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Title
Classroom Analysis of an Oral Communication
Class at a Japanese High School

Biodata

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Abstract
In Japanese English education, Oral Communication classes were introduced to improve students' communicative competency. This research compares the outcomes of an Oral Communication class taught by a native English speaking teacher, with those of a reading class taught by a Japanese teacher of English from two previous studies (Nunn, 2004; Otlowski, 2003). Though one would expect significant differences, the outcomes of both of these classes were highly convergent and predictable. Likewise, provision of a native English speaking teacher did not induce a higher quality of English output from students. This probably results from Japanese classroom culture and the negative washback effect of examinations. The assumptions that provision of Native English speaking teachers, and that Oral Communication classes will improve communicative competence is clearly challenged, as there remain serious constraints which impede objectives.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction and practice of Oral Communication classes

In traditional Japanese English classes, the grammar translation (GT) method is predominately employed for the development of reading and writing skills for the purpose of passing entrance examinations (Dayon, 2000; Nunan, 2003; Watanabe, 2004). Almost 20 years ago, however, the Japanese Ministry of Education (present Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) took the first steps to develop students' ability to communicate using English. In 1989, the Japanese

Ministry of Education announced the revised national curriculum guidelines and officially placed pedagogic emphasis on the development of students' communicative abilities. A new English class, Oral Communication (OC), was introduced to develop students' communicative ability at this time (cited in Taguchi, 2005). According to the course of study for foreign languages announced in 2003 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the general objective of OC classes is to develop students' ability to understand and convey information by listening to, or speaking English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with various topics (MEXT, 2003)

1.2 Constraints that Japanese teachers face when conducting Oral Communication classes

Regarding the actual practice of OC, Taguchi's (2005) survey study reveals that teachers are caught between the objectives of the national curriculum and local constraints, namely, their lack of expertise and experience in designing communicative activities and the washback effect of examinations. Nunan (2003) goes on to point out the gap by stating that although the government rhetoric stresses development of practical communicative skills, at the classroom level the emphasis is on the development of reading and writing skills for the purpose of passing entrance examinations.

Oshita (1999) expresses how difficult it is to conduct communication- oriented classes that require teachers to have very high teaching skills as well as high English proficiency. Taguchi (2005) states that only 7% of 92 Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) surveyed reported using English as a medium of instruction in the OC classes. Activities involving student speech are rarely conducted in OC classes and "the form-based receptive instructional method used in traditional courses was also evident in the OC classes" (p.10). Watanabe (2004) suggests that teachers employ the GT method because they have learned English in this way and feel it difficult to adopt other methods. Similarly, Hulstijin (1995) points out that teachers who teach a language which is not their mother tongue strongly believe in the usefulness and

necessity of grammar teaching. Evidently, it seems that most JTEs do not, or cannot design and conduct communicative activities and they tend to use traditional form-based instruction even in OC classes.

The washback effect of the examinations also has a negative effect on practice. In spite of the official curriculum changes, the entrance examinations of major Japanese universities, both public and private, have remained essentially unchanged. Among 20 universities, no university has implemented communicative entrance tests such as interviews (Kikuchi, 2006). This is true at the school level also, where written assessment is much more frequent than speaking tests (Taguchi, 2005). Watanabe (2004) suggests that JTEs tend to teach what they think would be important for examination preparation such as vocabulary or structure. The traditional form-based receptive instructional method that was observed in the OC classes in Taguchi's (2005) study could be due to this tendency, which causes gaps between the objectives in the national curriculum and actual practice in OC classes.

1.3 The role of JTE and non-NESTs in English classes in Japan

Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) are recruited at the national and local levels in Japan, as part of the plan to improve students' communicative ability. It is assumed that NESTs and non-Native English Speaking Teachers (non-NESTs) will take on very different roles in the classroom. Non-NESTs (JTEs) should provide grammatical instruction, while it is assumed that NESTs will teach more communicatively. With this in mind, MEXT employs several thousand NESTs to work as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) under the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. Gillis-Furutaka (1994) summarizes that the role of ALTs is to "engage actively in communication and interaction with Japanese students" (p.13). Explaining facts about the English language and answering students' questions is considered the role of JTEs.

Other studies also imply that NESTs and non-NESTs have different *perceived* characteristics and roles. NESTs may have an advantage in teaching a class like OC where there is less emphasis on explaining grammatical rules and active interaction is

required (Hulstijin, 1995). Non-NESTs, on the other hand, can serve as models for students to emulate, having learned English as a second language themselves. They can also use their first language in class to explain new words and grammar structure (Cook, 1999).

1.4 Alternative views toward the distinction between teaching communication and grammar

The implication above is that teachers are expected to teach a communication-oriented class differently from a grammar class in Japan. Other research, however, suggests that such distinctions might not be necessary or appropriate. Facts about language such as grammar rules do not necessarily have to be taught explicitly. Grammatical structures should be encountered and taught within the context of meaningful communication instead of in isolation (Nunan, 2001; Swain, 1998). Fotos (1993) suggests that learners' consciousness of grammatical structure can be raised through interactive grammar tasks just as effectively without explicit grammatical explanation. Furthermore, it may be inaccurate to assume that the provision of an ALT or OC classes improves students' communicative ability most effectively. Doughty and Williams (1998) point out that in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment like Japan, learners have limited opportunity for output and "there may be instructional and cultural limitations on pedagogical practices such as large class size or a tradition of teacher-[centered] or examination-centered language instruction" (p.200). Large class sizes, teacher-centered language instruction, and examination-centered language instruction are all common to English education in Japan. We must consider these restraints when trying to optimize the effect of ALTs in communication-oriented classes.

2. The Present Study

2.1 Research questions

This study is a comparative analysis of a NEST-taught OC class and a non-NEST-taught reading class at two Japanese high schools. The reading class was

analyzed by Otlowski (2003) and Nunn (2004). The OC class was analyzed by the author, using the same framework as Otlowski and Nunn so that the results would be comparable. The research questions are:

1. Are the outcomes different between the non-NEST taught reading class and the NEST-taught OC class?

2. Of what factors are the outcomes a product?

2.2 Participants and instructional context of the NEST-taught OC class

A 50-minute-long OC class was instructed by a NEST alone who had 3-years experience as an ALT at different public schools and had been teaching at this private junior and senior high school for nearly four years. She was proficient in Japanese and seemed to be well adapted to teaching as well as to the school. She took full responsibility in class and outside of class. The students were first year high school students aged 15 to 16. In Japan, English becomes compulsory in the first year of junior high school, so all participants had received formal English education for three years and six months but it is possible that some of them had also studied English privately or in elementary school before entering junior high school. The high school is private and almost all of the students go to university after graduation. It is assumed that the participants study hard to go to prestigious universities.

The textbooks used were "Progressive Oral Communication B", which was approved by MEXT and is used as the main textbook of the course, and "Collocation Eitango", which presents vocabulary items for entrance examinations and was used to expand vocabulary. A fill-in-the-blank song lyric sheet was also used as supplementary material. The song played in class was pre-selected by some of the students and a worksheet was made by the teacher. The target of the class was seating position vocabulary that was covered in the main textbook, Progressive Oral Communication B, and their short-term goal was to pass the upcoming final examination. Collocation Eitango and the song lyrics worksheet had nothing to do with seating positions and the teacher did not spend much time on them. First, they

worked on the song lyrics worksheets for 13 minutes. Then, they did a vocabulary drill using Collocation Eitango for 3 minutes. The remaining 34 minutes were spent learning seating positions based on the main textbook.

2.3 The reading class taught by a non-NEST

The data of the non-NEST-taught reading class is from Nunn (2004) and Otlowski (2003). The participants were 42 high school students instructed by a non-NEST (JTE). Nunn described classroom discourse with respect to four categories. Table 1 shows the definitions of the categories.

Table 1. Definitions of the four categories. (Nunn, 2004, p.25)

Turn-taking and exchange structure	Who controls nomination, self-bidding, interrupting, initiating, responding, following up, negotiating, eliciting, recasting, repairing, evaluating, terminating…?
Input and output: text and topic	Who chooses and creates spoken and written texts? Who chooses, develops, changes topic? Who decides language, origin, nature and quality of texts?
Holistic types of pedagogical discourse	Who presents, reads aloud, explains, translates, conducts, drills, lectures, narrates, reconstructs a text, leads a discussion, participates in a group activity, interacts in pairs or small groups…?
Focus and outcomes	Focus on product or process Convergent predictable or divergent unpredictable outcomes

In the present study, the last category, "focus and outcomes" is very important. The focus may be on product or process. If a teacher prompts students with the intention of eliciting a specific response, then product is the focus. For example, intending on eliciting a time expression, a teacher may prompt students with: "What time did you go to bed?" A student may respond with "Well, I couldn't sleep, so…". If the teacher rejects the response, asking: "But what time did you fall asleep?" until the student answers with a time expression, we see that the discourse is product focused. If, on the other hand, the teacher acknowledges the communicative message of the student's initial response, inquiring as to why he or she couldn't sleep, then process is the focus.

'Outcomes' refers to student production in class. In other words, it's what students say. Outcomes are convergent and predictable where prompts from the teacher elicit specific limited answers. This would be the case if in the example above, all students know that the teacher expects a simple time expression and they answer accordingly. Even more convergent predictable outcomes are seen when teachers conduct repetition practice. The answer: "Well, I couldn't sleep, so…", on the other hand, is unpredictable and divergent. Reflecting the nature of real communication, a lesson can be said to be more 'communicative' if the outcomes are divergent and unpredictable and the focus is on product.

Nunn (2004) provided Table 2 as representative of the non-NEST-taught reading

Table 2. Role map for the reading class (Nunn, 2004, p.29)

Turn-taking and exchange structure	Teacher controls turn-taking
	No self-selection by students is tolerated
	Teacher initiates, eliciting, negotiating, repairing and terminating all contributions
	Almost no student bidding
	Students stand to respond if nominated before a question
Input: text and topic	Text and textbook is selected form a limited number of approved choices
	Teacher controls topic
	Extensive use of native language (code switching)
	Mainly mono-syllabic student contributions
Holistic types of pedagogical discourse	Teacher-fronted verbatim reproduction of text from the course book
	Word by word translation
Focus and outcomes	Product focus
	Convergent, highly predictable outcomes

class.

Otlowski (2003) provided qualitative data as shown in Table 3. The length of replies is either one or two words and there wasn't any student-generated production. The results reflect the prevailing classroom culture in Japan. Otlowski states that the teacher's "own culturally determined role is also a reason why the students are quiet and passive in class" (p.39).

Table 3. The length and the frequency of student production. (Otlowski, 2003, p.37)

Length of replies	Times
one word	14
two or more words	21
drill practice by whole class	17

In the non-NEST taught reading class, the teacher focuses on production, not process, and requires very specific responses from the students. Students are also ready to give such specific responses, which are convergent and predictable. As a result, students produce only one or two words. The JTE's culturally determined role also leads students to adopt a passive attitude in class.

2.4 Data analysis

After videotaping the NEST-taught OC class, all teacher and student utterances were transcribed and analyzed. A role map was made following Nunn's (2004) framework and is shown in Table 4. The underlined points are the differences from the reading class shown in Table 2, after thorough analysis of the recorded class. A more complete discussion on these differences is presented later.

Table 4. Role map for the OC class

Turn-taking and exchange structure	Teacher <u>partly</u> controls turn-taking **Self-selection at will** Teacher initiates, eliciting, negotiating, repairing and terminating all contributions No student bidding but <u>free student responding</u> <u>Students don't have to stand</u> to respond when nominated before a question
Input: text and topic	<u>Main</u> text and textbook is selected from a limited number of approved choices, but <u>some materials are pre-selected by students</u> Teacher controls topic <u>Limited</u> use of native language(code switching) Mainly mono-syllabic student contributions
Holistic types of pedagogical discourse	Teacher-fronted <u>step-by-step modified</u> reproduction of text from the course book <u>Occasional</u> word by word translation
Focus and outcomes	Primarily product focus, but <u>partly process</u> Convergent, highly predictable outcomes

Table 5 indicates the length (the number of words) of student utterances and the frequency with which each length appears. 'Drill practice' and instances where students translated the teacher's Japanese into English are not considered independent output and were not included (counted) in Otlowski (2003) but since there are many of such contributions, they were counted in the present study and might be of interest.

Table 5. Length and frequency of student utterances

Length of utterances	Times		
	Students' contribution	Translation	Drill practice
one word	20	8	28
two	5	3	18
three	1	3	6
four	0	0	6
five	0	0	6
total	26	14	64
	104		

3. Result

3.1 Differences between the two classes

One should expect that a NEST-taught OC class should be much more communicative than a non-NEST-taught reading class. The findings, however, indicate that although the NEST made some effort towards this end, student output (referred to as "outcomes", in accordance with Nunn (2004)) was similar in both classes. Also the NESTs efforts at establishing a communicative classroom environment were incomplete, perhaps because she is under some of the same constraints that her non-NEST counterparts face in Japan

In Table 4, differences between the OC class and the reading class are indicated. Consistent with classroom observations, comparison of the outcomes reveals that the OC class carried out by the NEST looks more communicative and democratic. For example, the students in the OC class were exposed to far larger amounts of English than the reading class. The teacher rarely used Japanese in class though she could speak it fluently, unlike the non-NEST who used Japanese and word by word translation extensively in the reading class.

In this respect, the OC class reflects distinct objectives. The students had more exposure to English, which seems to reflect the stated goal that OC classes should improve English comprehension. Students also had more autonomy in the OC class. They were able to speak at will, whereas the non-NEST controlled turn-taking in the reading class. The song used for the dictation exercise was also chosen by the students. In spite of the differences, however, the outcomes were convergent and highly predictable in both classes.

3.2 Similarities between the two classes

According to the role map (Table 4), the NEST-taught OC class seems to induce more active interaction between the teacher and the students than the reading class. Tables 3 and 5, however, show that in both the reading class and the OC class, many student contributions consisted of only one or two words. Surprisingly, in the OC class, more than 60% of student contributions resulted from drill practice where students repeated after the teacher. The only example of an independent contribution consisting of more

than two words is: "I don't know". The other three examples of utterances with three words resulted when the teacher asked students to translate Japanese phrases. One of the examples is provided below.

Extract 1

Teacher: What's the name of this row? (she is pointing at the front row) How do you say "*mae no retsu*"[the front row] in English? Mae [front]….

Student : In front of

Teacher : OK. In front of is ……….*no mae ni*, but just *mae* [front] is "front". Front row. …..

Unfortunately, "in front of" is not a meaningful contribution. Similar situations to Extract 1 where the teacher provided a Japanese phrase to elicit specific words were observed 14 times. "I don't know" and "in front of" are the longest examples of production in this class. As mentioned, the objective of OC is for students to express their ideas in English and to cultivate students' positive attitudes to attempt communication (MEXT, 2003). The reading class clearly does not suit this goal. It seems, however, that the OC class did not provide the opportunity for students to engage in active communication which would suit this aim either.

As mentioned, in the OC class, turn taking was not controlled by the teacher and the students could speak at will. However, only two or three students were actively engaged with the teacher and spoke at will, and only in response to questions initiated by the teacher. In other words, though a small number of students seemed to speak at will, there was not a single instance of student-generated discourse. This was similar to the non-NEST-lead reading class, of which Otlowski (2003) states: "There was not one instance of a student generated question to the teacher or to any other member of the class" (p37).

We see that the outcomes (student output) in both classes are highly convergent and predictable. The teacher's prompts required very specific responses. Where the exact required response was not provided, the teacher continued the line of

questioning to elicit the expected response just like the JTE in EXTRACT 1 in 2.1. The textbook exercises also required specific responses, which were sometimes not even oral (e.g. Raising a hand or standing up). It is these factors that lead to convergent and predictable outcomes, which we similarly find in traditional classes. Most interactions are predetermined and controlled by teachers and textbooks (Kubota, 1991). Considering the nature of communication, one would have expected the outcomes of an OC class to be more divergent and unpredictable and it is unfortunate that this is not the case.

4. Discussion and Suggestions

4.1 Constraints of normative classroom culture in the Oral Communication class

It is interesting that the outcomes of the OC class were not different from those of the reading class, despite the more democratic and communicative conditions such as uncontrolled turn-taking, self-selected material and more English input from the NEST. We should investigate why this is the case. Prevailing classroom culture and the educational environment seems to play a more important role than objectives, the type of teacher or the title of a course.

In Otlowski's (2003) classroom observation-based research, he suggests that student and teacher roles are socially determined and place limitations on classroom interaction. The dominant role of the teacher contributes to passivity among the students. Taguchi (2005) also described the OC classes she observed as teacher-centered, reflecting traditional Japanese classrooms in which teachers assume full responsibility and students remain passive. Yet it has also been suggested that in Japan, the cultural norms against making mistakes are stronger, and mistakes could cause excessive embarrassment for many Japanese students (Doyon, 2000). This may deter students from active participation in class if they are not sure they can present themselves in perfect English. Oshita (1999) asserts that for success in communication-oriented classes in Japan, passive attitudes need to be improved, as also stated in the course of study for OC classes (MEXT, 2003).

These studies in the Japanese context fit with other empirical and theoretical

studies. Van Lier (2001) underlines the existence of authority and power in institutional settings. This sort of power is common in classrooms which have a highly normative culture (Breen, 2001). In a normative classroom, learners anticipate that evaluation is crucial, and search for external criteria for success in coping with language learning and ways of reducing the potential threat of negative judgment.

In this study, three examples from this OC class presented below, illustrate the existence of normative classroom culture. The first example is that the teacher checked students' scores from the textbook exercise in front of the whole class. The second one was that the teacher brought up points that students learned in the past and checked if they remembered twice, which can also serve as a means to judge students. The third example is that there were only a few students who spoke at will as mentioned in 3.2. The power to judge and the power to control and evaluate the speech of others can be observed in this OC class. Normative classroom culture may have prevented most students from self-selecting to speak in class because if they made a mistake, their English ability may be negatively judged by their teacher and peers.

This research stands apart from previous research (on non-NESTs) in Japan since the teacher was a NEST, and thus free from some of the cultural baggage that JTEs carry. Although some actions of the NEST in the present study were consistent with a more traditional approach, she did provide a more communicative lesson and a more democratic atmosphere. By not controlling turn-taking or having students stand up before speaking, for example, she did not assume as dominant a role as seen in other classes taught by JTEs. Student output, however, followed the same pattern seen in the JTE's class. Students refrained from speaking spontaneously, likely to avoid negative judgment and feelings of embarrassment from making mistakes, having long been exposed to the culturally determined roles of teacher and student in Japan.

4.2 Constraints from the washback effect of examinations in the Oral Communication class

The role map in Table 4 and the production analysis in Table 5 resemble the

traditional high school English classes described in Watanabe's (2004) study. Frequent reference to test taking techniques, mechanical oral practice, few student requests for information and a lockstep classroom setting are key features. Based on these tendencies, Watanabe tentatively concludes that the presence of entrance examinations might have a negative washback effect on some lessons. Taguchi (2005) concurs, observing that in OC classes, JTEs often do grammar drills and even direct students' attention away from OC materials in order to prepare for university entrance examinations.

In this study also, there is ample evidence of washback effect. The teacher twice made a fairly long announcement about the coming final examination. She described the test design explicitly and gave tips on how to take the examination. The second example is that the teacher did not allow students the opportunity to respond when anything unrelated to the examination was being carried out. For instance, after completing the song lyric worksheet, the teacher wrote the answers on the board so as not to waste time instead of asking students to share their answers. Also, when using the collocation book, the contents of which were not in the upcoming examination, the teacher only conducted brief repetition practice.

We also see that the teacher tried to conduct classroom management as quickly as possible, probably because she was concerned more with examination-related material. When attending to classroom management, the teacher often posed questions rhetorically, without expecting a response. An example is provided below, wherein the teacher wanted students to straighten their desks so that they could be used to explain seating positions (the target of the lesson).

Extract 2

Teacher: OK, today, what I need you to do today is to make rows very straight. We are going to do seating position. We're doing seating positions. What I need…can you move your desk?...one, two, and three, what line are you in?....OK. What I need, what I need is for you to have straight lines in your rows, so we can count them. Can you move just forward?....(She is moving the desks) Yes. So that you and she are in the

second row. And you guys are in the …<u>is this the third row?</u> …Yeah, yes, <u>can you move just forward?</u> I just want to make sure you are all in the third. <u>Can you move back?</u>.....Yes…….

The teacher was almost talking to herself as she was moving around and giving directions quickly, both verbally as shown in Extract 2, and physically by gesturing. She did not pause to allow time for student responses. Responses were not expected by the teacher or encouraged in any way. Likewise, the students showed no verbal reaction. Some moved their desks quietly and others showed no reaction at all as the teacher moved their desks for them.

It appears that the teacher may have underestimated the value of classroom management as an opportunity for meaningful interaction. She was more eager to get on with the examination-related activity (describing seating positions), which indicates washback effect. Other research such as Oliver and Mackey (2003) has also indicated that teachers do not regard interaction in classroom management as an effective learning opportunity.

4.3 Suggestions to induce divergent unpredictable outcomes in an Oral Communication class

More divergent unpredictable outcomes could be evoked by encouraging the negotiation of meaning. Referring to Extract 1 in 3.2, when the student said "in front of", which does not really mean anything itself, the teacher immediately spoke Japanese to elicit the exact answer she wanted to hear. Instead, she could have tried to negotiate the meaning. Negotiation of meaning is significant because it can lead to modified input, output, and feedback, which are all beneficial for learning (Long & Robinson, 1998). The problem is that in this class, most tasks are not designed to induce interaction or lead to unplanned exchanges through negotiation of meaning.

The process of classroom management also provides useful opportunities for language learning (Nation, 2006; Oliver & Mackey, 2003). Nation (2006) emphasizes that if English is used for classroom management in a planned, consistent way, the

provision of meaning focused input may facilitate language learning. This type of input was not provided in the observed class. In Extract 2 in 4.2, the teacher could have used classroom management as an opportunity to illustrate the target language that she expected students to learn. Instead of moving the desks herself and directing individual students to move their desks, she could have said: "People in the second row, can you straighten your desks?".   Then she could have waited for a reaction, rephrased her instruction, or waited for a student to ask for clarification, thus encouraging negotiation and two-way communication. Meaning focused input from a teacher leads to the negotiation of meaning, and consequently meaningful exchanges between the teacher and students. In meaningful exchanges the output also becomes more divergent and unpredictable.

5. Limitation of the study and implications for future research

Further studies should evaluate outcomes in a context-sensitive, systematic way. Simply counting the word number in student utterances will be misleading in some classes. Furthermore, interviewing NESTs would provide insight into their motives and the specific constraints which they may feel.

The present study was restricted to the recording and analysis of one class instructed by one teacher. The findings from this study are not sufficient to make generalizations regarding OC classes across Japan, or the approaches taken by NESTs in other circumstances. The purpose of this research is not to describe what is happening in *all* NEST-taught OC classes, but to challenge the stereotype that NEST classes are *necessarily* communicative. It should also be recognized that NESTs are not a homogenous group in Japan. While many have no prior training or experience, others are professional educators. Research should take this into consideration along with other conditions. Further empirical evidence is required to paint a more complete picture of what NESTs are doing in classes across the country. Large-scale studies will provide more generalizable findings.

5. Conclusion

The outcomes of the OC class carried out by the NEST are not significantly different from those of the reading class carried out by a non-NEST. In the NEST-taught OC class observed in this study, the outcomes were convergent and predictable. Even when students were given the opportunity to actively get involved in English communication, only a few of them spoke spontaneously. When they did speak, they often produced only one or two words most of the time. This was likely caused by two factors: the normative classroom culture and the washback effect of examinations. In a normative classroom culture, students search for ways of reducing the potential threat of negative evaluation by avoiding speaking English. Embarrassment from making mistakes in public also affects Japanese students and may discourage them from speaking actively.

Also, examinations seem to have a negative washback effect. Not only does the teacher refer to the examination repeatedly, she also focuses on specific items that will affect student achievement in the coming examination. As a result, anything unrelated to the examination such as classroom management is dealt with quickly and there is no opportunity for meaningful interaction to occur. Moreover, examining classroom discourse, the teacher tried to elicit only very specific, 'correct' responses (sometimes using word by word translation), which were related directly to the upcoming examination. Interaction in class was clearly constrained by the washback effect.

In Japan there are widely held assumptions that NEST-taught classes are necessarily communicative and that OC classes will advance students' communicative ability. These assumptions, however, would seem to be mistaken to some extent. NESTs are not free from the constraints that non-NESTs face such as looming entrance examinations and other cultural factors, and this can have a strong effect on teaching.

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Title

Applying Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)
Principles to Business/Technology Teaching in
English (BTTIE) for Asian International School Students

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Abstract

International educational institutions teaching all subjects in English, from elementary to graduate schools, are proliferating across Asia. Most if not all such organizations dictate that students pass their respectively required English proficiency tests as an admission requirement, however, the obligation for prerequisite and/or ongoing English instruction is generally understood, as learners will initially and/or eventually need additional language training to succeed and ultimately graduate. Many Asian educational institutions have collectively substantial experience/education re: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), but Business/Technology Teaching In English (BTTIE) represents relative *terra incognita*. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has proven to be extremely effective re: teaching English to Asian students, and applying the "lessons learned" or principles from this area to BTTIE should benefit Asian international school students equally well. A regular school that has codified principles for CALL for local/native learners should easily be able to adapt such guidelines for an international institution so that students continue to learn: English as a means to an end as well as an end in itself; how to use computers for language and other studies; adapting computer usage to work and life. This paper suggests that CALL principles can and should be applied to a BTTIE environment, from English "per se" to business/technology courses...to all classes.

Keywords: Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Business and Technology Teaching in English (BTTIE), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), International Schools, Asian Students

Introduction

This educator (henceforth referred to as "I," because using third person in papers such as this is pretentious) has for the past 2.5 years worked for Woosong University's International Business Department (IBD) in Daejeon, South Korea. Previously, I taught English at Woosong for 2.5 years, including a one-year stint as the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Specialist, during which I managed Woosong's first CALL Center. My position entailed choosing all software, creating all syllabi, maintaining all records, etc., in addition to serving as one of the primary instructors and teacher trainers. I am currently teaching business and technology subjects in English to Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Korean and students of other nationalities. Before our international students, who are assigned to various Woosong departments as well as our own, can be admitted to our classes, they must attain a certain score on the respectively required English proficiency tests, but we IBD teachers have determined that regardless, most if not all of our learners come to our classes inadequately prepared in at least one if not more or all English skills: reading, writing, listening or speaking. Various "Business English" classes have been created as part of the curricula, e.g., as suggested courses for different majors, but strictly on a voluntary and, what's worse, ad hoc basis. In other words, students may take such a class (or not!) at just about any time during their studies, not necessarily at the beginning.

What my fellow educators and I would like to establish is not just an obligatory, preliminary training course, but a mandatory "academic preparation" semester that all but the students with spectacularly high entrance exam scores would be required to take, if not every learner who studies in our department. One of the common problems is that, e.g., although a student may pass a reading/writing-centric proficiency test, the learner may nevertheless experience difficulty with listening and/or speaking. Such English-preparation semesters have been used for Woosong students who have gone abroad to study, e.g., at the University of the Philippines (UP). Woosong learners were required to study English, regardless of test scores or any other factor, for their first

semester at UP before being allowed to join the general student population for their second, because experience had proven that no matter what, otherwise learners simply weren't ready to handle business and technology (or indeed any) classes taught exclusively in English. Such a program, still in the experimental stage, is currently being administered for students who are about to enter SolBridge (http://solbridge.wsu.ac.kr), Woosong's new international school. However, such programs have not to date made use of educational technology and I am convinced that this is a serious mistake. Computers should be not only used in English classes, but as part of every course, especially those teaching business and/or technology. CALL principles, when properly applied via appropriate methodologies, ideally by experienced teachers, greatly assist Asian non-native-English-speaking learners in every classroom environment, vital because no matter what such students are studying, English-skill enhancement is an inevitable part of the process, just as computer-skill enhancement is.

Scope/Research

This paper is not intended to serve as a proposal for such a preparation program, nor is a detailed description of such within this paper's scope, although certain suggestions re: tools and techniques are inevitably addressed. This paper's purpose is to discuss how CALL principles, generic to TESOL and specific to the usage of educational technology, learned via experience with hundreds of students, can and should be applied to such English instruction, regardless of whether it's in the form of an intensive, language-centric preparation semester, a Business English or other similarly-oriented class, or indeed a regular business and/or technology class. In other words, in a school setting such as the IBD, it is imperative to keep in mind at all times that English teaching considerations cannot be separated from other educational factors just because English is a means to an end versus an end in itself. Woosong's CALL Center made its debut in the summer of 2003, used for that semester break's "camp," attended by primarily college-age Korean students wishing to improve their English skills for various reasons. Following the camp were five sessions, carefully

analyzed for the purpose of establishing the principles stated in this paper.

It should be noted that the CALL Center served Woosong Language Institute (WLI), which is a private "hagwon," to use the Korean term, i.e., it is part of the university but caters to a much-wider range of clientele: children to adults. Nevertheless, the typical majority of its students are roughly of university age. Classes are taught in seven-week increments, usually for a total of six per year. Upon entering WLI, students are given a "level test" to divide them into six categories: 1 = Low Beginner, 2 = High Beginner, 3 = Low Intermediate, 4 = High Intermediate, 5 = Low Advanced and 6 = High Advanced, according to generally accepted TESOL standards. (Worldport ESL, 2001) Levels 1-5 were included in this study. Typically a maximum of 15 students per class is the WLI policy: it certainly was for the CALL Center, which featured only 15 student PCs. The one-year "CALL experiment" involved teaching one morning (10 AM – 12 PM) and one evening (5 – 7 PM) class per level in the CALL Center. Thus, a Level 1 student would spend Monday in the CALL Center and Tuesday through Friday in his/her regular classrooms, a Level 2 student would spend Tuesday in the CALL Center, and so on. Fifteen students per class, five days a week, morning and evening, would normally indicate that approximately 750 students participated in CALL classes from summer 2003 to summer 2004. The actual number of unique learners was much lower because many, more than half, of the students were "repeats," ranging from college-age learners who moved up a level every two sessions to "ahgeemah," i.e., middle-aged women who stayed in the same level throughout; and, of course, not every class included the maximum number of 15 students. I chose ten unique students per level per session, roughly five from the morning and five from the evening classes, to serve as the subjects of my research, so I surveyed and/or tested approximately 250 students over the course of a year. The first interesting point is that age or other factors had only a minimal effect on classroom learning: students tended to respond according to their level more than any other consideration. Students were given surveys and/or tests before and after each seven-week period: the results will be discussed during the presentation of the generic

(to TESOL) and specific (to CALL or educational technology) principles that follow. My CALL research informally started as of 2002, so studies conducted 2002-2004 resulted in the creation of the "Top Ten CALL Principles," intended to be part of a training program for would-be CALL teachers, that will be applied and combined with the studies I've conducted as an IBD teacher from 2005 to 2007 on many more hundreds of other students in English as well as business/technology classes, half of which were all conducted in computer labs.

The goal is not to bog down in statistics, but rather to present percentages with the objective of making various points in a "conversational" manner. Percentages will be identified as pertaining to "CALL" (2002-2004) students or "IBD" (2005-2007) learners, as described above. Please note that, in yet another departure from convention, references are deliberately given herein without page numbers: the points borrowed from the various sources are painstakingly condensed versions of material – versus short excerpts or quotations – that cover many, in some cases hundreds of, pages. This was done to meet maximum page number and word count requirements.

Generic CALL Principles

Generic Principle #1: The best overall strategy for TESOL is (i.e., the most effective theories and techniques are derived from) the Communicative Approach.

From among the plethora of language teaching/learning models enjoying popularity over the years, one paradigm in particular has proven to be the most effective overall: the Communicative Approach, the primary goal of which is to facilitate learner ability to communicate in the target language. The Communicative Approach is the latest version of what is usually referred to collectively as the "inductive/usage model," so called because linguistic structures are deemphasized and the teacher's principal role is to encourage interaction (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Despite the recent influence of American educational philosophies, Asian school systems have for the most part remained loyal to traditional (meaning Chinese/Confucian in origin)

"systematic/analyzing" models for teaching languages. Thus, e.g., Korean university graduates chronically can read and write English with varying degrees of success but can't participate in a simple conversation. This paradox is primarily responsible for the phenomenon of native-speaker teachers now serving as English instructors for thousands of Korean "hagwons" (private institutes) as well as public colleges/universities, where one form or another of the Communicative Approach is invariably used (Ch'oe, et al., 2000).

The "English craze" has been gaining momentum in many other Asian countries, with China's demand for English instruction having grown   most rapidly over the past few years. All WLI, and consequently IBD, instruction is based on this paradigm, the latter of which is distinctive only by the consistent utilization of computer technology in the process. Lessons always entail students having to demonstrate a variety of skills, including reading and writing, but listening and speaking are considered the top priorities. English is used exclusively in the classroom, with the occasional exception of direction delivery to lower-level students. Authentic or "real-life" situations are presented as the basis for both individual and group work; engaging in role-play and other activities is favored as a technique. Grammar is inevitably covered, but the teacher's goal is to keep the dialogue flowing while judiciously correcting mistakes versus focusing on the memorization of rules. Overall, the role of the teacher is to encourage active classroom interaction, not to present completely passive lectures or presentations (Celce-Murcia, 2001). IBD students over the years have consistently stated by at least 71% that they learn more not only about the subject matter at hand, but also re: communications in English in general via lecture-and-lab give-and-take with a Native English Speaker Teacher (NEST).

Many IBD students, via qualitative research interviews, have confided that they learn as much about English than the subject matter at hand in my business/technology courses and, in fact, one of the primary reasons low-skill students choose my courses is to learn English as much as having substantial interest in the

actual course material! The main point here is that half of every IBD class takes place in a computer lab so that what I call a "complete feedback system" is maintained, i.e., both teachers and students are engaged in a constant, reciprocal "communicative approach" to teaching/learning covering all four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. My CALL students spent one day per week in the computer lab: the rest of their studies were conducted via "book-and-blackboard," supposedly because this method favored listening and speaking practice. In actuality, students told me they got more listening and speaking practice in the computer lab than they did in the traditional classroom sessions. My CALL students consistently and overwhelmingly favored the "communicative approach" for covering all four skills made possible by the utilization of educational technology (by at least 82%) and the majority (an average of 68%) considered computer usage as the primary factor that made it possible (others cited me, i.e., the teacher). To provide just two of a myriad of examples: Microsoft Word's spelling and grammar checkers made it possible for students to focus on context and meaning versus details such as punctuation when writing; the interactive software gave students the ability to repeat a word many times if needed to get it right, without disturbing other students.

Generic Principle #2: All components of TESOL (listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar) must be taught in accordance with the students' level(s).

Under the guidelines of the Communicative Approach there are various "methods," or sets of procedures, and each method features different "techniques," or specific activities. As of the method stratum of language teaching, it is vital to keep in mind the different levels of learners when designing, developing and delivering curricula. Human beings evolve through distinctly different stages of "L2 acquisition" (i.e., other-than-mother-tongue learning) and to be effective all instruction must correspond with stage strengths and weaknesses. (Harmer, 2001) WLI students are assessed via oral interviews at the beginning and end of each session to determine their placement for the imminent term. Classroom materials, which in the case of CALL classes

include software, are chosen and utilized according to the special levels of skills involving listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. Level 6 students, with the goal of polishing rather than developing skills, participate solely in what's known as the "free talking technique," meaning that learners are assigned topics to discuss with their teacher and classmates, so accordingly only Level 1 through 5 students attended CALL Center classes (WorldportESL, 2001).

Level 1 CALL students used software that presented required vocabulary and other "building blocks" via picture association and word repetition. Sentence structure is introduced, but seldom above clause and phrase degree. Level 2 and 3 CALL students used software (and a corresponding workbook) to start expressing ideas in complete sentences. The scenarios and associated dialogs increase in complexity substantially from Level 2 to 3, since this step represents the advancement from meeting basic to advanced needs. Level 4 and 5 CALL students watched movies and TV programs using software that assists comprehension and retention, since the learners' goal at these strata is to perfect conversational abilities (WorldportESL, 2001 & Hansen-Smith, 2000). Ideally, IBD students will one day be divided into such levels for their classes. Much more likely is a continuation of the less-than-ideal scenario of mixing students of various levels together for whatever type of class is being taught – Remedial English, Just Plain English or Business/Technology – and attempting to accommodate the needs of all students via various strategies such as inclusion. I've been studying using inclusion to differentiate material delivery and otherwise meet the needs of advanced and slower IBD students simultaneously in the same classroom. Addressing this subject in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, but the conclusions, which consistently indicate that the utilization of educational technology is a primary factor re: successful teaching under such circumstances, are verified by my research results. The vast majority of both CALL and IBD students consistently stated that it was computer usage, more than any other factor, which enabled them to learn despite level "gaps" in the classroom, i.e., having higher or lower English skills than those of classmates. Put simply, computers "level the

playing field" for students, allowing learners with widely varying levels of English proficiency to succeed re: their group/individual goals. Slower students feel computer usage helps them keep up and advanced students say computer usage helps them to be challenged versus bored: the strategy works, whether in the English or business/technology classroom. CALL classes, even while segregated by level, nevertheless had variations within each classroom: students who identified themselves as "behind" their classmates in English skills, as well as those who saw themselves as "above" their peers, consistently and overwhelmingly (81%) cited computer usage as compensation for weaknesses or strengths. IBD students have contended, by a majority of at least 77%, that computer utilization allowed them to prove mastery of subject matter that otherwise would not have been possible.

Generic Principle #3: One of the emphases of TESOL, especially in some Asian countries, should be on students listening and talking to a native English speaker.

Koreans, e.g., who have studied English for ten or more years are typically unable to communicate verbally in the language until they receive exposure to and instruction from NESTs. This is not unusual among Asian societies, where not only was reading/writing traditionally revered more than listening/speaking, but until recently it was almost universally assumed that locals would never come into physical contact with foreigners! To this day, many Koreans sit in English classrooms led by teachers who never speak the target language, who indeed are incapable of pronouncing a single English word correctly (Ch'oe, et al., 2000 and Yamamoto, 2001). Thus it is vital that all Asian students concentrate on listening/talking to a native speaker.   In the CALL Center as well as the IBD lab, of course, the native speaker may be real or virtual. The standard TESOL classroom management rule dictating at least a 75-to-25% division respectively between "student time" and "teacher time" is honored, with educational technology classes taking the split one degree further: "student time" is increased via "computer time."

Although CALL software can be used independently of the classroom, such activity is deemed merely supplemental because of the requirement for a native speaker to clarify, correct, etc (Harmer, 2001 & Hansen-Smith, 2000). Level 1 students require some "silent reading" because of their need to form associations between how words appear and how they're spoken. But students at all other levels ideally should be constantly participating in a conversation at least indirectly if not directly, and by following the proper procedures an educational technology teacher can maintain this consistency throughout a class, a feat harder to accomplish in a traditional classroom because of the logistics of having every learner participate simultaneously. In an Asian country, the native-speaker classroom is often the only place for such listening/speaking opportunities to take place and one of the main reasons educational technology instruction is considered superior to the alternatives is that a much wider variety of speakers, real or virtual, is inevitably involved and so learners are exposed to different dialects, accents, etc (WorldportESL, 2001 and Yamamoto, 2001). This is an example of a "no-brainer" re: directly applying CALL principles to BTTIE. CALL and IBD students have agreed, 61% and 65% respectively, that computer usage helped them with improving their listening and speaking skills (reading and writing got much higher marks, not surprisingly…in Asia, particularly Korea, there is tremendous inertia and prejudice in favor of the traditional method of "conversational English" instruction, among both students and teachers!) better than the "book-and-blackboard" method. Re: interviews alone, I've managed to transform the concept of "native-speaker listening and speaking" into somewhat of an art form.

My students interview NESTs, NESTs interview them…NEST and student presentations are videotaped and played back…performances are critiqued with the goal of improving techniques…etc. Anything an English teacher can do in a traditional classroom a CALL teacher can do better in a computer lab…anything. And so it follows that anything a business teacher can do in the traditional manner an educational technology teacher can do better using hardware/software…yes, anything. Please note this caveat: The CALL and/or educational technology teacher must know

what s/he is doing…but this is another matter.

Generic Principle #4: Teaching English grammar with a communicative end in mind requires that meaning and use are considered in addition to forms.

The underlying theories of language instruction at Korean "hagwons" such as WLI assume that students have already been taught the lexicogrammar – the structure or forms – of English elsewhere and that WLI classes are supposed to be "conversational," with students taking advantage of the presence of NESTs to practice talking about people, places and things using English. Indeed, in comparably isolated Korean cities such as Daejeon, "hagwons" such as WLI offer the only opportunity locals have for face-to-face conversations with foreigners. At Woosong, only Korean teachers of English head classes that focus on grammar, with the functional goal of explaining structure and rules in the "L2" or "target language" as much as possible/feasible, but reverting to the "L1" or "mother tongue" as desired/required. Korean public colleges and universities feature the same division of labor, although the ratio of Korean to native-speaker teachers of English is typically much higher.

Such practices that allow different language teachers to define and perfect their niches follow precisely the recommendations of many grammar-teaching experts(Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999.) Thus WLI CALL classes by design are taught exclusively by NESTs, but only those with proven abilities to also successfully teach lexicogrammar, just not to the degree that a, e.g., Korean teacher of English does. Meaning and use are of primary importance in CALL classes. Grammar is interjected strictly in accordance with the needs of students at the different levels. Level 1 software shows students how to connect words into clauses, phrases and then sentences without "spelling out" the rules. The programs used for Level 2 and 3 students have a prominent grammar tutorial for each lesson, although as always the emphasis is on using the sentences to convey meaning in the scenarios involved. Level 4 and 5 students, who watch movies and TV programs, definitively and

appropriately focus on use and meaning: plots, characters, etc (Harmer, 2001 and Worldport ESL, 2001). This is another example of a "direct mapping" of CALL principles onto IBD methodologies. It cannot be emphasized enough that in an international school setting, the teaching of English never really stops: a teacher's conversation with students while walking down a hallway is essentially a lesson. Experience has shown that a typical IBD class of 30 students will consist of one or two Level 4 or 5 students, 10 Level 1's…with the rest 3's or 2's. Accommodating the needs of students with such a wide range of English proficiencies is a constant challenge, but the unifying concept behind all instruction is that meaning is emphasized over such details as punctuation.

Asian students will quickly "paralyze" themselves if they worry too much about making a mistake versus trying to, as I bluntly tell them: "Say *something*!" I've witnessed teachers interrupting students attempting to complete an oral presentation with corrections: terrible idea. I let my students make it through and then I make the corrections…then they get another attempt. The main point is that all international school teachers must (or at least should!) be at some level English teachers, regardless of their subject areas of specialization. Instructors must know the lexicogrammar as well as being able to teach using it…or without it…at the proper time, in the appropriate proportions, etc. The subject understandably never came up during CALL classes, but qualitative research conducted via interviews with IBD students revealed that they viewed their successes in my classes to be attributed to my ability to present material as much as my education/experience re: the subject itself. In other words, what I knew mattered, but the fact that I could explain this in deference to their needs as non-native speakers was equally as important. The Spring 2007 end-of-semester, Likert-scale survey included this statement: "I prefer an instructor with an advanced degree and at least 10 years of experience." Only 19% strongly agreed; nearly half (47%) agreed…but 28% were neutral and 6% disagreed. Being an expert in one's field is relatively meaningless unless you can communicate properly with students! The results suggest that perhaps the international schoolteacher selection process

should favor communications abilities over other factors such as degrees, schools, years of experience, etc.

Generic Principle #5: The most effective techniques for facilitating classroom interaction are activities (games, tasks, etc.) that engage the learner in the learning process.

The traditional Asian classroom dynamic consists of seated students passively receiving information, albeit while furiously taking notes, delivered in a monotone by a teacher who never leaves his/her desk except to write on the blackboard. After witnessing such a scholarly spectacle, little is left to the imagination re: students': (a) inability to communicate in English; (b) lack of confidence and enthusiasm re: further English study. In stark contrast, a conversational class must by definition get students talking, and unquestionably the best technique for achieving this is to get them involved with an activity of some kind. TESOL certification courses for native-speaker English teachers generally consist of two types of lessons: grammar refresher exercises and tutorials on how to design, develop and deliver assignments/activities. Thus over the years "hagwons" such as WLI accumulate entire libraries of games, puzzles, etc., that can be used to supplement and/or replace textbook material (Yamamoto, 2001 and Worldport ESL, 2001). I'd like to implement an "IBD certification" and start creating such a collection of materials as well.

One of the most powerful, practical arguments in favor of CALL goes as follows: Activities make conversational classes effective and fun; CALL provides the widest variety of and the most entertaining activities available. Even the most CALL-skeptical TESOL teacher is amazed when the Internet's "window to the world" is first used as a source of topics for a class. Games, e.g., are often used when a textbook runs short of material or when the book-and-blackboard routine becomes mind-numbingly predictable and dull. The WWW offers a practically unlimited number of exciting things to see and do; often finding the lesson is an activity in itself!

Without a doubt, however, it is the interactive functionality and multimedia elements such as sound, animation, etc., of CALL programs that define the most enjoyable and therefore effective exercises for English students. Most impressive re: getting the student engaged in the learning process, to cite just one example, is the power such software bestows to study at an individual pace while being part of a class, to choose one's own "path" according to individual interests (Dudeney, 2000 and Alessi & Trollip, 2001). This is yet another obvious example of how CALL principles map directly to IBD classes taught using educational technology. My students are not given tests in the traditional sense: instead, they are assigned projects as if they were employees in the "real world."

Using a standard computer application such as FrontPage to create a website is often the first practical use knowledge has been put to for most if not all of my IBD students. It's not just "applied knowledge," but "practical applied knowledge" that educational technology makes possible. Projects such as creating a website business plan open an entirely new door on education for Asian students. They learn: teamwork, how the business world functions, job skills, etc., in addition to the subject matter itself! The latest Spring 2007 IBD survey included these two statements: "Using computers helped me to understand business/technology concepts in English" and "Using computers helped me to understand business/technology concepts in general": 79% and 87%, respectively, either strongly agreed or agreed.

Specific CALL Principles

Specific Principle #1: Computer usage in TESOL should never be considered an end in itself or a replacement for human teachers; the keyword in CALL is "assisted."

Both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest one of the main reasons computer-illiterate TESOL (and perhaps all) instructors resist the inevitable progression toward educational technology in their schools is simply that they're afraid they'll lose their positions as a result, that teachers will be replaced by PCs.

Another explanation is that, whether or not job security is a concern, educators are apprehensive about their ability to learn how to use hardware and software in the classroom. NESTs' stated concerns about the effectiveness of CALL are usually nothing more than a smokescreen to disguise worry re: job security, however, such reservations are sometimes sincere, albeit uninformed. Experience indicates that instructors can be trained to use technology as they can be persuaded that CALL has a proven track record of success as well as a sound scientific foundation. Convincing them that their TESOL careers are not threatened by CALL is often more difficult, however (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). TESOL teachers' trepidation over being displaced by hardware and software is unfounded. Personal computers and language programs have been around for years, and the TESOL field has not disappeared. On the contrary, it's grown substantially. Korea, e.g., is one of the most techno-centric societies on the planet.

So why are thousands of NESTs still working here? Universally, for all education but apparently for language education in particular, the near-unanimous consensus contends that technology can supplement/augment/enable teaching performed by human beings, but that hardware and software are not sophisticated/capable enough – and probably will never be – to constitute an acceptable substitute for a person as a teacher. The teacher need not be physically present, as in the case of distance education, but the teacher – human, that is – must be available. Locally, distance education may someday become popular enough to include, e.g., webcam access to conversations with foreigners, but this represents a dramatic/unlikely cultural adjustment re: schooling and besides, the teachers would be humans, not machines, regardless (Dudeney, 2000 & Yamamoto, 2001). IBD teachers, as is most likely going to be the case with most if not all international school instructors, who have had experience in the "real world" (versus teachers who seldom if ever have ventured beyond the academic environment), generally do not fret about being rendered obsolete by machines. They are aware of my standard maxim: "Computers will never replace teachers, but teachers with computers will replace those without." However,

some instructors have nevertheless proved reluctant to adapt educational technology simply because they are, if you'll pardon the expression, "old school" and were never taught how to do this properly. Teacher training is beyond the scope of this document, but instituting a prerequisite program for international school teachers unfamiliar with educational technology is an excellent if not inevitable policy suggestion. One of the primary lessons to learn is that even teaching about computers isn't just about using computers: humans are necessary because without humans computers have no purpose: it's about *context*.

Specific Principle #2: CALL solves many of the classroom problems inherent in most if not all educational environments.

Whether the short attention span and high distraction level intrinsic to today's learners, especially the younger ones, are the result/fault of TV, computer games, or some other culprit(s), the fact remains that book-and-blackboard classroom instruction is increasingly considered old-fashioned and boring by students…and often by teachers as well. This factor, regardless of one's opinion about it, cannot be ignored, especially if a school is a business at the mercy of the marketplace. The competitive "bottom line" in a country like Korea is that, for a variety of reasons, a student given a choice between a school with technology and a school without will choose the former. As of ten or fewer years ago, the cost of hardware and software necessary for a multimedia classroom was prohibitive; today for a relatively modest investment a school can offer its students all the benefits of an educational technology environment (Alessi & Trollip, 2001 and Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Arguably one of the most important advantages CALL offers is a solution to the "level split" problem.

Even the best systems for assigning TESOL students to their respective levels aren't perfect. Human beings and their language abilities are typically too complex to fit students neatly into one category or another. The problem is bad enough in a small, intimate setting such as WLI, where classes are limited to a maximum of 15 students.

At the IBD, e.g., a class might have 40 or more learners. In the traditional book-and-blackboard classroom, this means up to two-thirds of the students are bored and/or frustrated at any given time. In a CALL classroom, the teacher can personally address certain students according to their needs while other learners – undistracted because they're wearing headphones – can either review, advance or "diversify" (i.e., continue lessons via other source material). The latter is another example of how once students know how to use the Internet, it can serve as a practically unlimited source of teaching/learning material (Granger, 2002 and Gitsaki & Taylor, 2000). All of this is not only directly "mappable" without further comment to IBD and other international school environments, but has also been discussed to some degree already. The main point to remember is that educational technology, the Internet in particular, makes the entire planet outside the classroom/school accessible in a way that no book-and-blackboard environment has ever, can now or ever will. This enables unlimited opportunities for teaching and learning: English; business/technology; both.

Specific Principle #3: CALL solves many of the culture-related classroom problems inherent in Asian educational environments.

To many teachers who've never worked in Asia, statements to the effect that, e.g., "Koreans do this or that" may seem to approach overgeneralization if not outright stereotyping, but the fact remains that Korea, e.g., represents a remarkably homogeneous society and thus student behavior patterns are starkly similar. This predictability, if exploited properly, can be a great advantage for teachers re: solving classroom management and other problems. Introducing and using CALL can diminish or eliminate many of the difficulties language teachers encounter while teaching all language students, but in several ways CALL can assist with teaching languages to Asian students in particular. (Yamamoto, 2001) For example, Asian students, especially younger ones, are quite shy about speaking English in the classroom. It's not the teacher's reaction they dread if they should make a mistake, it's the adverse appraisal of their classmates: "losing face," as it's called, in front of one's

peers is terrifying to them. Thus many students simply will not speak in the classroom, a disaster by definition for a "conversational" course. Closely related is the reluctance of an Asian student to appear as "standing out" from everyone else, especially if this involves seeming to monopolize classroom time by needing special attention, e.g., having to repeat a sentence multiple times before finally getting it right. Using CALL software is a convenient answer to such cultural dilemmas.

With all classmates in the classroom wearing headphones, students know that only the teacher and the computer can hear them…and neither will laugh at errors. A CALL program is infinitely patient: if a student needs to repeat a word 50 times, so be it. And the best CALL software features speech recognition technology that, although far from perfect, offers individualized and instant feedback. These, of course, are highly specific examples, but they illustrate how CALL and indeed all online classroom environments enable teachers to customize instruction according to their students' needs in ways that never would have been possible or even imaginable in the traditional onground classroom (Palloff & Pratt, 2001 and Hanson-Smith, 2000). References have been made elsewhere to the fact that educational technology enables a "leveling of the playing field," i.e., it gives students the ability to prove their understanding of the knowledge as well as demonstrate mastery of the skills in the way(s) appropriate for them. Perhaps more importantly for Asian students is the concept of being able to "express themselves" beyond the standard test: the pride on students' faces as they present, e.g., their individual websites in my classes is enough of a "research result" for me…I will never go back to the standard multiple-choice test as long as I have a say in the matter. Again, every business/technology (or whatever the subject!) class for a non-native speaker is essentially an English class too…what works in an English class will work for other classes…and educational technology WORKS. Nothing else "liberates the creative spirit in Asian students" like the usage of hardware and software in the classroom. (Ng, 2004)

Specific Principle #4: CALL has the current and especially the future potential for

being the ultimate means of facilitating learning via activities (games, tasks, etc.) that engage the learner in the learning process.

The TESOL classes taught in the WLI CALL Center were, by necessity, adaptations of existing courses, although the conventional wisdom re: such curriculum design maintains that it's better to "start from scratch" in such environments. A gradual change was deemed necessary not only for the comfort of WLI students, but our teachers as well. Asian school cultural norms dictate that a teacher is in charge of a lesson's presentation and progression: students are often "lost" without such an authority figure. This is one of the reasons why teachers aren't considered obsolete despite the fact that students can buy the language learning software used in the CALL classroom! Over time, WLI will be expanding its course repertoire by offering classes that are conducted mostly online, i.e., both teachers and students will need to adjust to an even more dramatic power transfer from teacher to student.

If everyone involved in such a paradigm shift is prepared and trained properly for the changes involved, it should go smoothly. The primary change in, e.g., an Asian student's view is that s/he will be more involved or engaged in making choices re: how s/he is going to learn something; from a teacher's perspective, s/he will evolve into more of a facilitator than leader (Palloff & Pratt, 2001 and Hanna, et al., 2000). Enjoying the benefits of such change doesn't necessarily have to wait for the future, however. Many of the requirements needed for a student to be truly engaged in the learning process are met by the average computer game or other activity related to the subject being studied. For CALL classes, numerous multimedia games and other programs are available that present a student with multiple "paths" s/he can choose. Even the simplest CALL software offers a choice of lessons that can vary according to students' group and/or individual interests and/or needs. With a clear understanding of the goals or objectives for a particular language unit, advanced students can actually design, complete and even assess/evaluate their own language learning activities (Lynch, 2001 and Palloff & Pratt, 2001 and Hanson-Smith, 2000). Ultimately,

Woosong and other international schools will no doubt wish to design, develop and deliver its own software for business and/or technology training. Teaching students how to, e.g., use Word to write business letters is certainly practical but hardly entertaining or even engaging for very long periods of time. I along with potential colleagues around the world are in the process of "sketching out" a wide variety of futuristic "scenario-based," virtual-reality-type programs that will revolutionize the ways we prepare students for dealing not only with the academic environment but the "real world" beyond it. It's the student participation in the learning process that makes the difference…and simulations, drills, performance support systems, "open-ended learning" experiences…I could go on…educational technology will ultimately make anything and everything possible (Alessi & Trollip, 2001).

Specific Principle #5: Computer usage in TESOL helps both students and teachers in a variety of ways, not all directly related to language learning/teaching.

Korea, e.g., is rife with unemployed college graduates who, proficient if not fluent in English, were never taught to do anything practical with the language. It seems that the ranks of TESOL teachers suffer from an overabundance of literature and drama majors; Asian employers tend to be totally unimpressed by an applicant's ability to analyze a plot or recite a play. Ask an average IBD freshman classroom's students how many of them know how to use a computer at the beginning of a semester and they'll all raise their hands. Ask how many can use, e.g., an Office application such as Word to write a letter and the small number of respondents will be shocking to the newly-arrived NEST.

Again, recruiters overwhelmingly don't require "Doom"-playing skills within their organizations. Many programs can be considered CALL and using them in the language classroom helps TESOL students in a wide variety of practical ways, but two of the less obvious include the increased proficiency at solving problems and the advancement of independent thinking. Such progress can be used as the catalyst for a

more satisfying/rewarding educational experience re: all subjects (Palloff & Pratt, 2001). The benefits of attaining and applying increased computer skills can also benefit teachers beyond the obvious blessing of continued employment. One of the reasons many students are handicapped re: their potential range of English usage is that NESTs have up until now been primarily relegated to teaching the language as an end in itself. The demand for English instructors is simply too overwhelming for the number of NESTs here: there's no remaining bandwidth for instructors to handle other subjects, not in the traditional onground classroom environment. One of the major advantages offered by CALL and other technological advances is that they enable one teacher's expertise to be accessible by larger numbers of students, e.g., an Internet-based writing class. Another benefit follows from the teacher role shift from expert to facilitator. Instead of being limited to teaching English using standard English textbooks, "layperson" instructors could teach any number of subjects in English: business, architecture, even medicine (Lynch, 2001 and Hanna, et al., 2000). Asian students if nothing else are definitely practical re: their choice of schools, subjects, etc. They want JOBS…Korea's workplace, e.g., features a tightly competitive employment market, but even it is mild compared to China's. Knowing English and computers are two of the key factors that practically guarantee if not the perfect career, at least a satisfactory one.

One of the primary reasons Asian students welcome the usage of computers in school is that they view such activities as being practically applicable to their futures. The same goes for English studies as well, so naturally learning how to use hardware and software in English is more valuable, even essential (Ng, 2004). Meanwhile, the shortage of teachers in general in countries like the USA means that international schools around the world are going to find meeting NEST staffing requirements extremely difficult for the foreseeable future, and "NESTs are the best," re: teaching English both as an end in itself and a means to an end, as this paper and other research point out. Even under the best of conditions, convincing, e.g., a tenured professor with a family, home, etc., in the USA to uproot himself and come to Korea or China is

often hard if not impossible. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, experience has shown that Asian students tend to appreciate more a teacher's ability to communicate effectively versus insisting upon certain academic or other credentials. Perhaps training talented English teachers to serve as instructors for other subjects will open entirely new career paths for such professionals, which will naturally benefit students proportionately.

Conclusion

For Asian international school students studying subjects in English, language instruction never really stops: it's an important, constant consideration regardless of major, subject, etc. Ideally such students would attend a semester-long academic English preparation program before they would be allowed to join the rest of the student population, but for various reasons this is not going to be feasible at every institution. Whether or not such a program exists, English instruction is inevitably an ongoing process and following TESOL guidelines throughout will serve both teachers and students well. In general, Business and Technology Teaching In English is new ground to cover for schools in Asia, but luckily the principles of TESOL, both CALL-generic and CALL-specific, can and should be applied to all instruction, whether English is a means to an end or an end in itself. CALL is the best way to do TESOL with Asian students, and so using educational technology is the best way to teach them every other subject in English. My research efforts are continuing in several areas: sheltered instruction; creating special in-house software for teaching/training students/instructors; devising evaluation criteria for establishing "basic applications" re: educational technology; and evaluating the success/failure of educational technology in general.

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