 | 16 |
| **22.** | 12 | 16 |
| **23.** | 14 | 17 |
| **24.** | 14 | 17 |
| **25.** | 13 | 17 |
| **26.** | 15 | 17 |
| **27.** | 15 | 17 |
| **28.** | 14 | 18 |
| **29.** | 15 | 18 |
| **30.** | 13 | 18 |
| **31.** | 15 | 18 |
| **32.** | 14 | 18 |
| **33.** | 16 | 19 |
| **34.** | 17 | 19 |
| **35.** | 16 | 19 |
| **36.** | 16 | 19 |
| **37.** | 16 | 20 |
| **38.** | 17 | 20 |
| **39.** | 15 | 20 |
| **40.** | 17 | 21 |
| **41.** | 16 | 21 |
| **42.** | 18 | 21 |
| **43.** | 18 | 22 |
| **44.** | 19 | 22 |
| **45.** | 19 | 23 |

**Fig. 2 - RANK-ORDER OF CLOZE TEST SCORES:**

**A = Testee Number B = ERS Rank C = SEMAC Rank**

| A | B | C |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 1.5 | 1 |
| **2.** | 1.5 | 2.5 |
| **3.** | 3.5 | 2.5 |
| **4.** | 6 | 4.5 |
| **5.** | 3.5 | 4.5 |
| **6.** | 10 | 6.5 |
| **7.** | 6 | 6.5 |
| **8.** | 6 | 9 |
| **9.** | 10 | 9 |
| **10.** | 14.5 | 9 |
| **11.** | 19 | 12.5 |
| **12.** | 10 | 12.5 |
| **13.** | 10 | 12.5 |
| **14.** | 14.5 | 12.5 |
| **15.** | 19 | 16.5 |
| **16.** | 14.5 | 16.5 |
| **17.** | 19 | 16.5 |
| **18.** | 10 | 16.5 |
| **19.** | 25 | 20.5 |
| **20.** | 25 | 20.5 |
| **21.** | 25 | 20.5 |
| **22.** | 14.5 | 20.5 |
| **23.** | 25 | 25 |
| **24.** | 25 | 25 |
| **25.** | 19 | 25 |
| **26.** | 31 | 25 |
| **27.** | 31 | 25 |
| **28.** | 25 | 30 |
| **29.** | 31 | 30 |
| **30.** | 19 | 30 |
| **31.** | 31 | 30 |
| **32.** | 25 | 30 |
| **33.** | 36 | 34.5 |
| **34.** | 40 | 34.5 |
| **35.** | 36 | 34.5 |
| **36.** | 36 | 34.5 |
| **37.** | 36 | 38 |
| **38.** | 40 | 38 |
| **39.** | 31 | 38 |
| **40.** | 40 | 41 |
| **41.** | 36 | 41 |
| **42.** | 42.5 | 41 |
| **43.** | 42.5 | 41 |
| **44.** | 44.5 | 43.5 |
| **45.** | 44.5 | 45 |

**Fig. 3 - SCATTERPLOT OF ERS VS. SEMAC SCORES:**

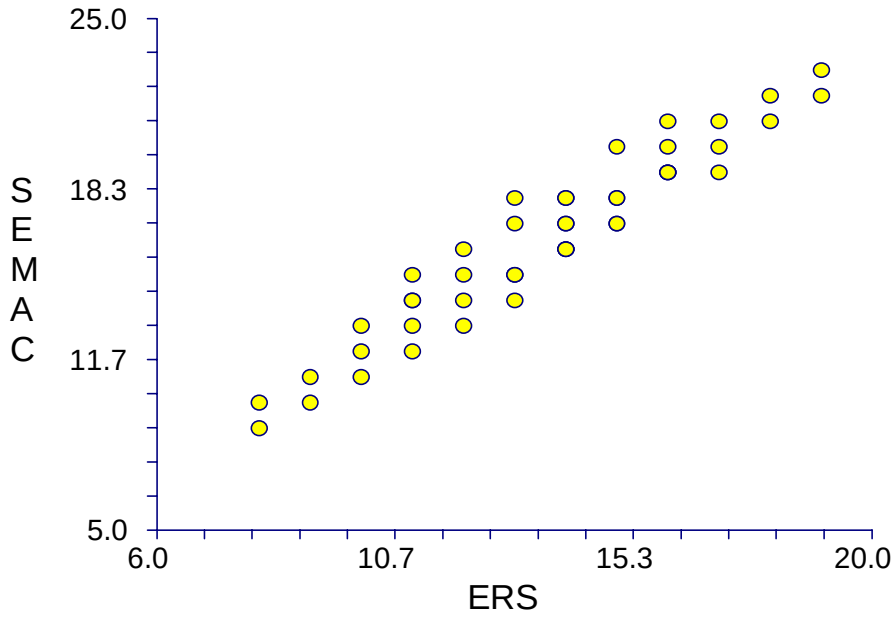


**Fig. 4 - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF ERS SCORES:**

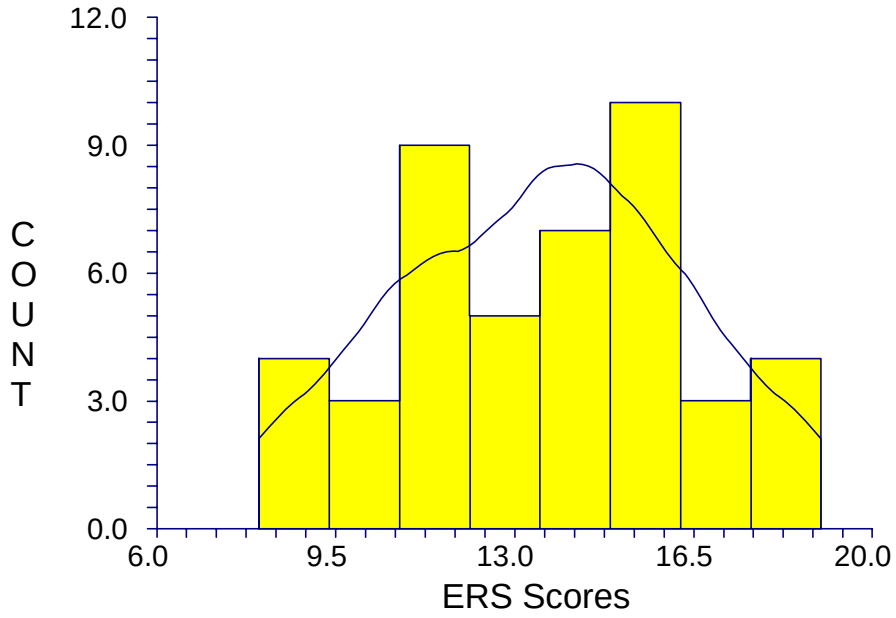


**Fig. 5 - FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SEMAC SCORES:**

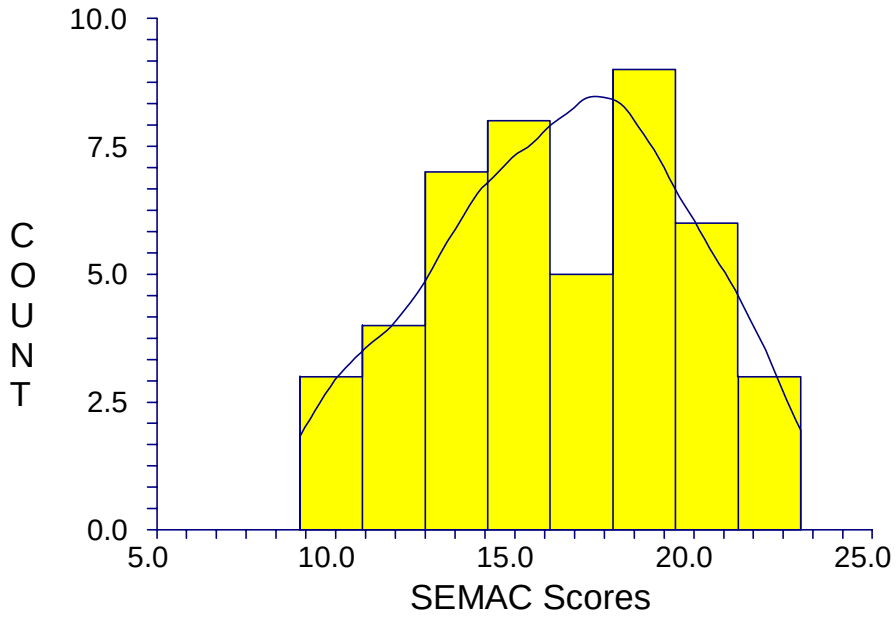


**Fig. 6 - STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:**

| *ERS Values* | *SEMAC Values* |
|---|---|
| ***Mean:*** 13.6 (or 54.2%) | ***Mean:*** 16.3 (65.2%) |
| ***Median:*** 14 | ***Median:*** 17 |
| ***Mode:*** 14 | ***Mode:*** 17/18 |
| ***Midpoint:*** 12.5 | ***Midpoint:*** 12.5 |
| ***Range:*** 11 | ***Range:*** 14 |
| ***Variance:*** 8.18 | ***Variance:*** 12.53 |
| ***Standard Deviation:*** 2.86 | ***Standard Deviation:*** 3.54 |
| ***95% Confidence Interval:*** 12.69 - 14.42 | ***95% Confidence Interval:*** 15.27 - 17.40 |
| ***Standard Error:*** 0.4312 (z = 6.26) | ***Standard Error:*** 0.5337 (z = 5.06) |

***Effect Size*** ***(Semac Mean - ERS Mean) ÷ ERS s.d.***
***e*** = 0.94

***t-test (paired):***
***t*** = -16.6
***df*** = 44
* Probability of the result assuming the null hypothesis is zero

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS (CONT.)**

***Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient:***
$r_{xy}$ = 0.9325, (p<.01)
***t*** = 17
***Coefficient of Determination:*** 0.87

***Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient:***
$r_s$ = 0.9553, (p<.01)
***t*** = 21.198
***df*** = 43 (significant at 0.05 level - directional test)

# EFL Instruction and Assessment with Portfolios:

# A Case Study in Taiwan

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**Bio Data**

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**Abstract**

As the reform movements continue to sweep across the educational landscape in Taiwan, educators and practitioners are exploring and attempting new and innovative practices in the classroom. Of all non-traditional approaches to instruction and assessment, portfolio use seems to show the greatest promise in enhancing diverse dimensions of learning and developing multiple intelligences as well as promoting learner autonomy. This study aimed to investigate and evaluate the implementation of a portfolio system at secondary English classrooms in Taiwan and to discuss emerging problems and approaches hereto. Participants included two classes of seventh graders and their English teachers. Significantly, the study found that students favored the portfolio system, considering the learning tasks conducive to their learning, and portfolios to be good tools to examine their learning process and improve their learning methods. Teachers' observations also confirmed that students benefited from the portfolio system in terms of the development of English use and confidence, learning ownership, versatile talents, and critical thinking. Implementation barriers mainly resulted from the traditional testing culture. Strategies of professional collaboration and curriculum modification were made to address identified problems. Given that the traditional notion of assessment holds sway, widespread use of portfolio assessment is out of the question for Taiwan. Findings of this study recommend that portfolios be better used as pedagogical tools.

**Keywords**: Portfolios, EFL Instruction and Assessment, Alternative Assessment

## 1. Introduction

As reform movements continue to sweep the educational landscape in Taiwan, educators and practitioners explore and attempt innovative practices in classrooms. Highlighted in this wave of reform is the implementation of Grade 1-9 Curriculum from elementary

through junior high levels. This plan emphasizes coherence of instructional goals and materials across levels, and demands pedagogical innovation and multiple approaches to assessment. Most important, teachers are required to weave assessment into instruction and provide chances for students to utilize evaluation skills as a learning task. Of all non-traditional approaches to instruction and assessment, portfolio use, aligned with theories of constructivism and multiple intelligences (Chang, 2001; Dai, 2003), seems to show the greatest promise in enhancing diverse dimensions of learning and developing multiple intelligences as well as promoting learner autonomy. Proponents deem its use as congruent with their teaching aims and beliefs about learning (e.g., Belanoff & Dickson, 1991; Cole & Struyk, 1997; Gardner, 1983, 1991; Lockledge, 1997; Newman & Smolen, 1993, Valencia, 1990; Yancey, 1992), touting such a process as a means of empowering students to become active learners and decision makers in their own learning. As Gottlieb (1995) puts it, portfolios “serve as a guide for students in making choices and in demonstrating how they reason, create, strategize, and reflect" (p. 12). In short, in pedagogy the assembly of a portfolio is regarded as conducive to students’ multiple intelligences, self-reflection, critical thought, learning responsibility, plus content area skills and knowledge.

Research evidence also suggests portfolios as a potent device to gauge students’ effort, achievement, improvement, and self-evaluation (e.g. Chen, 1999, 2000; Far & Tone, 1994; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Hsieh et al., 2000; Newman & Smolen, 1993; Smolen et al., 1995). Hamp-Lyons (l994) labels portfolio an excellent pedagogical tool interweaving assessment with instruction: it provides chances to integrate more forms of evaluation into teaching, such that evaluation will become “a less threatening and more supportive activity” (p. 54) to learners. Moya and O’Malley (1994) claim portfolios can be used as a systematic assessment tool in instructional planning and student evaluation. Matching assessment to teaching and supplying a profile of students’ learning and growth in multiple domains or skills, portfolios are thus recommended as an alternative to standardized testing and all problems found with such testing.

Currently the body of literature related to a portfolio approach to instruction and

assessment is growing in Taiwan. Documented studies include the fields of teacher education, web-based learning, writing, sciences, and English learning. Nonetheless, relatively little is known about EFL portfolio use. Chen (1999, 2000) asked her EFL university students to compile writing portfolios; significantly, they stated the task made them better learners, readers, and writers, and was conducive to their personal growth and learning reflection. Hsieh, Lu, and Yeh (2000) implemented portfolio assessment in a sixth grade EFL classroom and found these valid tools for elevating students' learning. Chang and Chang (2003) integrated multiple intelligences with portfolio assessment in a seventh grade English class in comparison with a traditional class and detected significant differences in student achievement test performance, learning motivation, and classroom climate. Only Chen's study described how portfolios are collected, used and evaluated, along with tasks demanded, plus pedagogy and assessment in curriculum.

The mandate for the Grade 1-9 Curriculum in Taiwan has made the policy of innovative pedagogy and multiple approaches to assessment a prickly issue. When it comes to the subject of English at junior high level, the issue becomes even thornier. Driven chiefly by nationwide standardized tests, junior high EFL classrooms remain unchanged. Oftentimes students, drilled by tests and quizzes, give up learning or pass standardized tests without "authentic and communicative" competence acquired. EFL scholars in Taiwan (Shih et al., 2001) have made great efforts toward setting guidelines and recommended strategies and techniques to facilitate change in classroom practices. However, these guidelines, in need of field-testing do not seem to help much. As with assorted dishes in the cafeteria, tempting and nutritious, it takes time to try them in combination. Teachers strained by heavy workload and limited time for class preparation will very likely fall back on "old but convenient" practices. One survey conducted by *Kang Hsuan Education Magazine* (*Central Daily News*, Jan. 17, 2002) showed most teachers highly confused about implementing the Grade 1-9 Curriculum: (1) top concerns were extra time for class preparation and assessment practices; (2) over 760 (86%) stated they knew not how to conduct "multidimensional assessment" and still used paper-and-pencil tests to evaluate students' learning. Facing waves of new measures in education, apparently, many teachers cling to old practices and do not attempt anything unfamiliar.

Now what they need most is a feasible model: a portfolio combining multiple approaches to instruction and assessment, plus (most important of all), one that motivates students and improves their learning.

The aim of this study was to investigate the implementation of a portfolio system in junior high EFL classrooms in Taiwan and examine its effect on student learning. It was hoped to set up a feasible portfolio model and offer suggestions for classroom practice and policy making. Specifically, the following questions were addressed in the study:

1. What are students' perceptions of the portfolio system?
2. What are teachers' observations of its effect on student learning?
3. What are the problems emerging during the implementation process?
4. What are the approaches adopted to tackle the problems?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Subjects were from intact classes at two schools in southern Taiwan, one with 16 female and 17 male students, the other 42 girls. All were seventh graders, having learned English formally for one year in elementary school. Teachers (here designated MW & CY) of said classes were trained in a Masters program of English education on use of portfolios to facilitate instruction and assessment and improve student learning. Schools where they taught had never adopted portfolio assessment in English classes.

### 2.2. Implementation of a portfolio system

Junior high schools in Taiwan began executing the Grade 1-9 Curriculum as of 2002. Texts and/or teaching materials are no longer unified, but chosen, adapted, and/or developed by the teachers. Schools of classes participating happened to select the same EFL books, with course and pedagogical procedures designed based on a school calendar and text content. A portfolio system, implemented over two semesters (fall 2002 to spring 2003) and modified after practice, is outlined in Table 1. It includes several components: (1) learning domains—cognitive, social, affective, and meta-cognitive; (2) language

skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (3) assessment formats—teacher, peer and self-assessment. Also, proposed and conducted as classroom evolution, the system mixes elements of portfolio and traditional assessment.

**Table 1. A portfolio system for EFL 7th grade students in Taiwan**

| Domain | Learning Task/ Activity | Assessment-- Task | Assessment-- Format | Portfolio Evidence | Weight of Grading |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive, Meta-cognitive | Listening and Speaking | Speaking-recording (each unit)<br>Listening and evaluating (each unit)<br>Storytelling (once a semester)<br>English drama (once a semester)<br>English radio program (weekly) | Teacher, peer and self-assessments | Audio-tapes, listening evaluation sheet, story script, storytelling group evaluation sheet, weekly reflection. | 15% (speaking-recording, 5%; listening and evaluating, 5%; storytelling and/or group drama performance, 5%) |
| Cognitive, Meta-cognitive | Reading and Writing | Exercises in workbook (each unit)<br>Worksheets (each unit)<br>Extensive reading (weekly)<br>Storybook making (once a semester) | Teacher, peer and self-assessments | Worksheets, reading sheet, student storybook | 10% (Workbook exercises, 3%; worksheets and reading notes, 4%; storybook, 3%) |
| Affective, Social, Meta-cognitive | Group/ Pair Work | Pair work: information exchange, practice and writing of dialogues (each unit)<br>Group work: creating group names and logos, short role-plays, dramatic performance (each unit) | Peer and self-assessment | Peer and self-evaluation sheet | (5%, with weekly self-reflection, and semester-end peer and self-evaluation) |
| Cognitive | Unit Review Tests | Listening test (each unit)<br>Unit achievement tests (each unit) | Teacher assessment | List of scores and self-reflection | 10% (listening tests, 5%; unit achievement tests, 5%) |
| Meta-cognitive | Weekly Re-flection | Self-evaluation (weekly) | Self-assessment | Reflection sheet | 5% (with peer evaluation, based on learning attitude, performance, contribution, and participation) |
| Cognitive, Meta-cognitive, Affective | Portfolio | Shared and examined after each term exam.<br>Exhibit and celebration of portfolios, sample portfolios chosen by students and teacher awarded (at end of semester). | Teacher, peer and self-assessment | Portfolio introduction, self-introduction, and reflection | 10% (based on completeness, documentation, language, and design & structure) |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive | Three Term Exams | Term examination contains :<br>30% listening items<br>70% reading and writing | Teacher assessment | List of scores and self-reflection | 50% (fixed and mandated for all classes at school) |

### 2.2.1. Goals and objectives

The first and foremost ability specified in the Grade 1-9 Curriculum in Taiwan is the one to develop self-awareness and potential. As to English curriculum, the goals are defined as cultivation of students' basic English communicative ability as well as English learning interests and methods, and facilitation of students' understanding of foreign and domestic cultures. Given such, the portfolio system of this study embraces four indispensable learning components: cognitive, affective, social and meta-cognitive. It is designed to help students use English appropriately, understand cultural differences, identify and comprehend tested points in school term examinations, assess performances of their own and peers critically and impartially, record and reflect on learning process and growth systematically so as to realize strengths and weaknesses in learning. It also aims to help students develop an interest in English, keep a positive attitude toward learning, learn and enjoy working with peers, and hold individual accountability.

### 2.2.2. Pedagogical activities

This system integrates assessment with pedagogical tasks to facilitate and monitor learning and teaching. Tasks and activities of different language skills and peer and self assessments (outlined in Table 1) are combined to provide students opportunities to exercise language use, collaboration with peers, critical thinking, and self development. Since speaking and listening are often ignored in the EFL classrooms in Taiwan, they are especially emphasized in the curriculum design. For instance, students are asked to record their speech on audiotapes when a unit is finished. They may decide content of their recordings. Low achievers can simply read aloud passages of *Dialogue* or *Reading* in a lesson. High-achieving students, however, are encouraged to rewrite passages in textbooks or record their adaptations creatively—e.g. playing different roles with varied voice expressions, or adding some background music. As a follow-up to the speaking-recording task, students listen to peers' tapes at home and yield feedback and scoring on a

given evaluation form. To create “dialogic exchange” between speakers and listeners, students are required to give self-feedback on the form. Those evaluated high and showing improvement are played in class as models of oral presentation.

Another essential task in the portfolio system is portfolio compilation. Students are told about this project at the beginning of a semester and by its end are required to finish the task to demonstrate what they have undertaken in class, showcase their achievements and favored works, and review and think how they could improve future work. To expedite compilation tasks, students are asked to share and examine “process” portfolios after each term exam in class. Guidelines for portfolio compilation are provided at the start of the semester. An exhibit and celebration of portfolios is arranged in a class meeting with an audience of teachers from other schools. Portfolios include introduction (chronicling the collection and selection period, explaining what is selected and why, noting self-reflection, and reserving space for feedback), author’s self-description (autobiography in brief), and selected works. Students are encouraged to create their own layouts of the portfolios. Peers and the teacher write their feedback on the provided introduction sheet.

### 2.2.3. Grading

The grading scheme of this portfolio system, including summative and formative assessments, is used to monitor and support students’ learning process and achievement, attitude and efforts. Each semester public junior high schools in Taiwan administer three achievement tests. Individual teachers of the same grade take turns constructing tests. A ratio of this summative assessment is fixed and mandated for all classes at school. What a teacher can “control” is the so-called formative assessment, 50% of the total grade. Given that the portfolio system adopts a teacher/student joint assessment model, grading criteria and standards are always made clear to students before they are involved in assessment procedures. Below are criteria for speaking and listening, reading and writing, and portfolio project.

Regarding speaking and listening tasks, those who turn in the recording of speech as required receive a perfect score of five points, this to encourage students to practice speaking every week. Evaluation criteria for recording encompass pronunciation, fluency, content, and accuracy. Assessment of storytelling or group drama is based on content, pronunciation, fluency, vividness, and timing.

As to reading and writing, each workbook exercise counts 100 points, with one point deducted for a mistake. Those who turn in exercises late risk 20-point punishment grade-wise. Worksheets and reading notes are rated from A+ (4 pointes) to D (1 point) mostly by the teacher, some combined with self-evaluation. Students' storybooks are evaluated by both the teacher and peers in terms of content, organization, coherence and fluency, wording, grammar, and mechanics.

Portfolios are rated by both the teacher and students in light of completeness (whether the collection records varied learning activities), documentation (whether works are dated and show self-reflection), language (whether language use is clear and correct), and design/structure (whether it is organized and presented neatly). Five portfolios are awarded during the exhibit and celebration at the end of the semester.

**2.3. Data collection and analysis**

To ensure methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978), both qualitative and quantitative procedures for data collection and analysis were adopted in this research. Data were gleaned from interviews, classroom observations, teachers' reflective notes, students' portfolios, and a questionnaire survey.

The survey on students' perspectives of the portfolio curriculum and their learning was administered by the end of the second semester. The questionnaire, provided in Chinese and containing 31 items plus an open-ended question, was tested and revised in the first semester. Each item was scored on a 5-point scale from 5 "strongly agree" through 3 "not sure" to 1 "strongly disagree." A couple of items were reverse-scored in

order to reduce response set bias. Chi square "goodness of fit" test and t-tests detected differences in students' background and their responses to the questionnaire.

The participating teachers took reflective notes throughout this probe, and were observed and interviewed to obtain greater clarity in classroom practices and a true picture of opinions or feelings. Qualitative data including interviews, observation and reflective notes, and students' portfolio reflections were classified and categorized by two EFL university teachers using content analysis method. Member check and independent coding were utilized to ensure the credibility of qualitative procedures.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Students' learning attitude and achievement

Participating students, though from two schools and taught by different teachers, showed no significant difference on an independent t-test in self-ratings of learning attitude, English proficiency, and school test performance. Yet female students rated themselves significantly higher in their school test performance (Female M= 3.95, SD= 0.78, Male M= 3.375, SD= 0.885, df= 73, t= 2.55, $p<.05$) and assignment fulfillment (Female M= 4.19, SD= 0.89, Male Mean= 3.625, SD= 1.0878, df= 73, t= 2.12, $p<.05$).

As Table 2 presents, on a five-point scale students rated themselves above average in learning attitude (M= 3.70), English proficiency (M= 3.43), and test performance (M=3.83). Over 70% stated they finished assignments and learning tasks as required (M= 4.07). Significantly more disagreed that they felt nervous about school tests (M= 2.60). And students somewhat consented that it was fair to use school tests to decide their English learning achievements with a mean of 3.17, though no difference among varied opinions was found by the chi-square test.

**Table 2. Students' self-rating of learning attitude and achievement (N=75)**

| Item | Excellent %(n) | Good %(n) | OK %(n) | Poor %(n) | Very Poor %(n) | $X^2$ | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. *My learning attitude is | 12 (9) | 48 (36) | 39 (29) | 1 (1) | 0 (0) | 43.3467 | 3.70 | 0.69 |
| 2. *My English proficiency is | 7 (5) | 39 (29) | 47 (35) | 7 (5) | 1 (1) | 66.1333 | 3.43 | 0.77 |
| 3. *My performance on the English test at school is | 21 (28) | 45 (34) | 28 (16) | 5 (4) | 0 (0) | 24.6800 | 3.83 | 0.83 |

| Item | SA or A %(n) | Not Sure %(n) | SD or D %(n) | $X^2$ | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. *I get nervous whenever I took English tests. | 20 (15) | 33 (25) | 47 (35) | 8.0000 | 2.60 | 1.12 |
| 5. It is fair and reasonable to measure the effectiveness of my English learning by school tests. | 40 (30) | 35 (26) | 25 (19) | 2.4800 | 3.17 | 1.02 |
| 6. **I turned in assignments and worksheets, and finished the learning tasks as required. | 76 (57) | 19 (14) | 5 (4) | 63.4400 | 4.07 | 0.96 |

SA= 5 points, strongly agree, A= four points, agree, D= 2 points, disagree, SD= 1 point, strongly disagree, *p<.05, **p<.01

### 3.2. Students' perceptions

Tally of questionnaire results revealed students significantly favoring the implemented portfolio system. Table 3 illustrates the results of students' questionnaire responses.

**Table 3. Students' responses regarding the portfolio system (N=75)**

| Item | SA or A %(n) | Not Sure %(n) | SD or D %(n) | $X^2$ | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. **I was ever asked to compile my portfolio before (in the course of English or other subjects). | 68 (51) | 17 (13) | 15 (11) | 40.6400 | 3.88 | 1.13 |
| 2. **The teacher made clear to us the course objectives. | 91 (68) | 9 (7) | 0 (0) | 49.6133 | 4.45 | 0.66 |
| 3. **The teacher made clear to us the criteria for portfolio assessment. | 92 (69) | 5 (4) | 3 (2) | 116.2400 | 4.47 | 0.72 |
| 4. ** Compiling and creating my portfolio is a meaningless task. [a] | 0 (0) | 17 (13) | 83 (62) | 22.3200 | 4.44 | 0.71 |
| 5. **I selected documents regarding my learning in English listening and speaking and put them into my portfolio. | 84 (63) | 8 (6) | 8 (6) | 86.6400 | 4.25 | 0.92 |
| 6. **I selected documents regarding my learning in English reading and writing and put them into my portfolio. | 83 (62) | 13 (10) | 4 (3) | 83.1200 | 4.37 | 0.87 |
| 7. *The selection of my portfolio was based on teacher's feedback and judgment. | 49 (37) | 24 (18) | 27 (20) | 8.7200 | 3.21 | 1.08 |
| 8. *The selection of my portfolio was based on peers' feedback and judgment. | 47 (35) | 29 (22) | 24 (18) | 6.3200 | 3.21 | 1.02 |
| 9. **The selection of my portfolio was based on my own satisfaction. | 76 (57) | 16 (12) | 8 (6) | 62.1600 | 4.09 | 0.99 |
| 10. **In my portfolio I put the learning evidence which I feel fond or proud of for assessment. | 85 (64) | 9 (7) | 5 (4) | 91.4400 | 4.34 | 0.86 |
| 11. **I actually examined my learning process for the weekly self-assessment. | 63 (47) | 29 (22) | 8 (6) | 34.1600 | 3.81 | 0.97 |
| 12. **Peer assessment helped me learn from others' strengths, expect others as asking myself, and develop my critical thinking ability. | 85 (64) | 11 (8) | 4(3) | 91.7600 | 4.19 | 0.83 |
| 13. **I like participating in various learning and assessing tasks (such as oral practice recording, role-play, listening practice, worksheets, public speaking, making storybooks, peer and self-assessment etc.). | 71 (53) | 23 (17) | 7 (5) | 49.9200 | 3.95 | 0.98 |
| 14. **Because of participating in various learning and assessing tasks, I made good progress in English learning. | 69(52) | 23(17) | 8(6) | 46.1600 | 3.83 | 0.95 |
| 15. **Because of participating in various learning tasks and assessment activities, I was positive about my learning achievements. | 76 (57) | 19 (14) | 5 (4) | 63.4400 | 4.01 | 0.94 |
| 16. **I preferred various learning and assessing tasks to English paper-and-pencil tests. | 61 (46) | 28 (21) | 11 (8) | 29.8400 | 3.83 | 1.11 |
| 17. I was less nervous while participating in various learning and assessing tasks than taking English paper-and-pencil tests. | 39 (29) | 40 (30) | 21 (16) | 4.8800 | 3.23 | 1.13 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. **Because of various learning and assessing tasks, I enjoyed English classes and English learning. | 61 (46) | 29 (22) | 9 (7) | 30.9600 | 3.72 | 0.94 |
| 19. **Having finished all the learning and assessing tasks, I felt my confidence was boosted. | 67 (50) | 27 (20) | 7 (5) | 42.0000 | 3.84 | 0.92 |
| 20. **Having finished all the learning and assessing tasks, I felt my relationships with the group members were bettered. | 72 (54) | 23 (17) | 5 (4) | 53.8400 | 4.03 | 0.94 |
| 21. I think the single measure of English paper-and-pencil tests can assess my learning more precisely than multiple learning and assessing tasks. | 36 (27) | 29 (22) | 35 (26) | 0.5600 | 3.08 | 1.18 |
| 22. **Compiling and creating my portfolio helped me little in English learning. [a] | 0 (0) | 17 (13) | 83 (62) | 22.3200 | 4.49 | 0.71 |
| 23. **Compiling and creating my portfolio helped me perceive the process and growth of my English learning. | 77 (58) | 20 (15) | 3 (2) | 68.7200 | 4.08 | 0.80 |
| 24. **Compiling and creating my portfolio helped me understand the learning objectives of the course. | 83 (62) | 15 (11) | 3 (2) | 83.7600 | 4.19 | 0.83 |
| 25. **Compiling and creating my portfolio helped me examine and improve my learning methods. | 75 (56) | 20 (15) | 5 (4) | 60.0800 | 4.05 | 1.01 |

SA= strongly agree, A= agree, SD= strongly disagree, D= disagree, *p<.05, **p<.01. Numbers are rounded and sometimes less than 100 in total percentage.

[a] Item reverse-scored

A great majority of students stated their teachers had clarified their learning objectives and criteria for portfolio assessment (91-92% strongly agreed or agreed). Their selection of portfolio content was mainly based on self-satisfaction (76%), then on teacher's and/or peers' feedback (47-49%). By creating their own portfolios, they perceived self-progress in English learning (77%), realized learning objectives of diverse stages (83%), examined their learning processes and upgraded their learning methods (75%). Most (83%) disagreed that portfolio tasks are meaningless and that compiling portfolios helped them little in English learning. The assigned learning and evaluation tasks were seen as beneficial to relationships with teammates (72%), boost their English confidence (67%), and make them fond of English learning (61%). Results of the chi square test indicated more students favoring the system and considering it conducive to English learning. The t-test results revealed no statistical differences in their attitudes towards the portfolio system between male and female students and between the two participating classes. Yet a close look at responses to Items 17 and 21 in Table 3 and Items 4 and 5 in Table 2 hints that tests might still be viewed as a dynamic measure gauging English learning achievement; students showed no strong tendency of test phobia. Significantly more students disagreed that they got nervous about taking English tests. However, means of 3.23 and 3.08 (Items 17 and 21) indicated that varied learning and assessing tasks were more likely to be valued than paper-and-pencil tests.

**Table 4. Students' questionnaire free responses (N=75)**

| Theme/Categories | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Positive | | |
| Examining self learning | 53 | 71% |
| Mutual learning between peers | 42 | 56% |
| Confidence and motivation boosted | 37 | 49% |
| Multidimensional development | 30 | 40% |
| Fun and joy | 14 | 19% |
| Negative | | |
| Excessive time, cost, and effort needed | 55 | 73% |
| Bias in peer evaluation | 14 | 19% |
| Limited effect on test performance | 3 | 4% |
| Quality related with English performance | 2 | 3% |
| Difficulty in storage and portability | 2 | 3% |

In addition to expressing their opinions with scale rating, students were also asked to write freely about dis/advantages of the portfolio system on the questionnaire. Table 4 summarizes their responses. Many indicated the system was advantageous to them. Over 70% of the students noted that compiling portfolios helped immensely in self-reflection; they examined their growth by reviewing what they experienced in learning and became aware of their strengths and weaknesses. 56% identified gains specifically from sharing and giving each other feedback in various tasks. With constant practice and feedback, almost half of the students mentioned that their confidence and self-image grew. Some realized the significance of performing sundry tasks in terms of diverse/multiple language skills and learning domains in the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, thus considered multidimensional assessment in line with assorted learning objectives and inspired their versatile potentials. Unanimously, learning from doing was regarded as fun; seeing one's own progress was viewed as joy. Students appreciated the portfolio experience very much.

As for negativity towards the portfolio system, five factors were identified in students' free responses. 73% complained about work overload from assignments - i.e., inadequate time and excessive effort for assigned tasks or activities all the time. They had diverse priority lists and could not devote themselves fully to English only. A few also cited insufficient time to prepare for term exams when given tasks not directly related to

tests, extra cost of assignments and portfolio compilation. Moreover, unfair evaluations are speculated to be caused by friendship marking and prejudice (or bias). 19% of the students (especially female) showed doubts about peer assessment. They questioned a few classmates might give high marks to those who are close to them or whose English is more advanced, or cast doubt on their ability to evaluate peers accurately and appropriately. In addition, a handful of students, trapped in the myth of tests, despite being aware of elevated learning attitude via weekly reflection, considered the portfolio projects had limited effect on their test performance. A few others pointed out that portfolios created by those good at English learning and in test performance often exceed those made by "poor" learners. Indeed, better proficiency and grades lead to higher achievement and motivation. It is possible owners of portfolios deemed substandard showed less interest in English learning. Also, storage and size of portfolios caused additional trouble for a couple of students. The size of their folder cannot accommodate various materials. Some materials are too big to fit into the folder. And carrying a folder back and forth from home to school was regarded as inconvenient to some students.

Students' negative responses to the portfolio system primarily reflected that they might be overloaded by this learning style. Two explanations can be derived. First, traditional testing decided at least half of the total grade and thus placed on the top of student priority list. Students saw the assigned tasks as not directly related to paper-and-pencil tests and believed the portfolio system caused extra burden. Secondly, the students were concerned about grades, and whether assessment procedures are fair and square mattered much to them. Broadfoot (1996) argued that students view assessment as defining what to learn and achieve, and how to allocate their time. McDowell and Sambell (1999) also observed that assessment influences how students use their time and engage in tasks that they perceive as necessary to meet the requirements. In line with their claims, this portfolio system involved double assessment of both process and product so as to motivate students in all learning tasks. As CY put it in her reflective notes (09/21/2002), "Students really like points very much. To encourage them to learn English, I think points could be used as good bonus." But it is very possible that students felt stressed and heavily burdened when assessed and evaluated throughout the system.

### 3.3. Teachers' observations

The process to create portfolios has been suggested as favorable to student learning in self-reflection, critical thinking, learning responsibility, and multiple intelligences (Blanoff & Dickson, 1991; Cole & Struyk, 1997; Gardner, 1983, 1991; Lockledge, 1997; Newman & Smolen, 1993, Valencia, 1990; Yancey, 1992). A content analysis of teachers' reflective notes, interviews, classroom observations, and students' portfolios scrutinized recurring themes and particular events/acts in students' learning. The findings indicated teachers' observations in support that students benefited from the portfolio system in terms of development of English confidence, learning ownership, versatile talents, and critical thinking.

#### 3.3.1. English confidence and use increasing

Students were given many opportunities to use the four language skills via peer and group work. In addition to those English tasks, CY noted how her students used more English in reflection and evaluation, though allowed to use Chinese (CY, Reflection, 03/07/2003). Several low test-performing boys in MW's class also improved learning behavior because of the increased language use and constructive feedback (MW, Observation, 4/26/2003, Interview, 06/11/2003). They had gained confidence and made progress in English learning after work in groups, received positive feedback from peers, and performed better in storytelling and English role-play. These students increasingly showed interest in classroom activities and paid greater attention to assignments. Such change indicated that traditional paper-and-pencil mode of assessment might have killed youths' interest in learning and self-confidence and image at school.

#### 3.3.2. Learning ownership acquired

Cole, Ryan, and Kick (1995) argue that "the most desired outcome of portfolio construction is to have students assume learning responsibility and develop a desire to do their best work" (p. 16). A few girls of CY's class, making further attempts to revise their works after the class, shared and exhibited storybooks and portfolios (CY, Observation,

04/30/2003, Interview, 06/18/2003). Seeing others' superior efforts, they aimed higher and desired to better their projects. Similar cases were also found in MW's class.

> Rei used PPT to show her story and Dan used his own pictures to attract the audience's attention. They demonstrated their story so successful that Lily and Zoe asked for a second chance to show their story before the final. Both of them did not remember their lines well and looked at their script now and then. They wanted to do a good job like Rei and Dan did. (MW, Reflection, 06/07/2003)

This self-rewarding behavior suggested students assuming learning responsibility. In addition, a close look at students' portfolios revealed how content, arrangement, and selection criteria mainly based on their own satisfaction, then on the teacher's and peers' feedback, also indicated students' having acquired learning ownership.

### 3.3.3. Other talents developed

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences alerted us to the fact that students' learning is best measured in authentic and varied contexts. In diverse learning and assessing tasks, English was indeed used as a means to develop and demonstrate students' talent - e.g., acting, drawing, arts, organization, music and teamwork. Both teachers were pleasantly amazed at their students' English performances and creativity in various tasks.

> I was surprised to see that students have got stage property, costume, and even background music ready. They have also arranged which group should come on the stage first…. They all did a wonderful job. I felt so amazed that some low-achieving students are natural actors. (MW, Reflection, 10/20/2002)

> I found that most of the students did a good job on the portfolios. They download beautiful pictures or draw by themselves. Their covers pages and self-introduction have their own specific characteristics. (CY, Reflection, 11/01/2002)

### 3.3.4. Critical thinking promoted

In a portfolio system, students are enmeshed in constant reflection and critical inquiries by self and peer assessments. On the weekly reflection sheet, they were granted channels to examine themselves and peers, and reveal their confusion. During portfolio

construction, they went back to review and reflect on what they had done and wrote feedback to themselves and peers. By way of these evaluative tasks, their voice was heard and critical thinking promoted. For instance, CY observed,

> Taking at a look at the peer evaluation forms of tape recording, I found that the raters become better in terms of making responses to the speaker. They know better how to encourage the speakers and how to use words to describe the advantages and disadvantages. Some of them also imitated the words I used to evaluate the tape. Also, some of them tried to use English to express their opinions….As to their weekly self-reflection, most of them talked about their learning problems or achievements, and believed they would do better next time. Some even provided suggestions to make the class more interesting and meaningful. (CY, Reflection, 03/07/2003)

The portfolio system that intended to profile student achievement in multiple dimensions indeed furnished opportunities to develop self-assurance, ownership, and critical thinking, as claimed by Genesee & Upshur (1996), Brown (2004), Brown & Hudson (1998), and Weigle (2002), along with multiple intelligences, proposed by Gardner (1983).

### 3.3.5. Portfolio exceptions

An examination of students' portfolios (75 in total for the second semester) revealed that the contents of students' portfolios were mostly selected and designed according to personal preference, suggesting students' ownership and active participation. All their portfolios had fascinating covers and good self-introductions. Art was integrated in their portfolio presentations very much. Of those 75, 63 students (84%) went back to review and reflect on what they had done and wrote feedback to themselves and peers "seriously." Their feedback on the portfolio reflective sheet was more than words or phrases such as "good," "OK," "not bad," and "I don't know." All students considered that they did well on portfolio construction and gave themselves a grade above B+. Their portfolios indeed chronicled their "colorful" English learning experiences in the class and mostly led them to look for future improvement. For example, one student stated,

> My favorite part of my portfolio is the introducing of myself. I think that part is pretty cool! I like it! I also like the content of my speech. Because I really work hard on that….I like the book made from Emily and me. We did a good job! My writing isn't very good, so I have to read more books, learn more words, and practice more. I should study hard on grammar. That'll help to

> improve my writing. When I'm in the 8th grade, we'll listen to *Studio Classroom*. It's harder than *Let's Talk in English*. That will help to improve my English too." (Y22)

Another student perceived her growth in the process of portfolio compilation, articulating,

> This portfolio is about my growth. Good or bad, it is a record of mine in this semester. My story is not as funny and creative as others. I still need to work harder on writing. But my speaking improves. I love drama and work with my group members very much. I learned a lot from them. (Y05)

However, not every student was as cooperative as expected in portfolio tasks. Some put all of their works in a folder, not organized and reflected as required. Their portfolios were not presented as showcases of their learning achievements, but more like fragments of what they had done and where they had traveled in learning. Teachers stated these portfolios were no different from daily folders, though students all treasured their portfolios by the end of the semester. In assumption of their negligence, teachers opined that more support and guidance for such students in using portfolios to examine and improve learning ought to be provided (CY & MW, Interview, 06/18/2003). Another possible explanation: some students did not perceive the immediate effect of portfolio as tests did to them, thus ignoring its significance. They could not spare more time for the task when they were obsessed by final exams.

### 3.4. Emerging problems

Teachers' constant reflection and dialogue with study partners facilitated implementation of the portfolio system by locating and tackling problems emerging during the process. These snags were found concerning teachers' frustrations and confusions, coded into five themes: confrontation with traditional testing, difficulty with a heterogeneous class, heed to students' complaints, anxiety about professional insufficiency, and speculation of worksheet overuse.

#### 3.4.1. Confrontation with traditional testing

The greatest obstacle teachers encountered was a menace of value and belief deeply rooted in traditional testing culture. MW showed concern about the prevailing testing culture and misuse of test results. She had been striving to keep a balance of testing versus performance-based assessment. Encouragingly, the portfolio system adopted did

not fail her and her students. Still, she felt powerless and "lost" when colleagues used students' test results to define teaching efficiency and students' efforts in learning:

> The students took the second term exam this Tuesday and Wednesday. Last week, their homeroom teacher reminded me that our average score had to be the highest this time. He told me that he was afraid that the students' English score would let him down because there were fewer tests or quizzes than he expected. He asked me to test them more often. But it was too late for me to quiz them more. I was worried that the homeroom teacher's nightmare would come true. Right after the exam, the homeroom teachers of the other two level-A classes asked me how well my students did on the English exam. I was not only worried but also nervous about my students' average score because of their concern. Fortunately, it turned out that my students won this English battle. But strange to say, I was not happy...
>
> Is average score everything? How can we let numbers be our nightmares?... how can we evaluate students mainly by paper-and-pencil tests? Though it is important to get good grades, it is even more important to enjoy learning…. I heard that the English teacher of another level-A class was so angry at some students who didn't spell the words right so that she hit them on the palms... [When] the learning atmosphere becomes weird and nervous or even hostile, how can we allow the average score to hurt our teaching and learning? (MW, Reflection, 05/17/2003)

Teachers experimenting with innovative assessment procedures exposed themselves to questions and even "blame" from the traditional camp. Traditionally, Chinese schooling is confined to standards - national, regional, and school-wide - and thus is knowledge measured by standardized tests. It is widely assumed that the quality of teaching is demonstrated through and by students' test scores. As Klenowski (2002) puts it, "When the portfolios are implemented, the prevailing understanding of the nature and purpose of assessment sometimes militates against their success…attitudes of students and teachers are difficult to change in institutions and contexts where traditional conceptions of assessment use, such as for measuring learning, dominate" (p. 79). Mabry (1999) also argues that any new system implemented in an old and inappropriate paradigm is limited in effect. Tension and internal conflict emerge continuously. This explains why teachers felt so powerless and confused in their new pedagogical attempts.

### 3.4.2. Difficulties with heterogeneous classes

CY and MW depicted a massive discrepancy in students' English proficiency, although the classes were classified as "high-achieving" by their performance on a screening test of Chinese and Math. They had trouble in designing suitable tasks for all students and were not sure if unified standards should be applied to all at first, since those with English proficiency always scored higher in performance-based assessment. This was very frustrating to those less proficient and weak in English, while perhaps equally or even more capable in other subjects (CY & MW, Interview, 11/04/2002; MW, Reflection, 12/07/2002). The following excerpt shows teachers' concern about how to design learning tasks and build up students' learning confidence in a heterogeneous class.

> Some of the students have been learning English for six years. However, some have been learning for only one year. These high achievers may give pressure to those lower achievers more or less, so some students become afraid of speaking English in front of the class. What kind of assignment should I give them to raise the lower achievers' confidence but not to bore the high achievers to death? (CY, Reflection, 11/16/2002)

It was then decided to award additional credits to those showing effort and progress in a portfolio system. Such decision corresponded to Brown's (2004) argument that small weights allocated to improvement, behavior, effort, and motivation despite their subjectivity. This will not mask strong achievement in the course but can mean stark difference in a student's final grade. Then again, to cope with the challenges teachers face in a heterogeneous class, cooperative learning strategy was adopted to create opportunities for peer coaching and assessment. Self-reflection and assessment were requested, such that students had a say in their learning attitude and improvement.

### 3.4.3. Heeding students' complaints

The teachers paid heed to students' complaints in using new pedagogical practices. Major concerns of students centered on doubts about peer assessment and more practice in test taking. Some students had suspicions about trustworthiness of peer assessment (CY, Reflection, 10/05/2002, 10/26/2002, 03/07/2003). The weight percentages of teacher and peer evaluation were modified to adjust for discrepancies in scoring, but some students remained dissatisfied. It was observed that such concerns all came from female students, who were found to self-rate higher in learning achievement (test and assignment) than

male students. It was speculated that they were more sensitive to grading and felt concerned about friendship markings. Such speculation merits further investigation.

In addition to concerns about peer assessment, several high achieving students expressed a preference for traditional paper tests and asked for more practice in testing (MW, Reflection, 12/07/2002). With a dim view of credibility of worksheets, collaborative learning or assessing tasks, a couple of students even showed willingness to take a very difficult but discriminating test (Y28, Y42, Portfolio Reflection). Student complaints echoed their negative free responses to the questionnaires. Peer assessment was considered a less reliable measure than paper-and- pencil testing, the common and familiar practice. Rating themselves high in test performance (Table 2), students leaned toward a testing mode they excelled in. But this was contradictory to what teachers intended to achieve in the portfolio system - measuring student learning in diverse domains through multiple methods. As old habits die hard, so are old mindsets hard and fast. Students already "standardized" in a testing culture faced confusion while experiencing new practices in the classroom; however, doubts caused difficulties in implementation.

### 3.4.4. Anxiety over professional deficiencies

Teachers devoted appreciable time and energy to making the portfolio system possible. Yet they felt nervous and uneasy about whether they had sufficient knowledge and skills in certain assigned jobs (CY, Reflection, 11/23/2002; MW, Reflection, 03/15/2003). For example, CY remarked confusedly,

> It's really a tiring and confusing job to evaluate students' English writing. I am very moved because most of the students worked very hard to finish their article…However, there are a lot of grammatical mistakes, no matter in vocabulary or sentence patterns. I wonder whether I should correct all the mistakes. If I do, I'm worried whether so many mistakes will discourage their willingness in writing. If I don't, I wonder which mistakes I should correct and which I should skip. Most important of all, what are the criteria of giving them points? Some of the articles, without good content, have correct and easy sentence patterns; some of them, with good content, have a lot of grammatical mistakes. Which part shall I focus on? (CY, Reflection, 11/23/2002)

Throughout this study, teachers also engaged themselves in critical reflection. According to Dewey (1904), reflective teachers are freed from engaging in impulsive or routine action. Posner (1985) argues, “Reflective teaching will allow [the teacher] to act in deliberate and intentional ways, to devise new ways of teaching rather than being a slave to tradition, and to interpret new experiences from a fresh perspective” (p. 20). But while reflecting in the act of carrying out a new task, teachers might feel nervous and worried about their insufficiency in professional knowledge and skills. Such anxiety was surely considered a factor; all the same, it compelled them to move forward in professional development too.

### 3.4.5. Speculation about worksheet overuse

In their reflective notes, participating teachers showed skepticism about whether worksheets were a means to an end or an end themselves. They perceived a serious side effect of educational reforms. Worksheets were adopted for “presentation and demonstration,” not for “improvement” when the Grade 1-9 Curriculum was being implemented. Both teachers speculated that worksheets were given far more than what students should and could undertake, noting potential danger in their attempt to change - i.e., too much effort might be required of students. They stated,

> The students are very busy this week…there are a lot of activities in school. Also, this week is our theme week, for Grade 1-9 Curriculum. The students have to write several worksheets and have performances in the ceremony. Many of them complained to me that there are too many worksheets. In the English subject, there’s also a worksheet…I wonder whether the worksheet is really helpful to the students in English learning or it is just used to carry out a task in a perfunctory manner. (CY, Reflection, 12/21/2002)

> There have been a lot of activities since the new semester: our school has been on the TV news and the newspaper for several times. Though Nora has helped me a lot, I still cannot find time to listen to students’ tapes…I have to confess that now I am the one who delay the homework assignment…Sometimes I would ask myself why so many worksheets or activities for this class. Is it because this is a portfolio project or because the students use the new version textbook? And my answer is both. (MW, Reflection, 03/15/2003)

### 3.5. Approaches to problems

Throughout the study, emerging problems were observed and examined due to frequent reflections and professional conversations. Two approaches were adopted to tackle problems: seeking and creating a support network and adjusting and modifying the strategy and/or design. It should be noted that some problems were not and may not be resolved in the near future, but the adopted approaches were found potential and promising.

#### 3.5.1. Seeking and creating a support network

Sustained professional support can overcome difficulties in various stages of an innovative attempt (Chen, 2002, 2003; Su, 2002). During the study, teachers had to battle a "gigantic testing monster" while their own teaching performances were still being evaluated by students' test scores at school. Lasting change in teachers' behavior occurs only when they, bonded as a group, are able to reflect on everyday teaching practices, identify their pedagogical problems, and take action to work out solutions (Chen, 2003). A support network was formed gradually during the process. At first, this was a support group of three people (two teachers and a university researcher), making reflection- on-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-for-action together (taxonomy of Killion and Todnem, 1991). Then it was developed into a network that collaborated and nurtured itself in professional growth. The activities carried out in the support network are as follows:

1. Reading related literature
2. Reflection in, on, and for action
3. Workshops and seminars
4. Frequent dialogues with research partners about problems, issues, and solutions
5. Attending and supporting tasks of English performance
6. Sharing with colleagues and administrators (principal and dean) need for additional strategies and procedures to assess student learning and the misuse of test scores
7. Inviting interested teachers for classroom observation and idea exchange
8. School-based study group for English teachers

These activities were not conducted in a linear or fixed order, but Numbers 1 to 5 served as dynamic power for this action research. They helped teachers to reconstruct knowledge of portfolio use, consolidate beliefs in action, and reduce menaces or difficulties throughout the study. Numbers 6, 7, and 8 developed as an extension of efforts in professional collaboration.

### 3.5.2. Adjusting and modifying designs and strategies

Teachers modified course designs based on students' concerns and requests. Regarding students' doubts about peer assessment, specifics of rubrics and examples were crucial scaffolds for students. The teachers provided guidance and modeling procedures in peer evaluation with care and detailed instruction. In addition, students' assessment performances were evaluated to ensure the quality of student assessment. Davies (2000) claimed that students took caution in comparing, contrasting, and evaluating peers' work when their assessment performances were being evaluated. Ballantyne, Hughes, & Mylonas (2002) noted how quality and quantity of student assessment comments increased when more marks were allocated for student assessment performance. By virtue of teachers' careful guidance and assistance as well as regular practice, students were becoming more skillful and confident in the evaluation task (CY & MW, Interview, 06/18/2003). They wrote "wonderful comments" (MW, Reflection, 12/29/2002) and even imitated evaluative feedback from the teacher (CY, 03/07/2003). Regarding the case of some female students still clouded with friendship markings, perhaps further investigation about whether such doubts about peer assessment are void or whether students' self-examination helps amend or modify errors of peer assessment is needed.

Moreover, during the study, adjustment in design for learning tasks was done incessantly to accommodate change in school schedule and students' needs. Teachers perhaps aimed too high in learning goals to take heed of some low-achieving students' struggles and frustrations. Some tasks might be too challenging and frustrating at the outset. Both of them reflected that they should demand small group tasks first, then individual projects. Groups provide a more comfortable and safe context for challenging

tasks. Students unsure or uncomfortable about doing a task alone were allowed to work with partners (CY & MW, Interview, 06/18/2003).

## 4. Conclusion

Several findings can be summarized from the present study. First, students who participated in this investigation significantly favored a portfolio system. They considered the learning tasks conducive to learning and portfolios to be good tools for examining learning processes and augmenting learning methods. Second, the teachers' observations also confirmed that students benefited from the portfolio system in terms of the development of English use and confidence, learning ownership, versatile talents, and critical thinking. Third, content of student portfolios was mostly chosen and designed in accordance with personal preference, suggesting student ownership and active participation. Fourth, implementation barriers mainly resulted from confrontation with the traditional testing culture, difficulties with heterogeneous classes, heeding students' complains, anxiety over professional deficiencies, and speculation about worksheet overuse.

Overall, this study corroborated findings of previous studies in Taiwan (Chen, 1999, 2000; Hsieh, 2000) that portfolios are a dynamic device to facilitate learning and ownership development. Nevertheless, confusion and doubt emerged and lingered during its implementation process, and the development of portfolio pedagogy was constantly inhibited by the prevailing understanding of assessment purpose and procedures in Taiwan. With sustained professional support and collaboration plus continued curriculum modification, the portfolio implementation ended as a success.

This study suggests that at the moment, when the traditional notion of assessment holds sway, widespread use of portfolio assessment, especially on the secondary level, is out of the question for Taiwan. Large-scale portfolio use indeed addresses assessment for high-stakes decision making, not for learning improvement. Research indicates large-scale portfolio assessment's problems arising from lack of validity and/or reliability, difficulty in technicality and administration, and mis-conceptualization (see Klenowski,

2002 for detailed discussion). Dudley (2001) warns, “Use of portfolios to assess distorts the concept and weakens its effectiveness” (p. 19). She argues student portfolios are not about assessment, but about achievement, reflection, and celebration. Klenowski (2002) also maintains that the effect of portfolio pedagogy is limited when we emphasize verification of work in portfolios. Supporting their claims, findings from this study lead us to recommend that portfolios be better used as pedagogical tools.

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# Apologies Across Cultures: An Analysis of Intercultural Communication Problems Raised in the *Ehime Maru* Incident

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**Bio Data**

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**Abstract**

This paper describes in detail an example of a failed intercultural communication and offers a teaching procedure to help students cope with culture's impact on language. Using the 2001 accident involving the sinking of the *Ehime Maru*, a Japanese fisheries high school training boat, the paper employs a "critical incidents" approach to suggest how differing cultural norms and values surrounding apologies in America and Japan caused serious intercultural communication problems. A pedagogical background demonstrating the importance of emphasizing culture and awareness-raising activities in language teaching is provided along with intercultural communication background specifically situating differing cultural apology values as a potentially huge area for intercultural miscommunication. Using a critical incidents approach, a teaching procedure and supplemental materials are then offered as a possible method for helping students understand differing expectations that might occur when apologizing across cultures. The procedure is linked to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and encourages students to deal with cultural difference in a way that best represents the spirit of ethnorelativity as described in the "acceptance" stage of Bennett's model.

## Introduction

On February 9th, 2001, the USS Greenville, a U.S. Navy submarine, surfaced on a training maneuver near Hawaii and accidentally hit the *Ehime Maru*, a Japanese high school training ship. Nine members on board the *Ehime Maru*, including several students, died in the accident. The accident became an international incident with much of the attention centering on the different cultural norms related to apologies, with the bereaved

Japanese families expecting a form of apology that was not immediately forthcoming from the American side, particularly the captain of the submarine. The issue was further complicated by frenzied media attention both in Japan and in the U.S. which attempted to portray the *Ehime Maru* accident in light of other vaguely or unrelated issues including the American military presence in Okinawa, the raising of the boat to recover the dead, the questionable performance of the Japanese Prime Minister, and, later, the issue of apology in the context of Japan's imperialistic history. This paper offers the incident as an example of an intercultural communication problem with special reference to helping students understand how cultural factors can impact apologies. Using a variety of authentic materials (media reports, opinion pieces and letters), a teaching procedure is then described to help students analyze such culturally influenced communication problems. The teaching procedure is strongly influenced by Bennett's (1998) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and is based on materials that might help students reach the first of Bennett's ethnorelativist stages, that of *acceptance*.

**Intercultural Communication: The culture and language bridge**

Teachers working in EFL contexts where such intercultural communication crises might occur need to be prepared to deal with incidents like this and the cultural questions that are sure to arise in the classroom. Such incidents provide an opportunity to show how culture impacts on language and behaviour, and to show how to overcome, or preferably prevent, the cultural resentment that so naturally appears in failed intercultural communication. This paper focuses on different cultural expectations regarding apologies between Japanese and Americans with particular emphasis on how differing cultural norms regarding apologies can seriously impact intercultural communication. Culture clearly featured strongly in this case and such examples provide pieces of the cultural puzzle that language learners must always deal with as they progress in overall language development. The *Ehime Maru* accident is presented here as a real life example of a clearly failed intercultural communication, a 'critical incident' that can also be used to help students understand some of the fundamental theory of intercultural communication research as well as culture's influence on language. A teaching procedure for analysis of apologies across cultures is offered as a means for helping students realize what

psychological conditions are necessary to reach the "acceptance" level of the ethnorelativist stages of Bennett's (1993) intercultural sensitivity model. It is based on analyzing cultural difference in ways that help students better understand both the "Self" and the "Other".

**Description of the intercultural communication problem**

For the purposes of this paper a brief account of what transpired in the month or so following the accident is necessary to give the reader a better understanding of the controversy surrounding cultural norms of apology seen in the incident. In the period between February 9th and February 28th, the U.S. was slow to officially apologize for the incident with public statements offering only such phrases as "sincere regret" if indeed the U.S. Navy is found to be at fault. On the U.S. side, at stake was a tense political relationship between the two countries, legal issues, an accident investigation and the matter of compensation. Finally, on February 27th, an American envoy was sent to Japan with an official and comprehensive apology from the U.S. President delivered both at the diplomatic level and to the bereaved families, a full apology that was well-received but still failed to appease the families as it did not come directly from the submarine captain. During this period, the captain of the submarine, Cmdr. Scott Waddle, maintained a silence that increasingly infuriated the families of the victims on the Japanese side. Waddle's non-apology during this period is best explained in light of his being the subject of an ongoing Navy investigation and in terms of the constraints of potential legal liability. Finally, also on February 27th, he expressed an apology in the form of "sincere regret" for the accident in written letters to the families delivered to the Japanese consulate in Hawaii. This gesture of apology was rejected outright by the victims, deemed too impersonal and insufficient for making amends. While he did express a desire to formally visit Japan to apologize, legal issues prevented him from doing so.

During this same period, it became clear that the type of apology the Japanese victims and the public wanted from the submarine captain was unlikely to be offered any time soon. Japanese families repeatedly requested a clear and public expression of contrition from Cmdr. Waddle, given directly to the victims to include an acknowledgement of

responsibility and to reflect that he was aware of the grief the families were feeling. The Japanese maintained that the apology must have a human face and many even demanded that Cmdr. Waddle should kneel and bow before them, as is ritual in Japan in similar serious cases. His reluctance to make any public remarks and to express an apology to the families directly was viewed as offensive and as a failure to abide by Japanese cultural norms of the victims valuing decorum and form. To the degree that the one making an apology is personally involved and responsible, and should express that sense of responsibility and sorrow directly to the victim, the *Ehima Maru* incident can be seen as straddling the domains of public and interpersonal apologies. With the direct apology desired by the victims, they then can choose whether or not to accept the apology. Although the incident was a public act, it required from the Japanese victims a more interpersonal form of apology from the person directly responsible and therefore the case does not fit neatly into either category.

**Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity**

Bennett's (1993) DMIS model of IC sensitivity is rooted in developmental psychology and views understanding of cultural difference in terms of personal growth spanning a continuum from Ethnocentric Stages (denial, defense, minimization) to Ethnorelative Stages (acceptance, adaptation and integration). The "acceptance" level has been described by Bennett (1998) as follows:

> "People at the acceptance stage enjoy recognizing and exploring cultural differences. They are aware that they themselves are cultural beings. They are fairly tolerant of ambiguity and are comfortable knowing there is no right answer (although there are better answers for particular contexts). "Acceptance" does not mean that a person has to agree with or take on a cultural perspective other than his or her own. Rather people accept the *viability* of different cultural ways of thinking and behaving, even though they may not like them." (1998, p. 28)

The parallel aims of this paper - analysis of apology behaviours across cultures and provision of a teaching procedure to help students deal with cultural differences of apologies - integrate Bennett's model in the sense that fostering ethnorelative thinking in students leads to smoother intercultural communication. It is suggested here that encouraging students to reach a minimal level of ethnorelative thinking as exemplified by the acceptance level is a worthy endeavour and appropriate in terms of the developmental

level of intermediate-level Japanese students embarking in the field of Intercultural Communication. It is particularly useful as a model in the sense that it mainly aims at awareness raising with respect to perception of cultural difference. As a model though, it does have limitations not the least of which is that it fails to adequately deal with "difference-within-difference", as Guilherme (2002, p. 136) has noted, and "does not problematise the formation of (inter)cultural identities sufficiently" (op. cit.). However, with a critical approach to both analysis of Japanese and American apology behaviours and the materials used to help students negotiate and understand apologies across cultures, the model has proved useful in determining whether or not students can deal with difference in a culturally appropriate way in this particular context of IC learning.

**Pedagogical background: Use of "Critical Cultural Incidents"**

Critical incidents are defined in Chen and Starosta (1998) as case studies based on real-life experiences with people from other cultures which "depict a controversy or source of conflict that reflects cultural values or other aspects of a culture" (p. 272). Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) have shown how critical incidents and cultural incidents can be used to develop effective teaching materials for increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity in students. Brislin (2002) suggests that critical incidents are useful for intercultural communication training and education because they provide an approach whereby students can analyze cases "that depict people in intercultural encounters that involve a misunderstanding or a difficulty"(Brislin, 2002, cited online). In the process of working through an incident to identify why a communication may have failed, students can also be introduced to "research-based concepts that assist in understanding many other intercultural interactions they are likely to have in the future" (op. cit.). While exploration of critical incidents is a student-centered strategy, the teacher may at times integrate a mini-lecture style format to focus on IC concepts as they arise.

While critical incidents are usually brief descriptions of situational events between interlocutors from different cultures, the *Ehime Maru* accident is offered here as a "critical cultural incident", a more complicated and involved incident which is familiar to Japanese students. Brislin (1993) notes that ideal critical incidents "include experiences

with which all...participants can identify" (p. 227). The *Ehime Maru* incident is also controversial enough to elicit a variety of culturally biased emotions and reactions to be identified and dealt with by the teacher. Use of critical cultural incidents is suggested here not only for more typical ELT situations but also in more specific course offerings where EFL teachers are often asked to coordinate their English language classes as part of broader fields such as "Intercultural Communication" or "Comparative Culture".

Noting that critical incidents may be preferable to "presenting prescriptive rules" (p. 26), Meier (1997) has called for more awareness-raising activities in language teaching suggesting the potential for the second language classroom as a "venue for culture teaching" (p. 26). Use of a critical incident approach to study apologies is also in line with Meier's (1998) position that findings in the literature on apology behaviour in English are too varied and that general descriptions of behaviour are not sufficient. At the very least, use of a critical incidents methodology for teaching intercultural communication can create an environment in which learners "gain insight into cultural assumptions which underlie the perception of contextual and situational factors as they inform linguistic behaviour" (Meier, 1997, p. 25).

A valuable precursor to the teaching of apology strategies used in English is the contrastive teaching of cultural norms related to apologies in a specific EFL context. This comparative method of teaching, sensitive to how the needs of both cultures should be considered, studies factors that can potentially impact on how an apology is given or received, and even whether or not an apology is actually offered. This kind of comparative analysis has the potential, as Byram (1997) notes, to turn "learners' attention back on their own practices, beliefs and social identities" (p. 20). The *Ehime Maru* incident provides a case where learners can consciously "understand that different evaluations of appropriateness may exist across cultures" (Meier, 1997, pp. 24-25). It should be noted here that contrastive analysis does have potential "traps" many of which have been detailed by Guest (2002). These include very real dangers such as oversimplification, polarization of cultural attributes and cultural reductivism (pp. 154-155). There is also the possibility that critical incidents, especially those as emotionally

charged as the *Ehime Maru* case, might serve to create even stronger feelings about how one feels about members of another culture, thus reinforcing stereotypes and generalizations. Further, in terms of working with cases such as the *Ehime Maru* incident, special heed is called for with respect to Guest's fear that contrastive analysis can "lead to cross-cultural paralysis" (p. 25). Rather than reducing dealings with the target culture to a level of "hypersensitivity", this kind of study is meant to prepare students with the skills "to be able to look at their own interaction with others analytically with fresh eyes in order to solve the puzzle of what is going on" (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman, 2004, p. 2). Indeed, as a strategy contrastive analysis should involve the utmost in terms of sensitivity, acknowledgement of exceptions, and avoidance of "otherization". As such, close analysis of an intercultural critical incident gone wrong can help learners attain a level of development of intercultural sensitivity close to the initial phase of Bennett's (1998) ethnorelative stages. Intercultural analysis of this kind helps students to recognize, appreciate and accept difference and sets the stage for better linguistic understanding of apology strategies for actual use in English.

For language teachers working in EFL contexts, mainly with lower-intermediate or intermediate level students, the research findings from Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper and Ross (1996) are of particular interest here. They found that native Japanese learners of English at the intermediate level were three times more likely to apply their native apologetic behaviours than more advanced learners. If indeed one aim of intercultural communication and language teaching is to help students improve pragmatic ability in English, cross-cultural studies of apologies such as the one presented here should be of value to the learner. The primary objectives of this lesson focus on developing a "critical cultural awareness" (Byram, p. 35) consisting of recognition of cultural differences, tolerance of others' values and understanding of cultural relativity. During this process of ethnorelative learning, the degree to which students choose to adopt the cultural norms regarding apology as an influence on actual production of the target language is left to the discretion of the individual student. The native-speaker cultural norms (in this case American) are presented alongside the Japanese cultural norms influencing apology. If, as Gieve (1999) hopes, such study "empowers students to co-create an interactive context

of their own inter-cultural space" (p. 7), then the teaching approach can be deemed successful. Focus on the development of key intercultural communication skills such as self-awareness and cultural sensitivity can be seen as ends in and of themselves.

**IC background: Culturally influenced apologies between Japan and America**

Intercultural communication scholars from Japan and America have given a great deal of attention to cultural differences between the two countries and how they might negatively impact communication. A study by Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) found that although both Japanese and Americans chose to offer apologies directly, most other forms and behaviours related to the delivery of apologies were fundamentally different. They conclude that the act of "offering an apology, what prompts it, to whom it is offered, how it is offered, with what consequences, embodies underlying cultural assumptions and values" (p. 203). While the focus of their study is on strategies for offering genuine apologies in interpersonal situations, they begin by comparing public apology strategies of similar real-life accidents to demonstrate differing cultural values. Differing assumptions, in our case with respect to apology behaviour, highlight what Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) have termed "violations of expectations" (p. 86) in a communication, causing an arousal in either or both interlocutors.

Studies in Japan include Naotsuka, Sakamoto, et al (1981) who attempted to explain cultural differences in apology styles between the two countries in terms of mutuality. They highlight the mutual aspect of Japanese apologies as a social lubricant by suggesting that "one is always expected to apologize in any awkward situation, regardless of the degree of actual personal responsibility for the awkwardness, in order to keep things running smoothly"(p. 166). This they contrast to a more adversarial approach by Americans where apologies are proffered less willingly, instead using "mutual confrontation as a social catalyst"(p.167) with apologies "considered to be more voluntary"(p. 167). This view is supported by Sugimoto's (1997) comparative study of American and Japanese college students which found that Japanese students put more importance on expression of regret, were more willing to offer and receive apologies and that Japanese participants in the study were more concerned with saving face than their

American counterparts who tried to maintain autonomy by offering nothing to remedy situations warranting repair. She also noted that Americans tended to accompany their apology with explanations while Japanese simply admitted fault.

A later study by Sugimoto (1998) offers more in terms of the differing cultural values involved in constructing apologies in America and Japan. Although her study does not specifically address apologies other than in interpersonal contexts, it is of particular relevance to the *Ehime Maru* incident in that it also provides a detailed comparative explanation of the extent of personal responsibility in a public apology. She cites Tavuchis' (1991) example detailing the 1972 massacre at Lod Airport in Israel in which Japanese terrorists killed several people, setting off, by western standards, a rather unusual string of public apologies ranging from Japanese youth groups to the President of Kyoto University to the Foreign Minister of Japan. This incident speaks to the importance of a comparatively greater range of accountability among Japanese and suggests that the average Japanese has "far more occasions to apologize than does the average American" (p. 255). Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) offer another real-life example of differences in public apologies (see Appendix 1 for an adapted version for classroom use). Both examples use real-life situations warranting public apology to frame cultural differences regarding interpersonal apologies as a lead-in to intercultural analysis.

The Sugimoto study also noted the importance of the concept of "*sunao*" in Japanese apologies in contrast to the emphasis Americans place on sincerity. While there are similarities between "*sunao*" and sincerity such as truthfulness, the concept of "*sunao*" involves submission, compliance and a stronger tone of "self surrender", an important detail in that "Japanese apologizers need to be true to the recipient's perception of the situation" and throw themselves "at the mercy of the victim" (p. 257). By contrast, Sugimoto notes the difference of the American notion of a sincere apology as including "taking responsibility, and expressing remorse but not to the extent of unconditional 'selfless surrender'."(p. 257). Several of the differing message construction principles of apologies Sugimoto found between Japanese and Americans are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

**Cultural Differences Impacting Apology Construction**

| Japanese apologies | American apologies |
|---|---|
| Preference for formulaic expressions; form considered more important than content; clichéd repetition regarded as safe. | Emphasis on spontaneity and originality of the message; manner and tone of delivery more important than words. |
| Values self-castigation with any deviation from the actual apology viewed with suspicion. Expression of humility and submission seen as fundamental. | Importance placed on elaboration, including accounts, offers of repair, denial of vindictiveness and promises of future improvements. |
| Relational reality; apologies tailored to the recipient's perception of reality; negative face plays key role. | Appeals to individual aspect of the relational dimension; places more value on the personal touch. |

While caution is advised here in that these contrasting aspects of apology suggest a cultural dichotomy and can potentially lead to stereotyping of apology behaviours, it is notable that part of the problem in the *Ehime Maru* incident was that the Japanese victims were expecting a style of apology in accordance with many of the cultural norms presented by Sugimoto. Being aware of these fundamental differences in how the two cultures attach meaning to the form and function of apologies is key to understanding and adapting to intercultural situations that call for apologies. The extent to which those directly involved in the *Ehime Maru* incident, as well as the general public and the media, failed to recognize these differing cultural values explains much about why this case is so valuable as a study of intercultural communication problems.

As noted, one interesting aspect of the apology issue in the *Ehime Maru* incident is that it crossed the border of what might be considered a public apology (or non-apology in this case) and an interpersonal apology. Christie (2005) notes that much is potentially at stake because "apologies by public figures can carry different implications for audiences from different cultures" (p. 3). Further, Barnlund and Yoshioka (1994) contrast casual apologies, which EFL students are more likely to study, with genuine apologies, summarizing the latter as consisting of a "recognition that another person has been harmed", awareness of responsibility for harm done and "obligation to acknowledge this awareness" (p. 194). They raise a key point by noting that, like casual apologies, genuine

apologies "permit a wide range of behaviour" (p. 194). The apology behaviour demonstrated by the submarine captain is reflective of this range in that it failed to meet the expected genuine public apology behaviour desired by the victims in the *Ehime Maru* incident. Students need to be ready for intercultural situations that might occur in which genuine apologies, perhaps even public apologies, are called for. Like the *Ehime Maru* case, these situations will be fraught with unique situational factors that will complicate matters. Attaining a minimal level of intercultural competence whereby an intercultural communicator can successfully mine what they "know or can predict about the [other] interlocutor's communication expectations" (Clyne, 1994, p. 194) is of fundamental importance. However, as FitzGerald (2003) notes, the teaching and training of intercultural communication skills still leaves much to be desired. Materials designed to develop these skills are needed now more than ever. Any cultural awareness skills a student brings to an intercultural situation calling for both casual and genuine apologies will help in the public and interpersonal understanding of what might be expected.

**Teaching Procedure**

The aims of the proposed teaching procedure are 1). to teach some basic concepts of Intercultural Communication, 2). to build self-awareness skills and heighten awareness of cultural differences with respect to apologies, 3). to show how cultural norms can potentially negatively impact intercultural communication, 4). to analyze a critical incident from an intercultural perspective, and 5). to help students move to the "acceptance" level on the ethnorelative end of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The procedure is designed for lower-intermediate to intermediate level Japanese students. The envisioned course for this procedure is "Intercultural Communication Between Japan and America" but it is suggested here as appropriate for both Intercultural Communication courses in general and EFL classes dealing with apologies. It is noted here that the materials and procedure used could be used with students from either of the two representative cultures.

In a brief teacher-fronted introduction to a unit on intercultural sensitivity based on differing cultural norms of apology, students are given a short lecture contrasting

American and Japanese apology strategies. Apologies are also discussed in more general terms considering why they are given and how they are performed. Depending on the level of the students, this mini-lecture may be used as a listening activity in which students use a note-taking print. The teacher also introduces pertinent vocabulary (apology, apologize, ethnocentric, ethnorelative, self-awareness, sensitivity, norms, competence) for the unit. Students are given examples of differing cultural expectations regarding apologies. An excellent example is provided in Samovar (2000) who advises that from an American perspective, apologies should be avoided in public speaking noting that although they might be appropriate in Japanese culture, apologies offered at the beginning of a speech actually have the effect of "reducing one's credibility" (p. 305). The lecture may or may not be supported by OHP or PowerPoint Presentation to assist the learner. During this brief lecture students may be asked to share personal experiences of apologizing across cultures. Many Japanese students mention differences in apology on the most basic linguistic level, questioning for example when "I'm sorry" can be used as "Excuse me". While basic, these questions provide opportunities to deal more specifically with language-related aspects of apologizing in English such as direct or indirect apologies and intensifiers.

Having completed the introduction, the next stage involves introducing some basic critical incidents (see Appendices 1 & 2) to familiarize students with this method of intercultural analysis and to provide clear examples of how culture impacts the act of apology as much as, or more than, the language used. These easier critical incidents also serve the primary function of introducing the concept of self-awareness with each incident representing some apology-related aspect of Japanese culture that students can identify with. Appendix 1 introduces the idea that differing legal systems may be a factor in how apologies are given while Appendix 2 contrasts differing values regarding responsibility when apologizing. Students are asked to read and discuss these critical incidents in small groups and report their findings to the whole class.

Continuing with cultural self-awareness, students are then given a more difficult critical incident (Appendix 3) in which they are asked to speculate as to how an airplane crash in

Japan was handled differently than a similar crash in the U.S. in terms of apology behaviours. Whereas the first two critical incidents are fictional, this one is based on a real-life incident. While discussing this incident, the teacher's role is as facilitator, eliciting responses from students as they work through their interpretation of the incident. In addition to the critical incident method, at this stage, students are also directed to other apology behaviour resources such as recordings from the Japanese television news media of official apologies which show examples of company presidents apologizing for defective products, or university presidents apologizing for entrance examination mistakes or sexual harassment misconduct by faculty members. It is interesting to note that the company official or the faculty member directly responsible in the matter is rarely asked to apologize directly to the public. Such examples serve to direct attention at the cultural values of "the self" and set the tone for the more detailed analysis of the *Ehime Maru* incident.

Moran's (2001) guidelines for the teaching of culture call for "participation, description, interpretation, and response" (p. 137) on the part of learners as they make their way through his four stages of the experiential learning cycle. The authentic materials from Appendices 4-7 are presented as a means of helping students with "interpretation" and "response", with both stages combined at the end of the unit for assessment of students. The four documents each discuss the *Ehime Maru* incident in terms of contrasting cultural norms and differing apology behaviours. In the interpretation stage students are asked to sift through the documents separating fact from opinion and creating a rough timeline of events. Using these sources, students are asked to note differences of apology behaviour expectations by citing specific examples and to offer an explanation of the incident from both perspectives. In the response stage, students are asked to express their opinions and feelings about the incident and suggest ways in which both sides could have handled the incident to alleviate or prevent this particular failed intercultural communication. Due to the passions and strong opinions raised in this real life critical cultural incident, whether or not students can successfully handle the "response" stage will tell the teacher if they are operating on the ethnorelative end of the intercultural sensitivity spectrum. During the three years in which this procedure has been piloted, it is

interesting that assessment of ethnorelative sensitivity from the response stage, whether it be in oral or written form, shows the same limitations people exhibit that Bennett noted (p. 28) in his discussion of the acceptance stage. While students seem to genuinely enjoy the exploration of cultural differences of apology, many still tend to value their own cultural norms when discussing or writing about the *Ehime Maru* incident and are often at a loss in suggesting solutions (see Appendix 8 for brief examples of student responses). Nevertheless, the process is an important one and success in reaching the ethnorelative stage of acceptance, as might be assessed in a particular course, is not always comparable with the process of attaining a level of ethnorelativist thinking in a student's real-life intercultural sensitivity development.

**Conclusion**

This paper has described in detail an example of a failed intercultural communication due to the differing cultural norms and values surrounding apologies. Discussion of pedagogical background demonstrated the importance of emphasizing culture and awareness-raising activities in language teaching. The intercultural communication background specifically situated differing cultural apology values and behaviours as a potentially huge area for intercultural miscommunication. Using a critical incidents approach, a teaching procedure and supplemental materials were offered as a possible method for helping students understand differing expectations that might occur when apologizing across cultures. In doing so, students are encouraged to deal with cultural difference in way that best represents the spirit of ethnorelativity as described in the acceptance stage of Bennett's model. The degree to which students exhibit intercultural sensitivity as shown by acceptance is assessed in how they respond to the materials.

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**Appendix 1: Critical Incident - Apology**
(From *Japanese Cultural Encounters*, p. 2)

Tom rented a car one weekend. It was his first time driving a car in Japan, but he had been an excellent driver in the United States. On his way to his friend's house, however, he had an accident. A young child about four years old ran into the street from an alley just as Tom was driving by. Tom was driving under the speed limit and he was watching the road carefully, so he stepped on the brakes immediately. However, the car did brush against the child, causing him to fall down. Tom immediately stopped the car and asked a passerby to call the police and an ambulance.

Fortunately, the child's injuries were minor. The police did not give Tom a ticket, and he was told that he was not at fault at all, thanks to some witnesses' reports. He felt sorry for the child but decided that there was nothing more he could do, so he tried to forget about the accident. However, after several days, Tom heard from the policeman that the child's parents were extremely upset about Tom's response to the incident.

Why were the child's parents upset?

In Japan, one is expected to apologize and visit the victim of an accident, even if one is not at fault, to show his or her sincerity. In fact, one is expected to apologize whenever the other party involved suffers in any way, materially or emotionally. In many court cases, perpetrators get a lighter sentence when it is clear that they regret their actions, as reflected in their apology.

**Appendix 2: Critical Incident - Apology**
(From *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*)

Harumi Tanaka, from Osaka, Japan, had accepted an assignment in Boston. His task was to explore the possibility of developing joint ventures with American firms. He had been invited by one company to spend a month and had been assigned an office and a research assistant. He agreed on a Monday to present a business plan the following Friday. On Tuesday, the computers in the company crashed and the research assistant called in sick with a severe case of the flu. Still, Harumi pushed forward and presented his plan on Friday. He began his presentation, "I'm sorry that I am not well prepared. This meeting

may not be a good use of your time." He then went into a clear, interesting presentation. After the meeting, one of the American executives said, "I don't know why you had to apologize. Everyone knows about the computer crash and your assistant's illness." Harumi responded that he thought that the apology would be a good introduction to his presentation.

Explanation:

The misunderstanding in this incident occurred because apologies are interpreted differently in the United States compared to Japan. In the USA, apologies are associated with weakness and with the admission of guilt. In this case, people at the meeting might interpret Harumi's apology as an admission of responsibility for a poor presentation. In Japan, apologies are less associated with weakness or with the admission of guilt. Apologies show concern for the difficulties and emotional distress people are experiencing. However, Japanese people making apologies are not necessarily claiming that they are responsible for the difficulties or distress.

**Appendix 3**: **Case study activity**

(Adapted from Barnlund and Yoshioka, 1990)

In 1982, two fatal airplane crashes occurred at roughly the same time. One was in Washington, D.C., killing 77 people. The other air crash happened in Tokyo Bay with 24 dead. In the American situation, there was an attempt to explain what happened but the crew, officials from the airline, and the government made no effort to apologize to the public or to any of the families of the victims. In an attempt to explain the accident, officials tried to say that because of poor safety records at the airport, the accident was to be expected.

In Japan, what happened with respect to how the fatal crash in Tokyo Bay was handled was very different. Can you suggest how officials in Japan handled this case?

Answer key:

1. The president of the airline company apologized to the public and visited every family involved to apologize personally.
2. The president gave his resignation and apologized.
3. The captain and co-pilot officially apologized for the accident even before it could be determined whether or not the cause of the crash was pilot error.
4. The Director of Transportation resigned his position to take responsibility.

**Appendix 4**

**We've Apologized Enough to Japan**

By Richard Cohen

The Washington Post

http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A59562-2001Feb26?

Tuesday, February 27, 2001; Page A23

I cannot tell you how the USS Greeneville surfaced under a Japanese fishing vessel, the Ehime Maru, sinking it with the apparent loss of nine lives. I cannot tell you if the presence of civilians in the sub contributed to the accident or if some piece of equipment malfunctioned or if someone was incredibly negligent. I can tell you, though, that it was an accident and that the United States has apologized enough.

But not for the Japanese. Now the vice chief of naval operations, Adm. William J. Fallon, has joined the group of apologizers. He follows President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Tom Foley, and the sub's skipper, Cmdr. Scott Waddle. By now, the Japanese ought to get the message: We are sorry.

And we are. The accident was a tragedy. Most of those on board the Ehime Maru were students. It was a training vessel. Some of those missing and presumed dead are students. Their parents are in agony; they have suffered an incalculable loss. They are permitted to say anything they want, to demand anything that will salve their grief. That includes the demand to raise the Ehime Maru and recover the bodies of the dead.

But other Japanese -- everyone from editorial writers to opportunistic politicians -- are demanding more than they are entitled to. The constant calls for more and more apologies. The implications that, somehow, the Americans are unfeeling and cavalier about the loss of Japanese life. These are calumnies. The collision was a tragedy, but it was an accident. The Greeneville was not even in Japanese waters -- it was off Hawaii. If the Greeneville was being reckless, it was more than likely that American lives would have been in danger.

This constant call for one apology after another may well reflect a cultural difference between Japan and the United States, but it also smacks of epic hypocrisy. It took the Japanese forever to acknowledge that approximately 200,000 Asian women were forced to become the sex slaves of the Japanese military during World War II. Only grudgingly did Japan compensate some of them and even more grudgingly did it offer remorse. As far as some of the surviving "comfort women" are concerned, no apology has ever been forthcoming.

It has been the same story when it comes to other examples of Japanese war crimes before and during World War II. The Japanese have been extremely reluctant to own up to such barbarities as the so-called Rape of Nanking. That Chinese city was seized in 1937, and anywhere from 100,000 to 350,000 Chinese civilians were slaughtered, mutilated and raped by the Japanese Imperial Army. Once again, no apology has been forthcoming. Even the facts have been disputed.

The United States, in contrast, has become the most apologetic of nations. We are sorry for just about everything. Bill Clinton apologized in Africa for the enslavement of that continent's black peoples -- and he should have. We have apologized to the Indians of this continent and to this or that group which, in the past, was once a victim of discrimination and injustice. If you're wrong, you say you're sorry.

But it's hard to apologize for an accident. You're sorry it happened and you're sorry a boat's at the bottom of the ocean and you're sorry -- really sorry -- that people were killed. But there was no intent to harm anyone and no one was acting in an irresponsible fashion because he did not value the lives of non-Americans. This was Hawaii, for crying out loud.

Yet in Japan, the accident has been conflated with the behavior of some servicemen on Okinawa, a Japanese island. It has also been conflated with the remarks of U.S. Lt. Gen. Earl Hailston referring in an e-mail to Japanese lawmakers as "nuts . . . and a bunch of wimps." Put it all together and the newspaper Asahi Shimbun recently wondered if the security provided by the United States is worth all the trouble. "We cannot help asking whether security must come at the expense of people's lives," it said in a recent editorial. I cannot help asking if it ever heard of an accident.

So, one more time: We're sorry. All of America is sorry. Something went terribly wrong on the Greeneville and of course we apologize for the loss of the Ehime Maru and the apparent deaths of nine persons aboard. But we are the same guys who have provided Japan with a security shield ever since World War II, helped rebuild the country and have been its steadfast ally and best friend.

Don't make *us* sorry.

**Appendix 5**

## Letter from the Mayor of Uwajima, Japan

http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/02/19/uwajima.letter/

0February 19, 2001

Dear residents of Hawaii:

As the Mayor and representative of the people of Uwajima, I kindly ask you to read the following message.

There are the three main reasons why we are still strongly urging the U.S. authorities to continue its search for the missing nine members of the Ehime-Maru, the Uwajima Fisheries High School training vessel, one week after the tragic collision with the USS Greeneville occurred.

1. It is a fact that the bodies of drowning victims generally rise to the surface after 4 to 10 days.

2. It is the custom of Japanese fishermen to continue their search for those missing at sea for about two weeks.

3. Whereas in Christianity the soul of the person is considered of paramount importance, in Japan, the body takes a much more important role. In Buddhism, which is the predominant religious belief in Japan, when the funeral is held, the custom is to say a final farewell to the deceased before cremating them. The ashes are the final remains of the deceased and, as such, are cherished.

Uwajima is a small, close-knit fishing community and such beliefs are still strongly held. Thus I, and the victim's families, urge you again to press for a further continuation of the search for the missing.

After listening to the stories of the survivors, rescued thanks to the diligent work by the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy, even though two people, one high school student and one crew member, were seen on the deck as the accident happened, they have yet to be found. Please listen to the voices of the families and people of Uwajima, who are hoping that those nine missing people, four of which are high-school students, will still be rescued.

If you see anything which you believe may be connected to the Ehime Maru while you are out on the water, please report it to the appropriate authorities. We know that the people of America are dedicated believers in the value of the family and that you will empathize with us in trying to bring our loved ones home.

The oceans of the world are all connected and flow freely as one great body of water.

Furthermore, there is an old saying in Japan; "Hate not the people, but the crime." We hope and pray that this tragic incident does not harm the warm and truly special relationship that our two countries share.

Yours Truly,

Hirohisa Ishibashi,
Mayor of Uwajima

**Appendix 6**

## Japan culture is crux of apology demands

A letter from Bush is presented in Tokyo today, but people still want an apology from the captain
http://starbulletin.com/2001/02/27/news/story2.html

**By Janine Tully**
**Star-Bulletin**

Even as a special U.S. envoy hand delivered a letter today from President Bush to apologize for the sinking of a high school fisheries training ship, many Japanese still want the commander of the USS Greeneville to personally apologize.

Differing U.S. and Japanese views on apologies and on the raising of the Ehime Maru reflect differing cultural and religious beliefs.

"The Japanese would like the captain to admit responsibility, not that they feel that he's guilty, but it's a matter of him making an acknowledgment," East-West Center President Charles Morrison said. Japanese also have a hard time understanding the legal constraints affecting Waddle, said Morrison.

"I keep telling my Japanese friends to accept the higher-ups' apology, because it will be difficult for Waddle to apologize for legal reasons."

Adm. William J. Fallon, vice chief of naval operations, met with Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori today in Tokyo to present Bush's letter.

"It is my intention to use every opportunity while in Japan to convey the sincere apologies of the president of the United States and the Navy and all American citizens," Fallon said after the meeting.

Fallon said Mori asked that the United States do the utmost to salvage the sunken Japanese fishing vessel and give a full accounting of the Feb. 9 collision.

The U.S. envoy said Bush's letter expressed "our nation's apologies and regret."

Japanese Foreign Ministry official Toyohisa Kozuki told reporters that Bush's letter said American authorities would do what they could to raise the ship, and pledged that the investigation into the accident would be transparent.

Fallon was scheduled to meet with families of the nine Japanese missing and presumed dead in the accident, and with other government officials before leaving Japan Thursday.

But even Bush's personal letter might not be enough for the Japanese public, which perceives the submarine commander's reluctance to personally apologize as politically incorrect and offensive, experts say.

Greeneville's Cmdr. Scott Waddle broke his silence Sunday by sending a written statement to the Japanese, in which he expressed his "sincere regret" for the accident, which had caused "unimaginable grief" to the Japanese people.

Waddle's statement may help, but it still may be considered too impersonal, said George Tanabe, Department of Religion chairman at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. To the Japanese, Waddle is responsible for the accident, so he's the one who should apologize.

This is not to say that he is guilty, said Tanabe, but it would show that he is painfully aware of the grief the accident caused. Government officials and company executives often apologize in public for misdeeds that subordinates have done, he said.

Sheila Smith, a specialist in U.S-Japan relations at the East-West Center, said the Japanese families would like to put a "human face" on the apology. That was evident, she said, from the emotional plea given by the father of one of the missing men during a recent press conference here. At that meeting, Kyosuke Terada demanded that Waddle kneel and bow his head in front of the families. Such a gesture is the highest form of apology a Japanese can offer, Smith said.

Long-time foreign correspondent and author Richard Halloran agrees that there are fundamental differences between Japan and the U.S. in regards to apologizing. "From our American side it's an admission of guilt, and he (Waddle) is not willing to do that at this point until the formal inquiry is carried out," Halloran said. But it doesn't mean he's not sorry. "I'm sure he is; I have no doubt he is," he added.

People have lost sight of the fact that the accident occurred in U.S. waters, consequently U.S. law and American customs prevail, Halloran noted.

Also in Japan an apology is almost a ritual, he said, and has very little legal implication like it does here.

Halloran criticized Japanese political leaders and the press for not explaining to the captain of the Ehime Maru and survivors that Japanese traditions do not prevail in the

U.S. "Somebody should explain that to the Japanese," he said. "This (accident) unfortunately happened in America, so Waddle is obligated to follow U.S. law."

The apology controversy is not the only misunderstanding that has caused a furor in Japan. The families have also demanded that the ship, which rests 2,003 feet below the surface, be raised.

The request is based on religious ground, said Tanabe.

The Japanese believe the souls of their loved ones are not at peace until they are cremated and entombed. Having their remains, or an article that belonged to them, would give the families a sense of closure, Tanabe said.

While in America people often scatter the ashes of loved ones, in Japan they are preserved in an urn and honored.

"Cremation for the Japanese is not disposal, but preservation," he said.

**Appendix 7**

## Sub commander apologizes to families

March 1, 2001

CNN.com

http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/02/28/submarine.apology.02/index.html

TOKYO, Japan -- The commander of the U.S. submarine involved in a collision with a Japanese trawler has written to the families of the victims apologizing for the accident.

The letters from Commander Scott Waddle to the relatives of the nine people still missing after last month's collision, were delivered to the Japanese consulate in the Hawaiian state capital, Honolulu Tuesday.

Also included were letters to the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, the trawler's captain, the governor of the prefecture from which the students came, and the principal of their School.

The nine victims, including four students, are missing presumed dead after the submarine U.S.S. Greeneville collided with and sank the Japanese training vessel, the Ehime Maru on February 9 off the coast of Hawaii.

It is thought their bodies may be trapped in the hull of the vessel, which is currently lying on the seabed in the waters off Hawaii.

26 others from the 55-meter (180-foot), 500-ton Japanese ship were pulled from life rafts soon after the collision.

**Expressions of regret**

Waddle has been the subject of growing criticism in Japan where his earlier expressions of regret over the incident have been interpreted as falling short of a formal apology.

His letters were delivered to Japanese Parliamentary Secretary Yoshio Mochizuki, in Honolulu for transportation to Japan. Mochizuki later told reporters that Waddle was crying as he handed them over.

On Wednesday the special U.S. Navy envoy, Admiral William J. Fallon, met with relatives of the trawler victims and offered his personal apology for the incident.

"I'm here to request in the most humble and sincere manner that you accept the apology of the people of the United States and the U.S. Navy as a personal representative of President Bush," he told the families.

The meeting in the U.S. ambassador's residence in Tokyo was meant to quell growing Japanese anger over the accident, the U.S. failure to make appropriate apologies and the slow pace of investigations.

The Admiral said he plans to travel to Iwojima Thursday, the hometown of the missing students for further meetings with relatives and town officials.

Earlier Fallon, the Navy's number two man in Washington, delivered a letter of apology from the U.S. president to Prime Minister Mori.

He also briefed him on details of the ongoing investigation and the Navy Court of Inquiry slated for March 5.

The White House said Bush’s letter was a sign of the importance placed on its relations with Japan by the U.S., keen to ease tensions between the two countries.

Security ties between the two were strained prior to the accident by a series of crimes committed by U.S. servicemen on Okinawa.

**Apology 'sincere'**

Fallon's apology appeared to be well received in Japan.

"I felt the envoy was sincere, and it was the most satisfying meeting we have had yet," said Ryosuke Terata, father of one of the missing victims.

However, he said the families would also like to hear apologies from the sailors in the submarine responsible for the accident.

Apologies are considered vital in Japanese society, where they are seen as a display of the sense of shame at the trouble caused.

During their meeting with Admiral Fallon the families of the victims also reiterated their request that the trawler be raised from the ocean floor so they can recover the bodies of their loved ones.

"Traditional Japanese are very much concerned to have some remains or anything associated with the dead," said anthropologist Teigo Yoshida. "They would be satisfied if they can say 'good-bye.'"

Fallon said Washington was "politically committed" to raising the vessel but could say nothing more concrete until after the completion of a feasibility study around March 8.

Salvage experts say raising the Ehime Maru will be a difficult task given the depths at which it lies -- more than 600 meters (1,900 ft) below sea level.

**Appendix 8: Student response samples (unedited)**

**Student A:** First of all, this accident happened in Hawaii, so Japan could not punish the American sailor by Japanese criminal law because of extraterritorial rights. This is the greatest pain for the bereaved families. I think this incident is very difficult to solve. In Japanese, there is an ultimate way to apologize. People bow down on their hands and knees to beg forgiveness for their behavior. I think the families hoped this way of apologize, but in America, this is an unusual way. The American sailor and government officer must have apologized sincerely before Japanese media or bereaved families, but Japanese felt their apologize is not sincere. I felt sad because I can see that the difference of culture sometimes causes a trouble. I can understand the both side, but from the fact that the accident could have prevented, America has to make an effort to go along with the bereaved family’s hope.

**Student B:** I understand Waddle’s situation, but even so I think it’s not the problem of legal or not. It’s the problem of his behavior toward the families of the victims and Japan. Even if not by accident but by design, it is right for him to admit and apologize when he makes a fault. Sincere apologetic word toward the victims and their families or such an attitude should abate their feelings.

# Exploring EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching: A Case Study of Korean Secondary School Classroom Practice

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in a Korean secondary school context. The data for this study were collected through questionnaires from a total of 228 teachers at 38 different middle and high schools in Korea. The survey was conducted from August through October of the 2005 academic year, and the data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The overall findings of the survey show that the majority of respondents have a higher level of understanding about TBLT concepts, regardless of teaching levels, but that there exist some negative views on implementing TBLT with regard to its classroom practice. Additionally, some useful implications are proposed based on research findings in order to help teachers and teacher trainers to construct and implement TBLT more effectively.

**Key words:** Task-based language teaching (TBLT), teachers' perceptions, classroom practice, task-based activities, task performance, small group work

## Introduction

With the advent of the communicative language teaching approach in the early 1980s and

much emphasis on learners' communicative abilities over the last two decades, the term task-based language teaching (TBLT) came into prevalent use in the field of second language acquisition in terms of developing process-oriented syllabi and designing communicative tasks to promote learners' actual language use. Within the varying interpretations of TBLT related to classroom practice, recent studies exhibit three recurrent features: TBLT is compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001); it consists of particular components such as goal, procedure, specific outcome (Murphy, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998); it advocates content-oriented meaningful activities rather than linguistic forms (Beglar & Hunt, 2002; Carless, 2002; Littlewood, 2004).

Given the fact that language acquisition is influenced by the complex interactions of a number of variables including materials, activities, and evaluative feedback, TBLT has a dramatic, positive impact on these variables. It implies that TBLT provides learners with natural sources of meaningful material, ideal situations for communicative activity, and supportive feedback allowing for much greater opportunities for language use. Specifically, in an Asian EFL environment where learners are limited in their accessibility to use the target language on a daily basis, it is first of all necessary for language learners to be provided with real opportunities to be exposed to language use in the classroom. In his study based on interviews with teachers, teacher educators, and ministry officials, Nunan (2003) indicates that TBLT emerged as a central concept from a study of curriculum guidelines and syllabi in the Asia-Pacific countries including Japan, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Korea and Malaysia.

Unfortunately, however, a quick review of task-based literature shows that despite its pedagogical benefits surrounding the participatory learning culture, TBLT has not yet been sufficiently researched or proven empirically in terms of its classroom practice in school foreign language learning contexts (Carless, 2004; In-Jae Jeon, 2005). In light of this, this study's aim is to explore Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based instruction based on investigating their understandings of TBLT concepts, positions on TBLT implementation, and reasons they choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT in the

classroom. This will provide insight for teachers to design and implement any real communicative tasks, which are critically important for EFL learners in order to experience meaningful language use. It will also contribute to facilitating EFL teachers' practical use of TBLT techniques, thereby improving the learners' communicative abilities.

**Theoretical Background: A Brief Review of Task-based Pedagogy**

The task-based view of language teaching, based on the constructivist theory of learning and communicative language teaching methodology, has evolved in response to some limitations of the traditional PPP approach, represented by the procedure of presentation, practice, and performance (Ellis, 2003; Long & Crookes, 1991). Thus, it has the substantial implication that language learning is a developmental process promoting communication and social interaction rather than a product acquired by practicing language items, and that learners learn the target language more effectively when they are naturally exposed to meaningful task-based activities. Such a view of language learning led to the development of various task-based approaches in the eighties (Breen, 1987; Candlin & Murphy, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Prabhu, 1987), and during the nineties, has developed into a detailed practical framework for the communicative classroom in which learners perform task-based activities through cycles of pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task feedback through language focus (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). Specifically, Ellis (2003) indicates that TBLT has been re-examined in recent years from different perspectives including oral performance, writing performance, and performance assessment.

Despite the prevalent use of tasks in language pedagogy, some significant challenges behind designing proper task-based syllabi and constructing authentic task-based materials, both of which have been considered crucial factors in determining the effectiveness of TBLT in communicative classrooms, still remain unresolved. In response to these challenges, many SLA researchers are currently moving their attention from conceptualizing tasks to sequencing and implementing tasks based on observation of the practical utilities of TBLT methodology in classroom practice.

**The Notion of Task as a Central Unit for Designing Communicative Classroom**

In order to construct useful tasks for communicative classrooms, it is first of all necessary to draw a proper definition of 'task' with reference to capturing its major features and elements. Within much discussion and varying interpretations as to the definition of tasks, Nunan (1989) suggests that tasks can be conceptualized in terms of the specific goals they are intended to serve, the input data, which forms the point of departure for the task, and the related procedures, which the learners undertake in the completion of the task. Willis (1996) defines a task as an activity in which the target language is used for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome. Skehan (1998) also represents the core features of tasks within four defining criteria: there is a goal to be worked towards; the activity is outcome-evaluated; meaning is primary; and there is a real-world relationship. Candlin and Murphy (1987) assert that tasks can be effectively organized based on systematic components including goals, input, setting, activities, roles, and feedback. Briefly, goals refer to the general aim for the task and input represents verbal or non-verbal materials that learners can manipulate. Setting refers to the environment in which the task is performed and activities involve the things participants will be doing in a given setting. The roles for teacher and learner are closely related to the successful implementation of the task, and feedback concerns the task evaluation. The framework of task components provides second language acquisition researchers with some meaningful insights in a task-based syllabus design and authentic material development, for it can serve as the beginning point for designing task-based activities. Thus, in this paper, it is suggested that the central components of task-based framework include *goals, input data, classroom settings, activity types, and assessment*.

**Task Components to Consider for Implementing TBLT Successfully**

*Goals* serve as a guideline in the overall process of task performance and provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum (Nunan, 1989), involving a variety of perspectives based on communicative, socio-cultural, and cognitive awareness (Clark, 1987). Thus, they may cover a broad range of pedagogical objectives from general outcomes (e.g., improving learners' communicative competence or developing language skills) through specific ones (e.g., making a hotel reservation or making a travel plan in the

target language). Of key importance, among other things, are the explicit statements used in directing task participants to manipulate given materials, and imply what the results of a certain experience will be. Another point worth noting is that goals should properly reflect learners' needs and interests in order to stimulate their potential motivation for language use.

*Input data* refers to verbal or non-verbal materials, which task participants have to deal with when performing a task. While verbal materials may be spoken or written language, non-verbal materials include pictures, photos, diagrams, charts, maps, etc. Actually, input data can be derived from a wide range of sources in a real world context. For instance, Hover (1986) provides a long list illustrating all kinds of written sources which exist around us, and Brosnan, Brown, and Hood (1984) point out the richness and variety of texts that learners will need to face in real life situations. For verbal materials, Brown and Yule (1983) indicate that dialogue texts containing description or instruction, all other things being equal, are much easier for learners to comprehend and manipulate than non-dialogue texts, which include arguments or abstract concepts. In short, input data, which task participants are supposed to comprehend and manipulate in the language learning process, should reflect the learners' needs and interests, thereby positively encouraging the use of the target language.

*Classroom setting* refers to a certain environment, in which every task is performed. In relation to classroom arrangements, Wright (1987) suggests the different ways in which learners might be grouped physically based on individual, pair, small group, and whole class mode. For the relationship between task participants' roles and each setting, Anderson and Lynch (1988) advocate the effectiveness of group work compared to that of individual work for general pedagogic reasons (e.g., increasing the cooperation and cohesiveness among learners), and Pica and Doughty (1985) mention the positive role of group work in promoting a linguistic environment likely to assist L2 learning. In an experimental study of language learning settings, on the other hand, Li and Adamson (1992) indicate that advanced students preferred individual work to group or whole class work based on their beliefs that group activities would not be helpful in improving their academic grades. As

mentioned above, the research results of classroom settings show some mixed findings. Thus, it suggests that classroom arrangement should be flexible rather than fixed, allowing task participants to make use of different settings in different learning situations, and that roles for the teacher should be dynamic in order to control class modes.

The literature review of task-based research shows that many studies have concentrated on exploring *activity types* that best stimulate interactive language use in real world or classroom situations. One of the most general classifications was proposed by Prabhu (1987), based on three principal activity types including information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap activities. For the most helpful activity in facilitating L2 learning, on the other hand, there exist various findings among researchers. Pica and Doughty (1985), for instance, found that so-called two-way information gap games (e.g., all learners in a group discussion have unique information to contribute) stimulated significantly more modified interactions than one-way information gap activities (e.g., one member of the group possesses all the relevant information). Crookall and Oxford (1990) indicated that the effective use of role-plays added variety to the kinds of activities students were asked to perform by encouraging them to develop and practice new language and by creating the motivation and involvement necessary for real learning to occur. Grellet (1981) proposed that learners could develop flexible communication strategies through matching activities based on inferring the meaning of unknown elements. In short, researchers' findings revealed that each activity type had its own strengths in facilitating language learning, thereby helping learners to develop their own specific strategies.

*Assessment* of task-based performance, one of the challenges related to successful task-based instruction, is quite different from traditional formative tests in that it involves either the observation of behavior in the real world or a simulation of a real-life activity in a pedagogical setting (Bachman, 2002; Norris, Hudson, & Bonk, 2002; Weigle, 2002). Using tasks for assessment, however, does not simply mean replicating real-life activities, but rather represents an attempt to get an accurate picture of learners' communicative abilities. For one thing, a carefully designed peer assessment is believed to develop learners' communication skills with their group members by providing support as well as

challenging their group members to realize their potential (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). For the criteria used to select an assessment task, Bachman and Palmer (1996) suggest a well-specified target language use domain which refers to a set of specific language use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside the test itself. In short, task-based assessment involves many variables affecting test scores, and therefore, teachers are required to start with a clear purpose and proper steps. Thus, the authenticity of the tasks, among other things, is a critical quality in order to ensure the fairness and generalization of evaluation scores.

In conclusion, despite its educational benefits in language learning contexts, a task in itself does not necessarily guarantee its successful implementation unless the teacher, the facilitator and controller of the task performance, understands how tasks actually work in the classroom. It also suggests that TBLT as an instructional method is more than just giving tasks to learners and evaluating their performance. More importantly, the teacher, who wants to try implementing TBLT successfully, is required to have sufficient knowledge about the instructional framework related to its plan, procedure, and assessment.

## Research Design and Method

### The Research Questions

In an attempt to investigate Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT, the present study examined three related domains including teachers' understanding of TBLT concepts, teachers' views on TBLT implementation, and practical reasons teachers choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT in the classroom. In light of the goal of the study, the following research questions were posed:

1. How well do teachers understand TBLT concepts?
2. What are the aspects of teachers' views on TBLT implementation?
3. For what practical reasons do teachers choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT?

### The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument, a three-page questionnaire, was devised to measure Korean EFL

teachers' perceptions of TBLT in classroom setting. The questionnaire, composed of 15 Likert-type items and two open-ended items, was divided into four sections. The first section contained demographic questions in order to gain information about the teacher's teaching level, gender, age, and teaching experience. The second section (items 1-7) dealt with the basic concept of task and principles of task-based instruction in order to review teachers' practical understandings of TBLT. The third section (items 8-15), related to teachers' positions on classroom practice of TBLT, was partly adapted and modified from Nunan's (2004) checklist for evaluating communicative tasks. In the second and third section, teachers were asked to answer each question using a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. Finally, in the fourth section, teachers were asked to rate their own reasons for choosing or avoiding the implementation of TBLT, with reference to a total of 11 qualitative statements.

**The Participants**

The population for this study was Korean EFL teachers working at the secondary school level. From the 38 different schools, a total of 228 teachers participated in this survey. Specifically, the 228 participants were composed of 112 middle school teachers (49.1%) and 116 high school teachers (50.9%). All of the participants have had at least two or more year's experience teaching English as a foreign language. 153 teachers were female (67.1%) and 75 teachers (32.9%) were male. The teachers ranged in age from their twenties to fifties and 51.8% of them were in their thirties and forties. The number of years they had taught English varied, ranging from less than 6 years (15.4%), 6 to 10 years (19.7%), 11 to 19 years (43.0%), and more than 20 years (21.9%).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Two different methods were used for data collection. First, while visiting 17 different middle and high schools for seven weeks in August and September of 2005, the researcher contacted 69 middle and 78 high school teachers who have taught English, explained the pedagogical goal of the survey, and asked them to answer the questionnaire. A total of 141 teachers, including 65 middle and 76 high school teachers, completed the survey giving a response rate of 94.2%, 97.4% respectively. Next, written questionnaires were mailed to

120 middle and 130 high school English teachers. Out of 250, a total of 87 questionnaires from 47 middle and 40 high school teachers were returned, giving a response rate of 39.2% and 30.8% respectively. The large gap of response rates in data collection may be the result of the two different approaches for data collection, namely visiting or mailing.

The data analysis process consisted of two methodologies, Likert-type and open-ended item analysis. The Likert-type items, which were designed to identify teachers' understandings of TBLT conception and teachers' views on TBLT implementation, were given a numerical score (e.g., strongly disagree =1, disagree =2, neutral=3, agree=4, and strongly agree=5). Open-ended items, which were constructed to capture the reasons teachers choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT in their classrooms, were first categorized and then coded by the researcher in terms of the teachers' responding rates. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 11.0 for Windows was used to analyze the data.

## Analysis Results

### Teachers Have a Higher Level of Understanding of Task and TBLT

Table 1 presents a percentage comparison of teacher responses to each of the seven items on the key concepts of task and TBLT. For the convenience of comparison, the five-point scale responses were merged into a three-point simplified scale (strongly disagree & disagree, neutral, agree & strongly agree).

**Table 1**
**Teachers' Understandings of TBLT Concepts (n=228)**

| Questionnaire Items | | Strongly disagree / Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Strongly agree / Agree (%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A task is a communicative goal directed. | MT | 9.8 | 17.9 | 72.3 | 3.81 | 0.34 |
| | HT | 10.3 | 21.6 | 68.1 | 3.76 | 0.36 |
| 2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning. | MT | 11.6 | 25.0 | 63.4 | 3.57 | 0.43 |
| | HT | 7.7 | 21.6 | 70.7 | 3.71 | 0.37 |
| 3. A task has a clearly defined outcome. | MT | 10.7 | 21.4 | 67.9 | 3.55 | 0.31 |
| | HT | 6.1 | 23.7 | 70.2 | 3.65 | 0.34 |
| 4. A task is any activity in which the target language is used by the learner. | MT | 5.4 | 33.0 | 61.6 | 3.45 | 0.35 |
| | HT | 3.4 | 32.8 | 63.8 | 3.56 | 0.37 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. TBLT is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching. | MT | 6.3 | 22.3 | 71.4 | 3.74 | 0.36 |
| | HT | 6.9 | 25.9 | 67.2 | 3.64 | 0.39 |
| 6. TBLT is based on the student-centered instructional approach. | MT | 10.7 | 23.2 | 66.1 | 3.69 | 0.42 |
| | HT | 7.8 | 24.1 | 68.1 | 3.65 | 0.45 |
| 7. TBLT includes three stages: pre-task, task implementation, and post-task. | MT | 10.8 | 32.1 | 57.1 | 3.48 | 0.28 |
| | HT | 9.5 | 35.3 | 55.2 | 3.51 | 0.31 |

*Note*: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher, M=mean sore, SD=standard deviation

In responses to item 1 through 3, which asked for some key concepts of task, the vast majority of respondents understood that task has a communicative purpose (MT 72.3%, HT 68.1%), a primary focus on meaning (MT 63.4%, HT 70.7%), and a clearly defined outcome (MT 67.9%, HT 70.2%). In response to item 4, most teachers (MT 61.6%, HT 63.8%) considered task as a kind of activity in which the target language is used by the learner. This implies that most Korean EFL teachers generally agree with the definition of task as discussed in the section on theoretical background. In response to item 5, a clear majority of teachers (MT 71.4%, HT 67.2%) reported that they believed in the relevance between task-based instruction and communicative language teaching. This partially indicates that teachers approving of the communicative approach are likely to adopt the basic nature of TBLT in their own language classrooms. The findings in items 6 and 7, related to the instructional philosophy and stages of task-based learning, suggest that most teachers (MT 66.1%, HT 68.1%) held a conviction for student-centeredness, and that more than half of the teachers (MT 57.1%, HT 55.2%) recognized three different stages including pre-task, task implementation, and post-task.

**Teachers Have Some Negative Views on Implementing TBLT in the Classroom**

Table 2 presents the aspects of teachers' positions toward implementing TBLT in their language classrooms. First, in response to item 8, unlike a higher level of teachers' understandings of TBLT concepts, about half of the teachers (MT 49.1%, HT 55.2%) responded negatively when questioned about implementing TBLT in the classroom. This indicates that teachers' conceptual understandings of TBLT do not necessarily lead to the actual use of task in the classroom. Items 9 through 11 explored teachers' beliefs in TBLT as an instructional method. While less than half of the teachers responded that TBLT provides a relaxed atmosphere to promote the target language use (MT 44.6%, HT 46.7%)

and therefore activates learners' needs and interests (MT 47.8%, HT 43.1%), more than half of the teachers (MT 51.8%, HT 53.4%) showed some negative responses regarding TBLT's pursuing the development of integrated skills in the classroom. This suggests that EFL teachers who want to implement task-based instruction successfully are required to have some knowledge of the integration of the four language skills based on the principles of social interaction. The findings of items 12 and 13, which explored the teacher's role and preparation time in implementing TBLT, revealed a common feature regardless of teaching level. More than half of the teachers believed that TBLT will give teachers an undue psychological burden as a facilitator (MT 50.9%, HT 56.9%) and that it would require much more preparation time (MT 52.7%, HT 54.5%). The findings for item 14 indicate that few teachers (MT 22.3%, HT 31.0%) believed TBLT is proper for controlling classroom arrangements. For item 15, most teachers (MT 56.3%, HT 55.2%) answered that TBLT materials in textbooks are meaningful, purposeful, and based on the real-world situations.

**Table 2**
**Teachers' Views on Implementing TBLT (n=228)**

| Questionnaire Items | | Strongly disagree / Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Strongly agree / Agree (%) | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. I have interest in implementing TBLT in the classroom. | MT | 49.1 | 31.3 | 19.6 | 2.78 | 0.53 |
| | HT | 55.2 | 29.3 | 15.5 | 2.86 | 0.57 |
| 9. TBLT provides a relaxed atmosphere to promote the target language use. | MT | 19.7 | 35.7 | 44.6 | 3.12 | 0.45 |
| | HT | 22.4 | 30.9 | 46.7 | 3.16 | 0.48 |
| 10. TBLT activates learners' needs and interests. | MT | 30.3 | 21.9 | 47.8 | 2.98 | 0.66 |
| | HT | 23.3 | 33.6 | 43.1 | 3.07 | 0.61 |
| 11. TBLT pursues the development of integrated skills in the classroom. | MT | 51.8 | 32.1 | 16.1 | 2.65 | 0.32 |
| | HT | 53.4 | 27.6 | 19.0 | 2.68 | 0.34 |
| 12. TBLT gives much psychological burden to teacher as a facilitator. | MT | 24.1 | 25.0 | 50.9 | 3.25 | 0.36 |
| | HT | 19.8 | 23.3 | 56.9 | 3.31 | 0.31 |
| 13. TBLT requires much preparation time compared to other approaches. | MT | 19.6 | 27.7 | 52.7 | 3.17 | 0.43 |
| | HT | 20.5 | 25.0 | 54.5 | 3.23 | 0.39 |
| 14. TBLT is proper for controlling classroom arrangements. | MT | 33.1 | 44.6 | 22.3 | 2.57 | 0.55 |
| | HT | 29.4 | 39.6 | 31.0 | 2.53 | 0.58 |
| 15. TBLT materials in textbooks are meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context. | MT | 14.2 | 29.5 | 56.3 | 3.28 | 0.41 |
| | HT | 18.1 | 26.7 | 55.2 | 3.23 | 0.38 |

*Note*: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher, M=mean sore, SD=standard deviation

**Teachers Like to Use TBLT for Its Group Work Basis and Motivational Traits**

In response to whether or not teachers implement TBLT in the classroom, while 117 teachers (51.3%) among a total of 228 respondents answered they were currently using task-based methods or techniques in their classrooms, 111 teachers (48.7%) responded negatively. Table 3 presents the aspects of teachers' responses to the open-ended question asking them to identify some reasons why they decide to use TBLT in classroom practice. Data analysis revealed that the three major reasons teachers used task-based methods concerned appropriateness to small group work (70.1%), improving learners' interaction skills (67.5%), and encouraging learners' intrinsic motivation (54.7%). In contrast, few respondents agreed that TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment (39.3%) and promotes learners' academic progress (27.4%). The "others" category (11.1%) concerned classroom arrangements, promotion of target language use, controlling large classes, and so on.

**Table 3**
**Reasons Teachers Use TBLT in the Classroom (n=117)**

| Statements | Frequency | Total (Percent) |
|---|---|---|
| TBLT is appropriate for small group work. | MT 48 HT 34 | 82 (70.1) |
| TBLT improves learners' interaction skills. | MT 42 HT 37 | 79 (67.5) |
| TBLT encourages learners' intrinsic motivation. | MT 36 HT 28 | 64 (54.7) |
| TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment. | MT 21 HT 25 | 46 (39.3) |
| TBLT promotes learners' academic progress. | MT 17 HT 15 | 32 (27.4) |
| Others | MT 8 HT 5 | 13 (11.1) |

*Note*: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher

In response to the specific reasons teachers gave for using task-based techniques in the classroom, there were some meaningful differences according to the teaching level. While most middle school teachers, for instance, valued its appropriateness to small group work, most high school teachers placed an importance on improving interaction skills and encouraging intrinsic motivation. This partially implies that as an instructional method,

TBLT is currently preferred for its group work potential in middle school settings, and its motivational aspects in high school settings.

**The Biggest Reason Teachers Avoid TBLT Lies in Lack of Confidence**

Table 4 presents teachers' responses to the open-ended question that asked them to pick out their own reasons for avoiding the implementation of TBLT in their classrooms. Data analysis showed that lack of knowledge of task-based instruction (75.7%), among a total of six plausible reasons, is the main reason teachers are reluctant to implement TBLT. Their self-perceived inability to use the target language (73.0%) was the second major reason, followed by difficulty in assessing learners' task-based performance (64.0%) and finally, the problem of dealing with learners who are not used to task-based learning (45.9%). Materials in textbooks not properly designed and large class size were less frequent reasons given (30.6% & 21.6%, respectively). Other responses (10.8%) involved ineffectiveness in grammar instruction, holding bright students back, taking too much preparation time, etc.

In response to the specific reasons teachers avoid using task-based methods in the classroom, it is noticeable that there existed a clear feature regardless of teaching level: more than 70% of the teachers among a total of 111 respondents believed that they had little knowledge of task-based methods and limited target language proficiency.

**Table 4**
**Reasons Teachers Avoid TBLT in the Classroom (n=111)**

| Statements | Frequency | Total (Percent) |
|---|---|---|
| I have very little knowledge of task-based instruction. | MT 45 HT 39 | 84 (75.7) |
| I have limited target language proficiency. | MT 38 HT 43 | 81 (73.0) |
| I have difficulty in assessing learner's task-based performance. | MT 35 HT 36 | 71 (64.0) |
| Learners are not used to task-based learning. | MT 24 HT 27 | 51 (45.9) |
| Materials in textbooks are not proper for using TBLT. | MT 13 HT 21 | 34 (30.6) |
| Large class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods. | MT 9 HT 15 | 24 (21.6) |
| Others | MT 5 HT 7 | 12 (10.8) |

*Note*: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher

**Discussion**

The findings of items 1 through 7 showed that teachers had a comparatively clear understanding of the linguistic features of task, thus approving of the pedagogical benefits of task in second language learning classroom. More importantly, it is believed that teachers, regardless of teaching levels, convey a considerable amount of practical understanding about the key concepts of TBLT. This could result from the fact that the current Korean national curriculum for English, which was first introduced and applied within secondary schools in 2001, has been characterized by a definite shift toward the application of task-based learning and activity-oriented language use aimed at improving learners' communicative competence.

The findings of items 8 through 15 indicated that despite the comparatively higher-level understanding of TBLT concepts, many teachers actually hesitated to adopt TBLT as an instructional method in classroom practice. This may result from the fact that most Korean EFL teachers still use the traditional lecture-oriented methods, which they are accustomed to, and more than that, they have the psychological pressure of facing some new disciplinary problems in using TBLT. In relation to task participants' roles and classroom arrangements, it might be true that Korean EFL teachers have become accustomed to working in teacher-centered classrooms, thus adopting a one-way instruction method rather than two-way interaction. A teacher, however, needs to be flexible and dynamic in controlling the language learning environment, because the nature of language learning substantially demands that learners actively participate in language use activities.

The findings of the two open-ended items revealed that teachers may have different reasons for choosing or avoiding the implementation of TBLT. While some teachers decided to use task-based methods as a basis for group work, or because of its motivational potential, others had fears of being confronted with problems on account of a lack of knowledge and confidence. Yet many problems that teachers face in implementing TBLT can be successfully reduced when teachers make an effort to understand its pedagogical

benefits and increase positive attitudes toward TBLT as an instructional method. In light of this, it is first of all necessary for teachers to have the opportunity to learn both the strengths and weaknesses of a task-based methodology, and understand its basic principles, as well as its various techniques.

Now let's turn to the challenges teachers may encounter in trying to use task-based methods. Given the fact that difficulty in assessing learner's task-based performance is one of the major reasons teachers avoid implementing TBLT, attention needs to be given to performance assessment. In relation to assessment for group work, for example, awarding equal grades to all members of the group may serve as one of the crucial weaknesses for ensuring a level of fairness in assessment, particularly in high achieving learner groups. Therefore, the teacher needs to consider both inter-group and intra-group evaluations together in terms of enhancing the participation and quality of involvement in task-based cooperative work (Lourdusamy & Divaharan, 2002). While the inter-group assessment involves using the group's products as part of the course evaluation and thus giving equal grades to all members of the group, the intra-group assessment involves individual evaluation.

For learners not trained in task-based learning, one of the reasons they avoid participating in task-based activities may be related to a lack of confidence in performing tasks. This is why it is necessary for the teacher to help learners build confidence by encouraging them to learn how to deal with tasks and use collaborative skills in task-based performance. Once task participants realize that learning in tasks is only one of several ways of learning in the class, they will be able to overcome such challenges as fear of assessment, competition, and the difficulty of the task. Thus, the improved confidence of less assertive learners may lead to more equal participation and sharing of the workload (Burdett, 2003).

For task-based materials, few teachers answered that materials in textbooks were one of the reasons they avoid using task-based techniques in their classrooms. This partially indicates that the current EFL textbooks in Korean secondary school settings, all of which allegedly follow the principles of the communicative theory of language learning, properly

reflect the task-based syllabus which chiefly concerns communicative skills and social interaction. It also reveals that teachers are often required to redesign individual work-oriented materials in textbooks to be in accordance with the principles of promoting interaction and collaborative learning.

Finally, for large classes, which have often been considered to be problematic with regard to disciplinary situations in task-based group work, the teacher needs to take group formation and presentation procedure into consideration. Basically task-based techniques can be used the same way in large classes as in small ones, except that large classes need more time and preparation.

**Conclusion and Implications**

In the Korean EFL context, in which learners don't have much contact with native speakers of English, the focus of language teaching has been placed on changing the classroom practice from the traditional passive lecture to more active group learning so that learners can be more easily exposed to target language use. Thus, many teachers have had an increasing amount of interest in using TBLT as an instructional method, chiefly because they believe task-based learning has specific benefits for increasing learners' communication skills and interaction.

The overall findings of this study revealed that despite a higher level of understanding of TBLT concepts, many Korean EFL teachers retain some fear of adopting TBLT as an instructional method because of perceived disciplinary problems related to classroom practice. It also turned out that teachers had their own reasons to use or avoid implementing TBLT. Based on the overall findings, three important implications for teachers and teacher trainers are proposed. First, since teachers' views regarding instructional approach have a great impact on classroom practice, it is necessary for the teacher, as a practical controller and facilitator of learners' activities in the classroom, to have a positive attitude toward TBLT in order for it to be successfully implemented. Second, given the research finding that teachers lack practical application knowledge of task-based methods or techniques, teachers should be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge about TBLT related to

planning, implementing, and assessing. To this end, it is suggested that teacher education programs, which aim at in-depth training about language teaching methodologies, should properly deal with both the strengths and weaknesses of TBLT as an instructional method ranging from basic principles to specific techniques. Third, when taking into account that one of the major reasons teachers avoid implementing TBLT is deeply related to a lack of confidence, much consideration should be given to overcoming potential obstacles that teachers may come across in a task-based classroom. It is also recommended that teachers consider alternative solutions for classroom management such as leveled tasks, peer assessment, and a variety of various task types including two-way information gap activities as well as one-way activities, such as simple asking and answering.

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## Appendix
## Teacher Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to examine Korean EFL teachers' beliefs of task-based language teaching with reference to classroom practice. Please answer all of the questions as best as you can. Your answers will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Section I. General and Demographic Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Teaching level | ☐ elementary school ☐ middle school ☐ high school |
| Gender | ☐ male ☐ female |
| Age | ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50 + |
| Total number of years teaching English | ☐ less than 5 years ☐ 5 to 9 years ☐ 10 to 20 years ☐ more than 20 years |

**Section II. Teachers' Understandings of Task and TBLT**

For each of the following statements, please answer by putting ∨ in a box, according to the following scale: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree).

| Questionnaire Items | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A task is a communicative goal directed. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. A task has a clearly defined outcome. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. A task is any activity in which the target language is used by the learner. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. TBLT is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. TBLT is based on the student-centered instructional approach. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. TBLT includes three stages: pre-task, task implementation, and post-task. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Section III. Teachers' Views on Implementing TBLT**

The following statements address teachers' views on implementing TBLT in the classroom. Please answer by putting ∨ in a box that matches your position most, according to the following scale: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), U (Undecided), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree).

| Questionnaire Items | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. I have interest in implementing TBLT in the classroom. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9. TBLT provides a relaxed atmosphere to promote the target language use. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. TBLT activates learners' needs and interests. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 11. TBLT pursues the development of integrated skills in the classroom. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 12. TBLT gives much psychological burden to teacher as a facilitator. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 13. TBLT requires much preparation time compared to other approaches. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 14. TBLT is proper for controlling classroom arrangements. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 15. TBLT materials should be meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Section IV. Reasons Teachers Choose or Avoid Implementing TBLT**

Do you use TBLT in your teaching? □ YES □ NO

If yes, please put ∨ any reasons that you decide to implement TBLT.

□ TBLT promotes learners' academic progress.

□ TBLT improves learners' interaction skills.

□ TBLT encourages learners' intrinsic motivation.

□ TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment.

□ TBLT is appropriate for small group work.

If you have other reasons, please write them down.

( )

If no, please put ∨ any reasons that you avoid implementing TBLT.

□ Students are not used to task-based learning.

□ Materials in textbooks are not proper for using TBLT.

□ Large class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods.

□ I have difficulty in assessing learner's task-based performance.

□ I have limited target language proficiency.

□ I have very little knowledge of task-based instruction.

If you have other reasons, please write them down.

( )

# ESP Project Work: Preparing Learners for the Workplace

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**Abstract**

Language acquisition is believed to be most effectively facilitated if it is embedded within the learners' field of study or work. This paper describes a learner-centred activity which aims to help learners develop qualities of confidence, initiative and responsibility through interacting with practitioners at the workplace. This activity is one of the activities conducted in an English for Specific Purposes programme of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia which adopts an enculturation approach in the curriculum of the English language training programme. Data were gathered from 170 Civil Engineering undergraduates through questionnaires on their viewpoints regarding the activity and the programme as a whole. Overall findings of the study indicate positive perception of the learners towards the activity which had helped them increased their knowledge in Civil Engineering and become better learners of the English language through the interaction with practitioners in the workplace.

**Keywords:** ESP, project wok, learner-centred, interaction, workplace

## 1 Introduction

Language learning should not be restricted to only textbook and classroom activities. It is believed that language acquisition would be most effectively facilitated if it could be embedded with the learners' field of study or work. Through appropriate pedagogy for learning, the more the learners are exposed to real world tasks, the better language users

they will become. Real world tasks as defined by Nunan (1989) are those which "require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviours required of them in the world beyond the classroom" (p. 40).

This paper however, will go further, beyond the classroom and into the real world of the target profession and explore what opportunities can be tapped in developing learners' L2 proficiency through interaction with professionals in the workplace. As has aptly been outlined by Ellis (2005) as Principle 8 - The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency. This paper will describe a learner-centred activity which delves into new roles for the teachers and learners in the language acquisition process. The activity concerned is a project work related to the professional field the learners will be joining upon graduation.

By carrying out such projects learners indirectly develop qualities of confidence, initiative and responsibility through interacting with experts and practitioners in the professional field. This is not merely simulation or role play, but 'real play' (to borrow Dorothy Cheung's terminology. See Cheung, 1997) or work-embedded activities that arise out of the learner's overall training to be an effective member of the target community.

The activity is one of the activities carried out in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programme in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The ESP programme was designed to cater specifically for undergraduates from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and is known as the English for Civil Engineering (ECE) programme.

## 2 Background of the English for Civil Engineering (ECE) programme

The Department of Modern Languages of UTM adopted the enculturation approach in the curriculum of the English language training programme for its Civil Engineering undergraduates. The adoption of such an approach entails 'embedding' the

communication training of Civil Engineering undergraduates within their immediate academic environment. However, since the undergraduates' academic environment is embedded within the larger social environment of the chosen professional field, communication training should also take into consideration the wider professional context of Civil Engineering. The programme therefore views training of Civil Engineering undergraduates as a process of enculturation into the professional community of civil engineers. The three-semester programme which is integrated with the Civil Engineering curriculum should be viewed as one continuous, coherent training scheme that takes students through a stepped progression from the ability to extract information for academic purposes to the more demanding task of oral and written communication for academic and vocational purposes (see K. I. Abdullah et al., 1995 for a detail discussion of the framework of the programme and M. Hamzah et al., 1995 for examples of the learning materials).

### 2.1 The underlying principles of the ECE programme

The approach adopted and the activities designed are guided by four principles, each is briefly described below:

*I) Language acquisition is most effectively facilitated if it is embedded within the learners' field of study or work.*

In an academic setting, the main concern of learners is the acquisition of knowledge related to their present field of study or future workplace. It is therefore pedagogically logical that the subject matter, linguistic input and learning activities be derived from and embedded in the learners' immediate area of interest – Civil Engineering. The activities are designed to promote language acquisition through the content of Civil Engineering.

*II) The main role of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instructor is to manage learning.*

The ESP instructor's main role is to manage learning by setting up conditions in the classroom that will promote language acquisition. This role includes designing suitable learning materials, setting up relevant tasks and acting as a resource person to the learners

on matters related to language. It is important that the ESP instructor, being a language expert, does not take it upon himself to teach the content of Civil Engineering. Any validation of the truth or otherwise of subject matter related to Civil Engineering should be referred to four possible sources: students of Civil Engineering who themselves have some knowledge of the subject matter, authentic texts on Civil Engineering, Civil Engineering lecturers, and practitioners in the field.

*III) Input that is comprehensible and authentic promotes language acquisition*.
The input, especially in the form of written texts, has been graded both conceptually and linguistically, from simple (but authentic) to complex. It is hoped that such input will be challenging but not frustrating to learners. The instructor's aim is to assist the learners to eventually become independent users of English for academic and professional purposes. The learners should therefore be assisted to progress towards independent use of authentic texts that they are expected to handle in their current studies or future workplace.

*IV) Language training is part of human resource training*.
In addition to the development of communicative and linguistic skills, language training should include the training of the 'whole person' to include the inculcation of personality traits such as confidence, independence and initiative. The learner-centred tasks designed require the learners, working in groups, to take responsibility for the successful completion of their own assigned projects. In doing so, they develop the skills of time management, teamwork and interpersonal communication.

An example of how the underlying principles are put into practice is found in the next section. It takes the form of a description of a task assigned to learners.

**3 The Project Work**

This section describes one of the main tasks learners do in the third and final course of the ECE programme. The task is entitled "Project Work: Insights into the Civil Engineering Profession".

The project work aims to develop in learners qualities of confidence, initiative and responsibility. It is intended to provide opportunities for the learners to interact with Civil Engineering professionals in the workplace while collecting information on the profession. Through this activity, it is hoped that learners will acquire good communication skills, especially the skills of interacting with practitioners in the engineering field (e.g. practicing engineers, contractors and other professionals) as well as the skills of planning, negotiation and time management.

To achieve the aim of the project, learners are expected to work independently in small groups outside class hours to gather the necessary information. The group decides on the areas of information they are interested in or think will be useful or of interest to other Civil Engineering students. Based on this, the learners then gather information by interviewing as many practitioners in the field as possible (among the categories of information that learners in the past had gathered include career path, duties and responsibilities, and problems faced). Although the interview is the main source of gathering information, the learners could also collect information from books, journals and the Internet.

The learners are also expected to come up with an action plan detailing the steps to be taken to complete the project and the division of duties and responsibilities among group members. The instructor will allocate some class time to guide the learners (e.g. to prepare them for the interview sessions), to monitor their progress as well as to motivate them in their work. After collecting the information learners are expected to present their findings orally to the class and to turn in a written report of their findings.

**4 The Study**

The aim of the study was to specifically find out the perception of the students on the Project Work assignment. The study also examined the viewpoints of the students regarding the ECE programme as a whole.

A total of 170 second-year undergraduates from the Civil Engineering Faculty who had followed the ECE programme participated in the study. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed, one focused on the project work while the other focused on the overall evaluation of the programme.

## 5 Findings of the Study

For the purpose of this paper, only related data from the study will be presented. This takes the form of questions extracted from the questionnaires. The first part discusses responses of two open-ended questions related to the experience of the learners while carrying out the project work. The questions are *1) What is one valuable experience that you gained from the project?* and *2) What is one problem that you faced while conducting the project?*.

Part two of the findings section presents responses to the second set of questionnaire which aimed at examining the perception of the learners on the ECE programme as a whole.

### 5.1 Learners' Viewpoints on the Project Work

Unlike many language programmes which boast of providing good training to develop specific language skills in learners, most of the responses given reveal that the ECE programme is unique in the sense that it provides 'real world' learning experiences to the learners. The responses given to Question 1 range from satisfaction in having the opportunities to meet up with professionals in the Civil Engineering field to gaining knowledge in the Civil Engineering field, and developing specific soft skills and self esteem.

With regards to learners' satisfaction when meeting professionals in the field listed are some of the (unedited) responses given by the learners:

- *I have the chance to meet with the engineer and have a face-to-face interview.*

- *I interview someone-engineer, and he gave me support for me to be an engineer. Now I am ambitious to be an engineer.*
- *Interview the engineers. Before this, I have never talked with a professional engineer.*

The learners felt that the chance to meet and speak to a 'real' engineer is a new learning experience. Though it was the learners who schedule the appointment and conducted the interview sessions with the engineers, it was the approach adopted by the ECE programme which made it possible for the learners to experience such rare opportunity. The ESP practitioners played their part by setting up the necessary conditions for the smooth running of the project as stipulated in Underlying Principle II.

On another valuable experience learners gained i.e. obtained knowledge on Civil Engineering, the following are what some of learners said (again responses have not been edited):

- *I get many more information about civil engineering.*
- *I've got a lot of information about the real life of civil engineers such as the difficulties, the duties, the experiences and many more.*
- *I know how to be a good engineer. Maybe I can copy their way to be a professional in civil engineering.*
- *I know many terms of use in civil engineering.*

We can see from the claims above that having the learners do what is related to their study and future vocation makes learning more relevant. By finding out and discussing about the Civil Engineering field would also likely facilitate language acquisition (refer Underlying Principle I and III).

In addition to gaining knowledge on engineering, the learners felt that they also had developed specific soft skills and improved their self-esteem. The responses below seem to prove this point.

- *My group-mates are multi-racial. So, I learn how to communicate and co-operate with them.*
- *If I was not forced to, I am not sure I will ever conduct an interview. So, the interview session itself is a valuable experience to me.*
- *Teamwork is important. Don't be selfish. As a leader, don't be too emotional when something unexpected happens. Be professional.*
- *I learned skills such as interaction, planning and management.*
- *And also, I have gained confidence to speak in English from now on.*
- *I also get to learn how to make a good presentation from my friend.*

The project work without doubt trains learners to develop their communication skill but it apparently also contributes to the training of the 'whole person' as suggested by the responses above (in line with Underlying Principle IV).

In response to Question 2, it was found that problems faced by the learners while completing the project were mainly related to difficulty in getting hold of the interviewees, time constraint, managing people and lack of confidence due to poor language proficiency. Table 1 below contains some of the responses given by the learners (again these have not been edited).

*Table 1: Responses to "What is one problem that you faced while conducting the project?"*

| |
|---|
| ▪ Hard to find suitable person to interview and to get all the information given by the interview. |
| ▪ The problem is to make an appointment because the interviewee always busy. |
| ▪ Don't know what to ask in the interview and hard to find the interviewer. |
| ▪ The demand of completing an assignment in the time period. |
| ▪ Time to conducting the project. |
| ▪ Difficulties to meet/discuss with my group-mates as they live in various places. |
| ▪ Feeling shy/shame to speak and interview engineers. |
| ▪ We're ashamed and not good in English. |

The above findings point to the fact that the problems faced by the learners are in fact real. With real problems faced, learners have to find real solutions. While solutions to language problems can be 'prescribed' by language instructors, the learners just need to learn the ropes to handle such problems. And to be able to handle such situations would mean learners need to be more mature, responsible, confident and independent – traits highly valued in industry.

### 5.2 Learners' Viewpoints on the Effectiveness of the ECE Programme

In this section findings from the second set of questionnaire are presented (see Table 2 below). The aim was to examine the perception of the learners on the ECE programme as a whole.

The majority of the learners stated that the ECE programme had helped them:

(1) increase their knowledge of Civil Engineering (87.6% agreeing)

(2) in their studies in Civil Engineering (74.1% agreeing)

(3) improve their English (80.6% agreeing).

*Table 2: Viewpoints of learners regarding the effectiveness of the Civil Engineering programme*

| No. | Statement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | The course has helped increase my knowledge of Civil Engineering | 37.6% | 50.0% | 4.7% | 2.4% | 4.7% |
| 2 | The course has helped me in my studies in Civil Engineering | 21.2% | 52.9% | 17.1% | 5.3% | 3.5% |
| 3 | The course has helped me improve my English | 34.1% | 46.5% | 12.9% | 3.5% | 2.9% |
| 4 | I am now more confident in my use of English | 12.9% | 48.8% | 30.0% | 5.3% | 2.9% |
| 5 | The English for Civil Engineering course should be continued in UTM for other Civil Engineering students | 45.9% | 34.7% | 10.6% | 4.1% | 4.7% |

*N = 170: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree*

More than 60% of the learners claimed that the ECE programme had made them more confident in using English. The learners had also responded positively (more than 80%) as to whether the programme should be continued for other Civil Engineering undergraduates. Hence, the ECE programme was able to help learners not only to improve their understanding of Civil Engineering but also to improve their English and build up their confidence in using the language.

## 6 Conclusion

Language acquisition is more than just the acquisition of linguistic competence. It is also the acquisition of discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence and strategic competence (see Canale, 1983). Thus, language learning activities should not be restricted to textbooks and the physical set up of the classrooms. The study revealed that learners expressed satisfaction towards the learner-centred, real play project work carried out. Learners felt that the activity, through interaction with practitioners in the workplace, had increased their knowledge in Civil Engineering as well as developed certain soft skills. It had also helped them become better learners of the English language and had enhanced their confidence in using the language. Overall, the ECE programme with its real world tasks and appropriate pedagogy was seen to be relevant and useful to the learners, and hence recommended to other Civil Engineering undergraduates.

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# The Impact of Foreign Asian Students in Japanese University EFL Classrooms

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**Bio Data**

**Kaoru Mita**, Associate Professor, has a Master's Degree in English Education from Tsukuba University, Japan, and is currently ABD (all but dissertation) for her Doctoral degree in Linguistics at Dokkyo University Japan. She has invited foreign students to university EFL classes and researched its effects on Japanese students for two years.

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**Abstract**

This study examines the effects and implications of inviting foreign Asian students to Japanese university EFL classes. Foreign students invited to EFL classes are defined here as a possible source of a "real audience" which is characterized by having a real information gap. The participants in this study consisted of 68 students registered in required English classes at a Japanese university and 10 Asian students from China, Vietnam, and South Korea. The Japanese students made presentations in front of the foreign guests using presentation software, and dealt with subsequent comments, questions, and discussion in English. A qualitative analysis of post-activity questionnaires revealed that the program had a positive effect on motivation and performance. Results provide key implications toward developing a Communicative Language Teaching curriculum that addresses the needs of Japanese EFL students.

**Introduction**

In 2004, more than 11,000 foreign students were studying in Japanese colleges and schools, with 93.4% of them from Asian countries. Sakaguchi (2005) notes that a new type of college course has appeared in which both Japanese and foreign students study in the same classroom. Some are Japanese language classes for foreign students where

Japanese students attend as guests, while in other classes, both groups discuss topics concerning Japanese culture and history, or conduct collaborative research. However, this movement has yet to find its way to Japanese college-level EFL classes.

The program described in this paper seeks to fill this gap by placing foreign guests in Japanese EFL classrooms. It is a part of collaborative project to develop a curriculum called the Event-Driven Curriculum (EDC). We have instituted several programs as a part of EDC: cooking projects with foreign students, open-class presentations, the English Department Festival and so on. We define foreign students invited to EFL classes as a possible source of a "real audience" which is characterized by having a real information gap, thereby enhancing students' motivation and confidence.

Many Japanese have a stereotypical image about English instructors or English speakers in general; they should be Caucasian, ideally American or British. We would argue that a "real audience" or members of an L2 community do not have to be native English speakers. Over the last two terms we have attempted to improve the students' English and broaden the image of English as an international language by inviting non-native, non-western, college-age Asian students to be an audience for our students' presentations.

**Literature Review**

McKay (2003) suggests that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) may not fit in straightforwardly with Asian educational culture. A number of studies have compared the communicative behavior of Japanese with those of other cultures. Ishii (1984) says that Japanese are relatively quiet and reserved, and expect listeners to read their minds. Japanese speak less compared with Americans (Geatz, Ishii, & Kropf, 1990), and show less self-disclosure (Barnlund, 1975, 1989). Niikura (1999) reports that the assertiveness of Japanese was the lowest when compared with Malaysians, Filipinos, and Americans. Iwawaki, Eysenck, and Eysenck (1977) also observed that Japanese are more introverted than British people. In classrooms, Japanese students are sometimes characterized as

passive, introverted, unmotivated, inactive and unresponsive (Hadley and Evans, 2001; King, 2005).

Previous studies that have investigated reticence to speak (Tsui, 1996; Burns & Joyce, 1997; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Nation, 2003) advocate creating a relatively stress-free classroom learning environment in order to encourage target language use. However, Doi (1971) warns that some Japanese students will have a tendency to underperform when they are coddled by a "kind" teacher. We propose here that if those same students know they will be performing in front of an audience that is not made up of the same classmates they see every day, there could be a marked improvement in motivation and classroom performance.

Clement and Kruidenier (1983) identified several factors that could affect motivational orientations. Particularly relevant to our study was the opportunity for immediate sociocultural contact with members of the L2 community, especially in unicultural settings. Gardner and Lambert (1972) also suggest "an urgency about mastering a second language" (p. 141) that the presence of members of the L2 group in the learning environment could influence motivational orientations when there exists "an urgency about mastering a foreign language."

Based on the preceding studies and our own observations, we determined that some device was necessary to stimulate Japanese students to communicate more actively along with a curriculum that addressed the needs of Japanese students. It was hypothesized the presence of a "real audience with a built-in information gap" would have an impact on Japanese students in terms of motivation and effort to communicate in English.

**The Research Questions**

1) What difference do students find between speaking English with Asian students and speaking with Japanese students, or western native-speaking students/teachers in EFL classes?

2) What difference do students find between casual conversations with foreigners and making presentations?

**Participants**

Participants consisted of one class of 36 freshmen (18 males, 18 females) and one class of 32 juniors (10 males, 22 females) ranging in age from 18 to 20 years, registered in English classes in a Japanese university. They are non-English majors taking English as a required core subject. The course was held twice a week with a total of 25 90-minute periods a semester. Classes were held in a computer room with Internet access. Before the program, the students spoke English to each other for an average of 5 to 10 minutes in each class.

The foreign guests consisted of seven Chinese students for the freshman class, and one Chinese student, one Vietnamese student, and one South Korean student for the sophomore class. All the foreign students had been in Japan for just a few months, and none possessed fluency in Japanese.

**The Program**

Students were randomly put into groups of four. The program was conducted over seven class periods. Two periods were spent choosing topics and doing research using the Internet and Japanese culture textbooks. The following two periods were used for making presentation files and pairwork in English. The final two periods before the actual presentation were used to check the sentences of the students and do rehearsals of the presentations.

**The Topics**

Freshmen students: tea ceremony, Japanese sweets, Japanese history, traditional games for children, sushi, geisha, instant noodles, special dishes for the New Year's celebration, fermented soybeans, the oriental zodiac.
Sophomore students: origami, ayatori string game (cat's cradle), sushi, bean throwing festival, Japanese cooking, special dishes for the New Year celebration, Japanese oden stew, special New Year's soup, traditional festivals.

**The Presentations**

On the day of the presentations, one foreign student joined each group and rotated to other groups after each presentation concluded. The groups made their presentations using computer monitors to show the presentation files they had created. This was followed by a question and answer session and free conversation.

**The Questionnaire**

The following questionnaire was administered in Japanese after the presentations under the supervision of the students' English teacher.

1. What differences did you find between speaking English with Japanese students as done in past lessons and speaking with foreign students?
2. What difference did you find between casual conversations with foreigners and making presentations?
3. What difference did you find between speaking to western people and Asian people?
4. What difference did you find between speaking English with foreign students and speaking with foreign teachers?

**Results**

Responses for each questions were grouped into categories

Question 1: Differences between speaking English with Japanese students and speaking with foreign students. (See Table 1 in the Appendix for the complete list of responses)

1. Importance of grammatical knowledge (38 responses)
2. Importance of good pronunciation (21 responses)
3. Importance of gestures and body language (21)
4. Proficiency of foreign students (16)
5. Importance of appropriate expressions and visual aids (13)
6. Eagerness to speak English (12)
7. Cooperativeness of foreign students (12)
8. Anxiety to speak English (7)
9. Multi-cultural point of view (1)

Question 2: Differences between casual conversations with foreigners and making presentations. (See Table 2 in the Appendix for the complete list of responses)

1. Decreased anxiety and self-confidence (32)
2. One-sided conversations restricted to prepared topics (14)
3. Building vocabulary and sentence structure (11)
4. Meaningful content (11)
5. Realization of lack of information and vocabulary (8)

Question 3: Differences between talking to Westerners and Asians. (See Table 3 in the Appendix for the complete list of responses)

1. Sense of affinity (19)
2. Asian students easy-to-follow speaking speed (16)
3. Heavy Asian accents (13)
4. Limited use of difficult vocabulary to promote comprehension (9)
5. Asian character (3)

Question 4: Differences between speaking English with foreign students and speaking with foreign teachers. (See Table 4 in the Appendix for the complete list of responses)

1. Sense of affinity (33)
2. Desire to communicate (12)
3. Difficulty of making oneself understood (8)
4. Teacher error correction and vocabulary (4)
5. No difference in anxiety (6)

**Discussion**

The results are summarized as follows:

1. By making presentations to Asian students in English, our learners discovered the importance of grammatical competence (syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary) and strategic competence (gesture, body language, improvisation, visual aids, appropriate expressions).

2. By making presentations instead of having casual conversations, our learners experienced less anxiety and had more confidence in talking to foreign students. The answers also show that they developed their vocabulary and sentence structure in order to make presentations with content.

3. Our learners felt an affinity with Asian students for three reasons: being fellow Asians, being non-native speakers, and proximity of age. This sense of affinity could have contributed to them making a concentrated effort to communicate actively. The answers also show that the foreign students were viewed as good listeners with high proficiency and spoke more slowly than westerners, which made their language easier to understand. Finally, our learners were also impressed with the foreign students' attitudes and eagerness to understand to their presentations.

4. Negative responses had to do with one-sided conversations due to the nature of the program, inability to answer questions due to lack of detailed information, difficulty in understanding Asian students because of heavy accents, and having to avoid difficult words to make themselves understood.

Overall, the students' responses show that Asian students invited to Japanese college-level EFL classes have a significant impact on Japanese students thus proving their value

as a "real audience." Though they noticed differences in accent and vocabulary compared with native speakers, talking to Asian students made Japanese students realize that they themselves needed more grammar and pronunciation training to make themselves understood. They also realized the importance of gesture, body language, improvisation and visual aids.

The post-activity questionnaire also played an important role by having our learners reflect on their learning. They in effect became hands-on language researchers who carried out self-assessment and identified their strengths and weaknesses, thereby taking an active role in the learning process. Through this process, they learn to assume responsibility for their own learning and take a significant step towards the ultimate goal of becoming autonomous learners.

**Concluding Remarks**

Due to the small scale of this study, caution must be exercised about making claims about the efficacy of this program. However, as a preliminary investigation, we believe that the findings presented here are promising and warrant further investigation.

With some 1.7 billion non-native speakers of English in the world, EFL students will probably have more opportunities to talk to non-native speakers than to native speakers in their future (Crystal, 1985). The results of this study indicate that foreign Asian students can be an effective "real audience" or L2 community in Japanese EFL classes. Richards (2005) stresses the importance of teaching English as an international language. Achieving this in the Japanese EFL context requires innovative approaches and creative utilization of available resources. We feel that our program provides some key implications toward developing a CLT curriculum that is a good fit with Japanese EFL culture and furthering the concept of teaching English as an international language.

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**APPENDIX**

Table 1：Differences between Talking with Japanese Students and Talking with Foreign Students

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Importance of grammar knowledge | 38 | We cannot make ourselves understood using "Japanese English." | 29 |
| | | | We could not come up with necessary words. | 5 |
| | | | It was difficult to continue conversation without using Japanese. | 3 |
| | | | Importance of grammatical knowledge | 1 |
| 2 | Importance of good pronunciation | 21 | We cannot make ourselves understood because of our accents. | 20 |
| | | | Importance of good and smooth pronunciation | 1 |
| 3 | Importance of gesture & body language | 21 | Importance of gestures & body language | 18 |
| | | | Importance of eye contact | 3 |
| 4 | Proficiency of foreign students | 16 | Their pronunciation was better than ours. | 6 |
| | | | They spoke so quickly we could not understand. | 4 |
| | | | They corrected our pronunciation. | 3 |
| | | | Their English is better than ours. | 3 |
| 5 | Importance of appropriate expressions and visual aids | 13 | Importance of supplementary explanation | 3 |
| | | | Importance of improvisation to make ourselves understood | 3 |
| | | | Importance of visual aids | 3 |
| | | | Importance of good examples | 2 |
| | | | Importance of choosing easy words | 2 |
| 6 | Eagerness to speak English | 12 | I was eager to speak English, and use English words to continue conversation. | 7 |
| | | | I found that I could speak English and became confident. | 2 |
| | | | I was happy to know that I could make myself understood. | 3 |
| 7 | Cooperativeness of foreign students | 12 | They were willing to listen to our presentations | 6 |
| | | | They asked a lot of questions until they understood (sometimes unexpected questions). | 6 |
| 8 | Anxiety to speak English | 7 | I was nervous to speak English. | 7 |
| 9 | Multi-cultural point of view | 1 | I became more interested in different cultures and want to talk with people from different backgrounds. | 1 |
| Total | | | | 141 |

Table 2：Differences between Casual Conversations and Making Presentations

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Relief and self-confidence | 32 | Preparations lowered anxiety and gave me self-confidence. | 30 |
| | | | I could anticipate questions. | 2 |
| 2 | One-sided conversation, Restricted to prepared topics | 14 | The conversation tends to be one-sided by making presentations. | 10 |
| | | | Casual conversation would be better for building friendly relationships. | 3 |
| | | | The conversation might be limited to the topic of the presentation. | 1 |
| 3 | Building up vocabulary and sentence structure necessary for presentations | 11 | I could build up vocabulary and sentence structure necessary for presentations beforehand. | 11 |
| 4 | Presentations with content | 11 | I could make a presentation with meaningful content. | 6 |
| | | | The conversation extended in accordance with the listeners' interests. | 4 |
| | | | We could talk about each other's cultural matters objectively. | 1 |
| 5 | More detailed information and vocabulary was necessary | 8 | They ask more specific questions than in casual conversation so we need to prepare more detailed information. | 4 |
| | | | They asked us something we never expected, which made us embarrassed. | 2 |
| | | | More vocabulary is necessary to give satisfactory explanations and answers to questions. | 2 |
| Total | | | | 76 |

Table 3：Differences between Talking to Western People and Talking to Asian People

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A sense of affinity | 19 | I felt a sense of kinship as a fellow Asian. | 7 |
| | | | I felt less strain because they had the same appearance as us. | 4 |
| | | | It is easier to understand each other because we have many things in common. | 3 |
| | | | I felt relaxed because we were all non-natives. | 2 |
| | | | I was encouraged since we are all learners of English. | 3 |
| 2 | They speak slowly, easy to catch. | 16 | They speak slowly enough for us to understand. | 16 |
| 3 | Heavy accent | 13 | They had a heavy accent which sometimes made it difficult to understand. | 13 |
| 4 | Avoid using difficult words | 9 | They are as non-native as we are so they sometimes didn't seem to understand what we said. | 5 |
| | | | I had to avoid using difficult words to make myself understood. | 4 |
| 5 | Asian character | 3 | They do not use as much body language as western people. | 2 |
| | | | They do not have as many opinions as western people. | 1 |
| Total | | | | 60 |

Table 4：Differences between Talking to Foreign Students and talking to Foreign Teachers

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sense of affinity | 33 | I felt less nervous and more relaxed. | 17 |
| | | | I felt more sense of affinity because we are around the same age and in the same position as students. | 12 |
| | | | Because we are about the same age and have many interests in common, it was easy to extend conversations and talking was fun. | 4 |
| 2 | Good listeners | 12 | Sometimes I am passive in front of teachers, but I was active in front of foreign students. | 7 |
| | | | Foreign students are eager to listen to us and keep on asking questions until they understand, so I was more motivated to be a good speaker of English. | 3 |
| | | | Foreign students expect more from us than teachers do. | 2 |
| 3 | More difficult to make them understood | 8 | It is easier to make ourselves understood to teachers than to foreign students. | 8 |
| 4 | Error correction and vocabulary | 7 | Teachers correct my mistakes, which is necessary to improve my English. | 3 |
| | | | Teachers correct my mistakes, so I feel more nervous in front of them. | 3 |
| | | | Teachers naturally have better vocabulary. | 1 |
| 5 | No difference concerning anxiety | 6 | There are no difference between students and teachers concerning anxiety. | 6 |
| Total | | | | 66 |

# Language Teaching: State of the Art

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**Bio Data**

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**Abstract**

In its lifetime, the profession of language teaching has undergone many changes. Early attempts at language teaching almost entirely lacked a theoretical base. In the 20th century, however, two sets of language teaching methods emerged; the first set borrowed theories from psychology, linguistics, and sociolinguistics whereas the second set was based on individual philosophies of method developers. Late in the twentieth century, an attempt on the part of some pedagogists to evaluate the different methods of language teaching resulted in the validity of language teaching methods being called into question. As a result, the question of how the profession of language pedagogy should be approached called into attention such notions as teacher plausibility, autonomy, and reflectivity as well as learner plausibility and autonomy. The result of such an expanded perspective was the introduction of effective and reflective teaching ideologies of the seventies and eighties. In 1994, an attempt at finding an alternative to methods instead of an alternative method culminated in the introduction of the post method era. The present paper tries to provide the reader with a brief account of these trends.

**Keywords:** method; reflective teaching; effective teaching; post-method condition; language teaching; methodology; language pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

A long time ago, before the birth of Jesus Christ, a number of outstanding people started to teach different sciences including language. Perhaps the famous Chinese philosopher, Confucius (551? -479? BC) can be called the father of teaching. From the time of

Confucius up to the early years of the twentieth century, language teaching lingered on uninformed by any scientifically established learning theory. With the upsurge of interest in psychology, however, learning theories proposed by psychologists began to inform any teaching practice. As a result, language-teaching practices were ever more increasingly based on psychological learning theories.

The first steps towards making language teaching scientific were taken in the twentieth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, the proposal of the notion of method shed new light on the processes of language teaching (called methods). Structural syllabuses were designed and implemented in this profession. Later in the twentieth century, however, new psychological and linguistic findings resulted in an upsurge of interest in notional syllabuses; a move away from the notion of method led to considerations beyond language teaching methods. These considerations gave birth to three issues: effective teaching, reflective teaching, and the post-method condition.

**2. The Method Era**

As one of the key figures in the field of language pedagogy, Mackey (1950) wrote an article entitled "The meaning of method." In this article, he draws on the most important problem in the field of language teaching, and asserts that after centuries of language teaching, no systematic reference to this body of knowledge exists. The problem, he argues is that much of the field of language method has become a matter of opinion rather than of fact.

In an attempt to look at method sensibly, Mackey sets out to specify a number of features for any method. According to Mackey (1950), all teaching, whether good or bad, should include some sort of selection, some gradation, and presentation. Selection is vital for the fact that it is impossible to teach the whole of a field of knowledge; gradation should be undertaken because it is impossible to teach all the selected materials at once; presentation makes it possible to communicate concepts interpersonally.

Before deciding what to select, grade, and present, one should necessarily know something about the material. This has to do with the source from which we select. In the case of language teaching, the source of selection, according to Mackey, is nothing but the linguistic system. As such, an analysis of this system seems inevitable. However, as soon as we begin to analyze a language, we realize that it is not a single system but a multitude of systems. Mackey summarizes these systems into four categories: the system of sounds (or phonology), the system of forms (or morphology), the system of structures (or syntax), and the system of meaning (or semantics). These four systems, when taken together, comprise the materials from which we should select.

An analysis of these systems - a linguistic analysis - results in an understanding of:

1) the sounds of the language;
2) the significant sounds;
3) the sound combinations and change;
4) the significant forms;
5) the form combinations;
6) the order of forms; and
7) how forms and their order pattern our experience through units of meaning.

The analysis of the system of language will take us nowhere unless the result is a synthesis of all systems of language into meaningful utterances. Therefore, language learning should not only include selection, gradation, and presentation, but also habit formation. Selection tells us what is to be taught, how much of it is to be taught, and how all the linguistic items are selected on the basis of such criteria as frequency, usefulness and teachability.

Grading, on the other hand, is a two-fold process. It, first of all, tells us what comes before what. Gradation also tells us how much of what comes before what. Presentation,

as the third important step in methods development, tells us about the linguistic aspect of methods as well as the techniques required for the presentation of the selected materials. With a careful consideration of these three points, the language teacher should guarantee habit formation (i.e. the method should make language a habit).

Mackey, therefore, believes that any method should include some sort of selection, gradation, presentation, and, last but not least, habit formation. This reveals the fact that Mackey's approach towards language is a structural one, and that the content of the syllabus is determined by a detailed linguistic analysis of the language in question.

Richards (1984) is primarily concerned with three important points in relation to methods: the role of language theory, the role of instructional theory, and the implementational factors in methods. According to Richards, all methods could be categorized under one of the two headings: language-centered methods, and learner-centered methods. The former is composed of those methods which are based on a theory of (the nature of human) language. The latter, however, includes methods based on a theory of the learning process.

A further argument is made by Richards on the route of the development of methods. Richards notes that methods are deeply rooted in either a syllabus (i.e. the language content of courses) or an instructional procedure (i.e. classroom techniques). Richards underscores what he means by the use of the term "method" when he says that he uses the term to refer to a language teaching philosophy which contains a standardized set of procedures or principles for teaching a language that are based on a given set of theoretical premises about the nature of language and/or language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Methods, as Richards sees them, are attempts at creating opportunities for learners to acquire language. It should, however, be noted that different methods define language

differently. A critical survey of the language teaching methods from the turn of the 20th century up to now reveals that, during the 20s and 30s, methods were based on the consensus among methodologists and teachers to move towards the control of vocabulary. People like Ogden (1930), Faucett, West, Palmer, and Thorndike (1936), and West (1953) have all nurtured the so-called structural syllabuses. Palmer's view about grammar is, however, different than the notion of grammar as defined by the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) in that his view includes the system underlying the patterns of speech. Building up on the basis of this pedestal, Palmer and Blandford (1939) designed the textbook which they called *A grammar of spoken English*. Their work inspired such scholars as Hornby (1950) and others to develop grammatical syllabuses in 1954. Such a syllabus affords a graded sequence of patterns and structures for courses and course materials. Later, this structural syllabus was associated with a situational approach to contextualizing and practicing syllabus items, thus resulting in what was later called the structural-situational approach.

In the US, even though after several decades, the Applied Linguistic Foundation of Language Teaching led to similar results. This time, Charles Fries and his colleagues (1961) at the University of Michigan produced word lists and substitution tables which served as "frames" for pattern practice. The method resulting from their work was called the Aural-Oral Method (1961).

Even though, in the 60s, Chomsky (1959) made an attack on the structural view of language, it was not until very late in the 70s and 80s that the most serious challenges to the structural syllabuses emerged in the form of notional syllabuses on the one hand (Wilkins, 1976), and ESP movement on the other (Robinson, 1980). Lexico-structural syllabuses argued that, once the basic vocabulary and grammar of the target language had been mastered, the learner would be able to communicate in situations where English was needed for general, unspecified purposes. Wilkins simply redefines the language content of the structural syllabuses, and introduces the following items to them:

(a) the notions or concepts the learners need to talk about,

(b) the functional purposes for which language is used,

(c) the situations in which language would be used, and

(d) the roles the learners might possibly play.

This redefined lexico-structural syllabus is what Wilkins refers to as the "notional syllabus." Following from Wilkins, the Council of Europe elaborated a now well-known version of the notional syllabus which was called the Threshold Level (Van Ek, and Alexander, 1980). Unlike notional syllabuses, ESP starts not with an analysis of the linguistic code but with a determination of the learner's communicative needs. In other words, an understanding of the learners communicative needs will outline their linguistic needs in an ESP context.

It is interesting to note that all these approaches (i.e. structural-situational, aural-oral, audiolingual, notional-functional, and ESP) are content-oriented. It is, however, possible to find another developmental route for a number of methods - namely, the instructional theory route. An instructional theory has two aspects: a theory of language learning, and a rationale for teaching procedures and techniques. Methods based on an instructional theory are two-dimensional: (a) the psycholinguistic dimension embodies a theory of learning that describes strategies and processes and specifies the conditions necessary for these processes to be effectively implemented for, and utilized by, the learners; (b) the teaching dimension contains an account both of the teaching and learning procedures and of the teacher and/or learner roles in the instructional process. As such, the concept of a notional syllabus is independent of any instructional theory.

This account of instructional theory reveals what Asher (1977), Curran (1976), and Gattegno (1976) have done. They were prompted not by reactions to linguistic and sociolinguistic theories but rather by their personal philosophies of how an individual's learning potential can be maximized. Unlike the syllabus-oriented methods of the past which began with an *a priori* specification of course objectives and syllabus content, in

the more recent methods of language teaching, syllabus is an outcome of the instructional procedures - *a posteriori* syllabuses.

### 3. The Beyond Method Era

In a paper published in 1984, Richards claims that language-teaching methods have a secret life. According to Richards (1984), the secrecy of methods has to do with the fact that methods have a life beyond the classroom; the rise and fall of methods depends upon a large variety of factors extrinsic to the method itself. These factors often reflect (1) the fads and fashions of profit-seekers and promoters, and (2) the forces of the intellectual market place.

Besides their descriptive (i.e. orientational) and implementational aspects, methods need to meet the criterion of accountability. Accountability (or evaluation) has an established role in the process of curriculum development. This is the missing element in the development of methods. Besides the selection of a teaching method, curriculum development calls for the realization of other important steps:

1) Situation Analysis, in which parameters of language development are determined;
2) Needs Analysis, in which the language needs of the learners are assessed;
3) Task Analysis, which determines the required linguistic task to be performed by learners together with the communicative and linguistic demands of the task;
4) Goal Setting, which determines the required linguistic objectives based on the learner's entry level, communicative needs, and program constraints;
5) Selection of Learning Experience, which determines the procedures for the attainment of objectives; and

6) Evaluation, which could be both formative versus summative and product-oriented versus process-oriented.

Such a curriculum-based approach to language teaching is known as the Language Program Design. The important issues, then, are not which method to select, but how to develop procedures and instructional activities which will enable program objectives to be attained. This is not a question of choosing a method but of developing methodology. Long (1983) argues that the effectiveness of methods can be evidenced in either of the two ways: absolute effectiveness, and relative effectiveness. The former can be assessed with a survey of the internal structure of the method itself. The latter, however, calls for a comparative survey across different methods. No matter which type of method effectiveness is in focus, a number of issues must be addressed in any evaluation process:

1) The goals and objectives of the program need to be described, and criterion measures specified;
2) Once an instructional theory takes the form of a method, with theoretical bases in language and learning theory and operationlized practices in syllabus design and teaching procedures, claims made at each level of method organization must be regarded as hypotheses awaiting verification or falsification;
3) The validity of the items contained in the syllabus must be guaranteed.

A point of caution, however, is that most methods, to date, are based on shaky empirical pedestals. It should be underlined that if the methodology of language teaching is to move beyond the domain of speculation and dogma, its practitioners must become more seriously concerned with the issues of accountability and evaluation. This, in turn, means shifting our attention (from methods) towards the relevant facts and procedures of curriculum development.

Such a shift of attention has received a unique name - the "beyond method" era. The beyond method era was the outcome of the tradition prevailing in the method era: the construction of a new method at the expense of the total negation of past methods (c.f., Pennycook, 1989). The characteristics of the beyond method period are three-fold: (a)

evaluation of the scope and nature of methods, (b) redistribution of theorizing power among practitioners and theorizers, and (c) learner autonomy and language learning strategies. Beyond method is based on the claim that the notion of good or bad method per se is misguided, and that the search for an inherently best method should be replaced by a search for the ways for the interaction of teachers' and specialists' pedagogic perceptions. All of these claims boil down to what is called teacher plausibility.

The beyond method era was realized in two different forms: (a) effective teaching, and (b) reflective teaching. They are distinguished according to who should be held responsible for theorizing. The proponents of effective teaching suggest that applied linguists should theorize, and that teachers should practice those theories. That is, effective language teaching is the outcome of the cooperation of theorizers and practitioners. The proponents of reflective teaching, on the other hand, suggest that theorizing or, at least, mediation responsibility should be placed upon the shoulder of teachers, rather than applied linguists (Widdowson, 1990; Freeman, 1991). For instance, Widdowson conceives of teaching as a self-conscious research activity which should be done by teachers in order to have effective operational evidence. Further, only teachers can be entitled to act as mediators between theory and practice. Freeman (1991) questions the dependent position of teachers in the conventional concept of method, arguing that the fund of teachers' experience and tacit knowledge about teaching arising from their lives as students should not be overlooked. Teachers' untapped potentiality is also a matter of concern for Richards (1990) and Wallace (1991). They argue for the promotion of teachers' ability to analyze and evaluate their teaching practice and to initiate changes in their classrooms. The two camps within the beyond method era will be discussed in more detail here.

### 3.1. Effective Teaching

Language teaching has taken on two general forms up to now: (a) principled conformity (i.e. method stick-to-it-ive-ness), and (b) the exploratory teaching process. Whereas in the former approach methods function as the basis for instructional processes in a second

language program, in the latter methodology moves beyond methods and focuses partly on exploring the nature of effective classroom teaching and learning.

Method, as defined traditionally, is based on a particular theory of the nature of language and second language learning. They make assumptions about the nature of teaching that are not based on any study of the process of teaching (or what Mackey (1965) calls teaching analysis). The problem with this traditional notion of methods is that, by routinizing the teaching process, they covertly express a static view of teaching. As such, they entail a set of specifications for how teaching should be accomplished. This is where the whole problem of teacher plausibility begins. Ethically speaking, the traditional idea of method reduces teachers to the state of mindless robots programmed to carry out the methodological suggestions. This pack of methodological suggestions includes a set of prescriptions on what teachers and learners should do in the language classroom. Prescriptions for the teacher include what materials should be presented, and when and how they should be taught; prescriptions for the learners include what approach they should take toward learning.

There are, however, many observations that reveal that teachers seldom conform to methods which they are supposed to be following; they refuse to be the slaves of methods. In other words, teachers in actual practice often fail to reflect the underlying philosophies of methods which they claim to be following (be it a holistic rationalist process-oriented approach, or an atomistic empiricist approach). In this connection, Dunkin and Biddle (1974), and Swaffar et al. (1982) claim that teaching is a dynamic, interactional process in which the teacher's 'method' results from the process of interaction between the teacher, the learners, and the instructional tasks and activities over time. Such an interaction reveals itself as a quite different approach to teaching, one in which teachers are involved in observing and reflecting upon their teaching as well as the learning behaviors of their students; hence, effective teaching and learning. Good (1979) has tried to operationally define the term "effective teaching" by describing it as teaching that produces higher-than-predicted gains on standardized achievement tests. Blum (1984)

lists twelve effective classroom practices. Doyle (1977) and Good (1979) list several dimensions of teaching that account for differences between effective and ineffective instruction. They specifically mention such factors as classroom management, structuring, tasks, and grouping.

Effective teaching is claimed to be determined to some extent by the idea of structuring. A lesson reflects the idea of structuring when the teacher's intentions are clear, and when instructional activities are sequenced according to a logic that students can perceive. Teachers also assign activities to attain particular learning objectives. These are called tasks or activity structures. In a discussion of effective teaching, Tikunoff (1985) classifies classroom tasks on the basis of the type of demands they make on the students into three categories: (1) response mode demands (i.e. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis or synthesis, or evaluation); (2) interactional mode demands (i.e. rules that govern how classroom tasks are accomplished); and (3) task complexity demands (i.e. how difficult the learner perceives the task to be). Teachers must not only decide on the kind of task but also on the order, pacing, products, learning strategies, and related materials of the task. To this end, they should take 'learner plausibility' and 'language learning strategies' into account (Oxford, 1990). Members of the effective teaching camp argue that learners show autonomy when they undergo instruction and that they react individually despite the centrality of teaching style. As a result, learners' uptake is highly idiosyncratic despite the general assumption that the effect of instruction is somehow uniform for most learners of the class. This idiosyncrasy may be partly attributed to the various strategies learners adopt in the process of language learning. As Richards (1989) argues, what the teacher does is only half of the picture. The other half has to do with what learners do to achieve successful learning strategies. Learner autonomy, coupled with the use of strategies, implies that learners may succeed despite the teacher's method rather than because of it.

It should be noted that an unfortunate outcome of the educational system in most third-world countries is that usually teachers do not urge students to go beyond the response

mode of knowledge. Students in these countries are usually held responsible for simply memorizing the subject matter of their courses. As such, they stop at the level of knowledge and take the materials they are exposed to for granted. This results in the students' lack of critical thinking. In other words, such a kind of orientation extinguishes the potential for plausibility in the learners. Anyhow, good teaching appears to be highly task-oriented.

Tikunoff (1983), in relating effective teaching to bilingual classrooms, suggests that three kinds of competencies are needed for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) learners: (a) Participative competence (needed to respond appropriately to class demands); (b) interactional competence (needed for appropriate classroom discourse); and, (c) academic competence (needed for the acquisition of new skills, assimilation of new information, and construction of new concepts). These competencies help the learners to perform three major functions: (1) to decode and understand task expectations as well as new information; (2) to engage appropriately in completing tasks, with high accuracy; and (3) to obtain accurate feedback with relation to completing tasks accurately (c.f., Tikunoff, 1983: Significant Bilingual Instructional Features (SBIF)). The results of SBIF studies reveal that effective teachers are able to describe clearly what instruction would entail, to operationalize these specifications, and to produce the desired results in terms of student performance. No doubt, effective teaching derives its methodological principles from studying the classroom practices and processes employed by effective teachers. Effective teachers are plausible enough to control and manage the process of teaching, learning, and classroom interaction actively. This plausibility results from their understanding of the teaching and learning processes.

It seems reasonable enough to agree with the proponents of effective teaching on the fact that the other side of the coin of effective teaching is what learners do to achieve effective learning, or learner strategies. Learner strategies include the particular cognitive operations, processes, procedures, and heuristics that learners apply to the task of

learning a second language. Effective learners seem to be successful because they have a better understanding of and control over their learning than less successful learners.

In an attempt to describe effective learning, Cohen (cited in Oxford, 1985) lists six strategies used by successful learners:

**1)** Attention enhancing strategies;
**2)** Use of a variety of background sources;
**3)** Oral production tricks;
**4)** Vocabulary learning techniques;
**5)** Reading or text-processing strategies;
**6)** Writing techniques.

Willing (1987) defines strategies as essentially methods employed by the person for processing input language information in such a way as to gain control of it, thus enabling the assimilation of that information by the self. This clearly reflects what is called learner plausibility. The question here is whether learner plausibility is teachable. Wenden (1985) would say "yes." Wenden (1985, p. 7) argues that “ineffective learners are inactive learners. Their apparent inability to learn is, in fact, due to their not having an appropriate repertoire of learning strategies.”

Another point that deserves attention is that effective teaching does not absolutely contradict the traditional notion of method. In fact, it is not the method that works or fails to work. An effective teacher may find some of the traditional methods, or some parts of methods, useful enough to be incorporated into his classroom practices. What most of the proponents of the effective teaching orthodoxy suggest is that teachers should refrain from being dogmatic in their understanding of language teaching methodology.

### 3.2. Reflective Teaching

In a discussion of reflective teaching, I should draw the readers' attention to the fact that the eighties might be called the revolutionary era in the field of language teaching. Since the early eighties new approaches to teacher development have been proposed and implemented in classrooms. From among these approaches, the most prominent ones are (a) teacher-as-researcher, (b) clinical supervision, (c) critical pedagogy perspective, and (d) reflective teaching. Reflective teaching, however, has a special place among these approaches. Cruickshank (1984) defines reflective teaching as the teacher's thinking about what happens in classroom lessons, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims. As such, reflective teaching is a good means of providing the students with "an opportunity to consider the teaching event thoughtfully, analytically, and objectively" (Cruickshank and Applegate, 1981, p. 4). In other words, the major purpose of reflective teaching is to engender good habits of thought.

A second and quite different perspective of reflective teaching has been proposed by Zeichner and Liston (1985). They argue that a reflective teacher is one who assesses the origins, purposes, and consequences of his works at all levels. Van Manen (1977) outlines three levels of reflectivity of which the first is similar to Cruickshank's conception of reflective teaching. The other two levels have been called the practical and critical levels of reflectivity or orientation to inquiry into teaching. Reflective teaching is said to be patterned in such a way as to enable teachers to develop the pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed growth and towards preparing them to actively participate, individually or collectively, in their making of educational decisions.

In an attempt to identify what reflective teaching really means, Bartlett (1990) distinguishes between actions and behaviors. He draws on the example of an athlete raising his fist in triumph and a Nazi saluting, and argues that, even though these two persons appear to have behaved in much the same way, their intentions are totally different. Therefore, actions are informed by the intentions they try to fulfill. Reflective

teaching, viewed in this context, does not involve some modification of behavior by externally imposed directions or requirements, but requires deliberation and analysis of our ideas about teaching as a form of action based on our own dynamic understanding. In other words, reflective teaching links what we think (or intend) to what we do (or act).

Teaching is interaction in the sense that it involves individuals and groups acting upon each other, reciprocally in actions and responses in an infinite variety of relationships (both verbal and non-verbal, conscious and unconscious, or enduring and casual). Interaction is in fact communication in its inclusive sense in that it functions as a continually emerging process. Therefore, reflective teaching will result in a shared understanding among teachers and learners. The learners will value their practical knowledge and give it priority over scientific knowledge produced by researchers (of teaching). They will also appreciate the strong collegiality inherent in, and stimulated by, reflective teaching. Reflective teaching unfolds in the form of “pedagogy” in the sense that it engages each student wholly - mind, sense of self, range of interests and interactions with other people - in events inside and outside the classroom. Pedagogy addresses both every day experiences and the societal events that influence them.

Reflection can be viewed to have two different meanings; on the one hand, reflection involves the relationship between an individual’s thought and action. On the other hand, it involves a relationship between an individual teacher and his membership in a larger collectivity called society. Because of its dual meaning, reflection has been described as “critical critical.”

A reflective teacher (also called a researcher of teaching) is a person who transcends the technicalities of teaching and thinks beyond the need to improve his instructional techniques. Being reflective draws on the need for asking “what” and “why” questions. In reflecting on what and why questions, we begin to exercise control and open up the possibility of transforming our everyday classroom life. The process of control is called

critical reflective teaching. By being critical, a teacher will have the ability to see his actions in relation to the historical, social, and cultural context in which his teaching is actually embedded. Such a teacher will develop himself both individually and collectively (in relation to society). The what and why questions asked by reflective teachers should be systematized into a set of procedures to help others to become critically reflective teachers.

Dewey (1933), in his book *How we think* suggests: (1) that the pupil will have a genuine situation of experience; (2) that a genuine problem develop with this situation as a stimulus to thought; (3) that he possess the information and make the observations needed to deal with it; (4) that suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way; (5) that he have opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application to make the meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity (p. 174).

The statement made by Dewey reinforces the need to consider a number of principles that guide and inform the process by which teachers can become reflective. These principles include the following:

Teachers must reflect upon issues in the social context where teaching occurs;

1) Teachers must be interested in the problem to be resolved;
2) Issues must be derived from the teacher's own experience;
3) Reflection on the issues involves problem-solving;
4) Ownership of the identified issue and its solution is vested in the teacher;
5) Systematic procedures are necessary;
6) Teacher's experience of teaching should provide information about the issue;
7) Teacher's ideas must be tested through the practice of teaching;
8) Tested ideas about teaching must lead to some course of action;
9) New understandings and redefined practice in teaching should result.

These ten principles unfold reflective teaching in the form of a cycle of activity. Such a cycle would contain the five elements of mapping, informing, contesting, appraising, and acting.

Mapping involves asking questions about what we do as teachers. It involves observation and the collection of evidence about our teaching. What is very important in the mapping phase is that observation must be done by individual teachers (and through the use of personal diaries, learning logs, portfolios, and journals). The teachers approach to the mapping phase should be a descriptive one. The description should delineate teachers' routine and conscious actions in the classroom. Teachers should, for instance, focus on their specific teaching problems which can be improved. In fact, the aim of the mapping phase is to raise teachers' consciousness through writing.

The next step in the cycle of reflective teaching is informing. In this stage the teacher will ask such questions as (1) "What is the meaning of my teaching?" and (2) "What did I intend?" of himself. In other words, he turns to look for meanings behind the maps. That is, the teacher revisits his first records - his maps - adds to them, and makes sense of them. As such, the informing phase provides the teacher with an understanding of the difference between teaching routine and conscious teaching action, and the ability to unmask the principles behind them. The teacher will, therefore, strive for the best possible solution rather than the correct or most certain solution (on the basis of an informed choice).

The contesting phase begins with a consideration of such questions as "How did I come to be this way?" and "How was it possible for my present view of teaching (with reasons) to have emerged?" This phase involves contesting our ideas and the structures that hold them in place. To this end, we, as teachers, can share our understandings of, and reasons for, teaching in particular ways with our colleagues. This is meant to uncover our assumptive worlds. As we become experienced teachers, we develop our theories of

teaching, philosophies of the teaching and learning process, and our histories which contain assumptions about the best ways of teaching. In this phase of contestation, we confront and perhaps begin to dislodge the complex system of reasons (or theory) for our teaching actions - we theorize.

Contestation will unfold to us whether our view of teaching is fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies. If we believe that a given instance of behavior will have positive consequences for some and negative outcomes for others, then we hold an interdependent and dialectical view of behavior or action. Only after a fully-fledged contestation phase shall we proceed to the next phase - appraisal.

In the appraisal phase, we set a value for what we do as teachers by asking such questions as “How might I teach differently?” Appraisal is a quest for alternative courses of action. It guarantees our teaching by linking the thinking dimension of reflection with the search for teaching in ways consistent with our new understanding. According to Bartlett (1990), when we search for more participatory styles of goal-based or domestic assessment procedures, we are appraising possible courses of action.

The last phase in the cycle of reflective teaching process is “acting.” The question the teacher raises in this phase is “What and how shall I teach now?” In this connection, Paulo Freire (1970) distinguishes between activism and verbalism. Reflection without action is verbalism; action without reflection is activism. Freire claims that verbalism and activism should go hand-in-hand to guarantee the best possible outcome. After mapping, we rearrange our teaching practice, unearth the reasons and assumptions for these actions, subject these reasons to critical scrutiny, appraise alternative courses of action, and then act. As such, becoming reflective forces us to adopt a critical attitude to ourselves as individual second language teachers, and to challenge our espoused personal beliefs about teaching.

## 4. The Post-Method Era

The period of insecurity manifested by both the methods of the method era and the ideologies of the beyond method era formally culminated in the post method era - or post method condition. In an attempt to distinguish between the post method era and the foregoing heterodoxies, Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2001, 2003) suggests that the post method paradigm is an attempt at finding *an alternative to method rather than finding an alternative method* (my italics). He draws on the distinction made by Mackey (1965) between method analysis and teaching analysis, and goes on even further to claim that language teaching practitioners have more recently come up with "an awareness that as long as we are caught up in the web of method, we will continue to get entangled in an unending search for an unavailable solution, ... that nothing short of breaking the cycle can salvage the solution" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 28). In this connection, Kumaravadivelu distinguishes between knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy (based on the traditional notion of method) and classroom-oriented theories of practice (based on the post-method condition). He outlines the characteristics of the post-method condition in such a way as to signify (1) a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method, (2) teacher autonomy, and (3) principled pragmatism.

Kumaravadivelu argues that a need to look beyond the notion of method has emerged out of the inherent contradictions between method as conceptualized by theorists and method as actualized by practitioners. This claim is again far from being scientific. He argues in such a way as to pinpoint the existence of a taken-for-granted sort of hostility between theorizers and practitioners. It seems to be more reasonable to try to encourage both theorizers and practitioners to compromise in more favorable ways. Given the chance of reasonable discussion on points of major controversy, this compromise does not seem to be out of reach.

Teacher autonomy is another pedestal upon which the post method era stands. The crucial problem with the traditional notion of method, according to the proponents of post-method condition, is an ethical one in the sense that method, as outlined by

theorizers, keeps practitioners away from the practice of their potentials. "The post-method condition, however, recognizes the teacher's potentials: teachers know not only how to teach but also know how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula, and textbooks" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 30).

Principled pragmatism reveals itself in the form of teacher's sense of plausibility (i.e. *teacher's subjective understanding of the teaching he does*). Teachers' plausibility connotes the involvement of both teachers and students in the learning activity. As such, it is quite reasonable to emphasize the importance of teacher plausibility in language teaching pedagogy. Teacher plausibility should not be interpreted in such a way as to empower the teacher to change language teaching or learning experience to a unidirectional flow of information from the teacher to the learner. It should, on the contrary, entail the teacher's endeavor to assess learner needs, and his attempt to involve learners in learning activities. Principled pragmatism is based on Widdowson's (1990) notion of 'pragmatics of pedagogy' which construes the immediate activity of teaching as the medium through which the relationship between theory and practice can be realized.

Kumaravadivelu (1994) takes the characteristics outlined above as a point of departure to propose a strategic framework for L2 teaching. The framework, Kumaravadivelu claims, is offered not as a dogma for uncritical acceptance but as an option for "critical appraisal in light of new and demanding experience and experimentation in L2 learning and teaching" (p. 32). The post method condition, as Kumaravadivelu delineates it, is a descriptive, open-ended set of options, and an interim plan to be continually modified, expanded, and enriched by classroom teachers. The post method framework suggests that teachers should foster the following ten macrostrategies:

**1)** Maximize learning opportunities.
**2)** Facilitate negotiated interaction.
**3)** Minimize perceptual mismatches.
**4)** Activate intuitive heuristics.

5) Foster language awareness.
6) Contextualize linguistic input.
7) Integrate language skills.
8) Promote learner autonomy.
9) Raise cultural consciousness.
10) Ensure social relevance.

The paradigm of the postmethod condition was later enriched by Kumaravadivelu's (2003) attempt to characterize language teaching in a postmethod era and to provide the fundamentals of the postmethod pedagogy as a three-dimensional system consisting of the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility (Tajeddin, 2005). The parameter of particularity facilitates the context-sensitive language teaching with a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities. Practicality ends the conventional role relationship between theorists and practitioners through empowering teachers to construct their own theory of practice. Possibility is the parameter which allows learners, teachers, and teacher educators to be sociopolitically conscious and to search for identity formation and social transformation.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude this paper, I wish to borrow some terms from geology. The geologic time scale used today breaks the age of the earth into distinct intervals of varying lengths. The longest intervals are eons. Each eon is subdivided into eras. Each era is made up of periods, which are further divided into epochs.

By way of analogy, the age of the field of language pedagogy can be broken into eons, eras, periods, and perhaps epochs. There are two eons: (a) the non-scientific eon, beginning with Confucius and ending with the emergence of the language teaching methods based on structural psychology and linguistics; and (b) the scientific eon, starting with the emergence of the language teaching methods based on structural psychology and linguistics and continuing to the present time. The second eon can be

subdivided into three eras: the method era, the beyond method era, and the post method era.

The non-scientific eon is distinguished from the scientific eon on the grounds that the former lacks a systematic theory base while the latter claims to be systematically based on various theories and ideologies. Within the second eon, the eras are distinguished on the basis of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psychological theories as well as ideologies and philosophies that inform each era. The method era has witnessed two periods: (a) the period of methods informed by linguistic, psychological, and sociolinguistic theories, and (b) the period of methods informed by the personal philosophies of method developers. Along the same lines, the beyond method era is further subdivided into two periods: (a) the effective teaching period, and (b) the reflective teaching period. In the former, teachers practice what applied linguists suggest; in the latter, teachers theorize and then practice their own theories. The last era within the scientific eon has three distinct features: (1) a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method, (2) an emphasis on teacher autonomy, and (3) an attempt at principled pragmatism. Revised in 2003, the postmethod pedagogy is now a three-dimensional system consisting of the pedagogic parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility.

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# The Cultural and Economic Politics of English Language Teaching in Sultanate of Oman

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**Bio Data**

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**Abstract**

English language teaching (ELT) has been an important global activity and a large business and industry for the past five decades or so. This has been concurrent with the international role English language has been playing on the world arena in the postcolonial/neocolonial age dominated by USA. This paper, hence, triangulates data from different official texts and the pertinent literature. Its aim is to discuss three foci of the cultural and economic politics of ELT with a special reference to the Sultanate of Oman and to delineate the powerful ideological impact underlying them. These foci are 1) English in Oman, 2) ELT within the Omani education system, and 3) ELT outside the Omani education system. The discussion leads to the conclusion that Oman, as a developing Third World Arab country with a shortage in human and physical resources, is culturally and educationally dependant on North America (USA and Canada), Britain and Australia (NABA) for its progress and development.

## ELT as a Profit-Making Activity

A very important aspect of the politics and economics of English today is ELT (Phillipson, 1990; Bourne, 1996). ELT has become a global activity and to a large extent a business and industry, which can be dated to the 1950s (Dua, 1994; Pennycook, 1994).

English and ELT within this context has become a valuable commodity for export and a profit-making multinational industry in the hands of the West (Al-Issa, 2002).

The spread of English played a key role in the expansion of the cultural, economic and political influence of Britain and USA or the "Center" (Kachru, 1986) in less developed countries or the "Periphery" (Kachru, 1986), especially in *government and education* (Phillipson, 1992). According to Phillipson (1992), the high status of English in these two interrelated sectors perpetuates the dependency of the Periphery countries on the powerful Center countries and interests. The less developed countries are the consumers of the expertise, methodology and materials dispensed by the West, which, according to Canagarajah (1999), promote Western ideologies and contribute to its domination more subtly. While the role of the UK was implicit in promoting English as a second language so as to protect and promote capital interests, the American role, which started in the postwar era, had identical aims and was as explicit (Dua, 1994), and as significant as the British role. Phillipson (1990) writes that "ELT was seen as a means towards political and economic goals, a means of securing ties of all kinds with the Third World Countries" (1990, p. 128). Dua (1994) writes that the USA looks at the promotion of English "… as one of its objectives of cultural policy" (p. 10). English, therefore, was seen as a fundamental component of American and British foreign policy. Pennycook (1994) writes that

> … In some way, it might be said that the English language class may be less about the spread of English than about the spread of certain forms of culture and knowledge … through the very practices of English language teaching (pp. 178-179).

Central to this paper is the argument made by Dua (1994) that developing countries are also responsible for the expansion of English and ELT through depending on the UK and the USA for financial assistance and planning expertise and the failure to take any independent decisions related to language planning. This unequal relationship with the developed nations (NABA) is claimed to have forced the developing nations to accept cultural and educational dependency as part of their existence and reality (Dua, 1994). This illustrates that the ideological and hegemonic control and expansion of English

language and ELT in the postcolonial/neocolonial period are reflected within a neocolonial contextual perspectives.

This is thus particularly true as English is considered the language of technology and science (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996, Al-Issa, 2002; Zughoul, 2003), business, banking, industry and commerce, transportation, tourism, international diplomacy, advertising (Enyedi & Medgyes, 1996; Zughoul, 2003), communication (Strevens, 1992; Fonzari, 1999; Pakir, 1999; Hasman, 2000; Zughoul, 2003), telecommunication, mass communication and the Internet (Strevens, 1992; Graddol, 1997; Pakir, 1999; Zughoul, 2003). The vast majority of the scientific and social fields stated above are dominated at present by the world's only superpower – USA.

**ELT Products**

Dua (1994) and Pennycook (1994) argue that the economic gains of ELT are represented in the role the British Council played as a dynamic organization in spreading ELT and selling and marketing ELT to the world. The British Council Annual Report (1968-69) states that "there is a hidden sales element in every English teacher, book, magazine, film-strip and television programme sent overseas" (pp. 10-11). The British Council linked its important role in facilitating ELT in the Third World to the contribution the USA can also make in this regard (Bourne, 1996). The Chairman of the British Council stated in his Annual Report 1983-84:

> Our language is our greatest asset, greater than North Sea Oil, and the supply is inexhaustible; furthermore, while we do not have a monopoly, our particular brand remains highly sought after. I am glad to say that those who guide the fortunes of this country share my conviction in the need to invest in, and exploit to the full, this invisible, God-given asset (quoted in Phillipson, 1992, p. 144-145).

The vocabulary used here – "asset", "supply", "monopoly", "brand", "fortunes", "invest" and "exploit" are of economic orientation and are a reflection of a politicoeconomic ideology production. The spread of ELT worldwide has been thus

through the sale and marketing of the various and numerous textbooks, computer software and readers published with regard to ELT. Pennycook (1994) provides extensive statistics about the British and American economic profits from ELT.

**Native English Speaker Teachers**

Another important aspect of the cultural and economic politics of ELT is the native English speaker teacher (NEST), who forms an integral part of the industrialization of ELT (Pennycook, 1994) and is considered as a source that increases the revenues of UK and USA (Al-Issa, 2002). Widdowson (1992) acknowledges that NESTs make better informants, but not necessarily better instructors. Curtain and Dahlberg (2000) describe the hiring of NESTs as a better choice than a teacher who has learned the language as a second language as a "misconception". Also, Bebawi (2000) writes that "the ideal ESL/EFL teacher is not necessarily a native speaker" (in text online). He states that most studies agree that 'nativeness' is not included in the identified qualities of a credible teacher.

Phillipson (1996) uses the phrase "the native speaker fallacy" to refer to unfair treatment of qualified non-native English speaker teachers. The term was coined as a reaction to the tenet created in 1961 Commonwealth Conference in Makarere-Uganda, which stated that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. Maum (2002), however, describes the Makarere tenet as "flawed" and writes that "people do not become qualified to teach English merely because it is their mother tongue". Kramsch (1997) argues that native speakership is neither a privilege of birth nor of education, but "acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and non-native speakers" (p. 363). Canagarajah (1999) writes that the native speaker fallacy "monopolizes the ESL teaching jobs in the Periphery" (p. 82). Kachru (1992), furthermore, states that it is a fallacy to believe that native speakers of English, whether teachers, academic administrators and material developers "… provide a serious input in the global teaching of English, in policy formulation, and in determining the channels for the spread of the language" (p.

359). Canagarajah (1999) considers the situation in ELT where expertise is defined and dominated by native speakers.

> In fact teacher trainers, curriculum developers, and testing experts are predominantly from the Center. Language teaching consultants have to make periodic trips from Center academic institutions to guide, counsel, and train Periphery professionals on the latest developments in teaching. The native speaker fallacy appears to legitimize this dominance of Center professionals/scholars in the circles of expertise (p. 85).

In this paper I argue that English language in general and ELT in particular, therefore, are viewed as a bridge established by the West to help maintain the necessary connection between the West and a Third World country like the Sultanate of Oman. This type of relationship allows more reliance by the Sultanate on NABA in various fields. This is a very strong ideological act that employs a powerful instrument like language to help achieve potentially hegemonic cultural, economic and political aims.

**English in Oman**

In its public statements of policies, the Omani government recognizes and stresses the important and fundamental role English language is playing worldwide and that it is the language of science and technology and an effective tool for modernization. The choice of English here is primarily for transition purposes and based upon sociolinguistic, socioeconomic, sociocultural, historical and political factors (Al-Issa, 2002).

The importance of English as a language, which serves multiple purposes, is evident in the *Reform and Development of General Education* (Ministry of Education, 1995). The text reads as follows:

> The government recognises that facility in English is important in the new global economy. English is the most common language for international business and commerce and is the exclusive language in important sectors such as banking and aviation. The global language of Science and Technology is also English as are the rapidly expanding international computerised databases and telecommunications networks which are becoming an increasingly important part of academic and business life (p. A5-1).

"Global economy", "international business and commerce", "Science and Technology" and computer industry are all dominated by the USA at present. The Omani government is aware of and convinced by the fact that in the post-colonial/neocolonial age, the USA determines and controls the economic progress of any developing nation today as it dominates the tools and the fields that can lead to such progress.

The aforementioned excerpt is further corroborated by what is found in the *Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English Language School Curriculum* document (1987), prepared by Nunan (Australian), Walton (UK) and Tyacke (Canadian). This important document is a plan or a policy text for ELT in Oman. The three authors, who visited and stayed in Oman for some time in 1987, stress the importance of English "… *as the means for wider communications within the international community*" (p. 2) [emphasis in original] and "… a resource for the country's continued development" (p. 2) and for various key areas like science and technology. They consider English as the tool that facilitates the acquisition of science and technology, which can contribute to narrowing the "… *technology gap between the developed and the developing worlds*" [emphasis added]. English is the bridge, therefore, towards national development. Investing in ELT is seen as a part and parcel of achieving economic progress by the Sultanate of Oman. Moreover, "the international community" is dominated today politically and economically by USA, which makes communication with it something unavoidable (Al-Issa, 2002).

The Omani government has, therefore, opted for English as its only official foreign language. English in Oman is considered important for tourism, and is widely used in business, particularly in banks, chemist shops, medical clinics, showrooms, general trade stores, restaurants, factories, hotels, insurance agencies and companies (Al-Issa, 2002). English has been considered as a fundamental tool for 'Omanization' – a systematic and gradual replacement of foreign skilled labor by nationals. In fact, functional competence in English is a prerequisite for finding a white-collar job in the public and private sectors (Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Balushi, 2001). While the population of Oman does not exceed 2.3 million, approximately 20% of this number is expatriate skilled laborers, who largely

dominate the private sector, and who mainly represent countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Philippine and use English for interlingual purposes. Oman has, hence, embraced English and placed it at the heart of its educational planning, which has lead to the investment of multi million US dollars since His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said came to power in 1970.

**ELT in Public Education**

English is taught in public and private schools, colleges, universities and state institutes. In the public sector, English is taught from Grade One in the Basic System of Education as a compulsory 'school subject' on the curriculum. English is considered as another fact-based school subject to memorize and pass and is characterized as textbook-based, production-oriented and teacher-centered. Moreover, classes are large (35-45 students in each classroom) with students of mixed ability. Furthermore, resources allocated to ELT are below satisfactory – lacking educational technology facilities such as multi-media labs – and largely hinder communicative and interactive language teaching (Al-Issa, 2002).

The national syllabus used in public schools is produced locally at the English Language Curriculum Department (ELCD) – Ministry of Education. The textbooks lack challenge and are largely teacher-proof (Al-Issa, 2002). The team responsible for writing and editing the textbook is made up of British members: one Textbook Editor, two Authors and one Media Officer. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education recruits a British Chief Teacher Trainer and a British Chief Inspector.

**ELT in Public Higher Institutes**

English is taught for general purposes (EGP) at the Institute of Sharia Sciences and Royal Oman Police using imported ELT materials from NABA, but no NESTs are recruited. On the other hand, English is taught for general and specific purposes (ESP) in institutions like the Institute of Health Sciences, Higher Colleges of Technology, the College of Banking and Financial Studies, the College of Sharia and Law, the Colleges of Education, Sultan Qaboos University and the Royal Air Force of Oman Academy.

English is the medium of instruction in all the science-based majors in these public institutions. English is also taught for academic purposes (EAP) at the Institutes of Health Sciences and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to equip the students with the necessary skills to produce assignments and research papers in English. All these institutions mainly use imported ELT materials from NABA and a few in-house written materials. Some of these institutions recruit a good number of NESTs. The College of Banking and Financial Studies is the only institution affiliated with four foreign institutions: The University of Stratheclyde in U.K., Association of Chartered Certified Accountants in U.K., Institute of Canadian Bankers in Canada and the National Computing Center in U.K. (see Table 1).

**Table 1**:

The Characteristics of ELT in the Public Higher Education Institutions in Oman.

| **Institution** | **Materials Used** | **Mode of English Taught** | **Status of English** | **Total Number of English Teachers & NESTs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Institutes of Medical Sciences (13 campuses) | Combination of in-house & imported | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Total number of English teachers 37. 11 NETSs: Nine British, 1 USA & 1 Australian. |
| College of Banking and Financial Studies (one campus) | Imported | EGP & ESP | Medium of instruction | Total number of teachers: 6. No NESTs. |
| College of Education (six campuses) | Imported | EGP & ESP | Taught in Year One as EGP | Total number of English teachers 45. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 10 NESTs: 6 British, 3 USA & 1 Canadian. |
| Institute of Sharia'a Sciences | Imported | EGP | Taught in Year One as EGP | Total number of teachers: 2. No NESTs |
| College of Sharia'a and Law (one campus) | Imported | EGP & ESP | Taught in Year One as EGP & Year Two as ESP | Total number of teachers: 3. No NESTs. |
| Royal Air Force of Oman Academy (one campus) | Imported | EGP & ESP | Medium of instruction | Total number English of teachers: 61. 40 NESTs: 35 British, 2 Irish, 1 Canadian, 1 USA & 1 New Zealander. |
| Higher Colleges Of Technology (five campuses) | Imported | EGP & ESP | Medium of instruction | Total number of English teachers: 308. 77 NESTs: 76 Canadian & 1 British. |

Table 1 (*continued*)

| **Institution** | **Materials Used** | **Mode of English Taught** | **Status of English** | **Total Number of English Teachers & NESTs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SQU | Combination of | EGP & ESP in the | Medium of | Total number of |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (one campus) | in-house & imported in the Language Center. Imported in the Faculty of Arts & Faculty of Education. | Language Center. EGP, ESP & EAP in Faculty of Arts & Faculty of Education. | instruction for science-based colleges and programs, ELT and Translation specialists | English teachers in the Language Center: 156. 70 NESTs: 32 British, 17 American, 13 Canadian, 5 Australian & 3 Irish. Total number of English teachers in Faculty of Arts: 38. 14 NESTs: 7 USA, 4 British, 2 Canadian & 1 New Zealander. No NESTs in Faculty of Education. |

**ELT in Private Education**

There are also private institutions like private schools, colleges and universities, which are available to those who can afford the fees. The 132 private schools in Oman teach English from KG 1. All these schools use imported materials mainly from publishing powerhouses like Longman, Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan and so forth. These materials usually, if not always, come in full packages, which include a textbook, a workbook, a teacher's guide, charts, audio and videotapes and compact disks, and which are packed with the target language culture.

There are four bilingual private schools at present, which teach all science-based subjects in English. These schools along with a few others recruit NESTs (see Table 2).

These NESTs are paid more than their NNSETs counterparts in the other schools. A NEST is paid a minimum of US$ 2,000 per month as compared to a maximum of US$1,500 paid to the NNEST. These salaries are all tax-free.

**Table 2:** Breakdown of NESTs by Nationality in the Private Schools.

| Total Number of English Teachers | USA | Britain | Canada | Australia | Ireland | N. Z. | Total No. of NESTs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 220 | 6 | 16 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 33 |

**ELT in Private Higher Education**

At present there are 13 private colleges and three private universities. Some of these colleges are university colleges. Most of these colleges and the three universities offer First Degrees, Associate Degree and Diploma Programs in various majors. Examples of the programs offered are Accounting, Business Administration, Management Information, Information Sciences, Computer, Computer Science, Banking, Safety Technology, Fire Fighting Management, Architectural Technology, Graphic Design, Construction Management, Engineering (fire fighting, electronic, civil, mechanical and computer), Tourism and Catering and Medicine. English is taught in its general, specific and academic forms. The medium of instruction in these institutions is exclusively English for the science-based subjects. These colleges and universities use imported ELT materials and some of them recruit a large number of NESTs. In order to obtain the Ministry of Higher Education's approval, these local institutions are required to either affiliate, or sign a memorandum of cooperation, like Nizwa University, with an internationally recognized institution. Hence, the vast majority of these institutions are affiliated with an institution from NABA (see Table 3).

**Table 3:**

The Characteristics of ELT in the Private Higher Education Institutions in Oman.

| Institution | Academic Affiliation/ Cooperation | Mode of English Taught | Status of English | Materials Used | Total Number of English teachers & NESTs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sohar Univ. | University of Queensland - Australia | EAP, EGP & ESP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 28. 19 NESTs: 8 British, 6 USA, 2 Canadian, 1 Australian, I New Zealander & 1 Irish |
| Nizwa Univ. | British Council – Muscat – English Language Program | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 42. 42 NESTs: 22 Canadian, 8 USA, 6 British, 2 Australian & 4 New Zealanders. |
| Dhofar Univ. | American University in Beirut | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of teachers: 8. 5 NEST: 1 Canadian & 4 British. |
| Sur Univ. College | Melbourne University - Australia | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 10. 9 NESTs: 9 British. |
| Oman Medical College | West Virginia University – USA | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 8. 4 NESTs: 1 British, 1 Canadian, 1 Australian & 1 New Zealander. |
| National College of Science & Techno-logy | Westminster University – U.K. & Al-Yarmook University – Jordan | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 13. No NESTs. |
| Caledonian College of | Glasgow Caledonian | EGP, ESP & EAP. | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 17. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engineer-ing | University – U.K. | | | | 6 NESTs: 4 British, 1 Australian & 1 Canadian. |
| Majan College of | Luton University – U.K. | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 16. 5 NESTs: 2 British, 1 USA, 1 Australian & 1 New Zealander. |
| Muscat College | Scottish Qualification Authority & Sterling University – U.K. | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 5. 2 NESTs: 1 British & 1 Australian. |

| **Institution** | **Academic Affiliation/ Cooperation** | **Mode of English Taught** | **Status of English** | **Materials Used** | **Total Number of English teachers & NESTs** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Modern College of Business & Science | University of Missouri – St. Luis – USA | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 20. 6 NESTs: 3 USA, 2 Canadian & 1 Irish. |
| The Fire Safety Engineer-ing College | Central Lancashire University – U.K. | EGP, ESP & EAP. | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 8. 7 NESTs: 6 British & 1 New Zealander. |
| Mazoon College for Manage-ment & Applied Sciences | University of Missouri – Rolla - USA | EGP, ESP & EAP. | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 6. 4 NESTs: 2 Canadian, 1 British & 1 USA. |
| Al-Buraimi College | California State University Northridge - | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 6. 4 NESTs: 4 British. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | USA | | | | |
| Middle East College of Inform-ation Techno-logy | Manipal Academy of Higher Education - India | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 7. 1 NEST: 1 New Zealander. |
| Al-Zahra College for Girls | Al-Ahliya Amman University-Jordan | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction in English Literature, Translation & Teaching English | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 10. No NESTs. |
| Waljat College of Applied Sciences | Birla Institute of Technology - India | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 8. No NESTs. |
| Scientific College of Designs | Lebanese American University | EGP, ESP & EAP | Medium of instruction | Imported | Total number of English teachers: 1. No NESTs. |

Most of these private universities and colleges were established in the last decade or so and none of them is accredited thus far. Each of these institutes runs its own foundation and specialization programs, which are supervised and monitored by the Directorate General of Private Universities and Colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education. Such programs entail various problems related to the program structure and content, students' acceptance, assessment, material design, provision and selection, teacher recruitment, facilities and equipment and resources allocation (Higher Education Workshop on Quality Assurance in Foundation Year Programs: Realities and Challenges, 2005). Such fundamental aspects of quality assurance, which some of these colleges and universities have only partly achieved, are part and parcel of the overall accreditation system.

**English Teachers and Teacher Training and Education**

As far as in-service English language teacher education is concerned, the Ministry of Education has signed a multi-million US Dollar agreement almost five years back with the University of Leeds – U.K. to run an in-service teacher training program in the Sultanate to help upgrade the level of 1060 English language teachers over a period of eight years (2000-2008) to a Bachelor of Arts level. These teachers hold a Diploma certificate from the Intermediate Teacher Training College – two years of teacher training after completing secondary education. The B.A. program is designed and taught by an academic staff from the University of Leeds, who are ten in total (nine British and one American). There are also nine British Teacher Trainers and a British Programs/Project Manager.

It is noteworthy that Oman is not self-sufficient with regard to qualified teachers of English. According to the figures obtained from the Ministry of Education database in 2005, there are 1,934 Omani teachers of English in the 1,019 public schools as opposed to 2,399 expatriates. While Nunan et al. (1987) believe that trained Omani teachers entering the ELT force can have a considerable impact on the system and show more commitment than their expatriate counterparts, they stress that the financial and professional incentives are weak. 'Professional' here refers to in-service training sessions to help such teachers update their continuing development in theoretical, methodological and curriculum development to allow them to reflect on all aspects of their work. Another kind of professional incentives is awarding the more capable teachers post-graduate studies in TESOL and Applied Linguistics.

SQU is the only institution at present that trains Omani English teachers and the number graduating from there annually does not exceed 120. However, the Colleges of Education started training English teachers at the undergraduate level only two years back. Like the private colleges and universities, the Colleges of Education, which fall under the Directorate General of Colleges of Education at the Ministry of Higher Education, suffer in turn from accreditation problems related to their programs and institutions, despite the fact that some of them are quality assured in certain aspects.

Teachers graduating from SQU have come under scrutiny (Al-Issa, 2002) and found lacking language and methodological competence. This has been partly attributed to several shortcomings in the overall structure and quality of delivery of the ELT academic and training program they have been attending at SQU (Al-Toubi, 1998; Al-Issa, 2005 a, b) and partly to the overall structure of the ELT education system (Al-Issa, 2005 a).

**Omani Students in NABA**

The figures obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education database in 2005 indicate that there is also a large number of Omani undergraduate (1206) (see Table 4) and postgraduate students (624) (see table 5) attending different arts and science-based programs in NABA like education, arts, languages, information, commerce and administrative sciences, economics and political sciences, agriculture, engineering, medicine, computer, pharmacology and so forth.

The annual intake capacity of the various public higher education institutions is low (under 10,000 seats available in 2004-05) compared to the number of students graduating from secondary school every year (exceeded 40,000 in 2004-05). Enrollment in private colleges and universities is open to those who can afford the relatively high fees.

As far as the postgraduate level is concerned, only SQU – the only state-owned university throughout the Sultanate and which was opened in 1986, offers Masters degree programs in some subjects like education, arts, agriculture and science.

**Table 4:** Breakdown of Omani Undergraduate Students Studying in NABA

| Major | Britain & Ireland | USA | Canada | Australia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine | 86 | 6 | 0 | 4 |
| Pharmacology | 28 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Engineering | 264 | 74 | 19 | 35 |
| Science | 72 | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| Agriculture | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Education | 7 | 7 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Computer | 34 | 41 | 11 | 9 |
| Arts | 29 | 14 | 0 | 5 |
| Law | 12 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Commerce & Administrative Sciences | 25 | 109 | 16 | 39 |

Table 4 (*continued*)

| Major | Britain & Ireland | USA | Canada | Australia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic & Political Sciences | 6 | 10 | 0 | 2 |
| Information | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Languages | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Other Subjects | 62 | 32 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 732 | 307 | 52 | 115 |

**Table 5:** Breakdown of Omani Postgraduate Students Studying in NABA

| Major | Britain & Ireland | USA | Canada | Australia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine | 42 | 8 | 48 | 8 |
| Pharmacology | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Engineering | 39 | 10 | 5 | 4 |
| Science | 43 | 10 | 3 | 8 |
| Agriculture | 22 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| Education | 45 | 17 | 3 | 8 |
| Computer | 11 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| Arts | 37 | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| Law | 11 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| Commerce & Administrative Sciences | 93 | 23 | 1 | 35 |
| Economic & Political Sciences | 11 | 5 | 0 | 4 |
| Information | 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Islamic Law | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Subjects | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 373 | 102 | 62 | 87 |

These students are required to take the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as a compulsory placement test imposed by NABA universities to help determine the Omani students' competence in English prior to embarking on any academic program. This applies to all undergraduate students pursuing their First Degree program in NABA, while it is applicable to those who have obtained their First Degree from Arabic-medium universities and would like to pursue their postgraduate studies in NABA. While the IELTS is a British (University of Cambridge) test, the TOEFL is American. While the former is administered by the British Council, the Center for British Teachers Education Services and Hawthorn Muscat English Language Center (Australian) and the English language Services (American), the latter is conducted by the English Language Services and the American Information Agency. Students pay approximately US$ 135 to take each test. A special preparation course can be attended for at least two weeks prior to taking each test at a separate cost. Those who score low marks on either test, who are usually the vast majority, take a minimum of six months language improvement course in the country where they are going to study. The cost of these courses (tuition fees) ranges from US$ 5,000 – 10,000 per calendar year. This is in addition to the fees paid for the full academic program at the university, which varies from one country to another, one university to another and one program to another. There are also additional fees paid by the government to the students on scholarship to NABA and other countries. These include living, airfare tickets, books and clothes. Each student in each NABA country costs the Omani government approximately US$ 23,000 – 26,000 per academic year.

**ELT Conferences**

Another aspect of the cultural and economic politics of ELT in the Sultanate is the ELT conferences held by the Language Center at SQU and the ELCD at the Ministry of Education in which scientific research papers about ELT are presented and discussed.

While the former is of a regional nature, the latter is strictly domestic and confined to those involved in ELT within the Sultanate. While the former started in 2000, the latter started in the mid-1990s. Both conferences are open to presenters from all over the country and from the region in the case of the Language Center. Moreover, both conferences invite speakers from NABA for the plenary sessions. The Omani government, as represented in SQU or the Ministry of Education, pays all the expenses to these speakers to attend the conference and present a paper or two. They can be material designers, syllabus writers, book authors, or researchers in ELT. In the case of the Language Center conference, papers presented are later published as proceedings.

Furthermore, book fairs are also organized at the time of holding these conferences. Different local bookshops participate in these fairs where they promote and sell various ELT textbooks, dictionaries, teacher's reference books and audiovisual materials. These ELT materials are all imported mainly from British publishing houses like Oxford, Cambridge, Longman, Macmillan and some others.

**Private English Language Institutes**

Various NABA and local agencies have contributed to the firm establishment of English in Oman outside the Omani education system. There are 15 private English language institutes throughout the Sultanate, which offer various English language improvement courses for different levels and ages and are found throughout the Sultanate with the majority in Muscat Area. This is due to various reasons related to the cosmopolitan nature of Muscat, its population density when compared to the other parts of the Sultanate and the variable domains of English. This makes the demand for English relatively higher than it is the case in the other parts of Oman. Also, the ministries, which are located in Muscat, usually send their employees for language development courses to these institutes throughout the year. The courses' duration varies from two to 10 weeks and ranges between approximately US$ 150 - 2,000 depending on the length and type of the course. "Type" here refers to English for general or academic purposes, or business English.

Five of these private English language institutes are located in the Muscat area. The more reputable and popular ones are the British Council, which has been in Oman for over three decades, Center for British Teachers Education Services, which has been in Oman for two decades, the English Language Services (American), which is an American franchise with branches in different parts of the world and which was opened in the late 1990s and Hawthorn Muscat English Language Center, which was opened in 2002 and which is owned by the Melbourne University Private – Australia and which has five more branches in other parts of the world like Singapore, New Zealand and Canada, for instance. While the British Council and the Center for British Teachers recruit British teachers only, the ELS confines its recruitment to Americans. Hawthorn Muscat in turn has a strict policy of recruiting native speakers. Their teaching staff comes from Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The British Council also provides advice to those willing to travel to U.K. at their expense for language improvement purposes or in order to pursue their university education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

There is further the Australian Agency for Education and Training in Muscat, which liaises with the Ministry of Higher Education and different Australian universities the Omani students are studying at, since there is no diplomatic representation between the Sultanate and Australia. There is also Polyglot in Muscat, which is affiliated with the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. It is a local institute, which exclusively recruits NESTs.

**NABA Universities Fairs**

Moreover, American, Australian and British universities fairs are held annually in Muscat in order to promote the programs offered by the participating universities in these countries. Representatives of the various participating universities attend and gather for a few days in one place. Students and parents and other members of the society attend to find out about the various programs offered by the advertised universities. The universities' representatives are authorized to give acceptances on the spot, if the student submits the required papers. Only universities approved by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education are allowed to participate.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

As a developing Third World Arab country in a post-colonial/neocolonial context with a shortage in human and physical resources, Oman has been lagging behind in terms of science, technology and language-in-education planning, which are interwoven factors and very important for economic success in today's world. Meantime, a super and imperial power like USA is leading and dominating the world politics and economics in the current age and has considerable capital interests in an oil producing and strategically located country like the Sultanate of Oman. This has subsequently lead Oman to accept the adoption of English language and invest in teaching it so as to fundamentally facilitate the acquisition of such science and technology through the establishment of effective communication channels. Thus, the substantial dependency by a developing country like Oman on countries like Australia, Canada, UK and USA in planning language in education, hence, has subsequently forced the Sultanate to accept cultural and educational dependency as part of its existence and reality.

However, this substantial dependency can be largely and gradually overcome provided certain actions are taken. First, more attention needs to be given to local manpower training and development. In other words, the Sultanate needs to train more Omanis in the field of second language education at the graduate and post-graduate levels. Such training has to meet international and high standards so as to help produce competent professionals who can take over from the NABA working force. This competent manpower can in turn have its direct and powerful impact upon producing linguistically competent language users. Well-prepared Omani English teachers, inspectors, syllabus writers and others in the field understand the needs and problems of the Omani learners best and can work towards meeting these needs and overcoming these problems. This can have its long lasting and powerful effect on the Omani students' second language learning and acquisition, as these students embark on various courses in the future where English is the medium of instruction and hence will not need any actual prior language improvement courses.

Second, more investment is needed in educational technology to help prepare the Omani students for the job market, where competence in English language is a prerequisite. English language and technology go hand in glove today. In addition, technology at present has its direct and powerful impact upon language learning and acquisition and motivation (Savignon, 2002). Resources allocated to second language education at present are below satisfactory and hinder communicative language learning and teaching to a great extent.

Third, there are a good number of well-equipped private universities and colleges in Oman at present (see Table 3). However, none of these institutes is accredited. The Omani government represented in the Ministry of Higher Education needs to play its role here in pressing such universities and colleges to pursue obtaining their accreditation. Once this is achieved, students can enrol in these colleges and universities, which should cut down scholarship costs to NABA substantially.

Last but not least, there is a pressing need to establish a national language education research center that can diagnose the various academic, technical and vocational needs of the Sultanate. Such a center can help set future plans for Oman's needs and participate in various language education development, research, training and teaching projects and programs. The various private and public higher education institutes throughout the Sultanate have been working more or less in isolation from each other. Such a center can make use of the expertise available in such institutes and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in addition to recruiting its own. Such collaborative work is much needed at this stage and should prove fruitful.

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# *Paradigm Lost?* A Belated Reply to Jarvis and Atsilarat from Japan

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**Abstract**

This submission examines and challenges the preconceived and often ill-informed notions held by instructors of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in many Asian settings. It was Jarvis and Atsilarat's earlier publication in *Asian EFL Journal*, which took issue with the suitability of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology for the Asian context, that prompted this undertaking of a reflective review of the literature coupled with our own research. While it is one matter to disavow any paradigm, theory or set of theories, and corresponding methodology, it is indeed quite another to dismiss such a paradigm outright on the basis of some vague findings with an ill-equipped instrument. This initial paper provides a detailed review of the literature which takes stock of a range of theory and related topic discussion, situated in the broader heuristic paradigm that lends credence to the position that, CLT - if correctly interpreted and adequately integrated - is no less appropriate for modern Asian cultural settings, than it is in so many others.

**Key Words:** paradigm, methodology, context-based, communicative, learner centeredness

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**Introduction**

> 'There is something about us as humans and our relationship to language that I think is going to transcend individual situations and context, but you should know that's a volatile issue right now.' (Larsen-Freeman *in Ancker*, 2001, p. 2)

We commence with an expression of gratitude to Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004) for their contribution to the on-going debate on the appropriateness of communicative methodological practice in English language teaching (TESOL) environment. A persistent questioning of theory and methods leading to the conclusion that there is "no one best methodology" for every type of learner, or group of learners, is a view that is widely shared.

Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004) in their research paper-'*Shifting paradigms: From a communicative to a context-based approach'* - hold to the opinion that the communicative based method has been widely adopted in 'everyday practice, and in parts of the world where this does not yet occur there is pressure to move in this direction' (2004, p. 2). They subscribe to some detached linear perspective that communicative methodology is the entrenched 'replacement of its audio-lingual or grammar translation predecessor' (2004, p. 2). They further question 'after a quarter of a century' of 'western context'- based 'dominance', whether the broader enveloping paradigm is in any way relevant or 'culturally appropriate' for Asian learners, owing to 'problems of implementing the approach within specific contexts'. Moreover, they argue that it is time to press ahead in search of a new paradigm (2004, pp. 3-4). In view of this, they undertook a study of forty English language teachers and eight hundred students at The Language Institute, Dhurakypundit University in Bangkok, Thailand. They concluded that 'the combined responses from teachers and learners raise issues which question the

validity and the viability of a number of the central tenants of CLT' in their cultural context (2004, p. 13).

After a careful reading of Jarvis and Atsilarant's (2004) paper, coupled with a critical look at their instrument items, overall design, and measures, we find the basis of their conclusions to be, at the least, fragile. While it is one matter to disavow a paradigm, theory or set of theories and corresponding methodology, it is indeed quite another to dismiss it outright on the basis of some vague findings with an ill-equipped instrument.

In this initial paper, we will provide a detailed review of the literature, which takes stock of a range of theory and related topic discussion, situated in the broader heuristic paradigm. Communicative language teaching principles are connected not just to theories of language learning, but are substantially intertwined with a curriculum-wide constructivist educational theory, as well as that of other disciplines, all of which are situated within the grand heuristic paradigm.

A follow-on article will offer a comparative analysis of the research from Jarvis and Atsilarat's (2004) study on the Thailand context; Savignon and Wang's (2003) examination of that in Taiwan; and, our own detailed survey research of the Japanese setting. This should provide some added insight into how, with some educational contextual adjustments, adoption of CLT methodology could prove less problematic, if not more endearing to its stakeholders in the Asian EFL context.

**Paradigm Change—*what paradigm?***

> 'Paradigm "is a word too often used by those who would like to have a new idea but cannot think of one." - *Mervyn King, Deputy Governor, Bank of England*

In etymological terms, the word paradigm originates from the Greek word *paradeigm*, which means "pattern" or "example" from the word *paradeiknunai* meaning "demonstrate". However, it was Thomas Kuhn, indisputably one of the greatest historians

and philosophers of science in the twentieth century, who coined the concept *paradigm*. In his view, a *paradigm* should not result in definite solutions agreed by all participants of a discipline, but rather it is intended to be 'sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to solve' (1996, p. 10).

Post-positivism took hold in the early 1980s replacing logical positivism and is now commonly referred to as the *heuristic paradigm* (which is based on human values) in a variety of fields including the philosophy of science, psychology, sociology, education, and linguistics. The heuristic paradigm draws from a significant body of research in cognitive, psycho-social, and linguistic science, all of which demonstrates that knowledge is based on the use of heuristics - rudimentary understandings linked to conceptual frameworks that enable us as researchers to organize knowledge and construct problems. Social scientists as a whole have 'adopted the Kuhnian phrase *paradigm shift* to denote a particular social phenomenon…' (Dictionary.LaborLawTalk.com).

*Theory* is the basis upon which the features of matter - in this case, education praxis are constructed. Theorists like Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Kohlbert, Sternberg, Gardner, Bloom, and Bruner have all contributed in a significant way to the present and increasingly accepted constructivist educational theory. *Constructivism* is concerned with the ways in which learners, both individually and collectively, interpret or construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts. Constructivism contradicts the tradition bound teacher-centered notion that learning is the transmission of content to a passive receiver. Rather, learning is an active process that is based on learner's current understanding. The theory holds that learning is best facilitated when it is contextual - accounting for the students' comprehension; active - engaging with learning activities that use analysis, debate, and critical (as opposed to simple memorization) to validate the relevance and authenticity of information; social - using discussions, direct interaction with experts and peers, and team-based projects (Fenton, 2005).

Constructivist Theory (Burner, 1966) from the outset, promoted the theme that learning is an active process, whereby information is acted on in conjunction with prior, acquired knowledge. The learner chooses and alters information, constructs hypotheses, and engages in decision making with the aid of a cognitive structure (i.e., schema, mental models) that affords meaning and organization to experiences, thereby enabling a person to move beyond the information provided.

The field of education as a whole has as of late largely embraced the core tenets of constructivist theory, spurred on by changed conditions enabled by relatively new information technologies and global information infrastructure developments (McCall, 1994; Demchenko, 1997). Sterling (2001, pp. 58-59) provides as broad an interdisciplinary overview as any on the contrastive features between what we will refer to as a "paradigm-past" and a "paradigm-to-last" - a 'mechanistic' versus as 'ecological' view. In brief, Sterling's framework is predicated on the belief that this broader paradigm transfer is operative on three levels: level one being the educational sphere; level two (curriculum, evaluation and assessment, management, community) accounting for organizational and management of the learning environment. Level three pertaining to learning and pedagogy, accounts for a view of teaching and learning, a view of the learner, teaching and learning styles, and a view of learning.

The "critical elements" which underpin the latest developments in the grand *Heuristic paradigm-to-last* are: **social presence**, **interaction**, **cognitive strategies**, **collaborative learning**, and **learner centeredness**. To follow is a succinct review of the literature. It will account for a *definition*, *principles* underlying its importance, and *operational activities*, both in the traditional face-to-face (F2F) learning environment, as well as the ever-expanding global learning environment afforded by technology; the essence of these of these being that of "communication" and increasingly "intercultural global communication".

**Social presence** entails the creation of an intellectual and emotional presence toward the aim of building a virtual community of learners in both F2F and virtual settings

(Gunawardena & Zittle, 1996). Such a presence needs to constitute an atmosphere that is friendly, functional and social; all the while, fostering member participants with an attitudinal desire to interact and communicate with significant others in both asynchronous and synchronous communication (Collins & Berge, 1996). F2F and the more recent on-line communication is more than words; it can be the degree to which members of a learning community are perceived as real people expressing both verbal and non-verbal cues in communicative form, whether written or spoken.

The *principles* underlying the importance of learning have been well documented. Learners with a sense of being a part of a community or group are more likely to assume ownership for their learning with greater success. In the context of on-line learning, the use of electronic tools can aid in developing a learning community, thereby enabling the inception of meaningful participant discourse (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1996). Irrespective of the medium of learning, providing a warm, respectful, and collegial environment will greatly enhance a sense of affiliation and solidarity among groups of learners. Community members need to regard their interactions as intrinsically valuable and educationally profitable (Rourke, *et al,* 2001). Further, an expert's social presence fosters affective knowledge acquisition, through modeling of behavior and attitudes. Learners can gain vicarious insight through observing peers, mentors and experts performing tasks, potentially internalizing knowledge and related skills (McKenderee, *et al,* 1998). Understanding requires articulation and reflection on what we know. These processes involve both internal and social negotiation, in which multiple perspectives are brought to bear in the refinement of ideas. Therefore, all learning environments need to be established and maintained in which social negotiation of meanings can flourish (Jonassen, *et al,* 1995).

*Operational activities* for social presence, in a cursory sense, F2F or virtual, should include a warm opening and welcome on behalf of the facilitator; a brief overview of communication and discussion procedures; a welcome space where learner participants introduce themselves and provide an overview of their living or working situation; an active presence in the various discussion forums; facilitator reflection; question prompts

organized by forum; topic specific activities for participant groups; timely monitoring and moderating of various interactions between participants; encouragement coupled with critical assessment of participation activities and assignment submissions; motivation of participant learners to actively participate through submissions and thoughtful responses to the contributions of others. These can entail synchronous as well as asynchronous interaction.

**Interaction** involves regular discourse among participant learners, and between learner and facilitator or topic experts, on-going interaction with content tools and the learning interface, all with the aim of making meaning and constructing knowledge (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1996; Jonassen, 1998). Reushle (1995, p. 149) notes that the 'notion of interaction necessitates an integrated combination of learner control and active participation.'

*Principles* underlying its importance are tied to active engagement with the course participants which enhances skill and competency development, coupled with the facilitation and construction of knowledge. It has been demonstrated that meaningful learner interaction of both a personal and professional nature, positively affects intrinsic motivation, thereby enhancing one's problem-solving ability (Ragan, 1998, p. 3). Perhaps most importantly, regular communication between participants lends itself to mutually agreed knowledge constructs.

*Operational activities* that incorporate methods of engagement should be relevant to the specific needs of those participating in the course, and the corresponding learning activities (Laurillard, 1993). The operational activities require utilization of familiar content materials, software programs, and technical support, which lend ease to participant interaction; utilization of interactive cognitive tools (e-mail, simulation, etc.) F2F techniques to enable learning communication, collaboration and subsequent feedback; organization of learning opportunities through activities which engage participants in task specific thinking about course content; management of discussion

forums which are authentic in challenging content, yet non-intimidating and "potentially" non-assessed.

**Cognitive Strategies**: Gagne, Briggs & Wager (1992) specify that a cognitive strategy is a 'control process' wherein learners identify and adapt their modes of participating, learning, retaining, and thinking. Its adoption should empower internal control processes in ordering and sequencing information with the aim of establishing their own mental prototypic notion.

*Principles* underlying its importance: Gunawardina & Zittle, *et al*. (1996) cite a host of techniques that can be invoked in the process of learning; namely, identified selection, organization, rehearsal and elaboration. They offer up discernable categories of cognitive strategies: grouping or 'chunking' strategies, special learning strategies, and linking strategies. In short, learner participants' cognitive strategies (auditory, visual, kinesthetic, etc.) need to be matched with the relevant instructional strategies in order to realize predetermined learner outcomes.

*Operational activities* need to account for how target learners best acquire knowledge. Jonassen (1998) for example, asserts that a combined methodology of 'objectivism' and 'constructivism' offers varying perspectives; sequence learning activities via hierarchical structure of the target knowledge, thus ensuring that the basics have been acquired from the outset.

**Collaborative learning** is when individuals, or groups, work jointly in a co-operative manner to reflect on notions, issues and ideas from which they negotiate meaning, thus enhancing both the knowledge of the individual and the group as a whole.

*Principles* underlying its importance: Jonassen (1998) takes the view that collaborative learning environments can 'support constructivist learner-centered' activities. These activities enable self-directed, active problem-based meaningful learning. Recent advances in computers and communication technology are enabling greater numbers of

learners to engage and collaborate across both time and space. In addition, collaborative based activities can stimulate idea linking, idea construction and reflection; provide chances for the development of social presence; lend to the acquisition of varying perspectives through purposeful interaction; and the opportunity to discern one's own meaning betters a learner's own construction of knowledge concepts, thus building on multiple viewpoints. Gunawardina & Zittle (1996) cite research that demonstrates such attributes as increased motivation, completion rates, and learner satisfaction, even improved performance in smaller groups, as a result of collaborative group work.

*Operational activities*: Teles (1993) identifies two operational activities with special relevance to learning: structured group collaboration and unstructured peer collaboration. In order to facilitate collaborative learning, activities need to revolve around meaningful discourse. Learners must discuss, negotiate, and reflect with other students via computer-mediated communication. Jonassen (1995) writes: 'Conversation is an essential part of the meaning-making process'. Finally, it is important to align course content with reflective tasks that are both goal and process driven.

The **learner-centered** approach situates the emphasis on the learner and corresponding process learning. Such an approach empowers the student to assume responsibility for his own learning (from the inside out, rather than from the outside in; more freedom to choose, but more responsibility for those choices). In contrast, the instructor's changed role is equally important. Rather than teaching, they need too assume the position of designer, facilitator, mentor and coach.

*Principles* underlying the learner-centered approach have to do with motivating learners to adopt an active role in the organizing of learning activities. Much of the literature rooted in constructivist theory supports the notion that the active learner needs to build their own knowledge foundation from both previous experiential learning and newly negotiated meaning acquired through self-guided, collaborative problem-based real learning (Jonassen, 1995; 1998). Learners capable of determining their own learning goals experience a higher task completion rate (Jonassen, 1995).

In ideal terms, learners need to understand their context; become aware of their learning choices, the benefits and risks associated with each choice; discern which choice is best for them, in their context and with their goals; acquire the skills, knowledge and confidence which enable them to take control of their learning; and achieve all of this in an individual context, with individual needs, aims and aspirations.

*Operational activities* require systematic individualized mentoring and feedback. Learning activity and follow-on task assessment should reflect specified learning outcomes. The delivery of materials needs to be flexible, accounting for potential learner-logistical constraints. The use of cognitive and computer tools for problem-solving tasks accompanied by an appropriate level of technical support is necessary.

**Communicative Methodology—Where's the fit?**

> For most researchers and practicing teachers, a method is a set of theoretical unified classroom techniques thought to be generalized across a wide variety of contexts and audiences.

'Communicative language teaching methodology (CLT) refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning' (Savignon, 2002, p. 1), with a central tenant being that of "communicative competence" (Savignon, 2002; Hadley, 2001), which was proposed by the sociolinguist Hymes in 1972 'based on his criticism of Chomsky's linguistic competence' (Acar, 2005, p. 56), and later strengthened by Canale and Swain in the early 1980s (Beale, 2002). It is no coincidence that the timing and constructs of CLT correspond with the underpinnings of constructivist theory. A substantial amount of the literature on CLT refers to the still unresolved discussion on the meaning of communicative competence, and the distinction between *competence* and *performance*. Acar's (2005, p. 55), in his timely and critical reexamination of the 'communicative competence controversy', challenge Hymes, convincingly positing that *competence for use* is not of the same developmental matrix as *competence for grammar* - a claim that indicates the need for the treatment of competence and performance quite differently.

An adequate understanding of the debate surrounding communicative competence is critical for the practitioner, since it has major implications for syllabus design and hence, directly impacts on the learning context, not least, successful adoption of CLT methodology. For our purpose, we stress the obvious point, that possessing *communicative competence* refers to the 'underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication' (Canale, cited in Beale, 2002, p.1). "'Performance" is observable, and it is only through *performance* that *competence* can be developed, maintained, and evaluated' (Chomsky, cited in Hadley, 2001, p. 4). It then follows that *performance* requires production (Beale, 2002, pp. 3-4 and Dalton), pedagogical principles of the communicative approach to language teaching for developing 'literacy across the curriculum' are as follows (1998, p. 17):

> **1.** Teaching is learner-centered and responsive to learners' needs and interests.
>
> **2.** The target language is acquired through interactive communicative use that encourages the negotiation of meaning. The teacher interacts with students in ways that allow for individual preferences for speaking style, such as wait-time, eye contact, turn-taking, spotlighting.
>
> **3.** Genuinely meaningful language use is emphasized, accompanied by unpredictability, risk-taking, and choice-making. Educators need to assist language development through modeling, eliciting, probing, restating, clarifying, questioning, and praising, as appropriate in purposeful conversation; all the while, providing frequent opportunities for students to interact with each other and themselves during instructional activities.
>
> **4.** There is exposure to examples of authentic language from the target language community or subject area; learners are encouraged to utilize content vocabulary for communicative competence on content driven topics or themes deemed suitable for the learner.
>
> **5.** The formal properties of language are never treated in isolation from use; language forms are always addressed within a communicative context. Learners are encouraged to discover the forms and structures of language for themselves.

**6.** There is a whole language approach to bridging student language with literacy and content area knowledge through activities, and use of strategies that integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities.

It should now be evident that communicative language teaching principles are not only connected to theories of language learning, but also substantially intertwined with the curriculum-wide constructivist educational theory, all of which is situated within a grand heuristic paradigm. While there is general acceptance of there no longer being a single best method (Stern, 1985; Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2002), and with the recent movement toward a more integrated approach on all levels (curriculum, theory, method), the fundamental principles of CLT method are no less suitable today in the expanded global community than when they were initially introduced. Admittedly, as Savignon (2002), Brown (2002), Nunan (1991) and others acknowledge, there has been an absence-of-focus on designer methods for specific contexts. However, we submit that this is precisely the challenge practitioners the world over need to embrace especially in today's very mobile intercultural communicative global forum. To conclude on this point, the rationale can be made on two inseparable levels: Congruence between the tenants of the communicative approach and constructivist theory situated within the reigning heuristic paradigm: and, the continued move toward global interdependence, that is *globalization*.

**Communicative Competence for a Global Community**

In this revisionist era of neo-nationalism, the challenges accompanying the rapid pace of globalization has never been greater. Factors affected by changes in trade, technology, conflict resolution and ecology are surely among the most significant. One need only attend an education fair to realize that *education* is now viewed as a viable commodity for export by the governments of Canada, Australia, the United States, and New Zealand. This is largely owing to the earlier noted advancements in information technologies and global information infrastructure, which now enable ready and reliable synchronized and a-synchronized communication - the same technologies in use by even the smallest of businesses.

The needs of today's learners in economically both advantaged and disadvantaged countries are referred to by Ingram (2001, p.11) as 'learners' long-term and on-going developmental needs'. Modern day language courses need to not only 'provide diverse experience, but also be coherent and integrated with clearly established goals and objectives' organized around some 'cohering and integrating principle' (2001, p.11). Ingram (2001, pp. 11-12) and others maintain that this requires an approach to methodology which is socially interactive or community-involved, *the global community*, 'both formal and informal, F2F as well as online, with speakers of the target language, and to use the target language for real communicative purposes'… for 'social human interaction'.

The achievement of learner communicative competence, at a time when it is required by present day global development is crucial. CLT methodology, if correctly interpreted and properly integrated, is no less appropriate in modernizing Asian cultural settings, than in so many others. Savignon (2002, pp. 7-8) drawing on her earlier work and that of others (1972, 1983, 1987, 2000; Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Byram, 1986) presents an adapted version of the 'familiar "inverted pyramid classroom model"', which reveals that 'through practice and experience in an increasingly wide range of communicative contexts and events, learners gradually expand their communicative competence, which comprises grammatical competence, discourse competence, socio-cultural competence, and strategic competence' (see fig 1.1 in Savignon, 2002, p. 8). Savignon's inverted pyramid classroom model of communicative language teaching is a contextually flexible and valid approach to communicative competence. It is most appropriate in this era when the need for globally competent speakers of English could not be greater.

**The Asian Paradigm Adoption Challenge: Heuristic… NOT Communicative**

> "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." - *Albert Einstein*

Ho (1998, p. 1) provides a summary of the 'ELT terrain' in ten Southeast Asian countries that includes the English curricular changes afoot in the various cultures, with a

changed emphasis on English teaching methodology. Ho (1988, p. 7) and Hato (2005) identified some general observations that apply almost uniformly across the whole of Asia. Those include his projection that the use of English will continue unabated as the region becomes increasingly 'interdependent in economic matters'. Adding to this is the likelihood that English will eventually become the official language in Lao PDR. It is now the official second language in Taiwan, and will perhaps soon be in a number of other Asian countries including Japan. The majority of Asian countries by now have at least introduced English as a subject into the primary school curriculum (Ho, 1998; Hato, 2005). The ELT curriculum now 'appears driven, at least in intent' by CLT and skills integration (Ho, 1998, p. 7).

In the more economically advantaged Asian countries, however, (Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Thailand) where greater access to some form of post-secondary education is assured, competition for entry into prestigious universities is fierce and based almost solely on entrance discrete-point examination scores (Browne, et al, 1998; Zhenhui, 2001). It therefore should come as little surprise that such a focus seems to propagate a heavy reliance on the grammar-translation method of instruction in the high school English classroom; coupled with the use of memorization and rote-learning, devoid of meaningful context. This mirrors the values of a top-down, centralized authoritarian paternalistic and a non-heuristic paradigm-past. There is little incentive for educators to adapt, adopt, and integrate the necessary constituents which are conducive to the broader educational reforms shaping progressive global nations, and even less for learners who will likely go un-rewarded in societies whose leaders pontificate policy reforms with ill-conceived action plans (Hato, 2005; Brown, et al. 1998; Brown, 2004; McKay, 2003; Kadish, 2000). In Japan, where English has been emphasized as a subject of instruction at Japanese junior and senior high schools since the Meiji Restoration of 1868 (Brown, et al, 1998), 2.45 billion yen was earmarked for English public education in 2002 alone (McKay, 2003); and yet TOEFL scores rank Japan 144$^{th}$ (in June 2001) coupled with the well documented 'lack of motivation and general apathy' (McKay, 2003, p. 2), most observers would surely feel compelled to agree with the commonly voiced opinion of Japan's senior citizens - "*the old ways no longer seem to work*".

In the case of Thailand, still reeling from the collapse of a social economic policy first initiated some forty years ago, Brown's (2004, p. 2) reintroduction of 'The Four Iddhipada' which detail 'valuable attributes that traditionally have enabled and enriched Thai learners' are certainly worthy of reflection. Borrowing succinctly from Brown, they are as follows: first, will or aspiration, satisfaction and joy of learning; second, the diligent energy, effort and exertion required; third, attending wholeheartedly to learning with active thoughtfulness; fourth, investigation, examination, reasoning and testing of the language being learned. Could these ancient Buddhist teachings equally apply to Japan as well as other Asian contexts? Might they proffer a bridge from those 2,500-year-old values to Sperling's (2001) ecologically grounded adaptation of the heuristic paradigm: a paradigm-to-last which is active on multiple levels?

**Conclusion**

This submission examines and challenges the limited-in-perspective notion held by instructors of EFL in many Asian settings. It was Jarvis and Atsilarat's (2004) publication in the *Asian EFL Journal* that took issue with the suitability of CLT methodology for the Asian context, which prompted this reflective review of the literature. While it is one matter to question any paradigm, theory or set of theories, or corresponding methodology, it is indeed quite another to dismiss it outright on the basis of some vague findings with an ill-equipped instrument. It is evident that while communicative language teaching principles are connected to theories of language learning, they too are substantially intertwined with curriculum-wide constructivist educational theory, as well as that of other disciplines, all of which is situated within the grand heuristic paradigm. CLT, if correctly interpreted and adequately adopted, is no less appropriate for modernizing Asian cultural settings, than it is in the context of so many others.

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