

INVESTIGATING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

Edited by
Mirosław Pawlak

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
I. TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS AND LEARNERS	
1. Richard Kiely – <i>The purpose, promise and potential of teacher research</i>	11
2. Danuta Gabryś-Barker – <i>The research orientation and preferences of pre-service EFL teachers</i>	31
3. Anne Margaret Smith – <i>TEFL training for inclusive classrooms</i>	49
4. Meg Cassamally – <i>Fostering teacher development through online reflectivity: A study of teacher trainees at the University of Siena</i>	61
II. TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGE FORMS	
1. Jan Majer – <i>Negotiation of form in foreign-language classroom discourse</i>	79
2. Alan Fortune – <i>Collaborative focus on form: What, why, when and how?</i>	95
3. Mirosław Pawlak – <i>Advanced learners' use of strategies for learning grammar: A diary study</i>	109
4. Carol Griffiths and Zhou Chunhong – <i>Researching error correction in China: Procedure, product and pitfalls</i>	127
5. Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak – <i>The use of grammar learning strategies among secondary school students</i>	139
6. Agnieszka Pietrzykowska – <i>The effectiveness of focus on forms vs. focus on form in teaching English quantifiers</i>	149
7. Mahmood Mehrabi – <i>Vocabulary learning and retention: The usefulness of pre-reading and during-reading questions in EFL classes</i>	159
8. Marta Rominięcka – <i>Teaching pronunciation to adult learners: The advantages of explicit training</i>	169
9. Magdalena Wrembel – <i>In search of effective strategies for L2 pronunciation teaching and learning</i>	179
III. ISSUES IN TEACHING LANGUAGE SKILLS	
1. Bogusława Whyatt – <i>Bilingual knowledge and interlingual skills: A discussion of the benefits of translation tasks for second language learners</i>	197
2. Magdalena Trepczyńska – <i>Readers, reviewers, and revisers: L2 writers' strategies in providing and acting upon peer feedback</i>	211

3. Abbas Eslami Rasekh – *ESP writing for tourism: A genre-based approach in teaching writing to Iranian university students* 223
4. M. Naci Kayaoğlu – *Exploring the potential benefits of using on-line tools (weblog-forums) in a writing course in EFL settings* 239
5. Ali Şükrü Özbay and M. Naci Kayaoğlu – *What do tertiary level EFL writing teachers say but fail to do when providing feedback?* 251
6. Siân Morgan – *The space between 'yes' and 'no': How Italian students qualify and boost their statements* 267

IV. LEARNER FACTORS

1. Martine Derivry-Plard – *Students' representations of native speaker teachers of FL* 281
2. Gülşen Musayeva Vefali – *Do we know our language learners?* 293
3. Mahmet Kiliç and Berrin Uçkun – *Listening anxiety and the effect of text type on its occurrence* 307
4. Noreen Caplan-Spence – *English as an additional language or/and special educational needs?* 323

V. SYLLABUSES, RESOURCES AND EXAMINATIONS

1. Melanie Ellis – *Design and evaluation of a task-based syllabus for developing speaking skills* 333
2. Marek Derenowski – *The place of the target language culture in the language classroom: A few modest proposals* 347
3. Berrin Uçkun and Sevgin Ersürmeli – *The negative washback effect of a high-stakes EFL examination on the English teaching practices in high schools* 357
4. Bartosz Wolski – *Towards a perfect educational American Studies Web site: The usability of American History online resources to EFL learners* 373
5. Dawn Perkins – *Expertise in ELT textbook writing: What a case study of an experienced materials designer at work can reveal about materials development* 387

INTRODUCTION

When language teachers are acquainted with the findings of cutting-edge research in the field of second or foreign language acquisition, many of them just shrug their shoulders or simply ignore them with a wave of a hand, apparently thinking there is nothing researchers can tell them about effective teaching practice that they would not already know themselves. By the same token, there are far too many scholars who refuse to take seriously the findings of the research projects that practitioners conduct in their own classrooms, pointing to insufficient scientific rigor, lack of generalizability, failure to employ adequate statistical tools and many other flaws. While such sentiments are indicative of the somewhat inevitable rift between theory and research, on the one hand, and the actual act of teaching, on the other, they also point to the pressing need to bring the worlds of researchers and practitioners closer together. This is precisely the goal that IATEFL Research Special Interest Group has been vigorously pursuing for many years and, among the numerous activities it engages in, it is undoubtedly its annual conference devoted to different aspects of research into English language learning and teaching that serves this purpose particularly admirably. In October 2007 the event was held in Poland, being organized by the Department of Modern Languages of the State School of Higher Professional Education in Konin in cooperation with the English Department of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts of Adam Mickiewicz University in Kalisz. Its theme was *Exploring English Language Learning and Teaching*, it attracted almost 70 researchers and practitioners from across the world, and provided a forum for almost 40 presentations reporting the findings of various empirical investigations.

The present volume contains a selection of 28 papers delivered during the conference, with its diversity and scope testifying to the complexity, potential and robustness of research studies addressing different aspects of learning and teaching English as a foreign and second language. Even a cursory look at the contributions included in the publication will show that the authors chose to address a variety of issues, many of which are of immediate relevance to practitioners, embrace quite diverse research methodologies, employ a whole gamut of data collection instruments and use sometimes quite disparate analytical tools. Valuable as such diversity is in demonstrating the multifaceted nature of the field as well as highlighting the need to adjust research procedures to the object of investigation, it also posed a formidable challenge to the editor whose first task was to divide the contents in such a way that the book would be coherent, self-contained and easy to use. In the end, following much deliberation, hesitation and consultation, with the invaluable help from the reviewer, a decision was made to divide the volume into five parts, each containing articles with a similar focus, arranged according to their theme rather than the names of the contributors.

Part I, entitled *Teachers as researchers and learners*, brings together four papers by Richard Kiely, Danuta Gabryś-Barker, Anne Margaret Smith and Meg Cas-samally, all of which deal with different aspects of teacher professional de-velopment. Part II, *Teaching and learning language forms*, the longest in the col-lection, contains nine articles seeking to determine the ways in which teach-ers as well as learners can make the acquisition of grammatical, lexical and phonological elements more effective, with contributions by Jan Majer, Alan Fortune, Mirosław Pawlak, Susan Griffiths and Zhou Chunhong, Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak, Agnieszka Pietrzykowska, Mahmood Mehrabi, Mar-ta Rominiecka and Magdalena Wrembel. Part III, in turn, entitled *Issues in teaching language skills*, shifts the focus to the skills of reading, writing and translation, and includes six contributions by Bogusława Whyatt, Magdalena Trepczyńska, Abbas Eslami Rasekh, M. Naci Kayaoğlu, Ali Şükrü Özbay and M. Naci Kayaoğlu, and Siân Morgan. In Part IV, *Learner factors*, the reader will find four articles by Martine Derivry-Plard, Gülşen Musayeva Vefali, Mehmet Kiliç and Berrin Uçkun, and Noreen Caplan-Spence, all of which adopt a learner-centered perspective, seeking to examine the impact of beliefs, motivation, anxiety and learning disorders on the process of lan-guage learning. Finally, Part V, entitled *Syllabuses, resources and examinations*, features five articles concerning the organization and evaluation of the learn-ing process, contributed by Melanie Ellis, Marek Derenowski, Berrin Uçkun and Sevgin Ersürmeli, Bartosz Wolski and Dawn Perkins.

In conclusion to this introduction, it is only fitting to acknowledge the assistance and dedication of all of those without whom the volume would not have taken its present shape and the IATEFL Research SIG event would not have turned out to be such a success. First and foremost, my thanks go to all the conference presenters and then contributors to this edited collection who were at pains to adhere to all the deadlines and submission guidelines, and re-sponded promptly to all my requests for adjustments and modifications. I am truly indebted to the reviewer, Professor Hanna Komorowska, without whose profound experience, remarkable expertise and useful suggestions it would have been exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to attain the degree of clarity and coherence the volume now has. I am no less grateful to my friends and col-leagues in the English Department of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts of Adam Mickiewicz University in Kalisz who volunteered to proofread the final version of the book before it went to the printer's, detecting many of the spel-ling errors, technical problems and other inaccuracies that had escaped my at-tention. There are also those who assisted me in the organization of the event and, here, my first debt of gratitude is to Doctor Simon Borg, the coordinator of IATEFL Research SIG who trusted in our ability to hold a successful confe-rence, aided me with all the technicalities and spared no effort to help me re-view speaker proposals and draw up the final program. The conference surely could not have taken place without the wholehearted support of my colleagues from the Department of Modern Languages of the State School of Higher

Professional Education in Konin who saw to it that everything went exactly according to plan. I am also grateful to the students of English who invested their time and energy in organizing the event and did their utmost to assist the participants from abroad whatever the problem they might have encountered. It is my genuine belief that the conference was an enriching experience for both its organizers and participants, and that this volume will have a role in bridging the gap between research and pedagogy, and that it will contribute to enhancing the quality of second and foreign language education.

Mirosław Pawlak

Part I

TEACHERS AS
RESEARCHERS AND LEARNERS

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THE PURPOSE, PROMISE AND POTENTIAL OF TEACHER RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore three aspects of teacher research – purpose, promise and potential – from different perspectives. First, I review some of the dominant discourses of research in the language teaching and learning field, with particular attention to how teachers are positioned by and involved in the enterprise of understanding and explaining learning and teaching phenomena. Second, I set out particular features of current research activity in our field which constitute both an opportunity and a framework for teacher research. Third I examine the nature of teacher research, drawing on my own experience as a teacher researcher, and considering the context of study for research degrees, and recent publications in the ELT field. In the final section, I discuss what these recent changes mean for teachers and teacher researchers.

1. Introduction

In this paper I map out some key aspects of the role of research in the policy and practice aspects of the English Language Teaching (ELT) field. My argument in a nutshell is that the time is right for a major contribution to the knowledge base of ELT from teacher research. I start with a review of the development of wider discourses in foreign or second language pedagogy. I then examine four features of the current situation, all of which suggest a need for teacher research. I then consider what teacher research looks like, in terms of how it is approached, and how it is written up. My concern here is not to look at it in deficit terms, that is, how it falls short of what other people consider research to be. To do this, I set out Hilary's story, the plans of a doctoral student of mine a few years ago. And I will look at three recent pub-

lications of teacher research. From this analysis I will suggest some lines of development, so that the relationships between research and teaching are better understood and in practice, constitute a better balance of investment and return than is now the case. In this article, I will refer to both research and evaluation, the knowledge building practices in our field, sometimes separately, emphasising where these are different in purpose and nature, and sometimes together, emphasising where these activities share key features.

2. The reconstruction of teaching

I take as my starting point a key moment in global politics 50 years ago – the launch of the first satellite into space on 4 October 1957. This was a scientific and technological achievement of the USSR, and sent shockwaves through the other cold warrior, the US. One outcome of this was a major rethink of educational policy and practice in the US, with a key focus on effectiveness in educational processes. This led to a huge increase in educational research and programme evaluation in the US, with a particular emphasis on science and technology aspects of school and college curricula.

This growth in research into teaching and learning, in a range of evaluation frameworks, soon embraced foreign language teaching. This field in the late 1950s and early 1960s was being buffeted by a new set of ideas from the emerging field of Applied Linguistics and the decline of innovations based on Behaviourism, and inspired by novel thinking in Philosophy of Mind and Linguistics led by Chomsky. In policy and practice terms in FL teaching, the outcome was a recognition of theoretically different approaches to learning and teaching, which called for the elaboration of methods and the empirical testing of these (see Beretta 1992 for an account of these evaluations).

This approach to developing instructional policy and method was a major change in the foreign language teaching field in three ways:

- (1) It marked the end of a teaching expertise based on craft knowledge distilled and honed from long experience in classrooms, the end of principles and the beginning of a new theory and practice dispensation.
- (2) This represented a shift in the locus of knowledge construction about teaching and learning languages from the classroom, the domain of the teacher, to the academy, the domain of the researcher.
- (3) It represented an industrialisation of our field, and a new hierarchy of roles, with researchers developing the theory, and generating technologies for the classroom from this; and teachers as technicians.

These three related changes were successful during the second half of the 20th century because of two additional factors. First, the role of technology established the development of key tools in language teaching which were not generated by the expertise of the individual teacher. This technology in its first phase was the language laboratory of the 1960s, inspired by behaviourist audio-lingualism, and was destined to somewhat limited success.

But the genie was out of the bottle: technology had a role to play, and finding it was not, or at least has turned out not to be, the business of the teacher. Second, FL teaching, particularly English language teaching, became big business for publishers, and they sought to provide a more complete package to support the work of the teacher. So instead of a coursebook like Thomson and Martinet's *A Practical English Grammar* (1960), which essentially set out on paper the linguistic analysis which underpinned the language teacher's expertise, and left it to the teacher to develop classroom activities from this, the publishers offered us a pre-processed teaching resource, ready for 'delivery' by the teacher. An early example was *Streamline English*, first published in 1978, and quickly followed by the *Strategies* series and many others. These books were in colour, and had an eye-catching magazine rather than academic book format. They scoped the content, sequenced the syllabus, and detailed the activities which shaped the classroom process. The basic coursebook was augmented by audio (and later video) material, workbooks, tests, readers, etc.

These developments in materials helped teachers, but had two additional impacts:

- (1) They connected directly with learners, in ways Thomson and Martinet did not, and thus marginalised the teacher's role in the process of learning.
- (2) They introduced the notion of fun into the classroom, establishing the idea that foreign language learning should be recreational rather than hard work, and thus further developed the notion of teacher as entertainer and animator, rather than teacher as intellectual and creator of access to knowledge.

In this critical history of FL language teaching, the FL teacher is transformed from expert in a complex craft-type profession, to a technician, delivering programmes created by remote researchers and technologists, and ensuring this delivery involves play and amusement.

In my own experience of language classrooms, from the 1950s primary school classrooms where I learnt Irish as a second language, to more recent activity as an English language teacher and teacher educator in the university sector, this critical history is borne out. Until the late 1970s the teacher was central in the classroom and teaching learning process. Then the teacher was marginalised, figuratively as described above, and literally in terms of groupwork in the communicative classroom. I remember some years ago in a teacher education programme in Ealing, discussing with trainees what the teacher should do when the students were doing groupwork. The issue came down to either moving to the side and looking out the window (but surreptitiously listening and making mental notes for the feedback session), or silently (and menacingly) peering over shoulders, and intervening to correct or direct. Both options were unsatisfactory: they neither connected with what trainees' views of the teacher role involved, nor with what students

wanted – they will also opt for a more teacher-fronted classroom process, a view which derives from the social nature of the teacher identity, and the expertise assumed in this, and from a value for money perspective – they are paying for teaching and talking to other students while the teacher gazes out of the window is not part of this.

3. The current situation in ELT

In recent decades, further cracks have appeared in the *teaching-as-delivery* model. What language learning researchers have discovered has not been robust enough to definitively shape, or re-shape the teacher's work. Recommendations from Applied Linguistics research are typically set out using modals such as 'may', 'might', 'could', etc. This territory has already been mapped out in Mitchell and Myles (1998) and Lightbown and Spada (1999), and it is increasingly clear that teaching involves much more than facilitating the natural process of language learning. And what comes from the technologists, for example, the publishers, always needs adaptation, but is not easy to adapt. This is true of many commercially successful coursebooks, and even more so of their electronic counterparts: for a host of reasons language teaching resources on websites and CDs are difficult for teachers to work with.

We are now at a point where a new dispensation in FL teaching is required. This dispensation is already taking shape and teacher research is already a key part of it. I will return to the nature of teacher research as it has evolved later in the paper. First, though, I set out four key parameters, four features of current conditions which may illuminate the way forward, and which collectively promote the idea and practice of teacher research. These are:

- (a) Language teaching as a context of distributed expertise.
- (b) New understanding of the complexity of teaching.
- (c) Syllabus design and programme evaluation: effectiveness and variability in language teaching.
- (d) Effectiveness – methodological perspectives.

3.1. Language teaching as a context of distributed expertise

Researchers in Applied Linguistics and other fields, materials developers, policy makers and quality managers as well as teachers have a contribution to make to the task of devising better and more effective programmes. While researchers may contribute in terms of universals, teachers and others can address local characteristics of programmes, thus sharing in the knowledge construction which shapes our field. Two examples from 'conventional' research in Applied Linguistics which should be central to increased effectiveness of FL programmes are the work on Task-based Learning (TBL) (Skehan 1998; Ellis 2003), and Processing Instruction (PI) (Van Patten

2002). These have had a high profile in the research literature but are actually difficult to find in professional domains such as FL teacher education courses, coursebooks and actual classroom practice. TBL is based on language learning through communication, particularly output, and describes a learning trajectory along three clines: accuracy, fluency and complexity. PI also takes communication as a goal, but focuses on comprehension, particularly the processing of grammatical features to understand the precise message. It emphasises linguistic puzzles constructed around the natural redundancy of language in use.

In both cases, the research programme has required operationalisation as an instructional technique which can then be analysed and measured. These techniques do not derive from the practice of teachers. Second, they describe and analyse chunks of the classroom process of between 5-20 minutes. Teachers work with much more extended periods of time – lessons of up to 3 hours, courses lasting weeks, semesters, years. Research on language learning within the TBL and PI frameworks contributes to the knowledge base for such programmes, by informing through close micro-analysis how interactions work to promote learning. But there is more knowledge building required in order for these techniques to connect with the teacher's task – the role of the teacher, sequencing the syllabus, maintaining engagement or assuring quality of the overall learning experience.

Direction for the teacher also comes from domains other than research: quality assurance, for example, where the shape of the FL programme is prescribed and monitored by government, by institutional committees, or by external accrediting bodies, such as the British Council and BALEARP in the UK context, ACTFL in the US, and EAQUALS in the European context. The next point focuses on the key role of teaching in constructing this knowledge.

In terms of this distributed expertise we have something of an imbalance to be redressed. The weighty consideration accorded to the achievements of language learning research, the development of materials, and the overall quality management of programmes needs to be complemented by expertise on teaching, so that the particular contribution of the teacher is not subsumed by the quality assuring body, the coursebook, or techniques from the research domain.

3.2. New understanding of the complexity of teaching

Teachers are never just 'delivering' the curriculum, they are creating it. There are two ways in which the teacher's personal, dynamic and creative contributions can be explored: first, at the level of participation in micro-interactions in the classroom, and, second, in terms of constructing a whole programme – syllabus design, which I will return to in 3.3. below. In relation to understanding classroom interaction from a teaching perspective, three

studies in particular suggest that teachers' interpretations and decisions are central in the enterprise of understanding the potential of the programme as a learning experience. Breen et al. (2001: 472) develop the notion of *teaching principles* as "reasons teachers give for particular techniques that they adopted during language lessons [which] revealed a set of guiding principles that appeared to be shared across the group". Their analysis shows that we do not have either an exclusive content (i.e. language) or student focus, but rather a dynamic balancing of these two dimensions of the teaching task. This study complements analyses in Woods (1996) and Kiely (2001) which show that teachers' methodological decision making, i.e. *how* to teach, is shaped by the unfolding classroom interaction.

Richards (2006) explores one way in which such decision-making can be understood through an identity-oriented analysis of classroom interaction. He sets out a framework from Zimmerman (1998) which has three aspects of identity (adapted from Richards 2006: 60):

- (1) *Discourse identity*, which relates to the sequential development of the talk as participants engage as 'current speaker', 'listener', 'questioner', etc.
- (2) *Situated identity*, which refers to alignment to the identities of 'teacher' and 'student'.
- (3) *Transportable identity*, which refers to identities from the social world beyond the classroom which can be introduced – claimed for oneself or assigned to another – into the classroom discourse to add a dimension to the situated identity above, and thus alter the character of classroom talk.

Richards' analysis is important in two ways for our understanding of language teaching, particularly in the context of language programme evaluation: teachers (and indeed students) can manage identities, for example, introduce transportable identities, in the classroom discourse, and the language programme as a whole, which makes that classroom a uniquely engaging (or disengaging) set of learning opportunities. Second, teachers are likely to do this identity work to add value to the programme: to enliven, to engage, to defy the tedium of the predicted and the planned.

The dynamic nature of Breen et al.'s pedagogic principles, and the identity work that Richards describes might be viewed as attempts to relieve what Rampton (1999) refers to as *the dull referentiality of school* (1999: 335). Rampton is developing a critique of conventional second language teaching based on Bernstein's notion of ritual. The ritualistic, routine aspects of a language programme, such as grammar drills, or teachers correcting students' work, may be meaningful because participants see them as valid activities and invest time and effort in them. Changes may therefore be viewed as diminution of opportunities for learning and may be difficult to achieve consensually, effectively and quickly. The Rampton analysis reminds us of the limited scope teachers may have to shape the programme process, and

develop the creative learning spaces which characterise language learning opportunities in classrooms and programmes.

These analyses illustrate the complexity of the teacher's work: they combine personal-biographical and institutional-historical factors and competing forces of creativity and compliance, which teachers harness for learning in the dynamic spaces of the FL classrooms; that is, to engage learners, to sustain motivation and enthusiasm, so that the learners develop a sense of trajectory, a sense that they are progressing, that they can achieve, but have not yet done so.

3.3. Syllabus design and programme evaluation: Effectiveness and variability in language teaching

While my last point focused on micro-units of teaching – the nature and impact of classroom interactions – this section looks at the larger units, that is, the planning decisions both initially as the programme is constructed, and subsequently, for development and improvement. Syllabus design relates to the organisation of FL programmes, in terms of content type and sequencing, teaching and learning activities, and formative and summative assessment procedures. Programme evaluation is the process of determining the effectiveness of decisions taken and designs implemented in relation to these areas (Kiely and Rea-Dickins 2005; Norris 2006). In the last decade or so there has been renewed interest in syllabus design, particularly teacher-designed syllabuses (Graves 1996; Nunan and Lamb 1996; Murphy and Byrd 2001). This trend reflects the reality that teaching is not delivery, but a series of decisions and actions which are responsive and creative. Programme evaluation, which involves both individual teachers and the team or institution which 'own' a programme, can constitute a form of knowledge construction, particularly on how the jigsaw fits together. Arguably, much of the experienced teacher's expertise is in this area, so that the external syllabus works in tandem with the internal syllabus. Programme evaluation studies which, as we shall see later, constitute a substantial part of teacher research have an important role in mapping the effectiveness of particular series of activities that teachers construct for their classrooms.

A key issue in programme effectiveness is *variability*: a programme of learning activities will work for some and not for others. There are two approaches to managing this naturally-occurring variability. First, a managerial approach where changes are made in the programme to push up the percentage of students reaching a certain threshold, for example, the proportion of students achieving a certain level in an assessment framework. Second, we can examine the nature of variability of progress in learning, and perhaps take a critical view of both the construction of our understanding of variability and the factors which influence it. Both processes here can and should

involve teachers, in a combination of general programme evaluations and more focused research studies.

A recent study – conventional, though arguably not conventional SLA, research – by Diane Larsen Freeman has raised the profile of variability in learning a foreign language. Her findings, that when experiencing similar learning activities and opportunities some learners learn a lot and others do not, will not be a revelation to teachers. However, the programme of further research which she maps out might be taken as an opportunity for teachers to establish a conceptual basis for enquiry which connect with their pedagogical concerns.

We need to look at the ‘messy little details’ that make up the ‘here and now’ of real time. We need to take into account learners’ goals and intentions. We need to consider the tasks that we ask them to perform and to consider each performance anew – stable and predictable in part, but at the same time, variable, flexible, and dynamically adapted to fit the situation. The messiness is not ‘noise’, but rather a natural part of dynamically emergent behaviour assembled by the individual with a dynamic history of engaging in such tasks, with his or her own self-identified (or jointly identified) target of opportunities for growth (Larsen-Freeman 2006: 615).

The Larsen Freeman focus is on the student, and on what she terms *emergent-ism* in language learning. However, it inevitably incorporates the nature of planned learning opportunities, and the factors in these which facilitate engagement and learning. This perspective acknowledges the complexity of teaching, and, I argue, teachers and teacher research, including evaluation of tasks, activities, materials and syllabus components have an important role to play. My next point examines recent research method developments relevant to language teaching and learning and which in many ways parallel the conceptual agenda set out by Larsen Freeman, Breen et al. and Richards above.

3.4. Effectiveness – methodological perspectives

We are in a post pre- and post-test epistemological environment. To determine, measure and understand effectiveness of language programmes, it is no longer enough to test before and test after and pronounce on effectiveness as a function of the difference. Measures of learning outcome are a starting point rather than a full account. The key issues to inform on are the processes of learning, and fortunately for this task the methodological armoury is well-stocked. My own experience as a researcher of programmes in which I also had a teaching role provides in Table 1 a snapshot view of the methodological strategies which teachers can use to document teaching and learning processes.

The purpose, promise and potential of teacher research

Study	Research strategy
Integrated Area Studies and EFL (Clark et al. 1996).	Student self report, interview.
Programme evaluation in English for academic purposes (EAP) (Kiely 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006).	Ethnographic observation, interviews and document review.
Teachers into researchers (TIR) (Kiely 2004, 2007).	Interviews, documentation review (assignments and dissertations).
Student identity learning and progression (SILP) (Rea-Dickins et al. 2007).	Interviews, diaries, narrative workshops.
Socialisation and identity in learning in applied linguistics (SAIL) (Kiely and Askham 2007).	Interviews, ejournals, narrative workshops, documentation review (student assignments).

Table 1: Examples of qualitative teacher research strategies.

Four points about the research designs and methods of these studies relate to key features of teacher research.

- (1) The sample in each case is cohort-size, a group of a size that a teacher might engage with as a class. This means that the interpersonal knowledge aspects of the research align nicely with the social aspect of teaching.
- (2) The methods listed above are mainly representative of the qualitative resources the researcher can call on. This is not a philosophical or ideological position but, rather, a function of two features: what is involved in documenting learning processes in engagement with natural, non-recurring phenomena, and, second, the sample size means that a probing case study analysis is more appropriate than a survey which aims for breadth of coverage rather than depth. However, quantitative data from assessments, or ratings from evaluation questionnaires are also used in many of these studies.
- (3) These studies have a longitudinal dimension. The research is organised to represent learning over the programme period – a term, a semester, a year. The calendar structures our work as teachers, and while we can easily recognize that this structuring may map only vaguely onto learning, it can be a source of insight that the teacher can bring to the research process.
- (4) These studies have all emerged from an assumption I as a teacher found myself working with: for example, the TIR study came from the idea that teachers becoming researchers in the learning context of a Masters in TESOL was a smooth learning trajectory; the SILP study emerged from concerns about the consequential validity of the IELTS test as a gateway to university study in British universities. These starting points can prove enduring signposts in the research process. What Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as *tacit*

knowledge and *human instrument* in the research process can be a particular quality, even advantage, which the teacher researcher brings to an enquiry.

In summary then there is a need for knowledge-building in our field, and current understanding of the complexity of both learning and teaching, and increasing acceptance of a range of research designs and methodological options suggest that the time is right for teacher research. This is already happening: in the next section I set out two contexts of this research which illustrate what is happening. Then in the final section I identify some key features of teacher research which I see as relevant to understanding its purposes, and realising its promise and potential.

4. The nature of teacher research

4.1. Hilary's story

One of the principal contexts of teacher research involves practising teachers undertaking research or higher degrees. The motivation for this is multi-faceted: a higher degree, such as a masters or increasingly a doctorate can contribute to employment stability, career enhancement, and intellectual and personal stimulation as well as to improved programmes and teaching. The EdD in my own institution, the University of Bristol, is one such programme, and I would like to show how it can respond to these different motivations. I set out a brief case study, rather than a survey to do this: this is a brief account of a prolonged email correspondence with a university teacher of English before she actually joined the programme. The student, a

Hilary's topics for investigation	EdD Unit
1. The value of oral presentation in an EAP programme.	Evaluation of Innovation and Programmes in English Language Education.
2. English in University – balancing academic English and social English.	Analysing language.
3. The Quran for Engineering students – religious/cultural/linguistic aspirations of undergraduates taking elective modules in Arabic.	Narrative and Life Story Research.
4. Plagiarism – theory, policy and student perspectives.	Supervised Individual Study.
5. Feedback models – integrating content and language.	New Directions in Language Testing & Assessment.
6. Seminars in a second language – the experience of international students.	Researching Language Classrooms.
7. Content lecturers' perceptions of the language 'problem' of international students.	Data Collection and Analysis.

Table 2: Teacher research in the context of a professional doctorate programme.

university teacher of English with recent experience in Britain and overseas whom I shall call Hilary had a list of topics for investigation, listed in the left hand column of Table 2. We worked out which courses on our programme might 'host' each investigation, in the right-hand column. These seven units together with a compulsory research training unit, make up the taught element of the programme, which is followed by the serious research, a 45,000 word dissertation.

There are three important points to take from this account:

- (1) The Bristol programme is not unique – many universities, particularly Education Departments, have professional doctorate programmes where teachers can interrogate their practice through assignments based on research studies.
- (2) The research starting point is in the teacher's practice, typically a problem or puzzle as Allwright (2003) puts it. A teacher in any context is likely to have a number of such issues which could serve as platforms for investigation. The doctoral programme context can ensure that the investigations are effective: the problem is conceptually framed, so that the view of learning and the factors which facilitate or impede it are clear, and thus the platform is shared by others. As McDonough and McDonough (1990: 108) observe:

Research is a learnable skill, but a different one from teaching. If teachers need to be truly involved in research, they need training in how to formulate researchable questions. This is as much a matter of analytical thought as it is of technical know-how (...) To formulate a researchable question means finding a way of expressing a problem of general interest in terms of a feasible method of gathering and analysing data in a particular situation (...) such skills require the adoption of a research stance by teachers.

- (3) Hilary can develop these studies as sense-making of the status quo, or development and implementation of pedagogic interventions. Both approaches are important in teacher research, but the latter – research documenting the process and impact of teacher-developed interventions – is particularly important in furthering our understanding of the complexity of teaching, and in teachers understanding how their teaching relates to research. Two voices from the TIR project illustrate different aspects of this relationship. Grace illustrates a capacity for analysis and explanation as she relates the argument in the article critiqued (about the 'passivity' of Asian English language learners) to her own experience:

When I read the article I'm a little bit surprised to find that in fact Asian students don't have a different kind of learning attitude. In their mind they don't have different attitudes, but they still behave differently. So I think, if Asian teachers want to

use Western pedagogy, they have to work very hard because it's very difficult to persuade their students to participate as actively as European students. But I think at least they [the authors of the research article] found that they are not different in their mind, the difference is because of the educational system and the culture and traditions (from interview with Grace, TIR Project data).

Hana describes how her research skills will be a way for her to see her practice as a teacher differently:

I think I will be more observant, and will be more confident. I think I will, when I go back to my job again, I will notice: Oh this is a researchable area. I will notice that. When I look back I find there were many chances, I could have carried out some research, but I didn't see them. But I now think I will notice, I will realise there were some aspects to explore (from interview with Hana, TIR Project data).

There are however challenges in this particular induction to research. First, higher degree programmes are demanding and there is a risk that the programme can drain time and energy away from the core business of teachers like Hilary and Hana. This is a professional and ethical concern that teachers and institutions have to engage with. Second, there is the question of whether the research training programme will equip the teacher with the appropriate skills for teacher research. Perhaps Hilary will abandon her teacher stance, and become a language learning researcher? Or what Hana notices will be obscure linguistics problems, distant from teaching? I will return to this issue in the final part of this paper. Third, the development trajectory of a teacher like Hilary learning to research may not be as smooth or direct as we would like. Evidence from the TIR project suggests that due to the learning focus, and probably the historical stratification in our sector, teachers learning to research set aside their teacher identity, insights and expertise, and approach the research learning as students rather than as teachers (Kiely 2004: 8):

The literature review suggested that teachers see themselves as users of research, and so would focus on the findings and recommendations for practice rather than the conceptual framework and nature of data. One reason for this is the identity factor: the participants were reading the studies as students, rather than as teachers or researchers. And as good students do, they focussed on what the assessment criteria require.

4.2. Published teacher research

A research degree programme constitutes a learning experience in research, leading to the next stage, publication of research reports and papers. This represents a sharing of findings, and a contribution to knowledge. Over the last few years, teacher research has gradually become more visible. In 2006

TESOL Inc published three collections of studies, edited by Tom Farrell, and in the case of the Europe book, Simon Borg. This book includes:

- Evaluations of teacher-developed interventions;
- Narratives of learning to research;
- Reflections on the research process.

The principal type of study is the evaluation of an intervention (or series of interventions such as complex syllabus components), developed by the teacher from her analysis of the needs of her learners and the curriculum, which is then linked to the literature – the conventional research in the particular field. This pattern is further reflected in two additional publications I have looked at – the teacher research articles published in the *ELT Journal* 2003 and 2006.

In the tables below two sets of studies are presented in terms of their *research methodology*, that is, the types of data used, and the *focus*, that is the knowledge building which the study engages. A key problem with the analysis is identifying whether the researcher teacher is actually the teacher. My approach is to include a study if the writer states explicitly that she is the teacher, or it can be inferred that she is. Sometimes, the teacher is one of two authors, and occasionally the professional role is not specifically a teacher, but holder of another professional role on the curricular context, such as teacher educator, or programme administrator.

Study	Research methodology	Focus
Banfi, 2003 <i>Portfolios: integrating advanced language, academic and professional skills</i> , pp. 34-42.	Course evaluation using learning journals. Teacher insights.	The implementation and impact of portfolios in EFL.
Celik 2003 <i>Teaching vocabulary through code-mixing</i> , pp. 361-369.	Language analysis (Students' oral and written production). Teacher insights.	The implementation and impact of the use of L1 for teaching vocabulary.
Cotterall and Cohen 2003 <i>Scaffolding for second language writers: Producing and academic essay</i> , pp. 158-166.	Course evaluation. Language analysis (Students' written texts).	The implementation and impact of a scaffolding approach to teaching second language writing (EAP).
Eken 2003 <i>'You've got Mail': A film workshop</i> , pp. 51-59.	Course evaluation (interviews). Teacher insights.	The implementation and impact of tasks and activities for integrating the study of film and the development of language skills.
Hess 2003 <i>Real language through poetry: A formula for meaning making</i> , pp. 19-25.	Course evaluation. Teacher insights.	The implementation and impact of tasks and activities for integrating the study of a poem and the development of language skills.

Ho, Yen-kuang 2003 <i>Audio-taped dialogue journals: An alternative to speaking practice</i> , pp. 269-277.	Course evaluation (interviews, observation, spoken journal entries).	The implementation and impact of audio-recorded spoken journals.
Mennim 2003 <i>Rehearsed oral L2 output and reactive focus on form</i> , pp. 130-138.	Language analysis. Transcriptions of oral presentation rehearsals and oral presentations.	Implementation and evaluation of a rehearsal and transcription strategy.
Miccoli 2003 <i>English through drama for oral skills development</i> , pp. 122-129.	Course evaluation (learners' voices).	Implementation and impact of drama activities as a framework for course design.
Murphy 2003 <i>Task-based learning: The interaction between tasks and learners</i> , pp. 352-360.	Language analysis (tasks for accuracy, fluency and complexity).	Implementation of TBL – the contribution of learners.
Olk 2003 <i>Cultural knowledge in translation</i> , pp. 167-174.	Language analysis (translated texts). Students' think-aloud accounts.	The implementation and impact of translation in culture learning.
Pearson-Casanave 2003 <i>Multiple uses of Applied Linguistics literature</i> , pp. 43-50.	Course evaluation. Textual Analysis.	The implementation and impact of the use of Applied Linguistics academic articles for awareness-raising in EAP.
Smith 2003 <i>Music and mondegreens: Extracting meaning from noise</i> , pp. 113-121.	Language analysis ((mis)transcriptions of song lyrics). Teacher insights.	Strategies for using song lyrics to motivate and develop phonological awareness and listening skills.
Taylor 2003 <i>Using collateral material to improve writing performance</i> , pp. 149-157.	Language analysis (student writing). Evaluation feedback (student reflections).	The implementation and impact of Resource Based Learning in resource-challenged contexts.
Wilson 2003 <i>Discovery listening: Improving perceptual processing</i> , pp. 335-343.	Listening task (text reconstruction). Student evaluation (reflections on listening task).	The implementation and impact of a discovery listening technique.

Table 3: Summary of 13 out of 28 teacher researcher articles in *ELTJ* Volume 57 (2003).

Study	Research methodology	Focus
Arnold 2006 <i>Assessing the quality of mentoring: sinking or learning to swim?</i> , pp. 117-124.	Programme evaluation data (questionnaire, interview, diary, and document analysis).	Validation of an evaluation framework: understanding the nature of quality in a mentoring programme in Oman.
Cots 2006 <i>'Teaching with an attitude': Critical Discourse Analysis in EFL teaching</i> , pp. 336-345.	Teacher's account (with student texts) of a CDA strategy in action in university EFL.	The implementation and impact of a critical component in EFL programmes.
Davies 2006 <i>What do learners really want from their EFL course?</i> , pp. 3-12.	Course evaluation questionnaires, and action on findings.	The overall learning experience of students of English in a Japanese university.
Goh and Taib 2006 <i>Metacognitive instruction in listening for young learners</i> , pp. 222-232.	Perceptions of process-based listening lessons.	The implementation and impact of the application of listening strategies in English as

The purpose, promise and potential of teacher research

		a second language in Singaporean primary schools.
Hirvela 2006 <i>Computer-mediated communication in ESL teacher education</i> , pp. 233-241.	Analysis of postings on a Masters Teacher Education Discussion Board.	The implementation and impact of a CMC component in a programme for teachers.
Mynard and Almarzouki 2006 <i>Investigating peer tutoring</i> , pp. 13-22.	Course evaluation. Questionnaires and interviews.	The implementation and impact of a peer tutoring programme in a UAE university.
Reinders and Lewis 2006 <i>An evaluative checklist for self-access materials</i> , pp. 272-278.	Checklist development through a series of questionnaires.	The validation through engagement with users of SAC evaluation criteria.
Sugita 2006 <i>The impact of teachers' comment types on students' revisions</i> , pp. 34-41.	Analysis of teachers' comments on students' written texts.	The impact of teacher feedback, in terms of uptake and improvement from draft to draft.
Tin 2006 <i>Looking at teaching through multiple lenses</i> , pp. 253-261.	Observation and perceptions of 'demonstration lessons' of trainee English teachers.	The implementation and impact of an innovative 'demonstration lesson' component in an EFL teacher education programme in Thailand.
Timucin 2006 <i>Implementing CALL in an EFL context</i> , pp. 262-271.	Questionnaire study of teachers' attitudes to a CALL component in their EFL programme.	The implementation and impact of a CALL component as an innovation in an EFL programme in a Turkish University.
Williams 2006 <i>Maths in the grammar classroom</i> , pp. 23-33.	Language analysis: shared conceptual relationships between grammar and maths.	The implementation of the use mathematical concepts to teach grammar in adult ESOL in US.

Table 4: Summary of 11 out of 27 teacher researcher articles in *ELTJ* Volume 60 (2006).

I would like to make five points about teacher research from this analysis.

- (1) The particular study type, mentioned above – implementation and impact of a teacher-developed intervention – is also reflected here. Research co-exists with teacher analysis of curriculum needs and teacher creativity in devising appropriate responses.
- (2) The studies reflect the 'class-sized' scope mentioned above: the key research site is the classroom, and the perspective of the researcher is that of the teacher. The methodological orientation parallels this. First, there is extensive use of tasks: the data are generated by the processes and products of classroom learning activities. Second, research techniques such as transcription and think-aloud seem used in a way which enhances learning as well as facilitates the answering of research questions. Third, there is extensive use of teaching artifacts, such as course evaluation data, course and assessment guidelines and learning journals. Fourth, there is a longitudinal dimen-

sion: in most cases the research (like the teaching) is based on course units rather than lessons or tasks within lessons.

- (3) These are evaluation studies, constructing knowledge on effectiveness of particular instructional strategies. Many of these are syllabus design studies: they set out a proposal for a language programme, such as the development of listening or writing skills, or the incorporation of drama, poetry, CALL, or culture as a component in the programme. These accounts are particularly useful as they document the implementation and the positive impact, both in terms of learning, and in terms of the teacher inspiration and motivation.
- (4) The studies are very narrowly teacher-based, with little reference to the wider programme or institutional policy. Graham Crookes, writing about action research, commented (1993: 134):

[Action research] must start with the ideas and concepts of teachers, but it must be recognised that these are quite likely to embody the unexamined assumptions of the school culture which play a role in causing many of the problems which teachers face ('false consciousness'). Consequently, these must be developed through reflection and enquiry.

Teachers may, without engagement with *school culture*, reinforce a view in our field that teachers work in isolation in their classrooms, rather than as part of teams at programme and institutional levels. What we might look to as an outcome of teacher research is an account of impact on teaching policy, an account of how institutions are embracing what teachers demonstrate as possible and effective, and extending that more widely within that particular context. Such a policy link would represent a more graduated dissemination than is envisaged in exploratory practice, action research and evidence-based practice models, where the anticipated dissemination often seems to be from researched classrooms, to classrooms everywhere.

- (5) Many of the studies surveyed above rely on teacher insight as evidence of effectiveness. Cotterall and Cohen illustrate this dynamic fusion of teaching and research (2003: 165):

(...) our most lasting impression of the writing programme is of the excitement with which the learners engaged in the process of collective enquiry. Classes resounded with the learners' efforts at discovering and sharing information, exchanging feedback, and developing confidence in their role as experts.

Miccoli represents the issue here as one of trust (2003: 128):

My students trusted me enough to embark on this experience. I came out of that class as changed as they did. As I reflect, I learned that it

was trust that made learning possible. Had I not trusted that they could do it, and had they not trusted themselves, probably the excerpts would contain different testimonies.

These perspectives could be viewed as problematic bias or advocacy. Miccoli, reflecting on her experience and data, shows awareness of the potential role conflict here (2003: 127):

Did everything work just as wonderfully as I present it: I would dare to say, most of the times – yes.

There is a need for more evidence of effectiveness here. Teachers need to be as creative in research designs and data collection methods as they are in devising solutions to the challenges of their classrooms.

There is also the issue of presentation. The studies reported in *ELT Journal* are brief – there is a strict 4,000 word limit – and in representing the background and rationale for a teacher intervention, its implementation and its evaluation, each writer encounters a formidable challenge. Very often this is not achieved to best effect, leaving the reader feeling confused or missing key elements in the argument for effectiveness. One way for establishing an effective communication channel in any field is *genre*: a text has a structure, which in the abstract, before anything is written or read, establishes a basis for clear communication. We have this for conventional academic articles, particularly strong in the case of scientific articles. A *Readers Respond* item in *ELT Journal* emphasises this point (Lazaraton 2006: 288):

The results that Norton presents are hard to follow, perhaps because the organization of the article does not adhere to the usual introduction – literature review – research questions – method (participants, procedure, analysis) – results – discussion format of a research study. Literature citations appear in the results and the discussion; no explicit research questions are stated; and the method section seems to include the results.

The *Language Teacher Research* series (TESOL) sets out one possible structure:

Issue
Background literature
Procedures
Results
Reflection

This is a useful starting point. It may over-privilege the role of the literature, and insufficiently profile the biographical, historical and institutional roots of the *Issue*, which, as I stated above, are important in taking the impact of teacher research beyond the classroom, and have some impact on policy, on the programme and institution as a whole.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have considered some aspects of a complex issue – teacher research. I have set out what I think is a healthy developing body of activity, which shows that teacher research has a purpose. It is about understanding effectiveness in language teaching – understanding it, providing a framework where it is systematically carried out, and recognising it as an achievement of programmes and of individual teacher creativity and effort.

The promise of teacher research is the connection to the individual teacher, who is striving for effectiveness, and also for inspiration which is both intellectual and constructive of a social interaction in programmes. This may be achieved as in Hilary's case in the supportive environment of a research degree programme, or through collaboration with colleagues in the institution or programme. Either way, the promise relates to recognition, and to an identity which is professional in every sense of the word.

In a context of distributed expertise, the knowledge that shapes policy and practice must harness all types of expertise, so that the ongoing tasks of curriculum and materials design and the preparation of teachers are informed by research on language learning and language use, by the philosophical perspectives which underpin these, and by a theory of teaching which relates these to action in classrooms. That is the potential of teacher research.

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THE RESEARCH ORIENTATION AND PREFERENCES OF PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

The objective of this mini-project is to identify the research areas of interest in EFL methodology for teacher trainees involved in preparing action research (AR) projects as their final diploma requirement to become qualified teachers of EFL. In AR proper (Kemmis and Mc Taggart 1988; Nunan 1992; Burnes 2005) the choice of research area is determined by a diagnosed classroom problem occurring in a defined educational context the teacher-researcher works in. The data collected in this study comes from the preliminary stage of AR project development. The initial stage of topic choice is usually refined later on in the course of project design, preliminary investigation and the initial stages of its implementation in the classroom. In my former study (Gabryś-Barker 2006), this phase was evaluated by the trainees as fairly challenging.

It is believed that the areas of difficulty as exemplified by the choice of the topics made by pre-service teachers highlight these aspects of EFL teaching methodology which probably need to be more focused on or perhaps further developed in the methodology module of teacher training programmes. The final results of the study show that there is a need for the students to search for available literature on the problem areas to become more confident in their classroom behaviours and procedures they implement in their daily teaching practice. It is observed that more emphasis should be placed on teaching practice instruction in respect of the problem areas identified in the study such as, for example, the development of speaking skills and, closely related to it, techniques of teaching FL vocabulary.

1. Introduction

1.1. Teachers' professional development and growth: Focus on reflectivity

Hascher et al. (2004), following other studies, describe teacher development as a three-stage model:

- (1) the survival stage (novice teachers);
- (2) the mastery stage (experienced teachers);
- (3) the routine stage (experienced teachers as educators and pedagogues).

At the the survival stage, the teachers' main focus is: "(...) to plan the lessons, to arrange teaching, to make pupils be quiet, to keep the class interested in the topic, etc. Thus they are simply trying to adapt to the school reality and to become a teacher, the stage which usually lasts about three to five years" (Hascher et al. 2004: 624).

Five years is a long period of time and, if not used effectively and to the teacher's satisfaction, it may lead to either dropping out of the profession or becoming less (if at all) enthusiastic about his/her job and acting more as if merely offering services to clients (learners). Monotony, routine and finally burnout will inevitably result from this. One of the ways of making teaching a job of greater appeal is to make novice (and pre-service teachers) more aware that what happens in the classroom depends mostly on them and not so much on outside conditions, class composition or headmasters' decisions. What happens in the classroom is almost totally dependent on the teacher's actions and his/her rapport with his/her students. Developing awareness of this and the fact that teachers are in fact given a lot of autonomy these days – that they may deploy or not – should be the major concern of teacher training.

In present day approaches to teacher training and its main objectives, language teacher development (Mann 2005: 105):

- (...) values the insider view rather than the outsider view;
- (...) is independent of the organisation but often functioning more successfully with its support and recognition;
- (...) is a continuing process of becoming and can never be finished;
- (...) is a process of articulating an inner world of conscious choices made in response to the outer world of the teaching context;
- (...) is wider than professional development and includes personal, moral and value dimensions;
- (...) can be encouraged and integrated in both training and education programmes.

One buzz phrase that recurs in literature on teacher development based on his/her autonomous actions to become more professional is reflective teaching, i.e. classroom practice based on personal reflection on one's effectiveness in the teaching/learning context. Loughran (1996: 1, quoted in Harrison 2005: 422) refers to reflection as "the purposeful, deliberate act of inquiry into one's

thoughts and actions through which a perceived problem is examined in order that a thoughtful, reasoned response might be tested out”.

Being reflective may be an innate feature of personality observed in one’s daily life and activity, extending as well into a professional context. However, it can also be developed through creation of certain habits at the stage of professional training (as it is in the case of teacher training). If acquired at the pre-service stage, it will become a part of professional routine at the in-service stage. One of the ways of developing reflectivity is action research done by teachers in their own classrooms.

At present the well-established belief concerning the direct relationship between theory and classroom practice is being questioned (Freeman 1996: 89):

Over the years, the dominant conception of the relationship between research and classroom practice has been one of implied transmission. There has been an entrenched, hierarchical, and unidirectional assumption that interpretations developed and explanations posited through research can – and should – influence in some way what teachers understand, and therefore what they do, in their classroom practice. Yet, as we know, this does not happen.

Numerous studies of classroom issues show that teachers’ growth and development do not occur through transmission of knowledge about teaching (methods, strategies, etc.) but through a contextualized and individually experienced process of self-directed reflective instruction. Reflectivity is a complex construct that can be exemplified by its multilevel characteristics (Mezirow 1981). As can be seen from Table 1, each of the levels can be related to the context of the teacher’s growth and development.

Level	Focus	Teacher reflection focus
1. Reflectivity (a general concept)	An awareness of specific perceptions, meanings or behaviour.	Readiness to observe and observation of one’s own teaching context and its effectiveness.
2. Affective reflectivity	The individual’s awareness of feelings about what is being perceived, thought or acted upon.	An ability to describe one’s attitude and personal (affective) involvement in didactic practices.
3. Discriminant reflectivity	Assessing the efficacy of perceptions, thoughts and behaviour.	Being able to discriminate what works and what doesn’t work in different teaching situations.
4. Judgemental reflectivity	An awareness of value judgements made on perceptions, thoughts and behaviour.	Making informed judgements about one’s decisions.
5. Conceptual reflectivity	Assessing the adequacy of the concepts used for the judgement.	Developing understanding of the constructs (variables) and their relevance for a particular teaching context (based on theoretical principles and their adaptation to a given context).

6. Psychic reflectivity	Recognition of the habit of making precipitate judgments on limited information.	Careful analysis of one's observations of teaching practice and taking an individual approach to different teaching situations.
7. Theoretical reflectivity	An awareness that one set of perspectives, e.g. taken for granted practice or culture, may explain personal experience less satisfactorily than another perspective.	Getting acquainted with literature in the field, both in terms of field focus (here: a foreign language) and methodology (didactics) and empirical studies in academic research and their critical evaluation.

Table 1: Levels of reflection in teaching context (expanded from Mezirow 1981: 12-13).

Within these different levels of reflectivity, Mezirow distinguishes between the so-called *consciousness levels* (1-4) and *critical consciousness levels* (5-7). This distinction may be directly related to action research as a form of development of reflectivity in the teaching environment. The preliminary stages of action research, that is diagnosing the classroom problems and identifying the dependent variables resulting in formulation of the research questions or hypotheses operate at the *consciousness level*, whereas the interventive stage of implementation of independent variables in the form of treatment and dissemination of the results and their discussion operate at the *critical consciousness level*.

1.2. *Applied research* versus *basic research*. Action research in an EFL context

Basic research (scientific research) is understood as focusing on (Burns 2005: 60):

objectivity, control and the search of universal truths (...) it could not exist without four major characteristics: control, operational definition, replication and hypothesis testing (...) In contrast to basic research, which is aimed at the development of theory in its own right, the purpose of applied research is to make available the potential to apply theory to practice.

Any research, be it basic or applied research, is based on knowledge. In the professional context of teaching, knowledge includes (Harrison et al. 2005: 421):

- *Propositional ('knowing that') knowledge*: this includes knowledge gained from private sources, personal theories and public sources.
- *Process ('knowing how') knowledge*: which includes acquiring information, skilled behaviour, deliberate processes, such as planning, problem-solving, analysing and evaluating, and controlling personal behaviour.
- *Personal knowledge*: impressions that trigger experiential learning.
- *Moral principles or knowledge*.

One type of applied research is *action research* (AR) in the teaching context understood as: "Teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring about change in classroom practices" (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988). As we know, it has three defining characteristics. It is contextual as it focuses on problems, defines them and finds possible solutions in a specific context: for a given group of learners in a given instructional environment. Action research is also collaborative as it results from cooperation between the teacher and his/her learners and also between teachers and, possibly, teachers and researchers. Its implementation results in change introduced into a given classroom. AR can also be looked upon as a variation of applied research because it (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988: 60):

takes an explicitly interventionist and subjective approach. Because it is centrally situated in the local concerns and problems of the research participants, its aims are to investigate issues of practical importance, using systematic data collection procedures. In addition, action researchers use the findings from the investigations to deliberately change, modify and improve practices.

The *reasons* for developing teacher research as described by Edge (1992) are the following:

- it brings information from the front line so it is relevant to a particular teacher and his/her learners;
- learners are a source of information, that is part of the teaching process (development of learner autonomy);
- it means learning about language learning;
- it means developing one's awareness (both teachers' and learners') of learning and teaching processes;
- it results in classroom change through a decision-making process.

Consequently, the main reasons for carrying out action research projects are: "(...) the promotion of teacher development and his autonomy, thus making him a more aware, effective and successful teacher. The validity of action research is of importance to individual teachers and its results cannot be generalised, but they can be shared and discussed" (Gabryś-Barker 2006: 103).

1.3. Teacher training programmes: The place of action research and its objectives

Teacher training programmes constitute both the basis and opportunity for teacher development. At the level of pre-service, they fulfil the function of "(...) giving guidance to possible pedagogic choices, teaching strategies, L2 methods, course design and course-book materials. This can provide stability and security for new teachers" (Mann 2005: 105). However, this does not seem to be sufficient. The awareness of the need to develop pre-service teach-

ers' reflectivity and reflective teaching requires that action research plays a significant role in relation to various levels of reflectivity to be developed (see Table 1). It can be looked at from the purely didactic perspective but also a personal one. As such, when included in teacher training programmes, it will perform different but complementary functions at the didactic and personal levels of pre-service teacher development. According to Gabryś-Barker (2007), its *didactic dimension* will serve the purpose of:

- (a) making the pre-service teachers (student teachers) aware of their classroom (and out-of-classroom) teaching problems, enabling them to specify the areas of difficulty and pinpoint the variables involved;
- (b) making the students look for available resources in terms of literature on the subject to give them a firm theoretical background in a precisely defined area of interest;
- (c) making the students share problems in discussions and collaborate with their peers in finding solutions to be tried out in their own classrooms.

At the *personal (affective) level* action research will help (Gabryś-Barker 2007):

- (a) to develop student-trainees' enthusiasm for teaching as a challenging experience to prevent routine;
- (b) to create appropriate attitudes towards their role in a classroom (feelings of both responsibility and independence/autonomy);
- (c) to create appropriate attitudes towards the roles of learners in a classroom and their autonomy;
- (d) to open teachers to negotiation with their learners;
- (e) to feel a bond with other novice teachers;
- (f) to develop a special rapport with the learners.

2. The action research cycle: The preliminary stage

2.1. A cycle

Kolb (1984) expresses the view that for learning to be effective it needs to be experiential, i.e. to follow the sequence which leads to knowledge acquisition, from "the stage of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation" (quoted in Harrison 2005: 423). In the context of teacher development this experiential learning will follow a similar sequence of researching one's teaching practices. The research cycle as presented by Nunan (1992: 19) follows the stages of:

- (a) *initiation*: at this stage initial observations of a teacher's classroom context are made and the problem area(s) is (are) defined; also the general topic of the research is formulated;
- (b) *preliminary investigation*: here, the continued observations lead to reflection and identification of possible variables involved in the problem to be investigated; the topic focus is determined;

- (c) *hypothesis*: this stage leads to a formulation of the hypothesis; in other words, a statement expressing the correlation between the variables identified at an earlier stage (to be confirmed in the course of research), or alternatively, a research question is posed;
- (d) *intervention*: at this stage the planning (i.e. selection of data collection tools, their implementation and timing) and execution of the research (i.e. the treatment period, e.g. introduction of new techniques of presentation of material, new materials or classroom management techniques) are carried out;
- (e) *evaluation*: this stage looks critically (reflectively) at the results of intervention and proposes answers to the research questions/confirms or rejects the hypothesis formulated earlier;
- (f) *dissemination*: since a key feature of AR is its collaborative nature, the results obtained should be shared with fellow teachers as well as with the learners, the participants in the project;
- (g) *follow-up*: a very important stage which entails continued reflection on the problems observed and their solutions with a view to introducing other measures if necessary.

The general outline of action research sketched here presents only a framework for the teacher, which can be adjusted in terms of timing and form, depending on the feasibility of implementing it within given teaching constraints such as time, the syllabus, the availability of needed materials, etc., and, most of all, the teacher's urge to implement change in his or her didactic practices.

2.2. Topic selection

In carrying out AR projects the topic selection stage may seem the most obvious and not likely to pose special difficulties for teachers. However, as my previous study shows (Gabryś-Barker 2007), pre-service and novice teachers are inclined to express strongly their insecurity at this stage. Their doubts, however, do not relate to the general choice of the area of research, which would demonstrate their full awareness of challenges they face in their classrooms, but rather relate to how to (Gabryś-Barker 2007: 2):

- (1) bring the research area into focus and define the problem;
- (2) formulate a precise research question/hypothesis;
- (3) design a feasible project, including the time and space available to carry the project out.

These difficulties expressed by the trainees and novice teachers were clearly reflected in the course of the project when necessary adjustments had to be made, even resulting in a change in the project focus. As Wallace (1998: 339) rightly points out:

(...) there is, or should be, a dynamic relationship between the problem you set yourself at the beginning of your research, and your conceptualisation of

the problem as the research proceeds. From time to time you should go back to your initial statements. Did you ask yourself the right questions? Should the problem be reframed?

It is important to make trainees aware that what they decide to focus on at this stage will influence the success of their research, once it is implemented. Wallace (1998: 21) suggests that teachers embarking on an action research project should start by planning it carefully, by asking questions about various aspects of the project design which will influence the formulation of the topic of research. As Table 2 illustrates, these aspects relate to purpose, feasibility and end-product of the research, i.e. implementation of change in the classroom.

1	Purpose	<i>Why are you engaging in this action research?</i>
2	Topic	<i>What are you going to investigate?</i>
3	Focus	<i>What is the precise question that you are going to ask yourself within that area?</i>
4	Product	<i>What is the likely outcome of the research?</i>
5	Mode	<i>How are you going to conduct the research?</i>
6	Timing	<i>How long have you got to do the research? Is there a deadline for its completion?</i>
7	Resources	<i>What are the resources, both human and material, that you can call upon to help you complete the research?</i>
8	Refocusing/ fine-tuning	<i>As you proceed with your research, do you suppose you will have to rethink your original question?</i>

Table 2: Planning process in topic selection (Wallace 1998: 21).

This stage of planning relates directly to what Mezirow (Table 1) describes as a *consciousness level* reflection leading to *critical reflectivity* at the stage of implementation of the project and its evaluation and dissemination. On the theoretical level, careful attention has to be paid to the fine-tuning of the topic (narrowing it down) and at the practical level, the feasibility of the project, as illustrated by the questions posed, needs to be addressed (Table 2).

2.3. Research areas

In his discussion of the areas of action research to be undertaken by teachers, Wallace (1998, quoted in Burns 2005: 58) identifies and classifies them broadly into the following issues:

- classroom management;
- choice of didactic materials;
- teaching areas (language subsystems and skills);
- motivation, achievement and learner behaviour in the classroom;
- teacher personal management.

Those areas of research reflect the whole spectrum of didactic and personal considerations teachers face in their professional context, both in long-term planning and in their day-to-day practices in class. The choice of research focus made by an individual teacher will frequently overlap with the choices other teachers make, but the way the problems are seen, conceptualized and formulated will be very much influenced by idiosyncratic characteristics of individual teachers, such as their professional competence and teaching history, personality, or even individual learning histories. The classroom problems in question will be seen from their insiders' perspectives. These perspectives will not always be fully objective, hence careful planning of the project and constant review of it (even in the course of its implementation) will be necessary.

3. Pre-service teachers' research orientation (topics)

3.1. Group characteristics

The group of teacher trainees participating in this survey consisted of a sample of a hundred third-year students of two teacher training institutions – one university department and one teacher training college, who were about to graduate and take up their jobs at schools. The final requirement for them to obtain the BA degree in TEFL (*licencjat*) was to complete a thesis. The thesis was a small-scale research project designed within the framework of action research and related directly to the students' teaching practice carried out in the final year of their studies. Following the assumptions of action research philosophy, the choice of the research topic for an empirical project to be carried out was the area of teaching the trainees perceived as most troublesome for them as teachers. So the topics of the projects were independently chosen by each individual trainee. In the course of designing the projects in terms of their methodology (the stages, tools of gathering data, type of intervention, etc.), the projects were refined, that is to say narrowed down and re-phrased. However, they still respected the general preferences expressed by the students.

3.2. Topic areas

The corpus of this survey consists of a hundred topics for projects prepared by the trainees. Although these topics overlapped in terms of their main theme in quite a few cases, at the same time they also differed in terms of the teaching context: the type of school, age and language level of the learners. This tendency to choose similar areas for research clearly demonstrates some shared difficulties pre-service teachers encounter (Table 3).

Topic area	Number of choices (Total sample: 100)	Examples of topics
Classroom management	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The influence of seating arrangement on teaching and learning in a FL classroom</i> • <i>Motivational aspects of pair and group work</i> • <i>Application of an authoritarian teaching style</i>
Appropriate materials	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Visual materials in developing speaking skills of adolescent learners</i> • <i>Audio-visual aids in developing speaking skills</i> • <i>The role of CALL in teaching mixed ability classes</i>
Teaching areas (language and skills)	53%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teacher questions as a way of enhancing speaking skills</i> • <i>The development of writing skills in one-to-one tuition</i> • <i>FL grammar instruction: a case study of an adult learner</i> • <i>Teaching pronunciation at the level of segmentals</i> • <i>Teaching English article system to Polish learners</i> • <i>Teaching idioms at the pre-intermediate level</i> • <i>Implementing mnemonic strategies in FL vocabulary learning</i> • <i>Speaking barriers in the case of adult learners of EFL</i> • <i>Pre-communicative activities: encouraging students to talk</i>
Student behaviour, achievement and motivation	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A profile of an adult learner of EFL</i> • <i>Effectiveness of rewards in teaching a FL to teenagers</i> • <i>Reward and punishment in teaching young learners</i> • <i>The ways of motivating discouraged children to learn English</i> • <i>Prevention of and reactions to discipline problems</i>
Personal management issues (e.g. personal)	1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Foreign language attrition of EFL teachers</i>

The research orientation and preferences of pre-service EFL teachers

development, personal relations with other teachers)		
Assessment and testing	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learner training for EFL exams</i> • <i>Ways of oral assessment</i> • <i>Testing from teachers' and learners' perspectives</i> • <i>The role of students' self-assessment in the process of teaching and learning English</i>
Learner focus (strategies, autonomy, language awareness)	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The role of mother tongue in the process of FLL</i> • <i>Development of learner autonomy through project work</i> • <i>Lexical transfer in learning English</i> • <i>Code-switching as a communication strategy</i> • <i>Transfer of learning as a learning strategy</i>
Special needs learners	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Multisensory teaching of dyslexic children</i> • <i>Teaching children with symptoms of ADHD</i> • <i>Teaching English to a dyslexic learner (a case study)</i>

Table 3: Diploma (licencjat) projects: topic selection by areas.

The proportions between the different topic areas show a striking dominance of the topics relating to *teaching areas* (53%): what to teach (in terms of skills and language areas) and how to do it (strategies). This reflects the major focus of what these trainee-students (pre-service teachers) consider to be vital in their practice and what is also emphasised in the training programmes. The issues concerning student behaviour, achievement and motivation (11%) are most probably seen by the trainees as more elusive and fuzzy, thus more difficult to focus on and frame (fine-tune). Another possible explanation might be that they seem to be pretty obvious as difficulty areas and well-described in the literature so they might not be considered worth investigating any further. The projects on, for example, motivation that the students work on are often very conventional, tend to lack originality and, as a consequence, result in obvious solutions offered as the product of research: they tend to be very general, not grounded in a given teaching context. These types of projects require more boldness and courage on the part of the student teachers to 'experiment' and go beyond well-known

and accepted classroom practices, which for obvious reasons the students are not ready to undertake.

Another area, that of *learner focus*, involving such issues as strategies, autonomy or language awareness, seems to be gaining in popularity (11%) as these have also become key issues in modern pedagogy, which has resulted in a greater availability of resources in this area of teaching methodology. This is also very encouraging for students who are still insecure as teachers, so a firm theoretical background contributes significantly to the development of their sense of security in their classroom practices. The lowest score for *the special needs students* topic area (3%) can obviously be accounted for by the fact that not many students work in school settings which offer special education for less able learners. However, what can be observed is a growing interest in more broadly discussed issues concerning teaching dyslexic learners and those suffering from ADHD.

The *teaching areas* topics (53% of all topics selected; see Table 3) show a fairly equal interest in skills focus (53%) versus language focus (47%) as illustrated by Table 4. The 6% preference for researching skills development probably results from the general acceptance of communicative teaching methodology, where development of communication relates directly to skills more than learning different aspects of language (as much as we can in fact separate the two).

SKILLS FOCUS	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Integrated skills	Total
	2	4	18	4	28 (53%)

LANGUAGE FOCUS	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Total
	4	7	14	25 (47%)

Table 4: Teaching areas: skills *versus* language focus in topic selection.

The high numbers for topics relating to speaking skills (18%) *versus* the other skills is not so striking if we consider the role of speaking in developing communication, on the one hand, and the complexity of developing this skill, on the other hand. This complexity, as exemplified by the topic focus of the projects, stems from speaking barriers not only posed by a foreign language not yet fully mastered, but also from personality factors operating on the level of affectivity: anxiety, shyness, self-esteem, introversion, etc. This interest is not a consequence only of real classroom problems trainees (and not only them, also experienced teachers) face in their classrooms but also of their own undigested FL learning experience.

The significance of speaking skills in FL instruction is also visible in the choice of language focus in topic selection. Here, vocabulary teaching covers over 50% (14 topics) of all topics, ahead of grammar with only 25%

(7 topics). Vocabulary and lexical competence in general are naturally seen as vehicles for the development of communication in a foreign language, which is ultimately taken as a maker of overall language proficiency.

The choice of research topics presented here does not fully correspond to the trainees' expression of the difficulties they encounter in their classrooms and the weak points in their teaching practice as expressed in another study (Gabryś 2002: 187). It does not bear out what they also express in personal communication with the tutor (supervisor). The trainees mostly complain of their inability to manage their classrooms, for example, in the case of disruptive behaviour, pace of the lesson or problems with the timing of activities. These difficulties are often seen by the trainees as the result of lack of experience and may be assumed to be overcome automatically with years of teaching and familiarity with the context and the complexity of variables and also with security in one's position as a teacher with authority. Too superficial a knowledge of psycho-pedagogic issues is probably also reflected in the inadequate way they relate to dealing with different situations, such as critical incidents occurring in the classroom context.

3.3. Pre-service teachers' comments on their preferences for AR topics

The general attitude expressed by the trainees towards their projects was very positive – indeed enthusiastic, as they could observe the relevance of what they did to their immediate context. The following comment illustrates this:

(The project) was beneficial because it was based on my own teaching experience and interest and therefore practical and relevant. It was also down to earth because once you start teaching you look at the whole process from a different, more realistic perspective.

The comments provided here relate mostly to the project topics focusing on speaking which, as mentioned earlier, seemed to predominate over other problem areas. The choice of topics made in each individual case clearly reflected perceptions of what the focus of FL learning and its ultimate goal is, as exemplified by the following quotation:

When we think of learning a FL it is usually speaking (...) which we specify as the major aim. Moreover, verbal production is what causes greatest difficulties in the process of FL learning.

Also the inadequacy of the methods recalled from the students' own learning history and initial observation during the practicum constituted key reasons for designing projects in the specific areas:

Hundreds of methods have been applied to overcoming speaking barriers.

During my teaching practice, I encountered the problem of speaking activities in the classroom. I noticed that many students are unwilling to participate in them for various reasons.

The focus of this project is to find a more appropriate way to deal with the problem of using L2 during a lesson. I have chosen this topic because I remember that I had as well as my school mates a lot of problems with it (...) how to overcome speaking barriers.

It seemed that the trainees well understood the importance of the diagnostic (preliminary) investigation stage and teacher awareness of the reasons for the problems occurring, as expressed in the following comment: "The most important goal is to find what makes the students unwilling to speak aloud".

The choice of some of the topics was also justified by the need to introduce some element of novelty into an otherwise traditional syllabus and over-familiar didactic materials. The example to be quoted here is of the project which used the British sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances* to develop learners' cultural awareness:

As a traditional English lesson does not focus on teaching culture, mainly because of lack of time, I decided to introduce some elements of British culture in my lessons.

It seems that in commenting on their preferred topics for AR projects, the trainees did not focus very clearly on the areas of difficulty they mentioned earlier, relating to classroom behaviour and, generally, pedagogic issues. This again could be interpreted as a manifestation of their insecurity in dealing with their self-perceived weaknesses as teachers.

4. Implications for teacher training programmes

The present study asked what aspects of EFL teaching at the pre-service stage the trainees choose to consider as important and difficult at the same time, and how they conceptualise them in the form of research questions and hypotheses. The study showed that the trainees are fully aware of what would be valid for their development as teachers and for the improvement of their classroom practice as a consequence of reflective teaching. However, what is also visible is that the perception of what reflective teaching means is not fully there. The comments given by the novices are mostly descriptive in nature, pointing out their choices of topics to be worked on, without any clear ability to justify them more than by saying: "I observed that teachers have problem with (...), I myself as a FL learner have a problem with (...)". What is missing here is productive reflection understood as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends (Dewey 1933: 9, quoted in Davies 2006: 282).

The trainees' understanding of reflection makes use of description, not integrating it with knowledge and, most of all, analysis based on knowledge and evidence. It is purely observational and occasionally intuitive, deficient in perceiving the connections and relationships between variables involved in the teaching/learning process. This development of the need for reflection in teaching will

make trainees (teachers) conscious of the significance of researching beyond 'methods, materials, techniques' as was demonstrated in the topic choice in this study, beyond the categories of 'what' and 'how'. This inability to reflect productively is observed not only at the level of topic selection discussed in this study and considered basic to the success or failure of the research undertaken, but it also occurs later on in the course of data presentation and analysis of project results.

Another significant factor that contributes to pre-service teachers' attitudes to their own development is the beliefs they hold about what a good teacher is and what a good teacher does in his/her classroom. Murphy et al. (2004: 89) say:

Beliefs about good teachers seem to be formed at an early age and stay consistent, even throughout teacher preparation. The implications of these findings are valuable to not only teacher educators but also to practitioners. For teacher educators, an awareness that preservice teachers enter training with a preset belief system is vital. Discovering what deeply held beliefs their students bring into the training program could guide decisions and instructional approaches.

The study carried out by Murphy et al. shows that it is important to make these beliefs explicit as this may encourage trainees to be more open to change and lead to modifications in their beliefs during the course of training. However, this process of modification may not prove to be as easy as one may expect. Nevertheless, it should constitute an indispensable part of productive reflection.

Although productive reflection is seen as a characteristic of an expert teacher, it should already be targeted at the pre-service stage. In her discussion of the need for this ambition, Davies (2006: 294) puts forward the following recommendations for the instruction programmes for pre-service teachers:

Recommendation 1: encourage preservice teachers to move beyond description (...) In my reflective teaching assignments, for example, I am more explicit about issues to address in the reflection.

Recommendation 2: help preservice teachers consider learning processes, learners, and content (...) New teachers often neglect to attend to children as learners, focusing instead on themselves as teachers. When new teachers *do* attend to learners, their reflection can center on students' interest or motivation, rather than on whether they are learning content (...).

Recommendation 3: look for integration of ideas, not just emphases (...) Some preservice teachers simply *juxtapose* ideas about learners and learning, on the one hand, and instruction, on the other. Others (...) truly *integrate* them.

The suggested recommendations can be expressed in the statement that pre-service teacher training should to a greater extent focus on the development of productive reflection derived from the different types of knowledge the trainees possess/develop. These different types of knowledge as classified by Mann (2005) relate to the integration of:

- (1) knowledge organised into topics (received knowledge or transmission knowledge based on training courses, books and other resources);
- (2) individual knowledge developed through continued engagement of the received knowledge and individual experience;
- (3) situated knowledge based on a specific teaching environment.

This study therefore lends support to the idea that action research needs to be introduced at the pre-service stages of FL teacher training as a form of productive reflection, and, more specifically, in relation to the initial stages of AR, i.e. research area selection and formulation of topics, the main focus of this study.

Awareness of the value of reflection in one's personal context will contribute to teacher development, motivation and enthusiasm. It will emphasize that teaching is very context-specific and local. The long-held belief that prescription of how to teach is the basis for becoming a good teacher and that 'one size fits all' simply do not work. As a consequence (Mann 2005: 112):

Training and education programmes need to introduce teachers to the range of development tools and processes available in order to encourage engagement and commitment. Bottom-up teacher development is not only crucial to individual language teaching development but indispensable for the teaching profession as a whole.

This type of approach to teacher development should be encountered as early as at the pre-service stage in order to create professional, self-aware teachers, with beliefs open to amendment, encouraging them to engage in the life-long learning process of becoming and remaining successful teachers.

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Anne Margaret Smith

ELT Well

TEFL TRAINING FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

ABSTRACT

More people need to learn English than ever before, including many who experience barriers to their learning because of disability or learning differences such as dyslexia. Because of this increasing demand, every year thousands of new teachers join the ELT profession in the UK by taking a short intensive initial teaching course leading to a certificate in TEFL. This study sought the opinions of the trainers and trainees on these courses to determine how well they felt new teachers were prepared to work in increasingly diverse classrooms. A broad survey of British ELT professionals was conducted using a questionnaire, and more detail was gathered through in-depth interviews with teacher trainers. All the respondents were agreed that the certificate courses offered little or no explicit input on the issues of disability and inclusion. Nevertheless, there was some evidence that teachers who graduate from these courses are not totally unprepared to accommodate a wide range of needs; a generally inclusive approach to teaching was revealed as the prevailing ethos. The question remained whether more specific input was required on the topic of teaching disabled learners, so that all teachers would feel more confident in this aspect of their work.

1. Introduction

This research grew out of my own experiences as a new teacher, faced with a situation for which I did not feel I had been sufficiently prepared, namely working with learners who had a range of disabilities and learning differences. My instinct was to try to modify my lessons so as to make them as inclusive as possible, while I recognised that I needed more information about the nature of learning differences and disabilities. In the UK, and in many other countries, new legislation aimed at improving the situation for dis-

abled people is having an impact on education establishments, and encouraging teachers and management to reassess their provision with a view to making it more inclusive. Although this is most evident in 'mainstream' education (i.e. state education for students aged 5-16), it is also having an impact on state-funded adult education, which includes the provision of courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), as well as private institutions offering EFL courses.

The drive towards a more inclusive education system "is concerned with minimising all barriers to learning and participation, whoever experiences them and wherever they are located within the cultures, policies and practices of a school" (Ainscow 2001). Inclusive education is not only about accommodating students who have disabilities or experience difficulties in learning, although it seems that in some contexts the two have become conflated. Booth, Nes and Strømstad define inclusion as being "about reducing barriers to learning and participation for all learners. It is about reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and family background" (2003: 1-2). EFL classrooms in Britain are characterised by diversity in respect of many learner characteristics; heterogeneity – in terms of language background, nationality, religion, educational background and attainment, and motivation for learning – is expected and often utilised as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. The accommodation of disability, however, is one issue that still needs to be addressed in the pursuit of creating a truly inclusive sector.

Some research, notably that of Ganschow, Sparks and their collaborators in the USA, has focussed on the performance of language learners who are classified as disabled (see for example Sparks, Javorsky and Philips 2005), but little has been done which examines the teachers' perspectives, or those of professionals involved in the initial training of new teachers. This study therefore focused on how well and in what ways English language teachers in Britain are prepared to work with students who have disabilities or experience difficulties in learning, as a means to achieving full inclusion in ELT.

The focus of the project was necessarily quite narrow: it sought views from EFL teachers and trainers working in a number of different towns around the UK, the majority of whom had undertaken or were involved in running the short intensive courses leading to the initial Certificates that are a common route into ELT (often referred to simply as 'certificate courses'). At the time of the research project some changes were being implemented in the system of training new teachers and the profession was thus in a state of flux; extra variables may therefore have been inadvertently introduced in the form of more, different routes into teaching. However, every effort was made to separate these new routes from the 'traditional' intensive courses being investigated.

In this paper I will first of all give a brief overview of the methods I employed in conducting this research, and then I shall report some of the results

which illustrate the contrasting perceptions of trainers and new teachers (trainees) as regards the content of the courses under discussion. Finally, I shall discuss what these findings might mean for the English language teaching profession as a whole, and where they might lead us in the near future.

2. Method

In conducting this research I was fortunate to have the co-operation of many fellow practitioners around the UK, and I was able to pursue a two-pronged approach, using both a broad-brush postal questionnaire and in-depth interviews to fill in details concomitantly. The two sets of data thus collected provided mutual triangulation and corroboration. In this paper, space dictates that I can only briefly outline the procedure used to collect and analyse data. (for a more detailed account of the method, see Smith 2006).

2.1. Questionnaires

In total, 194 respondents returned completed questionnaires. The sampling frame was the list of schools and colleges in the UK accredited by the British Council or the British Association of Lecturers of English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP), from which every seventh institution was selected, a typology having first been constructed to maintain a balance between private and state-funded organisations. The selected schools and colleges were contacted by telephone, and a named representative (usually the Director of Studies or Head of Department) was approached for their help in distributing and in collecting the questionnaires from their teams and then sending them back to the researcher. The vast majority were willing to take part in the survey, but those who were not able to were simply replaced by the next institution on the list. Having a named representative in each participating institution meant that it was relatively easy to track the questionnaires, and the return rate was over 40%.

The questionnaire consisted of five pages; the first elicited personal and demographic information from the respondents, the second asked them to summarise their teaching qualifications and experience and the next three explored their attitudes to the inclusion of students with learning differences. This was done through the use of Likert scales, multiple choice questions and some open ended questions, thus always providing the opportunity for qualitative responses as well as the collection of quantitative data.

2.2. Interviews

15 ELT professionals from 8 different organisations drawn from both the private and the state sectors took part in semi-structured interviews (following a schedule of prompts). All the participants were involved in initial

teacher training through running courses or examining them. Table 1 below shows a summary of the participants' characteristics.

The sampling frame initially took into account the geographic location of the institutions (the ideal being two different types of institutions in each town) but soon became more opportunistic in nature, due to the difficulty of identifying suitable and willing participants. The interviews each lasted between 45 minutes and an hour; they were taped, transcribed, and then checked by the participants before analysis.

ID code	Sector	Gender	Role/title	Years of teaching experience	Years of training experience
IP1	Private	Female	Chief Examiner	10	10
IP2	Private	Female	Chief Examiner	7	7
IS3	State	Female	EFL Coordinator	22	15
IS4	State	Female	Trainer	19	12
IP5	Private	Male	Director of Studies	13	5
IP6	Private	Female	Trainer	12	5
IP7	Private	Female	Trainer	5	0.5
IP8	Private	Female	Director of EFL	14	7
IP9	Private	Male	Trainer	10	3
IP10	Private	Male	Trainer	15	3
IS11	State	Male	TESOL Coordinator	23	10
IS12	State	Male	TESOL Coordinator	30	15
IS13	State	Male	Senior Lecturer	20	3
IS14	State	Male	Senior Lecturer	13	5
IS15	State	Female	Head of ESOL	20	15

Table 1: Characteristics of interviewees.

2.3. Data analysis

Each respondent was allocated an individual code number which was used to protect their real identities. Interviewees were denoted by a code (shown above in table 1) which began with 'I' followed by 'P' for those working in the private sector, or 'S' for those in the state sector; the final number simply showed in the order in which they had been interviewed. A similar system was used for the questionnaire respondents, whose codes began with 'P' or 'S' followed by a letter designating the location of their school ('C' for city, 'L' for a large town, 'S' for a small town). Each school was then allocated a number, and each individual from that school was given his or her own number, simply in the order in which the data were received. These codes are used throughout this paper to help the reader understand the spread of responses from private and state sector employees.

Both the interviews and the questionnaires generated qualitative data, which were analysed manually. Emerging themes were identified, and as

new data were received, the categories were continually reassessed. Once all the data had been collated, a period of several months elapsed before the researcher returned to them to check that nothing had been missed, and that the themes originally identified were still clear.

The quantitative data generated through the questionnaires were analysed statistically using the computer package SPSS, and helped to complete the picture by allowing comparison of different respondent variables (such as gender, length of teaching experience, qualifications, and place of work).

This paper does not attempt to report all of the findings, which were complex and covered many different areas. Here, the focus is on the content of the short TEFL certificate courses, and particularly how they are perceived in terms of preparing new teachers for the challenge of working in inclusive classrooms.

3. Trainers' perceptions of the content of courses

This section outlines the main areas of content covered in the certificate courses, as reported by the trainers interviewed in the study. Their perceptions of the main aims of their courses varied from provider to provider, but all were strongly influenced by the requirements of the two major validating bodies: Cambridge ESOL and Trinity College, London. Briefly, Cambridge ESOL state the aim of the Cambridge Certificate course (CELTA) as being: "essential subject knowledge [and] (...) a range of practical skills for teaching English" (Cambridge ESOL 2005). Whereas Trinity College have as the aim of their Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Cert TESOL) that new teachers will gain: "the basic skills and knowledge needed to take up a first post as a teacher of English" and also "a firm foundation for self-evaluation and further professional development" (Trinity College 2004); this last aim, according to two examiners who participated in the study is intended to "[produce] considered reflexive practitioners".

3.1. Explicit input on inclusive education

Regrettably, it was felt by all the participants that the amount of explicit input pertaining to inclusion was negligible. One of the examiners believed that "in (...) FE colleges, they do tend to add their own layer of special needs awareness" (IP1) and added: "(...) it's explicit in as much as you're looking at a learner, you should try and identify why they're having problems, and these are the tools you have".

The trainers who were interviewed recognised that inclusion is "not something that's addressed from the special needs aspect" (IP7) and even in the state sector where disability issues arguably have a higher profile it was acknowledged that ELT professionals "don't talk about 'differentiation' as a buzz word" (IS4). The focus of the courses tended to be on more practical

aspects of teaching, rather than on theoretical or methodological considerations. However, the interviewees were able to identify several aspects of their courses that would foster a generally inclusive attitude. They talked about this in terms of: “addressing learner styles, the learner needs” (IP5), and “student involvement, student-centredness” (IP7). One trainer believed that “in the CELTA training we are quite hot on: ‘Are you addressing individual students’ needs?’” (IS4). This inclusive ethos was manifested through the concerns described in the following paragraphs.

3.2. Self-confidence

Building the self-confidence of the trainees was a key concern for many of the interviewees, who felt it was important after the course had finished that the trainees would have: “the resources to think ‘I know where I can find out something about that’, and the confidence to go and research things, and the confidence to go and ask other people for help” (IS4). Instilling self-confidence was seen as a strategy to help new teachers seek support for themselves and, if need be, to explore the support systems available to them when necessary in order to accommodate the needs of all their students. It was recognised that new teachers needed confidence in themselves and their ability to manage a class so that they could “actually realise what’s going on with the learners” (IP7), indicating a concern with the development of a more student-centred teaching style.

3.3. Classroom management skills

Self-confidence was also seen as being crucial for developing the technical aspects of teaching. “Good basic classroom practice” (IP6) was considered by about half of the trainers to be the most important aim of the short intensive course. This was expressed as “giving them [the trainees] the tools they need to survive” (IP5), and “basic survival skills for the classroom” (IP10). The trainers in this study felt that they had a duty “to prepare these people [the trainees] to be adaptable in any situation (...) they meet” (IP6). It was felt that if novice teachers could grasp the basics of classroom organisation they would be in a better position to reorganise if and when it became necessary to accommodate a wider range of learners’ needs.

3.4. Critical thinking skills

As well as the self-confidence and technical teaching skills required to survive their first year in the classroom, the development of critical thinking skills was also seen as an important aim of the initial training courses being examined, and was cited as a response to the limitations of these short courses. Trainers were concerned that the novice teachers would be able “to consistently learn,

not only on the course, but (...) to develop as teachers, when they actually leave the course, as well" (IP8). One interviewee described the aim of the training as helping new teachers to "develop a sense of awareness of how they've managed (...) evaluate what [they]'ve done and then if [they] have done things that [they] would change [they] are aware of why it hasn't worked and how [they] could improve" (IS3). This tied in with the ideas mentioned above of the need for teachers to be aware of their learners' needs and to be capable of adapting their teaching to suit different situations.

3.5. Teaching styles and techniques

One aspect of the courses which was identified as being characteristic of TEFL training, was that the style of teaching and the techniques employed for language teaching were also deemed suitable for teacher training, and were modelled throughout the course by the trainers. One trainer (IS12) reported: "In the CELTA input, you are using methods that you are suggesting can be used in the English language classroom. Whereas in the PGCEs [mainstream teaching course] you get your person giving a 60-minute lecture on the absolute necessity of varying the style of teaching in the classroom, and different learning styles". This *loop input strategy* (Woodward 1987) is consciously applied to aspects of teaching, such as encouraging cyclical learning, which was described as: "the same as EFL teaching as well, because you're recycling, you're going forward but you're going back to what you've done before, going "oh, remember what we've said about this in this session" (IP10). There is evidence that revisiting and reinforcing previous learning is likely to be beneficial for all learners, but it is particularly recommended for those with learning differences such as dyslexia (see, for example, Reid 1998: 84). The ability to react to learners' or trainees' needs was valued and incorporated into the training courses, as this same trainer from the private sector further suggested: "(...) it is very much dealing with individuals on the course and reacting to those needs as they develop, and putting in place extra sessions, remedial work, trouble-shooting sessions to meet those needs (...) So you are reacting to the group as you go along" (IP10).

Although it is clear that the short certificate courses offer little in the way of explicit discussion of inclusion or disability issues, there are many examples that lead to the conclusion that, for the trainers, these courses have as an implicit aim the introduction of the trainees to a student-centred and generally inclusive approach to teaching. This emphasis on seeing students as individuals and responding to their needs is modelled during (at least some) training courses and the key elements of the courses all contribute to this indirectly, even if the trainers do not consciously intend it.

4. Teachers' perceptions of the content of courses

Having explored how the trainers perceive the content of their courses, it is interesting to compare the views of teachers who have taken the courses and whose work is exclusively with language learners (i.e. they have not also taken on responsibility for training new teachers). The key question is whether the majority of classroom teachers feel able to accommodate the needs of learners who have learning differences or experience difficulties in their learning.

4.1. Teachers' lack of confidence

Overwhelmingly, the teachers who responded to the postal questionnaire (from both the state and the private sectors) reported a lack of confidence in working with students who experienced difficulties in learning. Most felt that they had not had any training in how to accommodate the wide range of needs under discussion, and those who had, reported that it was not part of their initial teacher training, but an additional course or simply personal experience that helped them to feel more confident in working with disabled learners.

The following two quotes are typical of their responses; one teacher from the state sector located the problem not in the learner but: "in the fact that I wasn't properly prepared, supported or trained in knowing how to deal with the students' difficulties" (SC1-1). Another teacher, this time from the private sector, also felt that most teachers are "(...) not trained, prepared or equipped to deal with students with learning difficulties" (PL6-1). These views were echoed many times throughout the data and the obvious conclusion is that teachers who have undertaken these initial training courses are not well prepared to work with learners who are disabled or who experience greater difficulties than their peers in learning.

On the other hand, it was seen from the interviewees' reports that although explicit consideration of inclusion is lacking in the courses, nevertheless, the trainers were able to identify components of their courses that would foster a generally inclusive attitude. This would raise the question of the extent to which they were successful in this implicit aim, and indeed, there is also some evidence that suggests that the trainees on the certificate courses are probably better prepared and trained for an inclusive classroom than they realise.

4.2. An inclusive approach to teaching

The questionnaire included a section designed to ascertain the attitudes of teachers towards students who experience difficulties in their learning. Respondents were asked to react to a series of statements, stating how far they agreed with each one. 88.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Teachers should expect their students to have differing needs, which it is the teachers' job to accommodate in class". Conversely, 84.6% disagreed or

strongly disagreed with the statement: "Teaching students who have 'learning difficulties' should not be part of an EFL/ESOL teacher's job". These were just two examples of many that were indicative of a strongly inclusive ethos that became apparent through the data. Despite the difficulties and problems that the teachers could foresee (and in some cases were experiencing) in their daily work, there was a general belief that students should be seen as individuals, and that ultimately it was their responsibility to include all of their learners. As one teacher expressed it: "They should be supported. It does make teaching more challenging, but if we have training in these areas and the students are receiving support, I don't see why we can't teach them. Sometimes it feels easier to 'get rid' of difficult students, but then it's not real teaching if the class is perfect" (SC2-2). Another teacher suggested that: "Probably all students have a learning difficulty of one kind or another, to a greater or lesser degree. Focus in EFL on all aspects of learning difficulty will assist all students, therefore, and not just those with obvious difficulties" (PS3-1).

This brief survey of teachers' perceptions of the content of short Certificate courses shows that there seems to be little in the way of *explicit* input that would enable a new teacher to feel confident in accommodating the needs of disabled learners. However, this does not mean that the teachers graduating from these courses are *not* equipped, able or willing to include all their learners. Indeed, there are good grounds for believing that a generally inclusive and student-centred approach is strongly advocated in ELT training, and this may be one of the reasons why the issue of supporting disabled learners is not tackled explicitly, as will be discussed in more detail below. It must be recognised, though, that no matter how well trained and equipped they may be, if they *do not perceive themselves* to be capable of or confident in working with disabled learners, then the training they have undergone has failed to adequately prepare them, in explicit terms, for this role.

5. Differences in perceptions

Since teachers do not feel confident in their own abilities to support their learners, there appears to be a mismatch between what the courses aim to do and what they actually achieve. The differences between how trainers and teachers perceive the outcomes of the short intensive courses is the key to understanding this mismatch, and will be discussed in this section. There are a number of potential reasons for the differences between how the trainers perceive the courses, and how the trainees experience them, not least the motivation that the trainees bring to the courses with them, and their perceptions of careers in TEFL. One vital aspect that cannot be overlooked, however, is the way in which we talk about learners who experience difficulties: the discourses that we employ in this field.

In 'mainstream' British education the accepted terminology for discussing students who are experiencing barriers to their learning is to describe them

as having *Special Educational Needs* (SEN). Critics reject this discourse on the grounds that it highlights the 'otherness' of disabled learners and locates the problems in the individual rather than in the system. Instead, an emphasis on inclusion is preferred, as defined at the beginning of this paper. The fact that there are few explicit references in TEFL courses to supporting learners with disabilities could be argued as an advantage: the 'Special Educational Needs' discourse employed in mainstream education is thus avoided. It can be argued that disability, where it is encountered, can be seen as just another dimension of classroom diversity, and that trainers therefore do not feel the need to explicitly explore this aspect of inclusion, but assume that it is sufficiently covered by an over-arching commitment to inclusion. However, it is important that we find a language to discuss the issues that arise. Without talking about our disabled learners, and those who are experiencing difficulties, it becomes extremely difficult to ensure that the facilities needed for all students to be fully accommodated – and truly included – are available.

A survey of 'mainstream' secondary school teachers in 2001 found that 78% of these teachers reported having had no training in 'SEN' in the previous 5 years (Florian and Rouse 2001), a figure which at first glance seems shocking, given the British government's avowed agenda of inclusion and widening participation. However, the researchers suspect that many of their respondents may have received training that was more inclusion-oriented, but that the use of an inclusive discourse, rather than the more familiar discourse pertaining to 'SEN', meant that they did not fully realise how well they were being prepared. This has clear implications for ELT professionals: it is important that we learn from the experiences in other branches of education with relation to the issues mentioned above, if disabled language learners are to be fully included.

In addition, it seems likely that trainers are themselves unsure of how best to approach the issues, having never confronted them in their own training. This is where the professional expertise of the trainers becomes crucial: whatever the agreed course content might be, it would be unrealistic to expect teacher educators to be able to pass on to new teachers skills and information that they are not in possession of, or not aware of in themselves.

6. Conclusions

The challenge to the profession is clear: we must address the issue of including disabled learners if we are to have fully inclusive language classrooms that embrace the full range of human diversity. As a profession we need to respond to the challenge in a number of ways, not least of which is to focus on the structure and content of initial training courses and the provision of professional development opportunities for serving teachers and trainers.

6.1. Teacher education

It may be that inclusive practice is modelled and encouraged on many courses, but if teachers do not perceive that they have the skills to support all of their learners, then more explicit coverage of the issues pertaining to disability and learning differences is evidently required. While the use of 'Special Educational Needs' discourses should be avoided wherever possible in favour of more inclusive language, it must be acknowledged that teachers need to be able to identify and discuss their learners' difficulties, in order to put in place systems that accommodate the full range of disabilities. The findings of Florian and Rouse's (2001) study noted above are particularly pertinent here and must be kept in mind.

The respondents in this study who were serving teachers were unable to cite many opportunities that they had found to explore the issues of inclusion in general, and disability in particular. In the state sector some generic staff development sessions were mentioned, but nothing that related specifically to language learning, leading to a general feeling of dissatisfaction with what was on offer. In order to comply with disability legislation, it must be important for all educational professionals to be aware of the issues and their responsibilities regarding the identification and accommodation of learners' needs. Teachers, and especially trainers, perhaps need to be more proactive in requesting specific training opportunities, and in seeking out the information that they need in this regard.

6.2. Accreditation and validation of courses

Further work could be done with the professional bodies in the UK (for example, the British Council, who accredit many private language schools, or BALEAP who accredit courses in the FE and university sectors) to ascertain in what ways they are already promoting inclusive practice, and how they could work more effectively with schools and colleges to ensure parity of provision across the country. One possible way forward could be to make the demonstration of inclusive practices and fully accessible curricula a pre-requisite for accreditation by the British Council or BALEAP, or for validation of teacher training courses. If implemented intelligently, this would ensure that inclusion remained high on the professional development agenda in any institution that required accreditation or validation of courses.

6.3. Opening the doors

It seems likely that the building of an inclusive English language education system will be a cyclical and gradual process, beginning not only with initial teacher education, but at all levels of teaching simultaneously, from TEFL certificate courses to trainer training. Since ELT professionals demonstrate a strong preference for learning through experience, any number of reforms to training courses will probably prove to be ineffectual unless and until they are

backed up with practical experience. This means that more disabled students need to be encouraged into the language classroom, and more disabled trainees need to be recruited into the profession, so that the trainers gain the valuable experience of working with a wider range of trainees, and can then pass this on to the next generation of teachers. Of course, we cannot expect disabled learners and trainees to enrol on courses until they are confident that we can properly accommodate them, which is why professional development is so important at all levels. In this 'chicken and egg' process, the commitment that EFL professionals have traditionally shown to their learners' individual needs will be a most valuable asset in furthering the inclusive agenda.

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Anne Margaret Smith, having studied Linguistics at York University and completed her TEFL certificate course, went to teach English in Germany and then Sweden. Once she realised how little she knew, she returned to the UK to study for an MA in ELT and eventually a PhD at Lancaster University, where she was able to combine her two main interests of ELT and Inclusive Education. She is now teaching ESOL in a local FE college, where she also works in the Learning Support Department, assessing British students' support needs. This has led to her current research project: developing assessment tools to use with students whose first language is not English. She also runs workshops for colleagues who are interested in finding out more about how to support their disabled students.

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FOSTERING TEACHER
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
ONLINE REFLECTIVITY:
A STUDY OF TEACHER
TRAINEES AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF SIENA

ABSTRACT

Reflective thinking has become a fundamental component of teacher training programmes. Not only is there a need for trainees to engage in critical reflection on relevant literature, observations and one's own teaching experiences, but also to share such thinking with their peers. The importance of collaborative reflectivity has been continuously highlighted as a means to foster teacher development among trainees, and computer-mediated communication has become a powerful tool in facilitating such reflectivity over the past decade. This study explores asynchronous discussion forums (ADFs) as a tool for fostering teacher development through online reflectivity among teacher trainees at The University of Siena by analysing the types of reflection present. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied to the study to observe the potential of the tool in order to recognise its importance in teacher training. An analysis of the ADFs revealed that during their first year, a supportive online community had developed, and trainees' reflections progressed from a descriptive form to a more deliberative form, demonstrating a marked usage of specific terminology related to English language teaching.

1. Rationale for the research

ADFs [Asynchronous Discussion Forums] (...) have the potential to facilitate reflective thinking among preservice teachers (...) For the potential of ADFs to be fully recognized, it is necessary for additional research to con-

tinue examining factors involved with teaching and learning within this medium. Such insights will contribute toward the growing body of research in this area – and, in turn, contribute toward achieving the full potential this medium has to offer teacher education.

(Lee-Baldwin 2005: 110)

The purpose of this exploratory study, both quantitative and qualitative, was to analyse the potential of asynchronous discussion forums (hereafter ADFs) as a medium to foster teacher development among teacher trainees at The University of Siena through collaborative reflectivity. Following Lee-Baldwin's (2005) claim that there is a need to further explore the potential of ADFs as a vehicle to teacher development, it was felt that this study was pertinent to contributing to this need and the growing body of research in this area.

The basis of this research, therefore, comes from two literature areas: the importance of reflective thinking as a means for facilitating teacher development within an online community, and ADFs as a valuable component on teacher training courses to enable such collaborative reflectivity to take place. Moore and Marra (2005: 192) argue that interactivity online has the greatest potential to affect learning: "In an effective online forum, the discussion encompasses the principles of constructivism and social interactions to help learners reach new insights, knowledge and perspectives".

By using a social constructivist approach, collaborative communication in the form of ADFs is believed to facilitate teacher development since trainees may articulate their understandings and interpretations of problems from multiple viewpoints, thereby constructing meaning in an online community; this view is supported by Grabinger and Dunlap (2000: 38) who believe that collaboration "requires a level of reflective articulation that promotes collective knowledge-building and a deeper personal understanding of what is being studied".

The following research questions were formed to enable the researcher to glean an insight into the benefits of asynchronous discussion forums on teacher training courses, and examine their potential to facilitate reflective thinking through the development of an online community:

- (1) To what extent do the structure and focus of an ADF impact the potential of this medium to facilitate reflective thinking?
- (2) How can such reflections be assessed to demonstrate the development of teacher knowledge among trainees?

2. Reflective thinking in teacher training programmes

Reflective thinking has become a fundamental component of teacher training programmes (Schön 1991; Houston and Warner 2000), normally requiring trainees to engage in critical reflection of set reading assignments, peer observations and self-evaluation of one's own teaching experiences, often in

the form of post-lesson analyses. Such reflection, occurring through verbal or written communication, is believed to facilitate teacher development and has been made even more explicit with the increasing number of studies analysing such development through computer-mediated communication (CMC), namely ADFs (Dede 2000; Edens 2000).

As a result, CMC has created new ways for individuals to communicate and share information, particularly within the field of teacher education; this development has reshaped the nature of teacher training and the way in which the trainee learns and reflects as part of an online community. Lock's (2006) recent study advocates the growth of online learning communities to facilitate teacher development and emphasises the importance of redesigning teacher training programmes to actually *incorporate* CMC rather than as a support.

For students in teacher training classes, asynchronous discussions can provide different perspectives on course materials, teaching practices, teaching resources and personal experiences (Kahmi-Stein 2000a; Greenlaw and DeLoach 2003). However, it is important to bear in mind that although ADFs may potentially facilitate reflective thinking, such potential is not necessarily inherent in this medium (Lee-Baldwin 2005). Recent evidence suggests that a structured and focused forum is fundamental for group participation and, therefore, collaborative reflection (Hara et al. 2000; Nicholson and Bond 2003).

3. The SSIS programme

The Italian Parliament authorised a number of reforms to its education system between 1997 and 2003. As a result of these reforms, the *Specializzazione Scolastico di Insegnamento Secondario* (SSIS) was established in 1999, and has been the only academic postgraduate course for pre-service teacher training in Italy to date. Prior to this, teachers were not required to undergo specialised teacher training before beginning their careers in state schools.

The SSIS course in this study is a two-year teacher training course for secondary school teachers of English. Course participants are all language graduates who attend weekly seminars of which two include English language teaching methodology. Teaching observations take place at the beginning of their first year for the duration of a term, although this may be reduced depending on the trainee's previous teaching experience.

4. The subjects involved in the study

The subjects of the study comprised sixteen graduates, ranging in age from mid-twenties to late-fifties, with diverse backgrounds in terms of education and language learning experiences; only one participant was a native English speaker. Twelve of the trainees had varying levels of teaching experience,

from two months to eight years, while the remaining four were complete novices; this is illustrated in more detail in Figure 1.

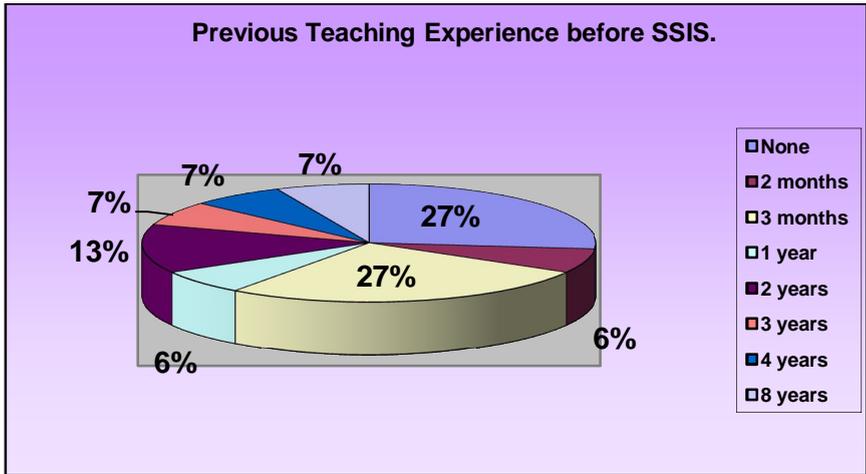


Figure 1: Participants' previous experience.

5. Asynchronous discussion forums

Specific tasks were incorporated into the teacher training course as a means to facilitate online reflection by encouraging trainees to share their past experiences of language learning, critically evaluate articles and comment on their classroom observations. Numerous studies have argued that asynchronous tools provide greater opportunity for reflection and processing of information on both specific issues and comments made by other participants in the online community (Harasim 1990; Meyer 2003; Hough et al. 2004; Lock 2006).

6. Methodology

Although many research studies use quantitative methodology for online content analyses (Henri 1992; Hara et al. 2000) there has been an increasing emphasis on qualitative tools. This study applied both measures as it was hoped that a more comprehensive picture of the impact ADFs have on fostering teacher development through collaborative reflectivity would be achieved. Three research methods were used: an analysis of online interactivity, a two-dimensional evaluative tool and a questionnaire in order to assess the following:

- Interactivity patterns among participants.
- The type of reflective thinking present in the ADFs.
- Trainees' attitudes to ADFs.

6.1. Online participation

One of the main aims for implementing the ADFs into the course was to create a learning environment whereby students would be responsible for their own learning and responsiveness to one another. Teacher interaction was intentionally minimal in order to enable students to dominate their own discussion thus creating a student-centred environment.

The forum began with the trainer's first posting, which welcomed students to the site. Students were then given set readings to analyse and discuss. Once their teaching observations had commenced, the trainees were asked questions which were intended to be controversial and exploratory, encouraging students to consider a particular aspect from multiple perspectives in order to foster collaborative reflectivity.

In order to analyse the ADFs, each individual entry represented a *posting*, which began by identifying the author, by showing a photograph, name, time, date, and subject heading followed by the main body. Since the technology provided a permanent record of their thoughts, it also provided the researcher with suitable data to identify reflective thinking and establish whether an online community had been successfully developed.

6.2. Interactivity of online discussion

Data from the ADFs were analysed to identify online interactivity among participants based on Hara et al.'s (2000) research. In terms of interactivity, messages were identified according to the three categories in Henri's (1992) model, which were adapted to enable closer observation between postings:

- *Explicit interaction*: direct response or commentary to a specific person.
- *Implicit interaction*: indirect response, wherein the content of another trainees' posting or name is mentioned.
- *Independent statement*: lacking in referential clues and the creation of further statements.

To simplify this in a visual graph demonstrating the interactivity, the following symbols were used:

- (1) Explicit interaction was indicated by drawing a line with an arrow:



- (2) Implicit interaction was linked by a wavy line:



- (3) An independent statement was shown as an isolated number:



Following this analysis, a visual mapping of each module was designed with messages sequentially numbered to represent the chronological order of postings.

6.3. Content analysis of online reflectivity

According to Schwandt (1997), content analysis is a generic name for a variety of textual analyses that involves comparing, contrasting, and categorising a set of data; this may consist of both numeric and interpretative data analyses.

Content analysis of online communication was considered as early as 1990 when Hiltz (1990) and Mason (1992) suggested that analysing transcripts of asynchronous communication could enable quality assessment of the learning process and its outcomes. It is a technique which is commonly used to analyse transcripts of asynchronous discussion forums in formal educational settings. Since the object of this research was to evaluate how successful ADFs were in fostering teacher development through online reflectivity, a suitable model was needed to *measure* such reflectivity rather than simply state how it might be fostered by a medium, as pointed out by Smith and Hatton (1993).

In order to obtain the necessary data to distinguish the different types of reflectivity present in the ADFs, Fund et al.'s (2002) evaluative tool was chosen to conduct this research. Although this tool was not designed with CMC in mind, it aims to identify reflectivity in writing and was, therefore, considered suitable for its application to the ADFs in this study due to its two-dimensional aspect of *content*, the 'object' of writing, and *form*. A model of this is shown in Table 1.

6.4. Measuring reflectivity

According to the designers of this model, the three components in the *content* dimension foster teacher development through reflectivity:

- (1) *Subject matter content* – (*what*) reflective writing about educational issues facilitates understanding.
- (2) *Didactic content* – (*how*) this reflection allows trainees to develop an understanding of teaching methods and 'didactic judgement'.
- (3) *Personal content* – self-reflection, either as an observer or as a trainee in the classroom.

As regards *form*, there are four types:

- (1) *Description*.
- (2) *Personal opinion* – reservations, hesitations or agreement.
- (3) *Linking* – concerned with linking to previous knowledge.
- (4) *Critical bridging* – deliberation on a certain issue in the lesson, including alternate opinions from the literature.

The first two *forms* demonstrate a *low* level of reflection while the latter two are considerably higher, enabling the researcher to observe the different stages in online reflectivity.

The content analysis procedure consisted of reading each message and classifying it as one of the four *forms*: description, personal opinion, linking or critical building, in relation to the type of *content*: subject-matter content, didactic content and personal content. Since teaching practice is not yet a compulsory component on the course, the *personal content* was modified to include the teacher being observed if the trainee was unable to teach himself.

	Description	Personal opinion	Linking	Critical bridging
Subject matter content	Describes the 'what' issues and contents of the observation or reading text.	Personal concerns of the 'what' including links to previous experience (LPE), and what I've learned from the 'what'. The concern lies on feelings and intuitions rather than on scientific basis.	Connects the 'what' to papers or previous knowledge.	Critical analysis of the 'what' with other opinions; gives evidence from the literature. Reaches general conclusions about the 'what'. Suggests alternatives with explanations and reasons.
Didactic content	Describes 'how' the lesson was taught.	Personal concern of the 'how', including LPE and what I've learned from the 'how'. The concern relies on feelings and intuitions, not on scientific basis.	Suggests possible reasons for the 'how' using previously learned concepts without explicit linking to literature. Makes links to literature but does not further develop it.	Connects the 'how' to papers or previously learned knowledge; generalises; reaches general conclusions about the 'how'. Poses considerations; makes judgements.
Personal Content	Student describes himself or teacher in the lesson.	Personal insight about himself as a student or teacher or teacher observed.	Explicit awareness of the linking and connecting process he/she employs.	Critical analysis of himself/teacher in the context of the lesson. Generally conclusions about 'my way as a teacher', based on knowledge and literature.

Table 1: Measuring reflectivity (adapted from Fund et al. 2002: 492).

The messages were viewed in chronological order within each module and then coded according to their particular *form* or *content*; this differs from Henri's (1992) model where meaning is divided into smaller units.

6.5. Questionnaire

The third research method consisted of collecting data from questionnaires to identify the trainees' attitudes towards their experience of online reflectivity. At the end of the first year a questionnaire, divided into four areas: *ADFs*, *Community building*, *Reflection* and *Teacher development*, was administered to evaluate this experience. Open-ended response items were used in order to obtain the biodata in addition to a *Likert* scale, also known as *rating* or *summative* (Brown and Rodgers 2002). The final section used open-ended questions to obtain more detailed personal comments.

The aim of collecting biodata was to distinguish between novices and those with experience to determine whether this was an influencing factor on reflectivity. The open-ended questions in the final part provided respondents with the freedom to comment further on compelling issues felt about the course thus reducing the *fixity* of responses on the Likert scale. These comments proved to be fruitful and provided the researcher with an insight into each individual's learning experience of using ADFs.

7. Presentation and discussion of results

7.1. Interactivity of online discussion

The first finding was the interactivity development during the course. Visual graphs displaying the dynamics of the online discussion demonstrated that interaction did develop, although a small number of participants were still writing independent statements in the final module.

Figure 2 below displays the interaction patterns at the beginning of the course. A considerable number of messages in the second module are directed to the teacher, others are simply independent statements, and only one trainee addresses her message to the whole class. Similarly, out of the twenty-three messages, only one participant demonstrates implicit interaction; this clearly demonstrates that the trainees have not yet developed an online community and place much more importance on interaction with the teacher rather than among themselves.

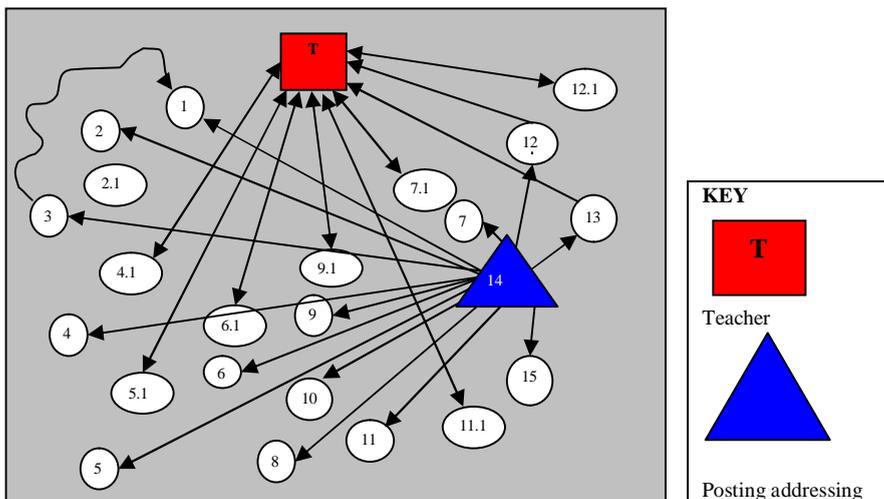


Figure 2: 2nd module – speaking forum (January 2006).

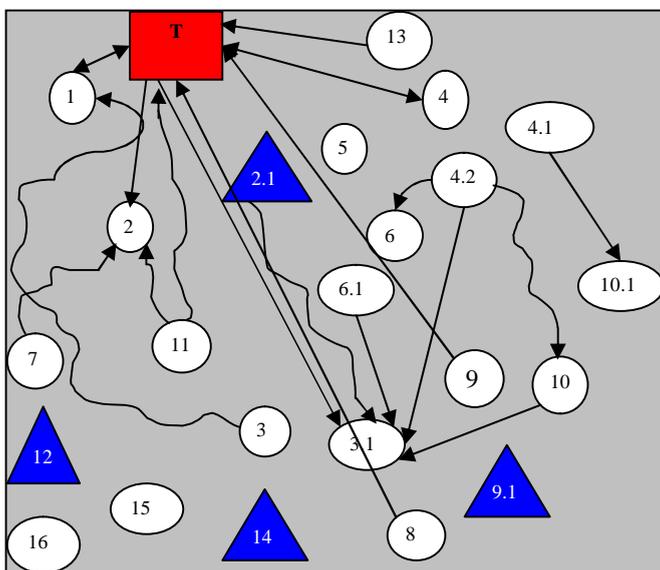
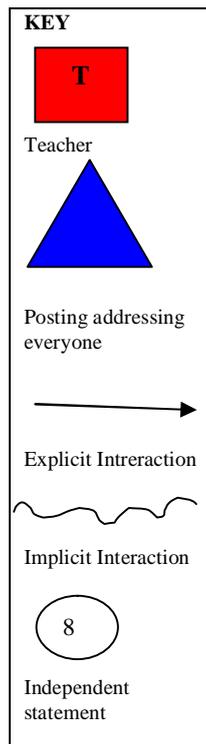


Figure 3: 3rd module – listening forum (January/February 2006).

However, by the third module, a marked increase in online interactivity is evident (see Figure 3) and an evident change in dynamics between participants. Messages are addressed to the whole community rather than the teacher and one particular student's question generates a considerable number of responses from the other trainees, demonstrating a development in two-way interaction. In addition, the number of postings per participant has increased, which is indi-

cated in the diagram by the sequential division of that number; for example, one participant has contributed three postings to this particular module.

In an attempt to examine the reasons for the development in interactivity and the increase in postings in the third module, such development may be a result of the concern generated towards a trainee's dilemma during a teaching observation. The trainee's posting and a response to this can be seen below:

3.1 in Figure 3

Hello everybody. This morning something made me reflect during my tironicio. There was a listening activity in a V ginnasio. The listening was introduced by some questions and by a description of a couple of pictures. The while listening activity was thick the right answer. The students read all the questions and someone asked: "Teacher, what does hiking mean?" I realised she was a little embarrassed and she asked the students: "Does anybody know what that word mean?" A girl raised her arm: "I know it", she said, "it's fare l'autostop". The teacher smiled: "Yes, that's right, fare l'autostop". But the listening was about a man who goes for a three days walking trip on a mountain, and had nothing to do with autostop. So the students got confused, because no car was mentioned at all in the listening. I did not know what to do at first, but I soon decided not to correct her. It would have been unpleasant for everybody.

So my remark is: no one is a walking dictionary. I'm sure something like this is likely to happen to everyone of us. Maybe it's better to check the word on a dictionary before telling the students something wrong, although it must be very hard to answer "I don't know" when they ask you a question. What do you think about it?

28 January 2006

6.1 in Figure 3

*Ciao Stefano,
Above all I want to say that, in my opinion, you did the right thing but probably you should tell your teacher his "misunderstanding", but very tactfully in order to make him reflect that a lesson should be better prepared. But I suppose that the very nature of your reflection is: does a teacher need to be omniscient to his students' eyes? I do not think so; students (even the youngest) are not that stupid: they are perfectly aware that sometimes teachers can make mistakes. The episode you described is something that occurs and re-occurs in every teacher's career; I think that the best thing is to admit the error. Students will realize and they will continue to esteem their teacher.*

Ciao Ciao

28 January 2006

This clearly indicates that the participants were reading each other's messages and engaging in collaborative reflectivity. Furthermore, it also became evident that the discussion forum provided a non-threatening environment since those who rarely participated in class proved to be extremely productive in the forum; this beneficial aspect of asynchronous technologies has also been noted by previous studies (Kahmi-Stein 2000b; Greenlaw and Deloach 2003).

7.2. Measuring reflectivity

A content analysis of the ADFs using the model in Table 1 was carried out. Of the 191 student postings, 24 were considered irrelevant data as the messages were off topic. Although the level of reflectivity varied in the trainees' postings, the analysis revealed that both high- and low-level reflectivity were present, indicating that the ADFs had been successful in fostering reflectivity during the first year of the SSIS course.

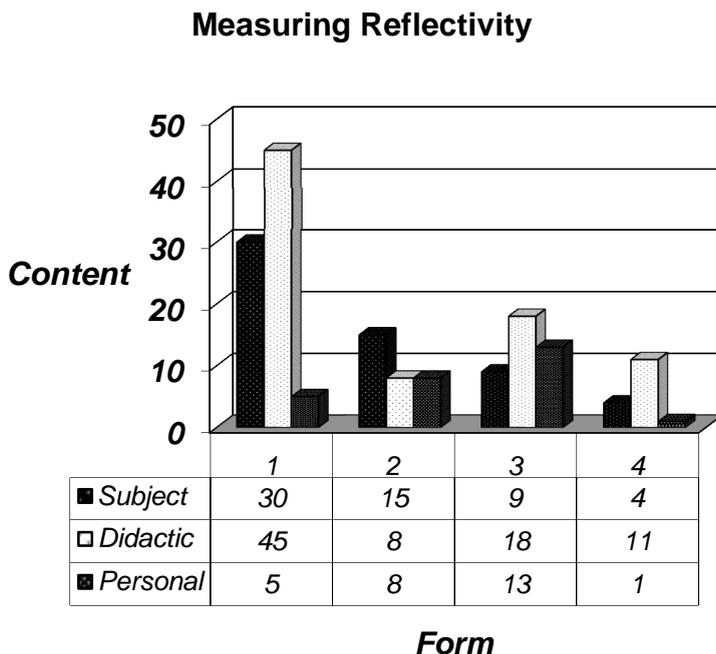


Figure 4: Measuring reflectivity.

An example of postings taken from the ADFs that identify a particular *form* in relation to the content dimensional framework may be observed below:

Subject matter: Relating to form 3 (Linking)

As I could have pointed out, my tutor tended to concentrate her syllabus almost entirely on the improvement of students' accuracy, providing a central role for the development of grammatical and lexical competences. In particular, a great deal of time was devoted to teaching vocabulary items as the teacher attached great importance to this area and was not afraid of "wasting time" with words, probably sharing with Swan and Walter the idea that "vocabulary acquisition is the largest and most important task facing the language learner" (Thornbury 2002). She was used to teaching vocabulary rather than lexis, in the sense that she mainly taught single words or sometimes very tightly linked two or three-word combinations instead of dealing with common collocations, chunks or multi-word items that, as the lexical approach has

proved, are important for developing the learners' fluency.

As far as her lexical selection was concerned, the tutor chose to teach key items related to thematic areas possibly relevant to the learners' needs and interests, such as animals, sport, food, job, travels and whatever although, she did not hesitate to spend time for incidental vocabulary during reading activities or to respond to the students' demands.

9th August 2006

Personal Content: Relating to form 3 (Linking)

As a student I didn't have a good relationship with mistakes. I was particularly afraid of speaking English incorrectly and I didn't use to take any risks concerning this skill, because I thought I could be wrong. On the contrary, when I was asked to carry out writing tasks I was more at ease, because I didn't feel immediately judged and then I had plenty of time to revise and edit my work.

As a teacher I realise that my own approach towards mistakes could affect my students' attitude towards them, but now I know that mistakes can often be considered the evidence that a learning process is taking place. [1]

[1] See J. Scrivener, Learning Teaching, Macmillan, Oxford, 2005, p. 298.

26th June 2006

7.3. Results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to lend credibility and validity (Denzin 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 1994a) to the findings in the transcripts and understand the participants' actual experience of using ADFs, rather than hypothesising from collected data.

As *Figure 5* reveals, two-thirds of the participants felt they had benefited from the asynchronous nature of the discussion forums, allowing them to contribute in their own time. The most striking factor was evidenced in question 14 and 15, where over 80% of respondents in both questions felt that collaborative reflectivity had provided ample learning opportunities, resulting in teacher development. Only one subject felt that he was unable to learn from his peers' postings while the remaining fifteen found the ADFs an extremely positive experience.

ADFs actually helped me to build on my teaching knowledge by making me compare my class observation experience to the theory I was learning. I personally liked the opportunity of having my own time to stop and think of what I was learning so far, trying to find a good balance between theory and practice.

(...) by reading my colleagues' contributions, I can also learn about different situations and teaching contexts and this helps me to develop a wider awareness of the teaching environment in general. In comparing my experience to those of my colleagues I can learn about different perspectives and opinions about the role of the teacher; it would not have been possible if I had limited my experience only to my single training experience. Finally, my perception of the role of the teacher has definitely changed since I have started the course, especially because before I undervalued many things related to the role of the teacher that now I can't ignore no longer. Even the apparently less significant aspects related to the teacher's role now has a specific value and meaning to me.

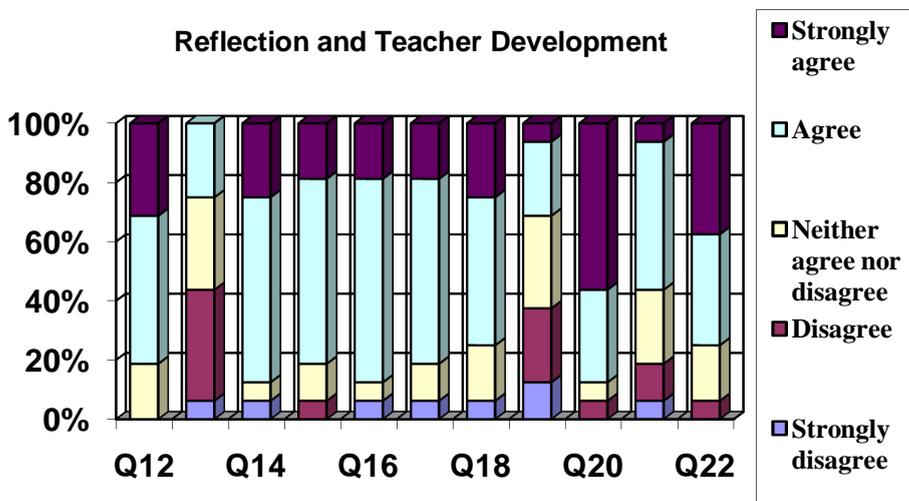


Figure 5: Reflection and teacher development.

Q12. I preferred having the time to reflect and contribute in my own time.
Q13. Writing online changed what I want to say.
Q14. I feel I was able to learn from my peers' postings.
Q15. I feel that I was able to build on my teaching knowledge in the forum.
Q16. I feel I was able to develop my range of EFL terminology through the ADFs.
Q17. The ADFs were successful in providing opportunities for reflection and exposure to multiple perspectives on English language teaching methodology.
Q18. In the ADFs, I would often compare my class observations to the theory I was learning.
Q19. Reading other people's contributions changed my opinion about certain aspects of teaching.
Q20. My perception of the teacher's role in the classroom has changed since I started the course.
Q21. I would often re-read the ADFs to help me to reflect more clearly.
Q22. I would recommend ADFs to other teacher trainees.

Table 2: Examples of questionnaire items.

7.4. Overview of results

The importance of the ADFs was highlighted over the course and the content analysis of qualitative data revealed that the trainees' reflectivity stems from two types of knowledge: theoretical knowledge acquired on the course and experiential knowledge built on their apprenticeship of observation and teaching practice where possible.

8. Limitations of the study

During the process of conducting the study and analysing the collected data, two caveats need to be noted: firstly, an implication of the findings in this study is that, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other teacher trainees' across the globe; secondly, the type of reflectivity found in other educational institutions may differ since teaching practice is normally a compulsory component of a course. In this study, it came to light that there was far less self-reflectivity, largely due to the absence of this element.

9. Recommendations

In the light of the study, it can be argued that ADFs are successful in creating opportunities for reflective thinking in teacher training and the development of an online community. It is suggested that further research is conducted to support these findings in order to emphasise their importance in teacher development.

A final area that requires more attention is evidence of knowledge construction within the forums. Although this has been previously carried out (Gunawardena et al. 1997; Henri 1992), the models used are not really applicable to measuring teacher development among trainees. A reliable and valid model that could be applied to teacher training would be highly welcomed.

10. Conclusion

As a result of the technological nature of ADFs, a permanent record of the participants' reflections provided the researcher with useful data to analyse and identify online reflectivity and the presence of a community over an extended period of time. Furthermore, since the trainees met face to face on a weekly basis and were asked to address set topics and readings in their ADFs, the content was nearly always a detailed reflective analysis, supporting Hough et al.'s (2004: 361) claim: "A primary goal during the formation of these electronic teacher communities is the desire to facilitate teacher reflection". The findings also suggest that the requirement to complete a number of focused discussion postings provided a degree of structure to the online activity.

The study has attempted to demonstrate the impact of ADFs among participants on a teacher training course in fostering reflectivity and facilitating the development of an online community. It can be concluded that asynchronous discussion is an important means to allow teacher trainees to explore issues with their peers and develop a supportive online community. Therefore, ADFs proved effective in facilitating meaningful professional learning and growth through online reflectivity.

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Part II

TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGE FORMS

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NEGOTIATION OF FORM IN FOREIGN-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

ABSTRACT

Among many other applications, discourse analysis has been used in the study of classroom communication. In keeping with this tradition, now accounting for decades of research, the present paper looks at how interaction in formal educational settings coincides with grammar instruction as an important element of foreign language pedagogy. In particular, this work analyzes ways of organizing corrective feedback and repair recognized in the literature as negotiation of form – distinct from both conversationally oriented recasts and didactically oriented overt corrections – such as metalinguistic cues, elicitations, clarification requests or repetitions. Excerpts from transcripts of classroom talk are subjected to qualitative data inquiry that is, admittedly, much less detailed than conversational analysis, but which at the same time offers direct pedagogical implications. As it turns out, in a bilingual community of practice form-focused instruction frequently relies on switches between L2 and L1, as negotiations of metalinguistic meaning and repair tend to be mediated by the learner's native language. This, however, does not appear to prevent successful production of modified L2 output.

1. Introduction

This research-based presentation looks at the form-focused L2 classroom as a bilingual community of practice, combining the study of educational discourse with performance analysis. In a review of interactive patterns occurring in monolingual communicative settings, particular focus is placed on negotiations of corrective feedback and metalinguistic meaning in both teacher-talk discourse (teacher-student dyads) and tutor-talk discourse (pair/group work activities), aimed to enhance production of modified output.

Qualitative data analysis carried out for the purpose of this paper on the basis of own data and examples reported in the literature appears to reveal some interdependencies between type of feedback strategy and language choice (i.e. whether L2 or L1). It follows that – contrary to a common stereotype whereby pedagogic discourse is essentially tutorial and artificial – patterns of negotiated interaction in the foreign language classroom tend to share several characteristics of feedback and repair patterns observed in non-classroom data: language alternation among naturalistic bilinguals.

2. Background and rationale

Comparisons between interactions in educational environments and discourses in other institutionalized settings as well as informal, naturalistic exchanges are not only invited spontaneously and but are also implemented as research inquiries. Therefore, for a few decades, among applications of conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and discourse analysis – besides studies of job interviews, courtroom proceedings, workplace communication, etc. – have been studies of classroom talk. As pointed out by Macbeth (2004: 705), it is “detailed multiple organizational domains” of natural conversation that can be particularly relevant for linguistic research into classroom discourse. In both types of talk, the turn-taking system and adjacency automatically involve the sub-systems of turn construction, sequencing, audience design, preference organization, and conversational repair. Mori (2007: 859), in turn, hopes that innovative perspectives on language that can be implemented into L2 acquisition research as well as into practices of foreign language pedagogy are offered by the intersection of functional linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and conversation analysis.

Yet sociolinguistic analysis is not the only focus of inquiry; increasingly, educational discourse is also studied by researchers interested in second language pedagogy. Like conversation analysis (CA for short), the methodologies employed in classroom discourse research aim “to collect, study, and interpret the interactional data” (Wilkinson 2002: 158). Here, too, researchers transform mechanically recorded speech into transcripts – perhaps not as detailed as in the case of CA – in order to examine the patterns of talk occurring in educational settings.

Seedhouse (1997, 2004) believes that there is reflexivity between pedagogy and interaction, and that learning is mediated by discourse. And so the reason why theories and practices of language learning and teaching should profit from studies of classroom communication is that the latter can give the researcher plentiful and directly accessible data on the process of instructed second-language acquisition. In other words, insights into “interaction in instructional contexts can provide the input and output conditions conducive to L2 development” (Braidı 2002: 2). Findings from studies of institutional discourse are applied universally in teacher training and devel-

opment. For example, He (2004: 659) reports that Chinese language teachers “systematically exploit the units and structures of talk-in-interaction (...) in order to provide many opportunities for language learning and teaching and to develop effective guidelines for language assessment”, while, on the basis of her study of Japanese classrooms, Mori (2004: 547) concludes that researchers “draw some practical implications, which may not be decisive but may still be productive, for designers, trainers, and practitioners” in formal teaching environments.

One application of classroom discourse analysis is the study of dependencies between interaction and grammar instruction. This issue can be researched from a methodological perspective, e.g. concentrating on the teacher’s primary pedagogical goal – teaching L2 grammar or promoting communication in L2 (Sheen 2004: 271). The former, as Nassaji (2000: 242) argues, is the *focused analytic approach*, which sees language learning as the effect of the growth of formal rule-based knowledge and for that reason it believes in controlled practice as the most effective activity. In contrast, the communicative pedagogical focus can be described as the *experiential approach*, which advocates naturalistic use of L2, with emphasis placed on meaningful and message-based tasks. Needless to say, the structure of classroom talk must differ considerably in such contrasting pedagogical approaches, though in most settings instruction tends to be more mixed.

An even narrower scope of inquiry is represented by research studies focusing on the organization of *corrective feedback* and *repair* in classroom interaction. In the language-teaching methodology literature, these two notions are sometimes used interchangeably, though they should be rigidly differentiated because one is contained in the other. For example, Hall (2007: 511) points out that “from a CA perspective, the practice of repair is a fundamental organization of interaction for dealing with troubles in achieving common understanding about the interactional work that parties in an interaction are doing together”, whereas correction is “a particular type of repair in which errors are replaced with what is correct”. But whether it is corrective feedback or repair, it often happens to be negotiated in classroom interaction.

Admittedly, the occurrence of “evaluative information available to learners concerning their linguistic performance” (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 123) does not automatically mean that a given lesson is predominantly grammar-oriented. Still, whenever corrective feedback is provided, it also offers “information about what is not possible in the TL in the form of *reactive negative evidence*” (Pawlak 2006: 301; emphasis original). Because the teacher often has to resort to meta-language to explain the nature of the problem, this may call for an occasional switch into the students’ L1 for more efficient comprehension. Such negotiations of form, which are not always easily distinguishable from outright correction or even more implicit types of negative feedback (Van den Branden 1997: 597), are the focus of the present paper.

3. Negotiation of form vs. recast

Negotiations of form in classroom discourse are essentially side-sequences – digressions from mainstream talk taken by interactants in order to deal with formal inadequacies in L2: phonological, lexical or structural. They differ from conversational repair in that they are not necessarily triggered by non-comprehension or communication breakdown. After all, the principal goal of the more proficient party (the teacher or another student) is tutorial – to draw attention to error while withholding the correct form (Tsang 2004: 199) and, more importantly, to ‘push’ the learner towards modifying his/her output. To be sure, in this respect, form negotiations seem to be interactionally less cooperative than recasts (i.e. correct reformulations of deviant learner utterances, as defined by Ellis 2001: 10; Loewen 2004: 158; Loewen and Philp 2006: 537), since they do not attempt to sustain positive affect by acknowledging the content of the learner’s turn (Nicholas et al. 2001: 721). What is more, as a particular type of implicit feedback, recasts provide learners with information about how distant their current interlanguage form is from the target norm (Nicholas et al. 2001: 732-733) in that they make only those changes which are indispensable for formulating a correct utterance, without changing the content. This is exemplified in the short excerpt below. In turn 3, the teacher not only recasts the learner’s erroneous response given in turn 2, but also elaborates on it. In this way, input enhancement is combined with expansion, which may seem a conversational strategy, but turns out to be a pedagogical move.

Example 1 (partly adapted from Łęska 2007: 73):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 T: What nationality is he? | [OUTPUT ENHANCEMENT] |
| 2 S: Britain. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 3 T: Yes, he is from Great Britain. He is British. | [RECAST – INPUT ENHANCEMENT – EXPANSION] |

However, negotiation and recast are not mutually exclusive categories. For example, confirmation checks, which are generally considered to be negotiation moves, can also contain recasts (Mackey et al. 2003: 39).

Analyses of classroom talk reported in the literature show that, even though conversationally much less natural than recasts, form negotiations do nevertheless elicit repair or otherwise communicate negative cognitive feedback more efficiently. Compare another two examples below. In the first of these samples, the teacher recasts the learner’s erroneous utterance (turn 2), which appears to be accepted as uptake (turn 3), yet it is not clear whether the learner has really noticed the gap between his/her interlanguage system and the L2 norm or merely acknowledged the teacher’s question as a confirmation check relative to the propositional content, thus apparently

ignoring the corrective signal altogether. The uptake may therefore have been unsuccessful.

Example 2 (partly adapted from Loewen 2004: 156):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 S: I was in pub. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: In the pub? | [RECAST – INPUT ENHANCEMENT] |
| 3 S: Yeah and I was drinking
beer with my friend. | [UPTAKE (UNSUCCESSFUL?) –
TOPIC CONTINUATION] |
| 4 T: Which pub did you go to? | [TOPIC CONTINUATION] |

In contrast, in the other excerpt (Example 3) we are dealing with negotiation of form. In turn 3, the teacher requests the repetition of the learner's previous utterance, which is elicited in turn 4, this time with successful uptake. Like in the example above, the teacher repeats the correct version of the student's utterance (turn 5) in order to finish the side-sequence and continue with the topic; however, this occurs after the learner has performed self-repair. Thus, student output is enhanced via modified strategic interaction.

Example 3 (partly adapted from Muranoi 2000: 634-635):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 T: And any other problem? | [OUTPUT ENHANCEMENT] |
| 2 S: ... I saw rat. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 3 T: You saw what? | [REQUEST FOR REPETITION – INPUT/OUTPUT
ENHANCEMENT] |
| 4 S: A rat. | [UPTAKE (SUCCESSFUL)] |
| 5 T: Uh-huh, you saw a rat in your
room. That's terrible. | [REPETITION – INPUT ENHANCEMENT]
[TOPIC CONTINUATION] |

Summing up, on the basis of the short review of the treatment of key terminology in the literature provided above we can conclude that negotiations of form:

- (a) involve a more didactic and less conversational type of repair since they aim not only for comprehensibility of message but also for accuracy and precision in form (Braidí 2002: 5);¹
- (b) make nevertheless participatory demand on the student in classroom interaction (Nobuyoshi and Ellis 1993: 209);
- (c) facilitate student-generated repair: self-correction (Braidí 2002: 4) or peer-correction (Tsang 2004: 190);

¹ Just as their alternative – negotiations of meaning (cf. Pica et al. 1989: 65). A third type has also been discussed in the literature: negotiation of content (cf. Rulon and McCreary 1986; cited in Van den Branden 1997: 594). Negotiation of content differs from negotiation of form or meaning in that it does not constitute a side-sequence to the main flow of conversation.

- (d) tend to be more effective in eliciting successful learner uptake than (even more pedagogically oriented) overt corrections or (more conversationally oriented) recasts (Tsang 2004: 190).

What follows is a comprehensive analysis of a representative selection of negotiations of form in L2 classrooms, mostly involving English as a foreign language. The data is analyzed qualitatively, with pedagogical implications going towards methodological applications in typical language teaching contexts.

4. Data analysis

This study analyses samples of discourse from foreign language classrooms, teacher-fronted formats as well as communicative activities. Those discourse patterns which involve the IRF instructional sequence² and display questions on the part of the teacher (cf. Majer 2003), i.e. formats which tend not to encourage extended student response, often include exchanges that meet the typological criteria of Lyster and Ranta's (1997: 47-48) classification of negotiation moves. The taxonomy in question comprises essentially four discourse treatments of a trouble source in the learner's utterance: (i) elicitation of the correct form; (ii) metalinguistic feedback; (iii) a clarification request; and (iv) a repetition of the learner's error. It is by no means a rigid typology, as digressions concerned with negotiation of form may involve combinations of the above. The data discussed below come from EFL classrooms, unless otherwise specified. Most of the extracts appeared in the original publications of the last few years as simple transcripts of interactions and therefore they had to be adapted and elaborated on for the purpose of the present paper.

The first example (4) shows an exchange taken from a form-focused instructional setting in which corrective feedback involves the use of grammatical terminology.

Example 4 (partly adapted from Tsang 2004: 208):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 S: Prices were being increase. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: What is the tense used? | [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK] |
| 3 S: Had increased. | [UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR (PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL)] |
| 4 T: Yes. This is the structure of
past perfect "had+been+
past participle". I give you
one more chance. | [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK] |
| 5 S: Prices had been increased. | [UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR (SUCCESSFUL)] |

The teacher's metalinguistic cue (turn 2), requesting the name of a particular structure, results in a paradigmatic rather than terminological response on

² That is, teacher *Initiation* + learner *Response* + teacher *Follow-up/Feedback* (cf. Majer 2003).

the part of the learner: 'had increased' (turn 3). This, however, happens not to be successful self-repair, and so the parties proceed to negotiate further. In turn 4 of this side-sequence from the main flow of interaction, the teacher offers another metalinguistic prompt; actually, a model on which the student can easily build the correct response (turn 5).

Such traditional, non-communicative negotiations have always been part of instructed L2 learning, particularly of language pedagogy with focus on forms.³ Clearly, exchanges of this kind are by no means innovative. In fact, modern methodologies – among them also more sophisticated trends in form-focused instruction – tend to deemphasize terminology. And yet, it has to be admitted that within just a few turns the negotiation in Example 4 results in a successful uptake. Besides, there is no stereotypical switching to the mother tongue only because the interaction involves grammatical content.

The next two samples (Examples 5 and 6) also demonstrate successful negotiations of the correct utterance. This time, the metalinguistic cues provided by the instructors in the second turns merely draw the learners' attention to the gaps between their interlanguage forms and the target language norms, resorting neither to terminology, nor to L1. However, in the first case the prompt is combined with a repetition of the learner's error with rising intonation, while in the other partial repetition already includes the right model of the essential structure.

Example 5 (partly adapted from Nizgorodcew 2007: 69):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 S: I'm more better than her. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: More better? | [ECHOING (RISING INTONATION)] |
| There is too much of something. | [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK] |
| 3 S: I'm better than her. | [UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR (SUCCESSFUL)] |

Example 6 (partly adapted from Nizgorodcew 2007: 82):

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1 S: There were my friends which I
didn't see for a long time and I
can talk to them again. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: Friends who – | [OTHER-REPAIR] |
| It's a person, right? | [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK] |
| 3 S: Oh yes. There were friends who I
didn't see. | [UPTAKE (SUCCESSFUL)] |

As can be seen in the above few excerpts, isolating instances of repetitions as separate from metalinguistic feedback or even elicitations within the same utterances would not be an easy task for a researcher interested in quantitative analysis of the data.

So far, none of the analyzed examples has featured repair or some other digression triggering code-switching, though this is a rather common

³ As opposed to focus on form (cf. Long 1991).

negotiation strategy in monolingual classrooms where the teacher and the students share a common mother tongue. Bilingual discourse may develop as a result of diverse communication problems, ranging from clarification requests and structural or lexical models provided as translations of the target forms to evaluative comments. Thus, Example 7 shows a very typical exchange illustrating how the teacher breaks the flow of interaction carried out in L2 (turns 1-2) and initiates a side-sequence by switching to L1 in order to clarify comprehension (turn 3) of the response by the learner, which makes the latter respond also in the switched code (turn 4). Following the clarification, the interaction proceeds in L2 again (turn 5).

Example 7 (partly adapted from Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain 2003: 381; L2 = German; L1 = *English*):

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 T: <i>Okay</i> | Kernspaltung oder | [<nuclear fission or > |
| | Alliteration? Aus | <alliteration? What > |
| | welchem Gebiet kommt | < area does nuclear > |
| | Kernspaltung? | < fission come from?>] |
| 2 S: <i>Chemie.</i> | | [<Chemistry.>] |
| 3 T: <i>What – What?</i> | | [SWITCHING – CLARIFICATION REQUEST] |
| 4 S: <i>Chemistry.</i> | | [RESPONSE IN THE SWITCHED CODE – TRANSLATION] |
| 5 T: <i>Ja, aus der Chemie.</i> | | [< Yes, from chemistry.>] |

In the eighth excerpt, the side-sequence taken to elicit repair (turn 2) of the learner’s erroneous utterance (turn 1) involves an elaborate interactional move consisting of a vague metalinguistic cue in the target language and a structural model provided in L1. Here, instead of initiating overt correction, the teacher first indicates that there is a difference in the shape of the possessive NP between L2 and L1 and then asks the learner to translate a model phrase.

Example 8 (partly adapted from Nizęgorodcew 2007: 65; L1 = *Polish*):

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 S: <i>Father one of the children.</i> | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: <i>English, please.</i> | [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK] |
| | [SWITCHING – L1 TRANSLATION MODEL – <One |
| | <i>Ojciec jednego</i> |
| | <i>dziecka –</i> |
| | child’s father –>] |
| 3 S: <i>Father of one child said...</i> | [UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR (PARTLY SUCCESSFUL)] |

This type of feedback turns out to be only partly successful, as in the uptake (turn 3) the learner still has not solved all the structural problems. However, from a typological point of view, we can acknowledge the side-sequence in the form of a switch to L1 in the second turn as consisting solely in the provision of translation practice, without changing the default code of the interaction, as in Example 7.

A slightly different mechanism of bilingual discourse employed as repair negotiation can be found in Example 9. This sample has been extracted from a

transcript of a pair-work activity, but in terms of feedback such interactions do not necessarily differ from communication involving instructors, as in this regard tutor talk (cf. Majer 2003: 142ff.) simply follows the patterns of teacher talk.

Example 9 (partly adapted from Majer 2003: 296; L1 = *Polish*):

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 S1: You know American girls? | [? INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 S2: <i>Jak masz pytanie, to musisz zacząć od "do"</i> . | [SWITCHING – METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK – <A question has to start with 'do'.>] |
| 3 S1: Do you know American girls? | [UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR] |

To be sure, the digression taken by S2 in turn 2 switches the codes of the exchange, but because it happens to be metalinguistic feedback in the form of a common grammatical rule that requires no further negotiation, then – following the repair – communication proceeds in L2. Typically, such short interventions are treated by participants of classroom discourse as 'bracketed prompts' rather than as genuine contributions to interaction.

In contrast, the negotiative moves of the teacher cited in the next sample (Example 10) betray a much greater involvement in discourse. Since there does not seem to be a strict language policy underlying feedback, the boundaries between the main flow of the conversation and the side-sequences are not clearly fixed for the parties involved, and so neither the repair, nor indeed the interaction itself proceeds smoothly.

Example 10 (partly adapted from Banaś 2006: 87-88; L1 = *Polish*):

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 T: Nice – <i>ładny, miły</i> ,
so what would you say,
'I think that –'
<i>Jak powiesz 'lato'?</i> | [SWITCHING – <nice, pleasant,> –
OUTPUT ENHANCEMENT –
PROVISION OF MODEL] |
| 2 S1: <i>Nie wiem.</i> | [SWITCHING – <How would you say 'summer'?>]
[<I don't know.>] |
| 3 S2: Summer. | [PEER PROMPT IN L2] |
| 4 S1: I think summer – | [PARTIAL REPETITION – INCOMPLETE RESPONSE] |
| 5 T: <i>No, uważam, że co?</i> | [SWITCHING – <Well, I think that what?>] |
| 6 S1: I think that summer is
the most nice. | [REPETITION – EXPANSION –
INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 7 T: <i>No, co znaczy 'nice'?</i>
Nice: <i>ładny, miły.</i>
Nicer:
<i>ładniejszy, miłszy.</i> | [SWITCHING – <Well, what does 'nice' mean?]
[<nice, pleasant.>]
[PROVISION OF MODEL –
TRANSLATION INTO L1 – <nicer, more pleasant.>] |
| 8 S1: Nicer. | [UPTAKE: REPETITION] |
| 9 T: <i>A co znaczy "the nicest"?</i>
<i>Najładniejszy, najmiłszy,</i>
<i>a tu mamy 'niż zima', czyli</i>
<i>jest –</i> | [SWITCHING – <And what does 'the nicest' mean?>]
[<The nicest, the most pleasant,>
<and here we have 'than winter',>
<so it's –>] |
| 10 S1: Nicer. | [UPTAKE: REPETITION] |

- 11 T: *Jeszcze raz*, Iza. [SWITCHING – <Once again, Iza.>]
 12 S1: I think that summer is nicer than winter. [UPTAKE – REPETITION – EXPANSION]

Like in a number of other samples that could potentially illustrate the present discussion, Example 10 involves a short practice phase as a side-sequence to the main flow of classroom talk. The whole sequence of turns leading to learner uptake is almost like a structural pattern drill. Even so, this negotiative option nevertheless seems a healthy alternative to the non-communicative teacher monologue (e.g. mini-lectures on grammar) or the patronizing Socratic dialogue (cf. Majer 2003).

In Example 11, the teacher's metatalk (cf. Łęska 2007) is even more forcibly pedagogical. Consequently, what may at first (turn 2) seem to be an exchange that still vacillates between the two linguistic codes eventually switches to L1 (turns 3-4).

Example 11 (partly adapted from Łęska 2007: 80; L1 = *Polish*):

- 1 S: Its siren were flashing. [INCORRECT OUTPUT]
 2 T: *Nie*, was, [SWITCHING – REPAIR <No, 'was',> –
i siren nie może flashing. SWITCHING – <and 'siren' cannot 'flashing'.>]
 Wailing. *Jakie jest* [< What is the>
polskie wyrażenie? <Polish phrase?>]
 3 S: *Wy*: [TRANSLATION INTO L1 – <Wail.>]
 4 T: *Tak, wy*: *Wyła syrena,* [<Yes, wail. The siren was wailing,>
prawda? A nie świeciła. <wasn't it? And not flashing.>]

In many other similar cases, teachers' preference for giving feedback in L1 tends to change the initial sociolinguistic profile of the interaction, and thus negotiations of lexical choices, verb forms, pronunciations and the like are often carried out in the learners' native language. Corrective principles override communicative goals. This tendency can be even further emphasized in negotiations realized as language switches co-occurring with feedback in the form of evaluative, even sarcastic, comments accompanying metalinguistic information or requests for elicitation. Compare the next example:

Example 12 (partly adapted from Łęska 2007: 82; L1 = *Polish*):

- 1 S1: Did you came by train [INCORRECT OUTPUT]
 or by –
 2 T: *No, bardzo pięknie.* [SWITCHING – <Oh, how very nice.>]
Robimy to dwa tygodnie [<We've been doing this for two weeks>
i dalej jest 'did you <and it still is 'did you came'. >]
came'. Która forma [ELICITATION OF CORRECT RESPONSE –
powinna być? < Which form should it be?>]
 3 S2: 'Come'. [PEER PROVISION OF CORRECT RESPONSE]
 4 T: 'Come'. Did you – [CONFIRMATION –
 Agata. ELICITATION]

5 S1: Come [kɔm].	[INCORRECT OUTPUT]
6 T: [kɔm] <i>to po niemiecku.</i>	[SWITCHING – <[kɔm] that's in German.>]
7 S3: Come [kʌm].	[PEER PROVISION OF CORRECT PRONUNCIATION]
8 T: Come. Did you come, <i>tak?</i>	[REINFORCEMENT – PROVISION OF MODEL – SWITCHING – <right?>]

Unlike in the next example, here the teacher's digression in the native language (turn 2) – as a reaction to S1's erroneous utterance – can still be considered to serve the purpose of eliciting the correct form. The pattern which can also be observed in numerous other samples of classroom discourse is 'negative affective feedback before cognitive feedback' or elicitation. The negotiation which ensues involves other learners besides S1 (turns 3 and 7), and so she gets no chance to perform self-repair successfully, after the imperfect first attempt (turn 5).

Let us move on to another case. On the face of it, the student's uptake (turn 3) in Example 13 shows that repair has been negotiated successfully. However, what matters is that in turn 2, besides the teacher's comment given in L1, we are also dealing with negative affective feedback – a mild threat, also expressed in the learner's mother tongue, which immediately precedes the grammatical rule. In other words, the whole side-sequence, meant perhaps to reproach the student more than to elicit the correct form,⁴ appears to be an excuse to switch the codes.

Example 13 (partly adapted from Nizgorodcew 2007: 70; L1 = *Polish*):

1 S: I also like thrillers like 'The Silence of the Sheeps'.	[INCORRECT OUTPUT]
2 T: <i>Ja ci dam</i> sheeps! <i>'Owca' po angielsku</i> <i>ma tak_a sam_a liczb_e</i> <i>mno_ga jak pojedyncz_a!</i>	[SWITCHING – REPETITION OF ERROR – <I'll teach you> <to say 'sheeps'!>] [METALINGUISTIC FEEDBACK – <'Sheep' in English> < has the same plural > < number as the singular!>]
3 S: <i>Aha!</i> Sheep.	[<I see!> – UPTAKE: SELF-REPAIR]

Judging from the analysis of extracts such as 13, one can make an observation that in managing cognitive and affective feedback at the same time non-native teachers are prone to select the learners' L1. Potential non-comprehensibility of metalinguistic commentaries may not be the decisive factor. Presumably, negotiations of form and repair would proceed more easily in L2 if less emotion were involved, with speech acts not threatening face directly.

An even more emotional attitude of the teacher, which can be inferred from Example 14, brings about an uncertain pedagogical effect. Here, too, neg-

⁴ It is interesting to note that the teacher did not get involved in repair aiming at the correction of the factual (lexical) error, i.e. 'The Silence of the *Lamb*s'.

ative cognitive feedback is combined with negative affective feedback, while the instructor is moving between L2 and L1. However, the function of the echoing of the erroneous utterance (turn 1) performed by the teacher in turn (2) is ambiguous, as we cannot be sure whether she only challenges the propositional value of the student's claim or perhaps also reacts to a basic mistake by providing the right model and at the same time maintaining interaction.

Example 14 (own data; L1 = *Polish*):

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 S: But wasn't homework. | [INCORRECT OUTPUT] |
| 2 T: 'Wasn't homework?' | [ECHOING – RISING INTONATION] |
| <i>Jak nie,</i> | [SWITCHING – <What do you mean there wasn't,> |
| <i>jak tak?</i> | <when there was?>] |
| Of course | [CONTRADICTION – |
| there was homework! | RECAST] |

Whatever the intentions, the erroneous utterance is perhaps inadvertently recast by the teacher before the student ever gets a chance to self-correct; though because there is no negotiation or output enhancement, one cannot be sure about the potential beneficial consequences for the development of the transient interlanguage rule.

Finally, let us take a look at a sample which is representative of classroom interactions in which focus is less pedagogical. The problem which such cases pose for classroom discourse analysis is that it is often difficult to distinguish clearly between turns or even individual moves that serve negotiation of form as opposed to negotiation of meaning. Example 15 is just such an exchange. For this reason, no diagnostic information is offered on the right hand side of the transcript, except for the English translations of the switches to L1.

Example 15 (partly adapted from Kusiak 2007: 104-105; L1 = *Polish*):

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 T: When you meet at home, when
you meet after school, <i>jak po szkole</i> | [< after school, when> |
| <i>się spotykacie</i> , after school. | <you meet,>] |
| 2 S: Uh – | |
| 3 T: What do you do? | |
| 4 S: <i>No uh no, robimy różne</i> | [<Well uh well, we do different> |
| <i>rzeczy, rozmawiamy –</i> | <things, we talk –>] |
| 5 T: Yeah, so you walk. | |
| 6 S: And talk. | |
| 7 T: And talk. | |
| 8 S: <i>Znaczy talk,</i> | [<That is, [we] talk,> |
| <i>my nie chodzimy.</i> | <we don't walk.>] |
| 9 T: You don't walk. | |
| 10 S: Yes, <i>czytamy gazety.</i> | [<we read newspapers.>] |
| 11 T: In English. | |
| 12 S: Read <i>czasopisma.</i> | [<magazines.>] |

13 T: Magazines.

14 S: Magazines.

15 T: Mhm, so you read magazines.

It would perhaps be fair to admit that we are dealing with unrestricted bilingual talk, with almost naturally occurring switches between the two linguistic systems available to the interactants, except that certain moves on the part of the teacher emphasize his or her dominance, as well as the inequality of participation rights, and thus gently remind the analyst that this is an exchange in an institutionalized setting. Those are, for instance, cases such as turn 11, which disciplines the student for the liberties taken with code-switching, or turn 13, which repairs discourse in terms of language choice, despite the lack of non-comprehension or the fact that the teacher, too, occasionally indulges in a more liberal language policy (e.g. turn 1). However, what is interesting and at the same time difficult to pinpoint is that repairs are also performed by the student (successively in turns 6, 8, 10 and 12), though there is no simple answer to the question whether those are genuine moves aimed at negotiation or merely conversational strategies. In any case, the sample above shifts between negotiation of form and negotiation of meaning, as there does not seem to be an explicitly defined goal – is this discourse oriented toward accuracy or fluency of expression?

5. Concluding remarks

The foregoing discussion of a modest representation of rather typical cases of negotiation of form in foreign-language classroom communication is hoped to have highlighted the most intriguing issues at the intersection of discourse analysis and language pedagogy. We have specifically looked at moves marking negotiation of form, i.e. metalinguistic cues, elicitations, clarification requests or repetitions, because they are known in the literature to trigger more effective (self- or other-generated) repairs than conversationally oriented recasts or pedagogically oriented overt corrections.

If negotiation strategies are used expertly by language instructors, they can draw learners' attention to trouble spots in their output, make them notice the distance between their current interlanguage form and the target language norm and, in effect, 'push' them to modify their L2 production. This is the psycholinguistic mechanism that is the rationale for studies such as the present paper.

A certain limitation of research approaches like this one is that they are confined to qualitative data analysis, based on ethnographic evidence, at best relying on extensive observation field notes and lesson transcripts that are usually much less detailed than typical CA scrutiny. However, applications of quantitative methodologies seem to be no less controversial. For example, statistics of association such as the chi-square test (cf. Oliver and Mackey 2003: 526f; Sheen 2004: 282) must operate on dichotomous variables;

unfortunately, without resorting to laboratory conditions and controlled elicitation of interactive data, it would be difficult to claim that, for example, a given sample can be assigned to either form or meaning negotiation. Quantifying qualitative material is not always the best research idea.

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COLLABORATIVE FOCUS ON FORM: WHAT, WHY, WHEN AND HOW?

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the use of tasks during which learners focus on form, either incidentally or more particularly as a design feature of the task. I will focus principally on research carried out on the latter task type, especially work, including my own, on collaborative output tasks. Among other things, I will look at how the amount and type of 'on-task' focus on form can be investigated, making use of the Language Related Episode as a unit for its measurement and classification. I will also discuss the language used by learners while they pay attention to form and co-construct knowledge about language, and the nature of their collaboration.

1. Key terms

I will begin with a discussion of three terms which are fundamental to this paper: *focus on form*, *collaborative* and *output*. A brief summary of some research studies is followed by a look at some of my own recent work, which draws on data extracts to exemplify some typical aspects of how students attend to form when collaborating to produce written language.

1.1. Focus on Form

Long (1991) drew the oft-cited distinction between *focus on form* and *focus on formS*. He used the term *focus on formS* to refer to learning activities in which language forms are individually selected and sequenced in a synthetic, product-oriented syllabus, and focused on one by one. Since most coursebooks and pedagogic grammars utilize such an approach, it is evident that a *focus on formS* approach is still widespread in ELT. *Focus on form* (hereafter FonF), on

the other hand, is distinguishable in several ways. According to Long and Robinson (1998: 23), FonF "(...) often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one of the students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension of production".

FonF¹ is usually incidental, i.e. focus on a language form is not the primary purpose of the activity, which may be completely meaning-focused or designed to practise one of the productive skills. However, a monitoring teacher or a student participant may opt to focus on a particular form, usually when someone has difficulty producing it or makes a perceived error. Moreover, the form under focus is not limited to grammar; it may be a lexical, discourse, orthographic or pragmatic feature. When the tasks involve language output, FonF may be reactive and take the form of corrective feedback, e.g. recasts or explicit reference to a rule, or it may be proactive. In the latter, an activity is organised to focus on a pre-selected feature, which may be done with varying degrees of explicitness. In Fotos and Ellis's (1991) study there is explicit focus on dative alternation. In contrast, Samuda focuses on forms which express the notion of probability more implicitly through the teacher guiding "attention 'from behind' as the task unfolds" (2001: 124), not by recasting student errors but by seeding her own utterances with different forms for expressing probability.

1.2. Collaboration

A significant amount of FonF research has investigated students working collaboratively in pairs or small groups. Storch (2001) has investigated the benefits and the nature of collaboration. Her paper compared the performance of student dyads in an Australian ESL context working on grammar-focused communication tasks (cloze, text reconstruction and composition) with that of students working individually, and demonstrated that working in pairs had a positive effect on overall grammatical accuracy.

It is evident to any practising teacher that dyads operate differently, and that some collaborate more effectively than others. Storch (2002), in a longitudinal study of ten pairs of adult ESL learners doing a range of tasks, distinguished four typical patterns of dyadic interaction through rating the interactions of pairs along two dimensions, *mutuality* and *equality*. Pairs who respond readily to each other and give each other plenty of feedback display high *mutuality*. *Equality* concerns not only the number of turns or utterances of each student, or their lengths, but the extent to which each contributes to the management of the task and the negotiation of form. Storch placed each dyad in one of the quadrants (Figure 1), claiming that learning was more likely to occur if the dyads are placed in the 'expert/novice' or 'collaborative' quadrant than in either of the other two.

¹ For further discussion of the term *focus on form*, see Sheen (2002).

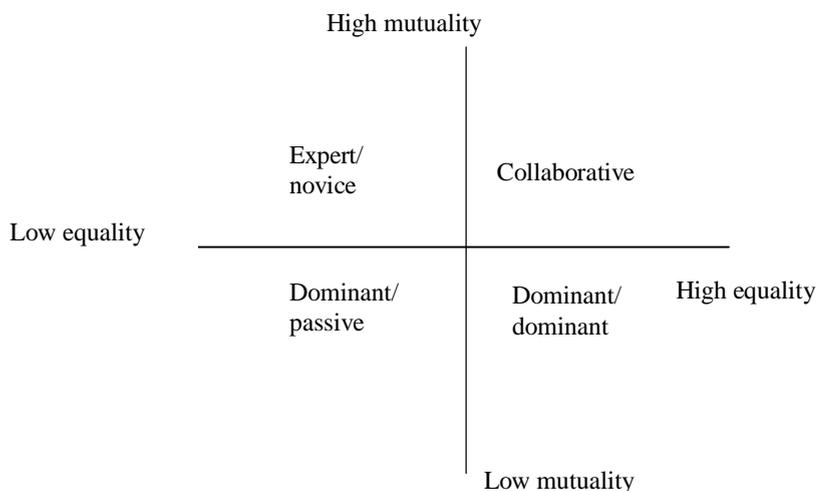


Figure 1: Patterns of dyadic interaction (adapted from Storch 2002).

Placement in one of these quadrants, however, is a very approximate way of classifying a dyad. Specifying an exact location along each of the two continua is a more accurate indicator. In my own study (see section 3), all the dyads rated highly for both equality and mutuality so I am currently attempting to refine Storch's instrument in order to describe or measure differences between the pairs.

1.3. Output

Swain's Output Hypothesis arose out of her observation of learners of French in Canadian immersion schools who, although able to carry out the semantic processing of language needed for comprehension, were less adept at the more syntactic mode of processing necessary for the production of accurate language. To help remedy this, Swain (1995) proposed the use of tasks which 'push' learners' output so that they have to engage in more focus on form, paying greater attention to the grammatical accuracy of the language they are producing. Her view is that the completion of such tasks involves learners in three functions of output, that is: noticing, hypothesis formulation and testing, and the metalinguistic function. When producing language, learners become aware of their own linguistic shortcomings; they 'notice the hole' (Doughty and Williams 1998) between what they can and cannot produce. They experiment with different linguistic forms (hypothesis formulation) and test them against teacher and peer feedback. This also involves reflection upon and evaluation of their own linguistic 'products', that is, the metalinguistic function.

2. Some studies of collaborative FonF output tasks

The mid- and late 1990s witnessed the emergence of a significant body of focus on form research studies. There have been plenty of subsequent publications to maintain the momentum but I will restrict myself to a brief discussion of FonF studies of collaborative 'pushed' output only, and the task types they utilise. In order to facilitate this discussion, however, I should first describe the key task type and the principal analytical construct employed.

2.1. Dictogloss (DG)

DG is the most frequently employed type of text reconstruction task in the research literature. Slight differences in the DG procedures researchers have employed are pointed out in Table 1 below, which also summarises other differences in the key studies discussed below. The following procedure was employed in my own studies (Fortune and Thorp 2001; Fortune 2005). Of the studies in Table 1, it is closest to the procedure in Kowal and Swain (1994).

- (i) A short text, usually 5 or 6 sentences long, is selected. The text contains examples of a seeded language form (or occasionally forms) which had been given prior focus in the previous class.
- (ii) The teacher reads the text aloud twice at normal speed, pausing slightly at the end of each sentence. During the first reading, the students just listen. During the second, they take notes.
- (iii) The students work in pairs to write a grammatically accurate text with the same meaning as the original.
- (iv) The teacher comments on one or more of the student texts as a whole class activity, eliciting suggestions for improvement from the students.

The type of Dictogloss, then, involves the *negotiation of form* during the completion of a task which is meaning-focused in the sense that students cannot stray beyond the semantic boundaries set by the original text. The FonF is explicit (section 1 above) in so far as the original text is seeded with instances of key lexis and a selected grammatical feature but, as we shall see, learners' negotiation of form tends to focus on language features way beyond those confines.

2.2. Language related episodes (LREs)

Sometimes called a *form focused episode* (e.g. Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis 2002), an LRE is "any part of a dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct" (Swain 1998: 70). An LRE focuses on one language item only. The definition employed in my study differs slightly. Since LREs are identifiable units of a collaborative activity, self-corrections are not treated as episodal. Again, Table 1 shows the

differences in researchers' definitions of this key construct as well as the different taxonomies of LRE² that they have drawn up.

2.3. The studies

Storch's work, all in an Australian higher education context, looked at collaboration in text editing and reconstruction tasks. Storch (1997) categorised the knowledge sources dyads employed when negotiating form during a text editing task. She found that students focused on form a lot, but not necessarily those forms targeted by the teacher. Her 1998 study compared performance across four collaboratively conducted output tasks (multiple choice, cloze, composition and text reconstruction), and showed that the most engagement with form, as witnessed by the number of LREs, occurred in the text reconstruction task.

Many of the key studies in this area have taken place in the context of Canadian French immersion secondary schools, and many of them have employed Dictogloss tasks. Two of the results of Kowal and Swain's (1994) dictogloss study lent support to Storch's findings. The collaborating students engaged in many LREs, and in doing so focused on forms of their own choice (the learners' agenda) rather more often than they attended to forms to which the teacher had given prior focus and/or seeded in the original DG text. These findings were further replicated by Swain (1998) in a study which compared two sets of dyads, who had (+M) and had not (-M) witnessed the prior modelling of DG task performance. The (+M) dyads focused on form more often, evidenced by their participation in two and half times more LREs than the (-M) dyads. The use of posttests, which were tailor made to focus on the actual forms the students focused on, demonstrated a tendency for LRE outcomes to be internalised, whether or not they were correct.

Swain and Lapkin (2001) compared the performances of dyads doing two tasks, a DG and a jigsaw task, which were controlled for semantic content. They found that both tasks prompted plenty of collaborative focus on form but there was no significant difference in the number of LREs, the DG task being slightly more constraining in the range of LREs produced.

Other task types have been the focus of more recent studies of collaborative output. For example, Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2005) and Watanabe and Swain (2007) both investigated students' working together to compare their own written texts with versions reformulated by a native speaker. Although such work is outside the scope of this paper, readers wishing to access studies of a wider range of collaborative tasks than I deal with here should consult Swain, Brooks and Tocalli-Beller (2002) for a detailed review.

² For more on the nature of LREs, see Fortune (2001) and Jackson (2001).

Study	1. Kowal and Swain (1994)	2. Swain (1998)	3. Swain and Lapkin (2001)
Type of group	Dyads and triads.	Dyads.	Dyads.
DG task instructions	Produce a grammatically accurate text. Words not the same as the original text.	Produce a text as close to the original as possible in grammar and content.	Reconstruct the passage exactly.
Are self-corrections included in the LRE definition?	Not specified.	No.	Yes.
Seeded form	Present tense (form).	Compound past and imperfect tenses.	Pronominal verbs seeded in the DG.
Tests	None.	Dyad specific posttests (1 week after experimental task). <i>Items based on that particular dyad's LREs.</i>	Pretest (2 weeks before experimental task) Class-specific posttests (2 weeks after), which comprised all pretest items + items based on the LREs of all the dyads in either class.
Task modelling	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Categories of LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammatical. Meaning-based. Orthographic. 	Not formally classified. Categorised only as correct, incorrect and unresolved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lexis-based. Form-based (incl. orthography and "an aspect of French morphology, syntax or discourse" (2001: 104).

Table 1: Key differences between DG studies.

The studies mentioned above, then, can be said to have the following features in common:

- they make use of the Dictogloss procedure (with slight variations);
- the 'on-task' small group, usually dyadic, interactions are recorded and transcribed;
- the LRE (Language Related Episode) is employed as an analytical tool. The *process data* (the transcribed student interactions) are analysed into LREs to investigate, inter alia:
 - which forms the learners focus on;
 - how, and how many times, they focus on the forms;
 - the metalanguage they use while focusing on form;
 - whether or not an LRE outcome is learned and, if so, whether or not it is correct (Swain 1998);
 - the knowledge sources learners draw upon (Kowal and Swain 1994).

All the studies demonstrate that DG tasks give rise to a considerable amount of focus on form, particularly on forms which are learner- rather than syllabus-driven. Key differences between the DG task studies discussed above are shown in Table 1.

It is evident that studies have categorised LREs differently. The widespread adoption of a common taxonomy would be beneficial in allowing more ready comparisons between studies to be made. My own taxonomy allows for finer distinctions to be made between LREs, placing them in the categories: grammatical (G), lexical (L), discourse (D), orthographic (O) and lexicogrammatical (LG). The latter describes form-focused dialogue for which the analyst-researcher finds it impossible to separate students' decisions about the choice of lexis from discussion of its grammaticisation.

3. My study

The DG procedure and LRE definition employed have already been discussed. My own study is a case study of 5 EFL learner dyads each engaged in the same sequence of four DG tasks. It makes use of posttests but their discussion is outside the scope of this paper. The students were upper intermediate to advanced level learners of English of mixed nationality studying at King's College Language Centre.

3.1. The research timetable

Prior focus on form, in the guise of traditional focus on formS teaching, was given to a specific language item, examples of which were then seeded in the DG text to be read aloud and reconstructed the following week. Table 2 shows the task performance and data collection schedule.

Week	Class activity	Form(s) given prior focus and seeded
1	Focus on Form 1	Passive voice
2	DG1 Pre-quake jitters	Passive voice
3	Follow-up interviews to DG1 Focus on Form 2	Countable/Uncountable nouns
4	DG2 The Best Advice	Countable/Uncountable nouns
5	Follow up interviews to DG2 Focus on Form 3	'If' sentences
6	DG3 Planning a Holiday	'If' sentences
7	Follow up interviews to DG3 Focus on Form 4	Relative clauses
8	DG4 Doctors Under Stress	Relative clauses
9	Follow up interviews to DG4	

Table 2: Task performance and data collection schedule.

3.2. Research questions (RQs)

My main general concern was to investigate in detail how the dyads focused on form during the oral interactions which took place during the writing of their texts. I will not list all the specific RQs arising from that concern, just three which I have chosen to highlight in this paper, and which are exemplified by data extracts A to C below. These are:

- (1) To investigate whether forms attended to by learners themselves during collaborative dialogue (learner-generated focus on form) are more likely to be learned than forms given pre-task focus by the teacher (syllabus-generated focus on form).
- (2) To investigate how students' knowledge about language (hereafter KAL) is utilised and jointly constructed, the nature of the metalanguage they use, and whether the employment of metalinguistic terminology helps learners to objectify language forms, and to attend to those forms more readily.
- (3) To investigate the nature of collaboration, e.g. maintaining focus, the relative contributions of each dyad member etc.

All three extracts are from the interactions of one of the five dyads, students R and T. The orthographic transcriptions are turn numbered so that in the ensuing discussion, Tx refers to Turn x.

Extract 1: Prior instruction (RQ1), KAL (RQ2), discontinuous focus (RQ3)

This LRE is discontinuous (Fortune 2005) in that R and T appear to have selected the simple present tense of 'know' in T56 only for R to refocus on this item later in the dialogue through questioning this choice in T71. About 35% of the LREs in my data are discontinuous and some are multiply so (see Extract 2 below). R makes reference to rules on 'if' sentences which had been the subject of classroom focus one week before. There is much equivocation about whether to use 'know' or 'knew', e.g. T in T84 and 86, but eventually the correct decision 'if they knew' is made, apparently for the rule-based reason given by R in T101 – 'they are not sure' indicating the hypothetical nature of the event. This demonstrates not only the effect of recent grammar teaching, but also the employment of metalanguage in joint knowledge construction. R uses grammatical terminology frequently (italicized terms in Ts 91 and 99) and it is a recurring feature of R and T's joint text construction that the greater metalingual competence and KAL of student R appears to drive the decision-making processes more often than T's greater (according to a pre-test) linguistic competence.

Collaborative focus on form: What, why, when and how?

53	R	so if they had no (...) if they had known no [they know]
54	T	if [they]
55	R	Know
56	T	yeah if they know yeah if they know that
71	R	em if they so before tourists visit a new country, they should find out as much as possible about the place they are going to visit if they know what kind (...) they known? (...) because (...) no?
72	T	[if]
73	R	[if] they known what kind of em weather they are they'll expect they would take the suitable
74	T	Yeah
75	R	Clothes
76	T	yeah
77	R	they knew
78	T	if they knew?
79	R	yes because
80	T	yeah [they knew]
81	R	[they don't] because they don't they would take (...)
82	T	they would take the yeah
83	R	suitable clothes em secondly yes erm if they (...)
84	T	also if they (...) knew whether no if they know (...) or knew? (pause)
85	R	[yes]
86	T	you [know this] one is like if they knew
87	R	Mm
88	T	it seems like it already happened but if they knew before
89	R	(no) if they had () if it has already happened em we say if if they had knew use [the past]
90	T	[they would have]
91	R	perfect use the past perfect is when it's impossible for the it has already happened but if it is still erm it's not
92	T	It's not happening yet
93	R	yes not because they haven't
94	T	if they knew
95	R	they are planning before going there
96	T	yeah yeah yeah I know [but em]
97	R	[they knew] before
98	T	they would've em would have [they would]
99	R	[so] when you use erm if past simple past then the modal verb it is when em it's when em it's not sure
100	T	Yeah
101	R	so they are not sure here they are not sure about whether they are going to face this country
102	T	the uhu (okay) so the other one so also if they know whether to tip or not they will avoid [the (embarrassing)]

Extract 1: Grammatical LRE (Tense in 'if' clause).

The effects of recent prior classroom focus on a target form (the syllabus agenda) is evident in several LREs despite the fact that episodes focusing on items from the learners' own agendas are more numerous. In about

10% of the episodes learners make (usually) explicit reference to KAL, often in the form of a rule or generalisation which they have encountered.

Extract 2: Prior instruction (RQ1), KAL (RQ2), discontinuous focus (RQ3)

This LRE is multiply discontinuous; “engagement with a form is threaded throughout large parts of the entire text reconstruction process, something which must surely be a firm indicator of sustained attention to form” (Fortune 2005: 32). By T14 the present simple appears to have been chosen, then ‘will expect’ in T62, only for this decision to be questioned by R in T111. Apparently resolved in T221, the form is attended to yet again about ten minutes later (T349) with the same outcome.

In T119, R cites a generalization from her prior instruction, which she expresses clearly and which holds in some contexts (e.g. in the dependent clause of ‘if’ sentences) but is overgeneralised and ungrammatical in the syntactic context under consideration. This reference to a rule seems crucial to the LRE outcome; R’s KAL again appears to be the driving force. Nonetheless, the refocus by R in T349 would indicate lingering doubt.

9	R	they are going to expect or
10	T	what kind of weather oh I don't have it
11	R	they expect yes what kind of weather they expect they should em take
12	T	take
13	R	suitable clothes
14	T	yeah
61	R	they will?
62	T	they will (...) expect yeah
111	R	(they take the) <u>or</u> whether to tip or not (...) if they knew what kind of weather they'll exp- (...) they they will expect or they expect?
112	T	what kind of weather they expect no will I think
113	R	if they knew what kind of weather they expect (...) they'll expect there (...) [what do you think?]
114	T	[I'm not sure] if they knew what kind of weather they (...)
115	R	will expect
116	T	they will [(expect)]
117	R	they (aren't there)
118	R	they would have
119	R	he said that Alan said that we can use the present for future ac[tions]
120	T	[act]ion (...) yeah yeah yeah
121	R	so they expect what kind of weather they expect they would take the suitable clothes or if (...) or if to tip (...) whether to tip or not so that they [avoid]
349	R	I'm not sure (...) they will expect or they expect?
350	T	if they knew what kind of weather they expect? they will expect
351	R	they (expect) no they expect
352	T	they expect?
353	R	eh yes yes (...) [if they knew]

Extract 2: Grammatical LRE (Tense – ‘expect’ vs. ‘will expect’).

Extract 3: Interactivity (RQ3)

Some LREs are more interactive than others (Storch 2002, 2007), or the degree of *interactivity* (mutual engagement) may vary within an LRE. The first part of this discontinuous episode is interactive, showing a high degree of mutual engagement. In T48-9, 'it is said to be mothers' is the agreed outcome. However, when this LRE reappears much later in the dialogue (T466), R changes the outcome (T471-3) to 'it is said that mothers are the ones' with no apparent involvement from T. The researcher cannot be sure that T has engaged at all with this alternative offered by R, which appeared in the jointly constructed final text.

38	T	it is
39	R	to be
40	T	okay is said to be?
41	R	it is to be (...) you can say I think
42	T	it is to be
43	R	that mothers
44	T	traditionally it is to be traditionally it is said that traditionally it is said that (...)
45	R	I think there is to be is okay because he say <u>they</u> they how do you say? (...) were are to be (...) yes em you can say they are to be married they are to be married
46	T	yeah but in a few minutes in few days probably were to be married is like now were to be married not in the future like in few days like you're not [exactly]
47	R	[so xxx now]?
48	T	this is past traditionally it is said to be
49	R	Okay
466	T	Said
467	R	said!
468	T	oh said (laughter) said
469	R	to be mothers
470	T	to be mothers
471	R	oh it is said that mothers are
472	T	traditionally it is said
473	R	that mothers are the ones

Extract 3: Grammatical LRE (Syntax – 'it is + ...').

In the data obtained from all five dyads there are plenty of instances of LREs in which the students have participated equally in a decision-making process of high mutuality, engaging readily and often with each other's contributions. On other occasions in the same DG, however, the involvement of one member of the dyad may appear slight and peripheral to the outcome. Storch's (2002) dyads rated differently for equality and mutuality over a sequence of tasks. In other words, she noted general inter-dyad differences during the performance of a range of tasks. In my data, episodes like Extract 3 demonstrate intra-dyad variation; particular pairs show varying degrees of interactivity within the duration of a specific task.

4. Summarising comments

Although space constraints have not permitted the inclusion of much of my data to illustrate the findings, my own work provides further evidence to support the following assertions about collaborative, form-focused output tasks:

- Much of the collaborative dialogue demonstrates the existence of Swain's (1995) three functions of output (see section 1.3. above).
- Learning can be situated in learner-learner negotiation about form. Collaborative dialogue is "problem-solving (...) knowledge-building dialogue" (Swain 2000: 113) but only as long as collaborative effort is made by participants in the activity (e.g. 'high mutuality' (Storch 2002)). Some LREs are more interactive than others.
- The outcomes of LREs usually 'stick' (e.g. Swain 1998), and therefore teacher or other corrective feedback at a later stage is important. Nevertheless, in most studies, a high percentage of decisions made are 'correct'.
- The language items selected for negotiation by the learners more often derive from the learners' internal syllabuses (learner-driven agenda) than the agenda of the syllabus or teacher (e.g. pre-teaching of a form, seeding in a DG text etc.). Even so, there is some evidence in my data of the effects of prior 'whole class' focus on form.
- There are differences in the amount and types of collaboration shown both by different dyads and by the same dyad at different times during a task.

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ADVANCED LEARNERS' USE OF STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING GRAMMAR: A DIARY STUDY

ABSTRACT

Although numerous studies have investigated the use of language learning strategies and their effect on language learning, some skills and subsystems have received less attention than others. One such neglected area is the application of strategies for learning grammar. The paper aims to throw some light on this issue by reporting the findings of a diary study which sought to explore the ways in which English department students go about mastering and practicing grammatical structures. In the first part, grammar learning strategies will be related to the main taxonomies of strategic behaviors and the findings of previous research in this area will be outlined. In the second part, the design of the study will be described, its findings will be presented and discussed, and some recommendations for teachers and researchers will be made.

1. Introduction

Given the fact that research into *language learning strategies*, or *language learner strategies*, as many experts now prefer to call them (e.g. Cohen and Macaro 2007), has entered the fourth decade, it may come as a surprise that some language skills and subsystems have received considerably less attention than others. While there have been numerous studies concerning the description, application, effectiveness and training of reading, writing, speaking, listening and vocabulary strategies, few researchers have sought to investigate these issues with respect to pronunciation, pragmatics or grammar. The present paper focuses on the last of these areas which Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007) call the 'Second Cinderella of strategies', a term that

Vandergrift (1997) once used with reference to listening strategic devices to stress the fact that they were ignored by researchers. As Anderson argues, "(...) the role of strategies in the teaching of L2 grammar has focused more on the teacher's pedagogical strategies than on learner's strategies for learning the grammar of the language (...) Clearly, what is lacking in the research are studies that specifically target the identification of the learning strategies that L2 users use to learn grammar and to understand the elements of grammar" (2005: 766).

On the one hand, neglect of this kind is somewhat understandable in view of the fact that grammar teaching has always been surrounded by controversy (Ellis 2006; Pawlak 2006), with the effect that SLA researchers have primarily been concerned with improving teaching practice by advancing pedagogic proposals consistent with the available empirical evidence and the latest theoretical models. On the other hand, however, it is very unfortunate that the learner has been left out of the picture since, as is the case with any other subsystem or skill, it is him or her that ultimately decides how to approach the task of mastering TL grammar and the actions taken to achieve this goal may not reflect the instructional modes preferred by the teacher. Logically, the more we know about what these actions are or under what circumstances and by what kind of learners they are deployed, the easier it will become to gauge their value, promote the most beneficial and effective ones and, in so doing, foster autonomy in this area. For this reason, this paper aims to contribute to the conspicuously scarce body of research in the field of grammar learning strategies by reporting a study which sought to explore the ways in which English department students go about learning and using grammatical structures. To start with, such strategic devices will be related to the most influential taxonomies of language learning strategies and the findings of relevant empirical investigations will be outlined. Then, the research design will be described, with special emphasis being placed on justifying the use of diaries for the purpose of data collection, the findings will be presented and discussed, and a handful of suggestions for classroom practice and future research will be offered.

2. Grammar learning strategies in strategic frameworks and previous research

As a recent survey administered to leading experts in the field demonstrated, there is still no consensus as regards the definition, description and potential of language learning strategies (Cohen 2007), a result which resonates with the conclusion reached in the latest state-of-the-art articles (e.g. Chamot 2004; Anderson 2005; Dörnyei 2005; Macaro 2006; Grenfell and Macaro 2007). One influential definition comes from Chamot (2004: 14), who describes L2 learning strategies as "the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning

goal", and explains that "strategic learners have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what a task entails, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meet both the task demands and their own learning strengths". A very similar description is offered by Oxford (2002: 124) for whom L2 strategies involve "specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skill". However, in contrast to the predominantly psychological approaches emphasizing cognitive information processing which Chamot's definition represents, she stresses the need to recognize student contributions to the learning process in various domains, claiming that "the learner is a 'whole person' who uses intellectual, social, emotional, and physical resources, and is therefore not merely a cognitive/metacognitive information-processing machine" (2002: 128).

Since researchers cannot agree on a single definition of language learning strategies and their main characteristics, it should not come as a surprise that many different classifications of strategic behaviors have been proposed over the years, starting with early lists compiled by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975). Still, it is the taxonomies proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990) that seem to have become the most influential in recent years, as is evident in the fact that they have been used as a point of reference in numerous studies. In the former, based on Anderson's (1983) cognitive psychology, L2 learning strategies are divided into three categories, namely: (1) *metacognitive strategies*, employed to manage and supervise the learning process in general, (2) *cognitive strategies*, drawn upon to control processing of L2 information in specific tasks, and (3) *socioaffective strategies*, used to deal with affective concerns and interacting with others. As for the latter, Oxford (1990) makes a key distinction between (1) *direct strategies*, which entail direct manipulation of the target language material, being further subdivided into *memory*, *cognitive* and *compensatory strategies*, and (2) *indirect strategies*, which manage and support the learning process, and include *affective*, *social* and *metacognitive strategies*. In view of the fact that there is considerable overlap between these classifications, there have been attempts to reconcile them, as Cohen and Dörnyei (2002) did by suggesting that compensatory strategies should be eliminated while the remaining strategic behaviors should be divided into *metacognitive*, *cognitive*, *affective* and *social*. However, on account of the richness of the data collected by means of diaries and the finding that Oxford's taxonomy best reflects learners' strategy use (Hsiao and Oxford 2002), it is her division that was used to categorize the strategies identified in advanced students' diary entries.

A pertinent question to ask at this point is how grammar learning strategies (GLS) fit in with the theoretical frameworks discussed thus far and what conclusions concerning their use and utility have been reached by researchers. Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007: 117) explain that "Like many types of L2 strategies, grammar strategies are actions or thoughts that learn-

ers consciously employ to make language learning and/or language use easier, more effective, more efficient and more enjoyable". They also argue that it is possible to identify strategies which are compatible with the instructional modes teachers use for dealing with grammar and supply lists of strategic behaviors for (1) *implicit L2 learning which includes focus on form* (e.g. noticing or remembering structures causing problems with meaning or communication, comparing speech or writing with that of more proficient people to trigger improvement, etc.), (2) *explicit-inductive L2 learning* (e.g. participating in rule-discovery discussions in class, trying to apply a discovered rule in a meaningful context as soon as possible, etc.), and (3) *explicit-deductive L2 learning* (e.g. paying attention to the rules provided by the teacher or the book, color-coding different grammar categories in the notebook, etc.). The researchers are at pains to emphasize, however, that "(...) a given type of instructional mode, even one that does not seem to offer many strategic options, does not necessarily limit or confine grammar strategy use. By the same token, the presence of rich strategic options in a given instructional mode does not mean that a given learner will take advantage of them" (2007: 125). While it would be difficult to question the cogency of such a position, it is undeniable that, more often than not, it is teachers who shape or at least heavily influence the strategic behaviors manifested by their learners, a point that will be revisited in the discussion of the findings of the study. Also, in the opinion of the present author, the strategies enumerated by Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007) are mainly concerned with noticing, studying or remembering points of grammar at the expense of those employed when practicing explicitly taught or learned TL forms.

An alternative approach to identifying and classifying grammar learning strategies could involve adopting as a point of reference one of the widely accepted taxonomies and matching the strategic behaviors undertaken by learners with the categories and strategy types listed therein. When we closely examine Oxford's (1990) classification scheme, for example, it will soon become clear that not all of the six classes will be equally relevant to learning grammar and that some strategic devices will be more appropriate and beneficial for this purpose than others. Thus, it could reasonably be argued that it is various cognitive strategies that are most likely to be drawn upon in studying and consolidating grammatical structures, with all the categories being highly pertinent to this task. This is because understanding the workings of a rule requires different types of analyzing and reasoning (e.g. reasoning deductively, analyzing contrastively, translating, etc.), deeper processing and better retention are aided by creating structure for input and output (e.g. taking notes, highlighting, etc.), accurate, consistent and ultimately spontaneous use of the structure calls for various forms of practice (e.g. formal and naturalistic practicing, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, etc.), while dealing with unknown constructions in comprehension and production is facilitated by the use of strategies for receiving and send-

ing messages (e.g. resourcing). Some memory strategies can also prove quite useful since, for example, creating mental linkages (e.g. grouping, associating, etc.) eases understanding and remembering points of grammar, applying images (e.g. making charts) may provide a mental shortcut to a rule, while reviewing plays an important part in mastering any language subsystem. As regards metacognitive, social and affective strategies, their contribution is more indirect but in some cases undeniable for the simple reason that attending to teacher feedback, cooperating with a friend to apply rules or rewarding oneself for a high score on a test are likely to enhance the effectiveness of learning grammar. Perhaps the least useful will be compensation strategies as overcoming limitations in speaking and writing will only lead to increased TL exposure. However, even here the use of linguistic or contextual clues may turn out to be invaluable in noticing a structure and figuring out what it means, thus paving the way for further stages of acquisition.

As was made plain in the introduction to this paper, there is a marked paucity of studies specifically seeking to identify, describe and classify the strategic devices students employ to understand, learn and use grammar structures, let alone such which would set out to explore factors influencing their choice and use or their effectiveness in terms of learning outcomes. A clear reference to the importance of learning grammar and the most beneficial approaches to it can be found in the so-called *good language learner studies* of the 1970s, with Rubin (1975) emphasizing that successful learners are concerned about grammar, Stern (1975) speaking of the need to develop the new language into an ordered system and to revise it, and Naiman et al. (1978/1996) pointing out the importance of realization of the TL as a system. Later on, though, in all likelihood due to the advent of the *zero grammar option* in language pedagogy (Krashen 1982; Prabhu 1985), GLS started to be ignored by researchers and this neglect is still visible at present.

One study which did pursue this line of enquiry was conducted by Fortune (1992) who investigated learners' views on different types of self-study grammar practice exercises and found that, although most of his respondents displayed a preference for deduction, support for inductive activities increased when the students had been provided with the opportunity to complete a variety of them. In the Polish educational context, the issue of GLS was addressed by Drożdżal-Szelest (1997) who, however, explored them as one of the many strategic behaviors displayed by secondary school students. Using the classification system proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), she found that the subjects mostly relied on cognitive strategies such as deduction, with metacognitive ones, mostly in the form of selective attention, being much less frequent, and socioaffective ones not being used at all. She concluded that "Generally, the strategies used by the students were not very original", adding, what is particularly germane to this discussion, that "(...) they seem to accurately reflect the general tendency in language teaching in Polish schools" (1997: 123). In a very recent study, in turn, Tilfarlioğlu (2005) examined the relationship between the use of grammar learning strategies

by Turkish students and their attainment, reporting that successful learners did not draw upon these devices more often than unsuccessful ones but showing that such variables as gender, length of study or educational background might affect the types of strategies used. A positive relationship between the employment of GLS and success in learning grammar by English department students has been corroborated by Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2008), who points out, however, that the repertoire of strategic behaviors used was limited. Finally, as Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007) emphasize, there has been a series of narrowly focused studies dealing with strategies used for assigning gender to nouns in L1 or L2 (e.g. Karmiloff-Smith 1979; Stevens 1984; Oliphant 1997), but these have been ignored by language learner strategy experts. Given such scant and patchy empirical evidence, there is a clear need for more research in the field of grammar learning strategies and this was the main impulse for carrying out the study described in the following sections.

3. Aims, data collection and analysis

Before moving on to the description of the research procedures, it seems warranted to offer a few comments on the use of diaries as an instrument of data collection as well as to provide a rationale for their employment in the study reported below. According to Gass and Mackey, "second language diaries, also referred to as L2 journals or learner autobiographies, are another means of obtaining information about learners' internal processes" (2007: 47). As such, they are commonly regarded as an invaluable tool in research into language learning strategies and have been recommended for collecting this type of information in a number of recent publications (e.g. Macaro 2001; Mackey and Gass 2005; White, Schramm and Chamot 2007). Listing the strengths of diary studies, Mackey (2006), following Bailey (1991), points out that they allow researchers to investigate participants' perspectives on various factors affecting teaching and learning, facilitate identification of variables which may be overlooked and yet are worth studying, enable methodological triangulation and make data collection relatively accessible. At the same time, however, she cautions that such investigations usually involve few subjects who may focus on quite diverse aspects of the learning process and most of the published diary studies have been undertaken by linguists, experienced teachers or teacher trainees, thus not being representative of the average learner. Also, the data obtained in this way are inherently subjective and doubts abound as to the participants' ability to reflect upon their own experiences.

Due to such limitations, it is often advised that diaries should be complemented with other methods of data collection, which is reflective of the more general belief that diverse tools should be used in strategy research "(...) in order to provide interpretive clarity and to avoid the criticism that the method predetermines the results obtained" (White, Schramm and Chamot 2007: 94). Still, in the light of the fact that so little is known about

the strategies used in learning grammar, the very first thing that should be done is identification and description of such devices and it can reasonably be argued that the rich data provided by learner diaries are perfectly suited for this purpose. In addition, by asking learners to regularly reflect and comment on their efforts to study and practice grammatical structures, it was possible to adopt a contextual, situated approach to exploring language strategies, thus recognizing the fact that their application may be a function of a specific situation (cf. Hsiao and Oxford 2002; Chamot 2004; Anderson 2005; White, Schramm and Chamot 2007)

As for the study as such, it sought to investigate the use of grammar learning strategies by advanced learners of English as a foreign language who were 29 third-year students at the Institute of Modern Languages of the State School of Higher Professional Education in Konin, Poland. To be more precise, it was believed that the diary data would provide useful insights into the ways in which the subjects confronted the challenge of learning grammar by enabling the researcher to address the following research questions:

- advanced learners' preferences concerning the use of grammar learning strategies;
- identification of the most and the least often employed strategic behaviors of this kind;
- evaluation of the grammar learning strategies employed;
- the relationship between strategy use and the type of instruction provided;
- the impact of learner variables on the employment of grammar learning strategies.

Although the participants were not homogeneous in terms of their command of English, all of them had considerable experience in learning English and represented a high level of proficiency, in most cases approaching or exceeding C1. Additionally, since they had been provided with intensive and comprehensive teacher training and were preparing for their final exams in English and completing their BA papers, it was assumed that they would have sufficient awareness of their learning processes to report the actions they took to learn and practice grammatical structures. The subjects were supplied with blank notebooks during their methodology classes and requested to record their experiences in learning grammar over the period of two months. In order to enhance the likelihood that their comments would focus on GLS, a decision was made to supply them with prompts which were intended to guide them as they were making their entries. These were as follows:

- What do you do to learn grammar more effectively?
- What do you do to use grammar in communication?
- Do you plan when, what and how to learn?
- How do you evaluate your progress?

- What problems do you encounter and how do you solve them?

Since the researcher wished to avoid a situation in which the students would simply answer such queries each time they decided to include a comment, they were explicitly told that these were only suggestions and they should feel free to write about anything they viewed as relevant to learning grammar. The prompts were accompanied by instructions which asked the subjects to make entries at least twice a week and explaining that they could do it in English, Polish or a combination of both languages, as they saw fit. Although the diaries were never used in class and they were never inspected in the course of the study, the participants were occasionally reminded to systematically record their experiences to minimize the danger that most entries would be made in the last few days of the two-month period. The data collected in this way were subjected to qualitative analysis which involved identifying the behaviors which represented GLS, determining which of these were mentioned most often, coding them into the categories proposed by Oxford (1990), evaluating their effectiveness in terms of the subjects' experiences and the opinions of experts, as well as relating them to the dominant modes of instruction and individual variables.

4. Findings of the study

In the first place, it has to be pointed out that the participants' response to keeping a diary and the richness of the data obtained far exceeded the researcher's expectations. Although at the beginning many of the students expressed serious reservations about the purposefulness of the task just a few months before the examination session and their reactions indicated that they considered it a waste of time, the situation started to change gradually once the experience got under way. With time, the subjects started to appreciate the opportunity to include comments in the diaries since, as some of them pointed out in class or indicated in their entries, this allowed them to reflect on the process of learning grammar, better identify their strengths and weaknesses, evaluate the utility of the techniques they used and, in some cases, even achieve higher scores on tests. Thus, it would seem that, in line with the claims advanced by some L2 learning strategy experts (e.g. Rubin 2003), the experience of keeping diaries contributed to raising the subjects' metacognitive awareness of themselves and of their learning of grammar. This beneficial effect of journal writing was nicely summarized by one of the students in the final entry in her diary which read as follows:

Some reflections on the whole diary. This is the last entry and I have to admit I will miss keeping it. Thanks to it I understood that I should make my grammar learning more varied and use more inductive ways of learning (...) It is a good way to analyze what we do and make modifications.

Another positive finding was that some of the participants chose to include comments more frequently than twice a week and many of the entries were quite extensive, with students being surprisingly candid in their observations. On the one hand, they did not hesitate to be critical of the instructional materials and techniques employed by their teachers, but, on the other, they appeared to be fully cognizant of the fact that the problems they faced were caused by their own learning styles, their approach to studying grammar as well as the failure to work on this language subsystem in more consistent and systematic ways. Interestingly, Polish was often drawn upon even by participants with superior command of the TL, indicating that reflection on language learning experiences is easier and perhaps also more profound in the mother tongue. In fact, it was the entries where the subjects chose to use Polish that typically provided the most valuable insights into GLS, which testifies to the prudence of the decision to leave up to the participants the choice of the language in which the comments were to be recorded. Obviously, there were students who remained skeptical about the undertaking, viewing it as a necessary evil, including very brief and repetitive comments, and apparently making the majority of the entries just before the notebooks were collected. However, such cases were rather infrequent, dangers of this kind are unavoidable irrespective of the choice of data collection instruments, and, most importantly perhaps, they do not in the least diminish the overall contributions of the study.

When it comes to the specific actions the subjects reported using to facilitate the process of learning and practicing grammar, there was a marked preference for cognitive strategies which accounted for the vast majority of all the strategic behaviors in the diary. By far the most frequently used among these were different types of formal practice, such as doing numerous exercises focusing on a specific grammatical item, particularly when a major test was coming. The students also quite often mentioned the use of resources, typically in the form of pedagogical/reference grammars or grammar practice books for advanced learners, deductive reasoning, analyzing expressions, note-taking and highlighting. Many of these were in fact combined to create strategy chains, as when the learner first tries to break a phrase into pieces, then looks up the structure in a grammar book and, finally, applies it in a number of exercises and tasks. Given the level of the subjects as well as the training in linguistics and methodology they had received, it is rather surprising that such important strategic devices as practicing naturalistically, translating or analyzing contrastively across languages were very rare, being reported by just a handful of the subjects. Moreover, the participants seemed to downplay the importance of communicative use of grammar in reception and production, more or less consciously subscribing to the belief that noticing and attending to relevant grammar points in authentic materials or using them in spontaneous speech do not qualify as real learning. Representative examples of cognitive strategies from the diary data follow, accompanied by labels taken from Oxford's (1990) classification scheme:

- ✓ *In order to prepare for the grammar class I did exercises from Hewing's book 'Advanced grammar in use' (formal practice and using a resource).*
- ✓ *When learning I use textbooks by such authors as Swan, Graver, Vince (...) (using resources).*
- ✓ *I started learning with detailed theoretical explanations concerning articles used not only with proper nouns but also in context (deductive reasoning).*
- ✓ *I underline the most important rules in pencil (highlighting).*
- ✓ *The first step is to make notes into my magic notebook. It is very colorful due to the fact that I use different colors (note-taking and highlighting).*
- ✓ *I didn't do much today. I read Newsweek and found a few new, interesting structures (practicing naturalistically and analyzing expressions).*
- ✓ *I try to use the new structures in class as often as possible (practicing naturalistically).*
- ✓ *When I compared the tenses, I came to the conclusion that German grammar is easier (analyzing contrastively).*

The remaining two types of strategic devices directly supporting the process of language learning, namely memory and compensation strategies, were mentioned much less frequently. As for the former, the subjects mostly reported applying memorization, pointing out that such aspects of English grammar as articles, prepositions, phrasal verbs or verbal complementation can only be learnt by heart and mastered through intensive practice, which shows that, in some cases, it is hard to distinguish between cognitive strategic behaviors and memory-based ones. The analysis of the diary entries also yielded instances of other memory strategies such as grouping, contextualization, using images, semantic mapping and structured reviewing, but these were used much less often than rote-learning. As was hypothesized in the theoretical part of this paper, compensation strategies turned out to be of limited value for learning grammar since only two participants reported utilizing them to figure out previously unknown uses of familiar structures on the basis of linguistic and contextual clues. The excerpts given below are examples of memory and compensation strategic behaviors pinpointed in the data:

- ✓ *There is no other way to learn articles but to learn them by heart. I had to cram it (learning by rote).*
- ✓ *I put the verbs followed by the gerund and the infinitive in two separate columns (grouping).*
- ✓ *I wrote a sentence with each modal verb I reviewed (placing new structures in context but also a form of practicing).*
- ✓ *I wrote a story using the tenses I was reviewing (placing new structures in context but also a kind of formal or naturalistic practice).*
- ✓ *Such things cannot be understood so you have to learn them by heart. What helps me are different pictures I draw to illustrate different rules or exceptions (imagery).*
- ✓ *I think I have to be systematic so I review what we do in class several times until I am sure I understand everything (reviewing).*

- ✓ *At the beginning I didn't know what the difference between 'could have gone' and 'might have gone' was, but when I looked at the sentences and the text, it dawned on me what they meant (using linguistic and situational clues).*

Although the subjects reported using indirect strategies less frequently than direct ones, metacognitive strategies were much in evidence in the data, with at least some of them being mentioned in every single diary. The most commonly used strategic devices falling into this category included paying attention, setting goals and objectives, planning for a language task, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. In view of the fact that metacognitive strategies perform a supervisory function and their skillful employment is a necessary condition for making the process of learning effective, such a finding is unambiguously encouraging. After all, it is uncontroversial that, if learning grammar, or any other language subsystem or skill for that matter, is to be successful, students have to be capable of indentifying their strengths and weaknesses, setting realistic goals, thoughtfully organizing their learning, choosing the most beneficial techniques and resources, constantly monitoring their progress and assessing the outcomes of their efforts. Still, it is somewhat disconcerting that at least some of the subjects did not see a connection between all of these stages, pointing out, for example, that they set goals and plan for upcoming tasks but failing to clarify how they go about accomplishing them or describing self-evaluation procedures. Another cause for concern is the fact that few students reported seeking opportunities to practice the grammar structures studied, a finding which was to be expected given the limited amount of naturalistic practice referred to above, but still baffling taking into account their high proficiency level and awareness of teaching and learning processes. Typical examples of the metacognitive strategies follow:

- ✓ *After the conversation I devoted some time to reflection, analyzing what I had said and in particular what had been correct in terms of grammar (self-evaluation).*
- ✓ *I decided to review phrasal verbs (goal-setting).*
- ✓ *When I see I cannot do all the sentences right, I go back to the rules and explanations (self-monitoring).*

As regards affective and social strategies, behaviors that could be classified into the two categories were reported by only a minority of the subjects, which is perhaps indicative of the fact that they are given little prominence in the classroom and learners themselves often fail to appreciate them as tools which could enhance the effectiveness of their learning. It should be noted, however, that in a few diaries the entries were replete with references to various ways of lowering anxiety, encouraging oneself, requesting advice or cooperating with others, which suggests that the application of such strategies may depend on personality factors, learning styles, prior educational experiences or oppor-

tunities to act in this way. The following two excerpts exemplify the affective and social strategies coded in the data:

- ✓ *After doing all the exercises form the unit, I got discouraged but I said to myself that I have to carry on to pass the exam (self-encouragement).*
- ✓ *I used Skype to talk to my friends to check the answers to this exercise (cooperation).*

Careful analysis of the data included in the diaries also enabled the researcher to draw more general conclusions about the character of the grammar learning strategies employed by the subjects and the key factors affecting their use. For one thing, the grammatical structures mentioned in the context of discussing strategic behaviors demonstrated that the participants' efforts were in most cases guided by what happened to be the focus of their practical grammar classes at a given point in time. This is evident in the fact that concerns about the same feature came to the fore almost simultaneously in most of the diaries and the sequence of grammar points receiving greatest attention closely reflected that found in the syllabus the students' grammar teacher followed. In addition, most entries abounded in references to upcoming tests and examinations, which might indicate that for the majority of the participants it was such external evaluation that constituted the main source of motivation for learning and practicing grammar. Although such tendencies are understandable in view of the fact that the study was conducted just a few months before the final examination in English, it is clear that different motives are needed as well if students are expected to move beyond conscious rule knowledge and develop the ability to employ the structures taught in meaningful communication.

As can be seen from some of the comments, what transpired in grammar classes and the format of evaluation measures also determined to a large extent the approach that the subjects adopted to studying and practicing points of grammar. Since grammar instruction mainly involved explaining how grammatical structures were used, drawing attention to exceptions or working on exercises from grammar practice books, it should not come as a surprise that most of the participants did exactly the same things while learning in their own time. By the same token, the fact that the key to success on tests was the ability to perform what Ellis (1997) refers to as *text-manipulation activities* (translation, fill-in-the-gap, multiple-choice, etc.) and that the written component of the final exam was not much different, dictated that many students confined their study of grammar to completing as many exercises of this kind as possible. As a result, they mostly focused on developing explicit TL knowledge which, when sufficiently automatized, may lead to superior performance on tests, but does not have to translate into the ability to use grammatical structures in real-time communication. This is because this type of performance calls for the development of sub-conscious, implicit knowledge and, no matter whether we accept the strong,

weak or non-interface position (cf. Ellis 2005), this can only be achieved through communicative tasks.

The diary data also provided valuable insights into the relationship between the use of strategies for learning grammar and some individual learner differences. In the first place, it is clear that more advanced students, understood here as such who got higher scores on tests and did well on final examinations, were more likely to make more frequent and elaborate entries, reported using more numerous and varied strategies and appeared to be more successful in finding solutions to the problems they encountered. For instance, it was subjects falling into this category that managed to provide more examples of strategy chains, displayed greater cognizance of the need to match the mode of learning to a particular task and more frequently described attempts to employ grammar structures in spontaneous speech. In contrast, the weaker students often mentioned unrelated strategies, sometimes opted for behaviors which were blatantly unsuitable for the activity at hand and made few efforts to practice grammar naturalistically. A conspicuous example of a dismal failure to match strategies and activities involved a student who resorted to grammar books during communicative tasks whenever in doubt about the use of the needed linguistic feature. Another important finding was that some of the students, again usually the more successful ones, were aware of the close relationship between learning styles and GLS as well as the need to carefully match the two to enhance the effectiveness of learning. As one participant commented, "Explanations in grammar books do not appeal to me as I am a visual learner. That is why I make diagrams and drawings to illustrate different points of grammar". There can be no doubt that the capacity to adjust the grammar learning strategies used to task characteristics and learning style preferences testifies to high metacognitive awareness, an attribute which underpins success in learning grammar and should thus be fostered among students.

5. Conclusions and implications

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, advanced foreign language learners, such as the English department students who participated in the study, are aware of the need to employ varied strategic devices in learning grammar and it can be inferred from their comments that they are capable of using a range of such strategies. Still, it is also clear that the majority of them opt for traditional ways of understanding, remembering and practicing grammar points, failing to make full use of all their knowledge and resources, and paying scant attention to ensuring that the items they study will be available in spontaneous TL use. While such a situation may be reflective of their learning styles or deeply ingrained beliefs and preferences, it can mainly be ascribed to the predominant mode of instruction in practical grammar classes as well as the requirements on tests, quizzes and examina-

tions. Another disquieting finding is that many subjects experienced considerable difficulty using metacognitive strategies in a logical sequence, from setting goals, through choosing appropriate techniques and materials, to self-evaluation, and that they seldom thought about affect and collaboration with others in the process of mastering grammar. Finally, the analysis provided ample evidence that the employment of GLS may be a function of individual factors, with more successful students being better able to match their ways of learning with task demands and their cognitive styles.

Such findings provide a basis for advancing several tentative pedagogical proposals, the implementation of which can contribute to optimizing grammar instruction with higher level learners, such as students at foreign languages departments. In the first place, it seems obvious that students should be explicitly instructed in the use of GLS and that, if instruction of this kind is to be effective, it should begin in the first year of study, be systematic, and take place in both language pedagogy and practical grammar classes. It should also be kept in mind that such efforts can only be successful if they are integrated with more general strategy training which would cut across various language skills and subsystems and constitute, in turn, only one strand in a broader program aimed at fostering learner autonomy. Given the apparently close relationship between instructional modes, assessment types and learners' approach to learning grammar, it would also be advisable to place more emphasis on the communicative component in grammar classes, address the features taught in conversation, pronunciation and writing courses, and give greater weight to meaningful use of grammar in final examinations. Thanks to such modifications, students will be more likely to appreciate the need to use the structures they learn in communication and this is bound to affect the choice of GLS and, in the long run, contribute to greater TL proficiency. Finally, difficult as it might be, it makes sense to encourage students to keep diaries in which they would comment on their approach to studying grammar since this experience fosters reflection, enhances the quality of language learning, promotes learner autonomy and is in fact valued by learners themselves.

Obviously, these recommendations should be informed by the findings of studies which would specifically focus on GLS and, as made plain throughout this paper, such empirical investigations are few and far between. Thus, there is a need for more research in this area which would involve subjects representing different ages and proficiency levels, and draw upon a combination of various data collection instruments. This is because there are bound to be differences between different groups of learners with respect to the strategies they use and, although diaries provide us with copious information, they are not without their shortcomings and must be complemented with other tools for the results to be valid, reliable and generalizable. Such studies should describe the diverse grammar learning strategies, explore the variables affecting their use and, ultimately, tackle the ques-

tion of the effectiveness of different types of strategic behaviors. However, the problems with the description and categorization of GLS encountered in the present study show that the most immediate challenge for researchers must be identification and classification of grammar learning strategies because only in this way will we be able to seek cause-effect relationships, establish correlations or make comparisons between studies. It remains to be seen whether a taxonomy of this kind should best be based on broadly defined instructional modes, as proposed by Oxford, Rang Lee and Park (2007), draw upon one of the existing descriptive schemes, as is the case in this study, or perhaps adopt as a point of departure a specific classification of pedagogic options in teaching grammar, such as that proposed by Ellis (1997), Williams (2005) or Pawlak (2006). Wherever we start, the conclusions reached by researchers will provide teachers with useful insights which can guide them in training students in the use of grammar learning strategies, thus facilitating mastery of this important language subsystem.

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RESEARCHING ERROR CORRECTION IN CHINA: PROCEDURE, PRODUCT AND PITFALLS

ABSTRACT

Error correction in language classrooms has long been controversial. Is it useful? If so, how should errors be corrected and who should carry out the corrections? This paper provides a background discussion of the issues involved and reports on a study which aimed to explore these questions from the point of view of a group of freshman English Major students studying at a University in Beijing, China. A questionnaire using a Likert-scale to elicit student correction preferences was distributed to the students in order to collect quantitative data. These were entered onto SPSS, averaged, and correlated with end-of-semester scores. In addition, in order to add a qualitative dimension to the study, students' comments made on the form were analysed, and after the final exam the students who got the highest and the lowest scores were interviewed to further explore their attitudes towards error correction. By correlating the students' end-of-semester scores with their correction preferences, this study compares (a) students' preferences regarding how correction is conducted (immediately, directly, publicly, always) and (b) students' preferences regarding who carries out error correction (teacher, self, peers) with successful outcomes for the course. Pedagogical implications of the empirical findings and questions for further research are also discussed.

1. Errors and correction

Over the years, various aspects of errors have been studied by scholars and English language teachers from diverse theoretical and practical points of

view (for a summary, see Roberts and Griffiths 2008). According to Corder (1967), an *error* is a deviation in learner language which results from lack of knowledge of the correct rule. It contrasts with a *mistake*, which is a temporary inaccuracy that the learner can often self-correct. There is far from universal agreement, however, about what is or is not 'correct'. Lennon (1991) suggests that an error is related to native utterances. However, of course, native utterances display wide variation which even other native speakers do not always regard as 'correct' or even comprehensible. James (1998) argues that some authoritative reference grammar books may be a relatively objective criterion which prescribes the acceptability of 'correct' language, thereby defining by default what an error is. Reference book language, however, does not always correspond closely with the realities of language as it is used in the real world. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) comment, so far there has been no universally accepted definition of error.

Although the definition of error remains problematic, the role of error in the process of language development has been investigated by a number of researchers. From a behaviorist perspective, Skinner (1957) regarded language learning as a process of habit formation, and therefore errors were considered counterproductive because they resulted in the formation of bad habits, which, if not corrected in a timely fashion, would result in fossilization. Chomsky (1959, 1981), however, argued that behaviorist theories could not explain the complexities of human language development which he saw as a cognitive process of rule formation requiring positive evidence (input) which may be modified by negative evidence (correction). Building on cognitive theories, Corder (1967) concluded that errors indicated an incomplete language system, later called *interlanguage* by Selinker (1972), representing a transitional competence before the acquisition of complete competence. From this perspective, errors are evidence of progress in language development, indicating that the learner is cognitively processing the input. Krashen (1985), however, argued that language cannot be acquired by means of thinking through the rules, but develops as a by-product of communication the way children acquire their first language. According to this view, correct usage will be acquired by means of comprehensible input without the need for conscious attention to error which may result in negative affective response. This view has underlain much of the philosophy behind the communicative approach to language teaching and learning which is in favour to this day, although it has been moderated to some extent by an information processing view whereby language learning is seen as a conscious endeavour during which the learner is capable of attending to and learning from error (McLaughlin, Rossman and McLeod 1983).

So how useful is error correction? Opinion is sharply divided on this question also. Long (1977) suggested that error correction received by learners is frequently unreliable, unclear, badly timed and fails to be effective. Nearly 20 years later, Truscott (1996) maintained that error correction is

unnecessary, ineffective and even harmful. Nevertheless, Harmer (1998, 2001) and Ur (1996) both argue that error correction is seen as an essential part of the teacher's role which is expected by students.

A number of studies have thrown some light on the many questions surrounding the issue of error correction. Schmidt and Frota (1986) noted that in order for correction to be effective, the learner must first consciously notice the correction and understand its nature. Roberts (1995) observed that despite frequent correction, the same errors were repeated, since the students did not even realize that the teacher was trying to correct their utterances. He concluded by agreeing with Schmidt and Frota's (1986) conclusion, that for error correction to be effective, learners must both realize and understand the nature of correction. This conclusion was also reached by Griffiths (2006) in a study of how good language learners deal with corrections.

2. The study: Procedure

The current study was undertaken in order to further explore some of the many unanswered questions which remain in the area of error and error correction. In particular, it aimed to investigate the following questions:

- (1) How important is error correction?
- (2) How should errors be corrected?
- (3) Who should carry out the corrections?
- (4) How do the students' correction preferences correlate with their end-of-semester scores?

2.1. Participants

The present study was conducted at a university in Beijing, China. The participating students were 105 freshman English Majors. They were divided into five classes, none of which was taught by the researchers/authors of this article. Approximately 80% of the students were female and 20% were male, and ages ranged from 16 to 20. After the end-of-semester scores came out, in order to further explore the students' error correction preferences, the top and bottom five students were interviewed.

2.2. Data collection

For the purposes of the study, students were assembled and questionnaires (see 2.3. A) were handed out, completed and returned during this time. Instructions were given in both English and Chinese in order to ensure that students understood what they were required to do. The research purpose of the questionnaire was explained, and students were assured that it was in no way related to their course results. The writers of this paper observed the students as they were working on the questionnaires, answered questions which arose, and collected the forms as they were completed.

In addition, after the end-of-semester scores were available, the top five and bottom five students were invited to a semi-structured interview. During the interview they were asked the questions on the interview guide (see 2.3. B) and any other insightful comments were discussed and noted. The selected students were interviewed in the foreign teacher's office, with which they were familiar, after they finished class. There were two interviewers (the authors): one of them a native-English speaker and the other Chinese. The whole interview was tape-recorded.

2.3. Instruments

In order to get both quantitative and qualitative data, this study used two instruments:

- (A) *Questionnaire*. In order to get both quantitative and qualitative data, this study used a Likert-scale questionnaire with spaces for comments. The questionnaire was a form containing seven items arranged according to how errors should be corrected and who should correct the errors. For each item there were five ratings from strongly positive to strongly negative with the relevant scale on the top of the form. The students were asked to rate their correction preferences according to the given scale and to add any comments they might have. Biographic details including their Chinese name, English name, student number and their e-mail address were asked for. Students were also asked to sign their consent to the data being used for research.
- (B) *Interview guide*. The top and bottom five students who were selected for interview according to their end-of-semester scores were asked the following questions:
 - Q1: How important is error correction for improving your English?
 - Q2: Can you give details about the types of error correction you do or do not like?
 - Q3: Can you give reasons for your error correction preferences?
 - Q4: Can you give examples of error corrections in class?
 - Q5: How do you think error correction should be carried out?

2.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were entered onto SPSS and examined for mean frequency of the students' preferences regarding how errors should be corrected (immediately, directly, publicly, always) and of the students' preferences regarding who should carry out error correction (teacher, self, peers). These ratings were correlated (Spearman) with end-of-semester results for the oral section of the course. The oral scores were

chosen for the correlation analysis since the correction preferences in the questionnaire relate most directly to oral language classes.

The interview data in the form of tapes and the interviewers' notes were subjected to a content analysis. This investigated any useful insights regarding students' correction preferences and how these might relate to their success in terms of end-of-semester scores.

3. The study: Results (product)

The results produced by this study fall into two categories: those from the questionnaires and those from the interviews. Furthermore, there are both quantitative and qualitative results from the questionnaires. These different types of results will initially be reported separately before being amalgamated in the discussion.

3.1. Quantitative questionnaire results

Regarding how students prefer their errors to be corrected, Table 1 indicates that the highest mean is for immediate correction (mean = 4.53). The lowest mean is for "I like my errors to be corrected publicly" (mean = 3.41). Although not as high as the mean for immediate correction, students also give a positive rating for having their errors corrected always (mean = 4.33). Direct correction (explained to students as opposed to indirect correction such as repeating the incorrect form and waiting for the student to self-correct) is also rated positively (mean = 4.32). As to who should carry out the error correction, the highest rating is for "I like my errors to be corrected by the teacher" (mean = 4.62). The least preferred is self-correction (mean = 3.88), and peer correction is also given a relatively low rating (mean = 3.95).

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Immediate	4.5333	.85560
Direct	4.3238	.86040
Public	3.41901	.19921
Always	4.33331	.08899
Teacher	4.6286	.7 6280
Self	3.87621	.21446
Peer	3.95241	.04127

Table 1: Mean results of the questionnaire with standard deviations.

A Spearman test of correlation revealed that of the 7 types of correction (immediate, direct, public, always, teacher, self and peer), only a preference for immediate correction was significantly correlated with the end-of-semester scores ($r = .242, p < .05$).

3.2. Qualitative questionnaire results

In the process of reviewing the questionnaires, some insightful comments made by the students were noted. Most of the students approved of immediate correction. Strongly positive remarks included:

- *If the error correction is delayed, the errors will be soon forgotten.*
- *Correcting my errors immediately can help me realize errors as soon as possible.*

The least preferred correction method was public correction. Students who gave a relatively low rating to public correction considered that correcting their errors publicly could produce embarrassment, anger, inhibition, shame and feelings of inferiority and cause them to lose face, confidence and self-esteem. Two wrote on their questionnaires:

- *It'll make me in trouble and have a little shame.*
- *Maybe in public, we'll feel nervous about making a mistake, and if my errors to be corrected publicly many times, it'll destroy my confidence.*

However, some of the students strongly approved of public correction and believed that although it made them lose face, public correction helped them remember their errors and avoid repeated errors. Comments included:

- *Error is not shameful. Knowing error but not correcting them is shameful.*
- *It may make me lose my face. But in this way, I can remember it deeply and may not forget forever.*

As to who should carry out the error correction (teacher, self and peers), most of the students preferred their teacher to correct their errors because they strongly believed that their teacher was professional and experienced and possessed profound knowledge about language, so their correction must be right. Also they believed it is the teacher's responsibility to correct the students' errors. For example:

- *The teacher is very professional. They know English better than us.*
- *I think teacher ought to correct me. It's teacher's responsibility.*
- *It may seem powerful.*

The lowest preference was for self-correction. As two students commented:

- *I often can't find my errors, if I can, I also don't know how to correct it.*
- *How can I do it by myself? If I can I won't make the mistake!*

3.3. Interview results

All ten interviewees believed that error correction was important. As one interviewee commented: "Error correction is very important. It's bad for me to make mistakes, but nobody tells me and I don't know how to correct them". Most of the interviewees said they did not mind being corrected by anybody but one regarded peers as unqualified. One of the students suggested error corrections should be done softly with a gentle attitude and humor and teachers should be careful about the students' self-esteem and be attentive when students were speaking so that errors could be noted and corrected afterwards. When asked what errors should be corrected, most of the students answered that grammatical, pronunciation and vocabulary errors were most important.

4. Discussion

According to the results produced by this study, most students prefer error correction conducted immediately by the teacher. Furthermore, the correlation between students' final scores and their preference for immediate correction is significant, suggesting that immediate error correction is effective in developing students' language ability. Comments on the questionnaires indicate that students would rather that their oral errors were corrected without delay so that they can recognize their errors and bear the corrections in mind. However, students' comments on public correction reveal that they may feel shamed, embarrassed and stressed when corrected publicly, so that teachers should be extremely cautious about this kind of correction.

According to the interview results, error corrections are expected by students as suggested by Chomsky (1981), Ur (1996) and Harmer (1998, 2001). This is contrary to Krashen's (1982) view that error correction is useless and contrasts with Truscott's view that error correction is a waste of time. It accords with Harmer's (1998, 2001) view that error correction is considered as an indispensable part of the teacher's role and also something that students expect to get from their teachers. Cathcart and Olsen (1976) also observe that learners like to be corrected by their teachers and expect more correction than they are usually provided with.

The qualitative data produced from the interviews and the comments derived from the students' questionnaires showed that teachers were preferred to carry out corrections and are expected to regard error correction as their responsibility and cope with it humorously with a soft and gentle attitude without destroying the students' confidence and self-esteem. Data gathered from the questionnaires also indicates that self-correction received a relatively low rating from students and is not significantly correlated with end-of-semester scores. This contrasts with Ellis's (1994) recommendation that self-repair is more beneficial to acquisition than other repairs. However, self-correction is perceived by Van Lier (1988) as having less likelihood of leading to a negative affective response than other kinds of correction.

During the interviews, students suggested that grammatical, pronunciation and vocabulary errors should be corrected. Students' preference for grammatical error correction is contrary to Truscott's (1999) finding that correction does not improve learners' ability to speak grammatically. Students also placed much importance on pronunciation errors and a lot of recent research evidence demonstrates that pronunciation is fundamentally important for second language learners (Brown 2008).

5. Pedagogical implications

Although students report not liking public correction, it is, of course, more or less impossible to correct immediately (as students report preferring) without correcting publicly. However, teachers should be aware of their responsibility to students whose comments indicate that their teachers had a powerful influence on their learning. Teachers, therefore, should be considerate and cautious so as not to hurt the students' self-respect when giving negative feedback on their errors, otherwise students will become discouraged and lose confidence. As Ur (1996: 248) suggests, regarding how correction is carried out "a great deal of teacher sensitivity is needed". Therefore, teachers should try to understand the students' emotional characteristics and learning tendencies and avoid correcting students in such a way as to cause emotional tension.

Though students gave a relatively low rating to self-correction, this does not necessarily mean to say that this correction option is not effective. In fact, of course, the reality of the classroom is that it is impossible for the teacher to cover all the errors every student makes. Students should therefore not pin their hopes on their teacher to correct all their errors and consequently they should be encouraged to find some effective and efficient ways to correct themselves, perhaps by consulting peers or reference material.

6. Limitations (pitfalls)

One limitation of this study might relate to the way the data was collected. Students were instructed to assemble at a given place at a given time and instructed to fill out the questionnaire which was handed to them. Although this kind of procedure is common in China, and although none of the students appeared to be unwilling, it goes somewhat against western ethical requirements for voluntary participation.

Another limitation relates to the fact that neither of the researchers actually taught the participant students, which means that neither had a clear idea of exactly how the end-of-semester scores were assessed. Since these scores were correlated with the questionnaire ratings, they have the potential to affect the reliability of the results.

7. Questions for further research

The results of the current study suggest a number of questions for further research:

- How can students' expressed preference for immediate correction be rationalised with their relatively low rating for public correction? Clearly, it is practically impossible for a teacher to correct students immediately without doing it so that others can hear. Research is needed to develop some basic techniques to deal with this incompatibility in student preferences.
- Do error correction practices which students like less (e.g. public, self, peer) nevertheless contribute to learning success? Although it is important for student preferences to be heard, this is not necessarily to say that their preferences are always in the best interests of successful learning. Further research is needed targeting the effectiveness of less popular practices.
- Do different students in a variety of settings respond similarly to the questions posed in this study? It is possible, for instance, that older students might find self-correction more useful than younger students, or that students with extraverted personalities might respond less negatively to public correction. Perhaps students from other cultural backgrounds might give different ratings to the questionnaire items, as might students in different learning situations, such as study-abroad or distance learning. All of these areas await ongoing investigation (for further background on many of these variables, see Griffiths 2008)
- How do teachers' perceptions of the various error correction options compare with students' ratings? Ultimately, it is teachers who must implement pedagogical practices, so their perspectives are not unimportant, though often overlooked and under-researched.

8. Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that error correction is considered extremely important and is expected by the students who prefer immediate correction by the teacher over other kinds of correction. Furthermore, a preference for immediate correction is significantly positively correlated with success in terms of end-of-semester scores. This would seem to suggest that teachers need to seriously consider their position with regard to the correction of their learners' errors, since correction practices may affect student success rates.

Comments made on the questionnaire forms and during the interviews suggest that public correction should be done cautiously and tactfully

in such a way as to maintain student confidence. Peer correction is regarded by many with suspicion, and students frequently lack confidence in their ability to correct themselves. However, although students give a relatively low rating to self-correction, perhaps they should be encouraged by the teacher to practise it because it may help foster good study habits and develops students' ability to manage their own learning.

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THE USE OF GRAMMAR
LEARNING STRATEGIES
AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The paper reports the results of a survey conducted with the aim of exploring the use of grammar learning strategies by secondary schools students. The common positive appraisal of strategy training does not readily translate into classroom practices. Lack of time or insufficient training often result in marginalization of procedures that might aid learners in the process of acquiring a foreign language.

1. Introduction

Research interest in the strategies that learners employ while learning and/or using a second or foreign language was initiated more than 25 years ago. The studies that were commenced in the late 1970s aimed to identify the features, qualities or procedures that characterized high achievers in the domain of language learning. It transpired that success in this sphere cannot be solely attributed to the application of a particular method since the results obtained in many research projects conducted to establish the effectiveness of different methods did not prove unambiguously the prevalence of one method over any other. Apparently, both research and everyday practice seem to confirm that whichever method is implemented, there are always successful students along with those who fail.

Having realized the extent to which individual differences correlate with various aspects of learning success, researchers shifted their attention to the learner and cognitive processes that intensify or block language acquisition. The so-called *good language learner studies* led to the identification of deliberate learning behaviors or actions undertaken by learners with a view

to language development that, apart from cognitive or affective factors, contributed to the ultimate success. Those *behaviors* or *actions*, called by some *techniques* or *devices* (Rubin 1975) and by others *strategies* (Naiman et al. 1978; Stern 1983; Omaggio 1986; Oxford 1989; Stevick 1989), have been recognized as the key to successful language learning. Moreover, while aptitude and intelligence remain stable, strategy use can be promoted among less successful learners in the hope of fostering behaviors that importantly aid learners in the process of attaining high levels of proficiency. Hsiao and Oxford (2002: 269) refer to the works of Wenden (1987), Oxford (1990), Cohen (1998) and Chamot et al. (1999), stating that the best results of strategy training can be achieved if strategy use is taught explicitly and becomes an integral part of a regular language course.

Most researchers agree that there exists a direct link between strategy use and the level of autonomy a language learner achieves. Learners who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, able to identify their needs and capable of taking control over their learning are more likely to actively manage it even if they are no longer enrolled in the formal educational system (cf. Drożdżiał Szelest 2004). While listing the features of good language learners, Holec (1987: 147) stated that "(...) good learners are learners who are capable of assuming the role of manager of their learning. They know how to make all the decisions involved. In other words, they know how to learn". The repertoire and intensity of strategy use may evolve together with the learners' level of proficiency. Beginners tend to employ fewer strategies than more experienced learners. Another tendency is that successful learners are capable of picking strategies and combining them to fit the requirements of a particular task and their own learning style, while less effective learners will choose them randomly not always considering their effectiveness in the case of a particular task (Hsiao and Oxford 2002: 369).

The debate over the definition and classification of learning strategies has never been resolved. The task of providing a single comprehensive definition seems to be a challenging one since it would have to encompass and account for a wide range of human behavior from mental processes, e.g. creating visual images, to overt activities, such as socializing. Many researchers place strategies within the framework of cognitive psychology, perceiving them as mental processes or operations. For example, Wenden (1986: 10) states that strategies are "steps or mental operations used in learning or problem-solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning material in order to store, retrieve, and use knowledge". For Weinstein and Mayer (1986: 315), strategies are "behaviors or thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process".

In the works of other scholars the focus is shifted from the cognitive dimension to the actual observable behavior performed by learners. For example, Oxford (1989: 235) defines language learning strategies as "(...) behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful,

self-directed, and enjoyable". Yet another attempt at determining what strategies are is that of Scarcella and Oxford (1992: 63) who state that strategies are "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques – such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task – used by students to enhance their own learning". It has been agreed that language learners use language strategies with a view to attaining their desired goals; thus strategies "must be controllable" (Pressley and McCormick 1995: 28) and, even though it is still debatable, involve a degree of conscious intention (cf. Bialystok 1978; Oxford and Cohen 1992). Also O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 43) point to the functional dimension of language strategies, claiming that they "(...)have learning facilitation as a goal and are intentional on the part of the learner. The goal of strategy use is to affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or integrates new knowledge".

One of the recent developments is the framework proposed by Macaro (2006) who claims that, although an impressive amount of research has gone into the area, there remain many unresolved issues, mainly because of the lack of a clear theoretical basis for research. The many controversies surrounding the concept of learner strategies have been summarized by Macaro (2006: 325) in the following way:

- (1) There is no consensus where learner strategies occur, inside the brain or outside it.
- (2) There is no consensus about what learner strategies are. Do they consist of knowledge, intention, action, or all three?
- (3) It is unclear how general or abstract learner strategies are and whether there exist substrategies as well as strategies and, as a consequence, if they can be classified in a framework or a hierarchy.
- (4) A lack of clarity also exists about whether their integrity survives across learning situations, tasks and contexts.
- (5) There is no consensus about what they do, especially whether they are always facilitative and effective.
- (6) It is unclear whether they are integral to language processing or if they are some kind of extra facility that speeds up learning.
- (7) Strategy definition in the literature is arrived at through the use of equally undefined terms.
- (8) There is a lack of consensus on a strategy's relationship to skills and processes.
- (9) A lack of consensus remains on how strategies lead to both language learning and skill development over the long term.

Having listed the weaknesses of the existing theoretical frameworks, Macaro proposed a model "that includes learner strategies in a clear relationship with other domains of language learning and language use" (2006: 325). His criticism of the research into language strategies mainly concerned the "lack of theoretical rigor" in the literature on the subject and thus, he determined to base

his own framework on clear principles. First, strategies should be described in terms of a goal, a learning situation, and a mental action. Next, they need to be distinguished from unconscious activity, language learning processes, skills, learning plans, and learning styles. Finally, it should be assumed that strategies do not make learning more efficient but they are "(...) the raw material of conscious cognitive processing" without which learning would not be possible; moreover, "(...) their effectiveness or noneffectiveness derives from the way they are used and combined in tasks and processes" (2006: 325). Although Macaro concedes that more research needs to be conducted to prove his hypotheses, he claims that strategies are located within working memory, in the learner's brain. Strategies are thought to be integral components of the processing theory and not 'shortcuts to faster processing'. The scholar believes that strategies are generally available to all learners and operate in clusters. However, success in language learning is not determined by the frequency of strategy use but rather by the proper orchestration of strategies, which, in turn, depends on the requirements of a particular task (2006: 332).

2. Research project

2.1. Procedures of data collection and analysis

The purpose of the study was to explore the use of learning strategies by Polish secondary school students at the lower intermediate/intermediate level. The main focus was placed on the application of strategies to the learning of English grammar. The participants who were 160 secondary school students, 58 male and 102 female, completed a questionnaire comprising a number of items representing L2 learning strategies especially with reference to learning grammar. It consisted of fifty questions that required only the yes/no response. The design of the questionnaire was based on Rebecca Oxford's (1990) SILL which is considered the most comprehensive list of strategies employed by language learners.

All of the subjects received uniform instructions as to how to complete the survey. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, they were assured that the responses would be treated with confidentiality and would not influence in any way the results they obtain in their classes. Their regular teachers administered the survey in their classrooms. Both the instruction prior to the survey and the survey itself were designed in Polish in order to avoid possible misunderstanding. The whole procedure lasted about 15 minutes. One of the teachers decided to use the questionnaire as the starting point for the discussion concerning strategy use with reference, not only to grammar, but also pronunciation, vocabulary and the development of all language skills.

2.2. Results of the study

The analysis was conducted by means of simple numerical statistics, best suited for the purpose of this exploratory study. The list of questions the students were asked to respond to was divided into six categories following the taxonomy of strategies presented by Oxford (1990), namely memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

Memory strategies	%
1. Do you try to find relationships between what you already know and new things you learn in English?	89
2. Do you make sentences with new structures to remember them better?	44
3. Do you try to understand every grammar rule?	89
4. Do you imagine a situation when you could use a new structure?	56
5. Do you use rhymes to remember a new rule/structure?	6
6. Are you able to discover a rule on the basis of the analysis of examples?	60
7. Do you physically act out new structures?	15
8. Do you review grammar lessons?	50
Cognitive strategies	
9. Do you use a notebook for new rules and examples?	77
10. Do you analyze diagrams, graphs, tables to learn grammar?	52
11. Do you do many tests and exercises?	35
12. Do you use the Internet to communicate in English?	31
13. Do you use grammar books, grammar parts of dictionaries etc.?	76
14. Do you watch TV programmes or movies in English?	67
15. Do you read for pleasure in English?	35
16. Do you take notes text messages in English?	36
17. Do you display example sentences on walls?	21
18. Do you skim an English text and then go back and read it carefully?	70
19. Do you analyze you grammar tests?	30
20. Do you mark new structures with colours?	42
21. Do you try not to translate word-for-word?	68
Compensation strategies	
22. Do you try to guess what new structures mean?	84
23. Do you use gestures when you are lost for words?	76
24. Do you look up every new word while reading in English?	53
25. Do you try to guess what the interlocutor will say next in English?	65
Metacognitive strategies	
26. Do you try to find as many ways as you can to use English?	56
27. Do you notice your English mistakes and try to correct them?	71
28. Do you pay attention when someone is speaking English?	82
29. Do you try to find out how to be a better learner of English?	72
30. Do you plan your schedule so you have enough time to study English?	69
31. Do you know people you could talk to in English?	66
32. Do you know what to improve?	75
33. Do you know what your strengths are?	74

Affective strategies	
34. Do you try to relax whenever you feel afraid of using English?	41
35. Do you encourage yourself to speak English even when you are afraid of making a mistake?	67
36. Do you give yourself a reward when you do well in English?	29
37. Do you notice if you feel tense or nervous when studying or using English?	39
38. Have you talked to anyone about how you feel when you are learning English?	27
Social strategies	
38. Do you ask the interlocutor to slow down or repeat if you do not understand what they are saying?	73
44. Do you like to be corrected when you talk?	54
41. Do you practice English with other students?	66
42. Do you try to learn about the culture of English speakers?	64
43. Do you ask people who speak English better for help?	79

Table 1: Strategy use reported by the learners.

As can be inferred from the results shown in Table 1, strategy use was quite common among the respondents. The fact that the application of meta-cognitive strategies was reported by as many as 70.62% of the respondents came as no surprise since it was expected that the participants of the experiment, secondary school students, must have developed at least some degree of independence, if not autonomy, and would be ready to accept, at least partially, responsibility for their own learning and reflect on the ways in which their skills could be further developed. Another most commonly employed group of strategies are compensation strategies. 69% of the subjects acknowledged their use, which may be a natural consequence of contacts with native speakers thanks to the growing mobility of Poles or the widespread use of electronic communicators, as well as frequent participation in communicative classes. Fewer participants (67.2%) reported the use of social strategies whose employment may depend on the participants' learning styles or preferences, however, it may also be the consequence of applying classroom procedures that do not stress the importance of cooperation or empathizing with others. Rarely is the ability to work in a team perceived as a merit in the highly competitive Polish secondary school context where individual achievements count.

The popularity of memory strategies – 51.12% of the subjects reported their use in everyday learning practices – may be partly attributed to the fact that, on the one hand, vocabulary extension and practice constitute a vital part of almost every language course; thus both teachers and material developers promote various techniques that aid memorization. On the other hand, the highly formalized and traditionally oriented Polish educational system requires memorization of vast numbers of facts and figures, and as a result, students, having to cope with the demands, develop or acquire many techniques that help them deal with a heavy load of information, not only in foreign language classes but also other school subjects. Heavy reliance on

memorization might account for the comparatively scarce employment of cognitive strategies, since only 49.23% of the subjects reported the use of such strategies included in the questionnaire. Affective strategies turned out to be the ones that were least frequently used (40.6%) of all the types presented. Although, as many teachers and academics agree, the affective side of a learner plays an important role in achieving success in language learning, issues such as gaining better control over one's own emotions or strengthening one's own motivation do not seem to be favoured by many.

It has to be remembered, however, that a questionnaire, apart from its obvious strengths, provides information that may not be the actual account of the subjects' behaviour but is an account of the reported use of strategies that cannot be easily verified. It is often the case that people present themselves in a way that more reflects their wishes than reality. On the other hand, this method of data-collection is very quick and efficient and is frequently used in studies on strategy use.

As Figure 1 indicates, the use of strategies was different for the three age groups represented among the students. Not surprisingly, the youngest group, least advanced, reported the smallest use of strategies. Slightly more than 51% of 16-year-olds admitted the application of language strategies. This low result can be attributed to their short learning experience and comparatively little exposure to strategy training. It also seems to point to the correlation between the overall level of proficiency and effective strategy use. As regards the second age group, almost 59% of the participants stated they used different strategies to aid their learning. However, the growing trend is not present among the third group of respondents, 18-year-olds, 55% of whom answered positively the questions concerning their strategy repertoire. The fact might be attributed to a number of factors that were not investigated during the study, such as the coursebooks the students used throughout their education or classroom practices which did not promote strategy use.

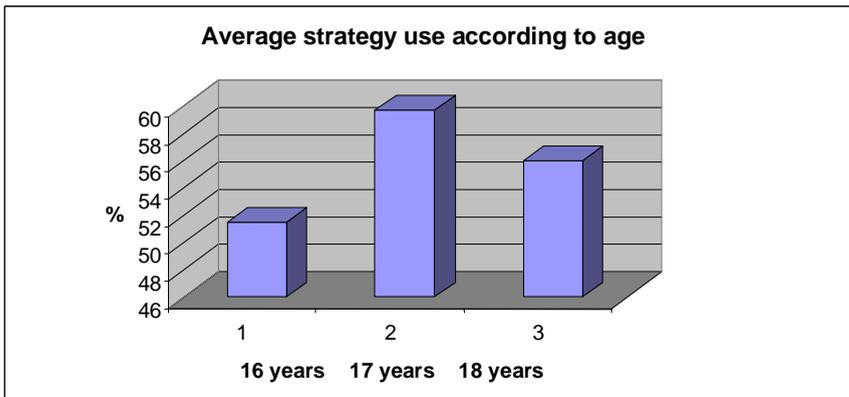


Figure 1: The reported use of strategies according to age.

Another analysis of the collected data was conducted to establish the correlation between the use of strategies and success in language learning, as represented by the students' grades. As can be seen from the data presented in Figure 2, the employment of learning strategies enabled the learners to achieve better results. The subjects who reported the use of strategies at less than 55% scored only the poor grade, while high achievers, those with a very good grade, admitted the use of strategies at almost 60%.

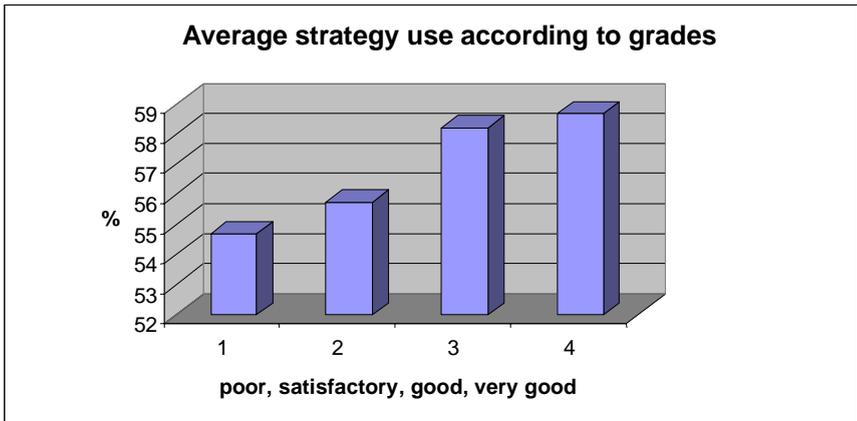


Figure 2: The use of strategies as correlated with school grades.

3. Conclusions and implications

It appears that secondary school students use quite a large number of strategies of all 6 types. However, it has to be remembered that the results only show certain tendencies present among the members of this particular group. Nevertheless, the picture emerging from the study is quite optimistic. The learners seem to be taking an active part in the learning process and report undertaking various activities contributing to their language development of their own accord, thus showing a growing degree of autonomy. Apart from traditional teaching aids such as dictionaries, thesauruses or grammar books, many students use modern technology to establish and sustain contacts with speakers of the target language. In the Polish educational context L2 instruction is limited to 3 or 2 hours a week, and thus strategy training and promoting learner autonomy seem to be at least a partial solution. Becoming aware of their potential and ways they can work on language on their own, learners might take charge of the learning process.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FOCUS ON FORMS VS. FOCUS ON FORM IN TEACHING ENGLISH QUANTIFIERS

ABSTRACT

Basically, there are three options available to the teacher when it comes to teaching a foreign language, two of which can be viewed as extremes and one as an approach striking a balance between them. Thus, the teacher may decide to concentrate mainly on getting students to study discrete linguistic features, may completely disregard the formal analysis of the target language forms and focus on developing learners' communicative skills, or can combine the two approaches and make students notice grammatical structures in a meaningful communicative context. The three possibilities are called respectively: analytical (focus on forms), experiential (focus on meaning) and focus on form approach. Despite several studies investigating how effective these three alternatives are, researchers are not unanimous indicating the best teaching approach. At the same time, numerous methodologists (Long 1981; Pica 1985; Doughty 1991; N. Ellis 1993) seem to support Ur's claim that "a knowledge – implicit or explicit – of grammar rules is essential for the mastery of a language" (1996: 7). The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of a classroom-based study whose purpose was to examine the effectiveness of these teaching strategies in which grammar plays an important role, namely focus on forms and focus on form, in teaching English quantifiers.

1. Introduction

Although language teaching methods have been the subject of methodologists' studies for several years, there is still widespread disagreement concerning the effectiveness of different options in teaching grammar. The

proponents of *focus on forms* emphasize the strong points of the code-focused approach and assert that only this method enables the learner to become familiar with the target language to the extent that allows him or her to use the language accurately and appropriately. From the perspective of the *analytical strategy*, language is a system organised across several levels, such as syntax or phonology, each of which combines sets of elements, for instance grammar rules, phonemes, and intonation patterns (Stern 1992; Long and Robinson 1998). The linguistic features are preselected, put in a particular order and made familiar to students step by step, in the hope that, with the passage of time, learners will know the whole system of the target language. The place of particular structural items in the sequence depends, among other things, on such factors as the importance of a given form, frequency of its use, and its complexity (Long and Robinson 1998: 15).

The two characteristics of the analytical strategy described above, namely sequencing and fragmentation, allow the teacher to divide the language into manageable chunks that can be gradually dealt with without unnecessary frustration on the part of learners, which makes the learning process more pleasurable and gives students the sense of making progress (Stern 1992; Thornbury 1999). However, according to Long and Robinson (1998), disregarding students' communicative needs, which is typical of the analytical strategy, makes learners absorb an enormous amount of redundant information, and, simultaneously, renders them unable to communicate even simple messages. The incapability of communicating successfully is said to be due to the absence of variety in the teaching materials and the simplicity or even impoverishment of their language which is most frequently reduced to unsophisticated sentences containing the forms to be practised (Long and Robinson 1998).

The fierce disapproval of the analytical perspective led to the emergence of the so-called *experiential approach* (Stern 1992: 301). This radical shift away from code-focused instruction to the experiential strategy concentrating almost exclusively on meaning and message conveyance was simultaneously fanned by the growing popularity of communicative teaching and Krashen's theory (1984), which discredited formal instruction and stressed the importance of acquiring the language naturally through being exposed to communicative input (Stern 1992: 304).

The most typical feature of this strategy is its holistic view of a language (Stern 1992: 301). Its advocates assume that the most effective way of mastering a foreign language irrespective of the age of the learner is through experiencing it, i.e. using the language for a particular purpose and concentrating on the meaning of the information that is to be conveyed rather than on its form (Stern 1992; Long and Robinson 1998). In the experiential approach, communicating in the target language performs two roles simultaneously: it serves both as a means and end as the students use the language in order to learn it and learn it in order to use it (Thornbury 1999: 18). Con-

sequently, providing learners with tasks requiring the participation in a variety of realistic social interactions is of great significance.

Although the experiential approach indisputably has certain assets, it is not immune from weaknesses. First of all, convincing as the results of immersion programs drawing on the experiential approach may be, it has been discovered that the language of the students taking part in such programs leaves much to be desired and is fraught with mistakes (Swain 1985; Tarone 1995). Numerous research findings (e.g. Swain 1985; Lightbown and Spada 1990) showed that immersion students have very poor knowledge of the target language grammar, which holds for both spontaneous speech and grammar tests. Moreover, certain linguistic features are unlearnable without formal instruction since positive feedback itself is not enough when it comes to raising learners' awareness of all formal aspects of the target language. In some cases, only formal instruction or negative feedback can inform students of what is incorrect or inappropriate (Ellis 1997: 67). Besides, researchers suggest that older learners are not able to achieve the proficiency of a native speaker purely and simply drawing on the input received and the imperfect language they produce as it is believed that at a certain moment of their psychological development people lose the inborn abilities responsible for naturally acquiring their mother tongue and are incapable of noticing and learning all the formal features of the target language system without having their attention drawn to them (Long 1990; Long and Robinson 1998).

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of the analytical and experiential approaches, the most sensible answer to learning needs is to adopt the third alternative, namely *focus on form*, which combines the advantages of the two strategies described above and gets rid of their inadequacies (Long and Robinson 1998). Incorporating focus on form into the language classroom is considered by several methodologists a remedy to the problems of the analytical and experiential approaches since, while overcoming the limitations of the two strategies, it allows learners to engage in truly purposeful communicative activities and simultaneously gives them an opportunity to attend to formal features of the target language, which enriches the learning experience and accelerates acquiring the language.

The term *focus on form* denotes "drawing students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long 1991: 45-46). In other words, focus on form occurs when students who are involved in performing tasks requiring understanding or conveying a particular message at some point shift their attention to formal features of the TL (Long and Robinson 1998).

It is the dispute among the supporters of the three approaches to teaching grammar that led the researcher to investigate how effective they are. To narrow down the scope of the research however, it was decided to compare only two strategies, namely *focus on forms* and *focus on form*. Another reason for choosing only the two alternatives is that it is hardly possible in

Polish schools not to teach grammar at all and, therefore, it seemed much more justifiable and useful to contrast those approaches in which grammar instruction occupied a significant position.

2. Research project

The researcher decided to conduct a quasi-experimental study since it permitted concentrating on ordinary classes, not randomly chosen new groups, which allowed gathering information in absolutely intact groups, so that there was a likelihood that the findings were applicable to the majority of classrooms. At the same time, the study was an example of action research, as it enabled the researcher to investigate whether and how particular treatment influenced the learning process.

The grammar point covered during the lessons when the study was being conducted was using the quantifiers 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little'. Two classes took part in the research. They were chosen only on the basis of their comparable performance in English. The first one, from now on referred to as Group I or FFS Group, was taught according to the principles of focus on forms, whereas the other one, Group II or FF Group, received instruction based on the focus on form approach. At the beginning of the research, the groups completed pretests checking their knowledge of the grammar point. The classes were divided into three groups, correspondingly A, B, or C, each of which was given a slightly different version of the test. Every test consisted of two exercises. In the first one, the students had to fill in the five blank spaces with 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little'. The other exercise required the students to complete five sentences by choosing one of the two options, for example 'a few' or 'few'. A learner could get one point for every correct answer. The maximum score for the whole test was ten.

During the following three lessons the two groups underwent different treatment. The members of Group I were first introduced to the meaning and use of 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little'. The teacher translated all the words into Polish and, by providing relevant examples of sentences, explained in what context each of them is used. Besides, the researcher elicited from the students information concerning the difference between countable and uncountable nouns. After making sure everyone understood what had been said, the participants were asked to write down all the necessary information in their copybooks. To illustrate the distinctions among 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little', the teacher dictated in Polish several contrasting sentences and asked the learners to translate them into English (e.g. 'I have a few friends' vs. 'I have few friends'). The next two lessons concentrated on exercises from the students' textbooks. The participants had to complete the rules concerning using 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little', filled in the blank spaces with the correct words, and circled the correct options. Besides, they were asked to imagine a table with food that they liked and disliked and describe

how much of what kind of food there was depending on their taste, e.g. "There are a few apples and a little chocolate". Overall, the sequence of lessons was based on the *PPP procedure* and consisted of presentation, controlled practice, and production. At the end of the third lesson, the students were asked to complete posttests (posttest 1), which were the same as pretests. The participants were divided into three groups and each of them took a version of the test different from the one completed in the pretest.

The first lesson in the FF Group began with reading a text containing numerous examples of the grammar point in question, which can be viewed as representing the relatively implicit technique of *input flood*. Besides, all the instances illustrating one meaning and use were emphasised in the same way: all the cases of 'a few' were in bold type, 'fews' were in bold and underlined, 'a littles' were italicised, and 'littles' were italicised and underlined. The assumption was that careful examination of the graphic form could make students draw conclusions concerning the meaning and use of target items. The procedure is commonly referred to as *input enhancement*.

In order to make sure that the participants would pay attention to the targeted features, below the text the researcher enclosed several questions formulated in such a way that answering them necessitated using 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little'. Every student prepared answers individually, and then the participants designated by the teacher read their replies aloud to the whole class. During the following activity, namely a *consciousness raising task*, pairs of students were to complete the table in accordance with the information in the text they had read. They had to write down different amounts (left side of the table) and numbers (right side of the table) of products, and use the '+' or '-' mark to indicate whether the amount/number was enough or not. In order to complete this task, the learners had to discover the difference between amount, connected with uncountable nouns, and number, related to countable nouns. In addition, they had to work out whether the amount or the number of something was sufficient only on the basis of the context.

The second lesson consisted of two consciousness raising activities. The students, working in pairs, read ten sentences containing the quantifiers 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little', and, after a short discussion concerning potential solutions, they had to choose the correct option. The other task required the learners to answer four questions, each of them including the grammar point under consideration. To answer them, the participants had to carefully discuss their meaning, which was hardly feasible without analysing what particular quantifiers denoted. The discussions the learners engaged in took place mainly in English, and required them to collaborate and share their metalinguistic knowledge.

During the third lesson, the teacher made use of the so-called *dictogloss*. A text containing multiple examples of 'a few'/'few'/'a little'/'little' was read to students two times at a normal pace. Simultaneously with listening to the story, the participants were making notes which were used later

on to reconstruct what they had just heard. At first, they worked in pairs, but later on they were allowed to read, compare and analyse their versions with each other. After some time, the teacher read the text again and gave the students the chance to revise their stories for the last time. Towards the end of the lesson, the class was divided into three groups, each of which completed posttests (posttest 1) different from the versions they wrote in the pretest. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the tests used in this posttest were the same as in the pretest.

Three weeks after the researcher's intervention Groups I and II completed posttest 2. Every student was given that version of the test she/he had not written so far. Consequently, during the pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2 each participant completed three different variants of the test. Taking into consideration the form of the tests, the data they provided were subjected to quantitative analysis.

3. Research findings and discussion

Figure 1 presents the fluctuations in the mean score of the FFS and FF Groups on the successive tests. As can be seen from the figure, in posttest 1 the FFS Group significantly outdid the FF Group (the difference between the mean scores was 2.5). In addition, it needs emphasising that the lowest score in the FFS Group was 4.0 and in the FF Group 0.0. What is more, 13% of the FFS Group members scored the maximum number of points (i.e. 10) and as many as 40% of this group got 9.0 points out of 10, whereas in the FF Group no subject scored 10 points and only 10% of the group members scored 9.0 points. Also, as the figure shows, when it comes to the FFS Group, there existed a considerable discrepancy (4.1) between the mean score in the pretest and posttest 1. Although the rise in the mean score between the pretest and posttest 1 could be observed for the FF Group too, it is not as noticeable as in the case of Group 1 (1.2 vs. 4.1). Besides, the analysis of the scores obtained by individual students in the FFS Group revealed that the minimum and the maximum number of scores increased. The minimum score in the pretest was 2.0, while in posttest 1 it was 4.0. The maximum score in the pretest was 8.0, whereas in posttest 1 it was 10. In contrast, in the FF Group the minimum number of scores declined from 2.0 in the pre-test to 0.0 in posttest 1. The maximum value rose by only one point, from 8.0 in the pretest to 9.0 in posttest 1.

As far as posttest 2, conducted three weeks after the treatment, is concerned, the overall outcomes for both groups were lower than in posttest 1. Still, the results of the FFS Group were once again considerably higher than in the other group, with the discrepancy standing at 3.2 and although no participant belonging to the FFS Group got the maximum score, more than half of them, namely 53% scored 8.0 or 9.0 points and the lowest score was 3.0. In the case of the FF Group, the highest score, obtained by 15% of the students,

was 6.0 and the lowest amounted to 1.0. It is worth emphasizing, however, that 53% of Group II got 3.0 or even fewer points. Additionally, even though the results of the FFS Group in posttest 2 were a little bit lower than in posttest 1, the mean score was still much higher than in the pretest, whereas in the FF Group there was a substantial decline in the mean score obtained in posttest two, not only in comparison with posttest 1 (3.4 vs. 6.4) but also with the pretest (3.4 vs. 4.2).

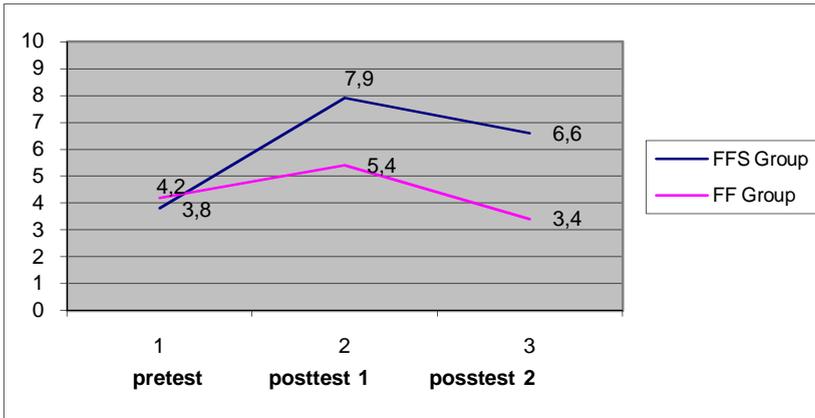


Figure 1: The fluctuations in the mean score of the FFS and FF Group on the successive tests.

The data presented above clearly indicate that focus on forms instruction brought much better results than teaching drawing on focus on form. In addition, this approach seems to have had a more lasting effect. Nonetheless, convincing as the results can be, one cannot exclude the possibility that it was not the focus on form approach itself that was to blame for the rather unsatisfying outcome. It could be speculated, for example, that the poor results obtained by the FF Group, compared with the results of the FS Group, could be ascribed to the fact that the group in question had never experienced focus on form activities, which was perfectly noticeable during the lessons utilising them. The vast majority of the participants were frustrated when asked to answer the questions concerning the text in task one without knowing the precise meaning of the quantifiers. It seemed that only a handful of them struck upon the idea that different font types indicated different meaning of those words. The students were even more confused when completing the dictogloss. Most of them treated it purely and simply as a memory game rather than a grammar task. What is more, careful analysis of the notes taken by the participants during listening to the story and of the reconstructed texts revealed that hardly any of the students focused their attention on the use and meaning of the target features. The subjects' general impression of those lessons could probably be best summarised by a note

one of the students wrote at the bottom of the exercise sheet, saying: 'Ohhhh my God. I prefer normal lessons. More effective'. The conclusion might be drawn that, in the opinion of the students, only traditional grammar lessons, understood as those based on a focus on forms format could in fact attain instructional goals. Any other approach is considered ineffective.

Another possible explanation of the poor results obtained by the FF Group is that the researcher had chosen a grammar point that could have been considered too complicated to the members of the FF Group. Perhaps, the form of the quantifiers was too similar to be noticed and learnt by dint of tasks drawing on focus on form. That would simultaneously explicate why the FFS Group achieved such satisfying results. On this account, one of the hypotheses that can be put forward is that the quantifiers covered in the research are simply more amenable to instruction based on the focus on forms approach. The members of the FFS Group had all the necessary information written down in their copybooks, so it was enough for them to read the notes to know in what context they should use each quantifier, which, in all probability, was done by virtually every student in this group, considering the fact that the participants were very assiduous. By contrast, the FF Group, which also comprised diligent students, did not have such easy access to rules governing the meaning and use of the grammar point in question. Probably, the activities in which they were involved, such as the dictogloss or the consciousness raising task, were inappropriate and did not draw the learners' attention to the targeted features to the extent that would allow for noticing the gap in their interlanguage and the exposure to these activities might have been insufficient.

4. Conclusion

Since it seems hardly reasonable to discredit the effectiveness of focus on form on the basis of one study, the most sensible solution would be to combine different instruction types. A lesson could, for instance, begin with an input enhancement task, when students are given a chance to pick up a given aspect of grammar unconsciously or work out its meaning and use by themselves, which might be followed by the teacher's explanations confirming or contradicting learners' assumptions. Besides, considering the fact that we should view grammar teaching in terms of sequences of lessons, it would be recommended to vary traditional grammar lessons with classes drawing on the focus on form approach. Still, a lot may depend on the choice of the structure as it must be borne in mind that certain aspects of grammar are more amenable to focus on forms whereas others to focus on form.

Rational and useful as the suggestions presented above may seem, it is judicious to remember that the study on the basis of which the pedagogical implications have been put forward has its limitations. As a result, it is immensely difficult to say whether the recourse to the recommendations

above will bring the expected results and, thus, in order to find the most advantageous teaching solutions, teachers themselves have to experiment with different options in their own classrooms.

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VOCABULARY LEARNING AND RETENTION: THE USEFULNESS OF PRE-READING AND DURING- READING QUESTIONS IN EFL CLASSES

ABSTRACT

One basic objective of research in the field of ESL/FFL administration in Iran has been to provide useful techniques for vocabulary development. There is debate among EFL practitioners concerning which method of using questions works efficiently in reaching comprehension classes with the major goal of developing vocabulary knowledge of the learners. In this study an attempt has been made to investigate the effect of using pre-reading questions compared with inserted questions on incidental vocabulary learning and retention. To achieve this goal, 60 selected intermediate learners, based on their scores on the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and by using a match-pair design, were selected and divided into two homogeneous groups. The participants in both groups were given a 60-item multiple-choice vocabulary test (40 target items and 20 distracters), the results of which revealed their vocabulary knowledge. Two weeks after the pretest, both groups received the treatments intended for them. In one group students were exposed to comprehending passages including pre-reading questions while the learners in the other group were exposed to the same texts in which the questions were used stage by stage in the body of the texts. When the learners finished reading the passages, an incidental vocabulary learning test which contained 8 questions was administered and this procedure continued for 5 sessions. Then, two weeks after the last session of the treatment, a posttest was administered to measure the retention of incidentally learned vocabulary. The analysis of the data showed that during reading questions proved more useful than pre-reading exercises. Consequently, the learners of this class outperformed the other group in terms of the number of words learned incidentally. Also, the results showed that the group receiving during reading exercises performed better than the pre-reading group

considering the length of retention period. Incidental vocabulary learning has a high correlation with reading comprehension exercises, and different reading activities impose different levels of involvement with text and thus lead to different amounts of vocabulary learning and retention.

1. Introduction

Reading is a skill of paramount importance. In many instances around the world it can be considered as the most important foreign language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English material for their own specialist subject but may never actually have to speak the language: such cases are often referred to as 'English as a library language' (Alderson 2002).

Language students need large amounts of comprehensible input, and reading materials provide the most readily available source (Chastain 1988). Research has confirmed that reading in either a first (L1) or second (L2) language has a positive impact on language development, an impact that has been referred to as *the power of reading* (Krashen 1989). Whatever language development that occurs as a result of reading is said to occur incidentally (or secondarily) in that the reader's primary task is to make meaning from the text rather than learn new words or learn to spell better. Language development is an additional benefit of reading: it is the bonus that readers receive. The indisputable linguistic gain that readers receive from reading is new vocabulary, be it partial or complete knowledge of a word's meaning (for L1 see Anderson (1995) and for L2 see Rott et al. (2002)).

Vocabulary is the most central element in the social system of communication (Harley 1995a). This view is strengthened by McCarthy (1990) who emphasizes the importance of vocabulary in expressing meanings in L2 communication. Richards (1998) maintains that vocabulary is the core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. Without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them. Many researchers in the field of language learning and teaching believe that there is a symbolic relationship between reading and vocabulary acquisition. It is a proven fact that learners with a high level comprehension skill are able to acquire broader and deeper vocabulary knowledge and learners with a larger vocabulary size are able to comprehend written texts better (Rott et al. 2002).

An assumption shared by many language-learning researchers is that much of second language vocabulary is acquired incidentally through reading for comprehension (Krashen 1989; Rott 2002). Age, reading skill, text type, word characteristics, and vocabulary size and topic knowledge familiarity are pinpointed as factors influencing incidental learning of meanings

from context. The impact of reading tasks on incidental vocabulary learning and retention has long been established, in the sense that different reading tasks impose different levels of engagement with the text, thus leading to different amounts of vocabulary achievement and retention.

2. The study

2.1. Research questions and hypotheses

According to what has been said so far, the following questions are addressed in this study:

- (1) Does the inclusion of pre-reading questions and inserted questions account for different amounts of incidental vocabulary learning from text?
- (2) Does the inclusion of pre-reading and inserted questions have an impact on student's retention of incidentally learned vocabulary?

Based on the questions posed, the following null hypotheses were proposed to be tested:

- (1) H01: There is no significant relationship between the location of the reading questions in the text (pre-reading as opposed to inserted questions) and incidental vocabulary learning.
- (2) H02: There is no meaningful relationship between the location of comprehension questions (pre-reading vs. inserted questions) and retention of the incidentally learned vocabulary.

2.2. Methodology

2.2.1. Participants

A total of 88 male and female students studying English at Islamic Azad University, Najafabad Branch were selected for this study. To determine the homogeneity of the subjects, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) test consisting of vocabulary and structure questions was administered. 60 students with an intermediate level of proficiency, according to the OPT chart, were selected and, by using a match-pair statistical design, were divided into two groups of 30, namely, Group A and Group B. Group A received their reading texts with pre-reading questions and Group B received their reading text containing inserted questions.

2.2.2. Instrumentation

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) comprising of vocabulary and structure sections was administered to ensure the homogeneity of the subjects. In addition, a pretest consisting of 60 multiple-choice vocabulary questions containing the vocabulary items intended to be tested was used. The rest

of the VOC items were included as distractors. The reason for this was to apply logical items which were new to the students.

Reading passages with a length of about 200 words and approximately at the same level of difficulty were selected from intermediate reading textbooks. The reading texts for Group A contained pre-reading questions while the texts intended for Group B contained inserted questions scattered throughout the body of the texts.

Tests of vocabulary which were administered after each session of the treatment were used to examine students' VOC development. Finally, a forty-item teacher-made vocabulary test which contained the vocabulary items used in the tests used after each session was administered two weeks after the last session to check the retention of the incidentally learned vocabulary. In order to make sure about the validity of the tests, three university professors were consulted and they approved that the test items were well-prepared and served the intended purpose.

2.2.3. Procedure

The next step was to check the vocabulary knowledge. To do so, lexical items were selected and in order to make sure that these words were unknown to the students, a pretest was prepared comprising 60 multiple-choice items containing the intended VOC items. After the test 40 unfamiliar items were selected.

Two weeks after the treatment started, the two groups were asked to study the same texts but the nature and the kind of tasks expected from them were different. In other words, Group A read the texts containing some *pre-reading questions*. Group B read the same texts with the same questions, but this time the questions were scattered throughout the body of the text, thus taking the form of *inserted questions*. The students were told that the purpose of the tests was only to try to find correct answers to the questions. No deliberate attempt was made to direct students' attention to vocabulary learning. Nothing was mentioned to the students about the upcoming vocabulary test. The procedures for conducting the classes were as follows.

First, a 'warm-up' exercise was presented and the students were introduced to the text. Then the passages were handed out. In order to set a time limit for the students' reading time, four teachers were asked to read the texts and the questions. The time needed for the students to finish reading the texts was calculated by the following formula:

$$A = B + 1/2 B, \text{ where}$$

A: The students' time for reading the text.

B: The mean of teachers' time for reading the text.

After they finished reading the texts, the passages were collected and the subjects were allowed a five-minute break. After the break, the incidental vocabulary learning test, which comprised 8 questions, was administered.

This procedure was followed in five sessions. After the last session, for two weeks there was no test or treatment. Then the final posttest which constituted all tests given already administered after each session was conducted to measure students' VOC retention ability.

2.3. Results and discussions

The main objective of this study was to find out whether there is any relationship between the type of question, that is, inserted question and pre-questioning, and vocabulary learning and retention in Iranian EFL learners. To find out the answer, an experiment was carried out and what follows is the result of the experiment. The results consist of two parts; part one includes the results of the tests which were administered after each session of the treatment and part two includes the results of the posttest which was carried out two weeks after the experiment.

2.3.1. The results of the tests after each session

The experiment went on for five sessions and after each session a test of vocabulary consisting of 8 multiple choice items which contained the intended vocabulary was conducted. Figure 1 shows a graphical representation of the results of the tests and Tables 1 through 5 below show the descriptive statistics of the *t*-tests regarding these tests. It should be noted here that for the ease of comparison all the scores were converted to a scale of 20.

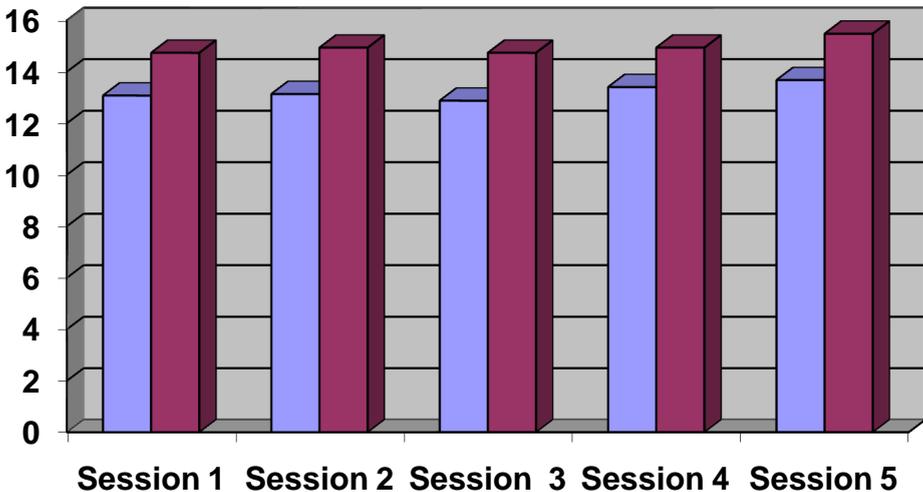


Figure 1: Bar graphic representation of the results of the tests.

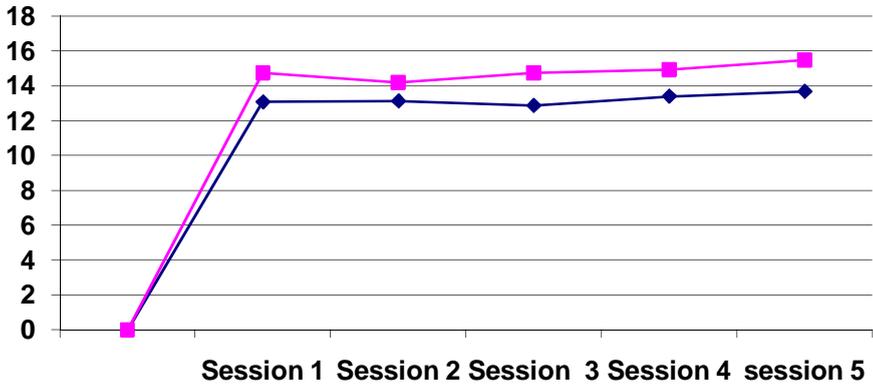


Figure 2: Line graphic representation of the results of the tests.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	13.07	2.766	0.505	58	2.405	0.019
B	30	14.73	2.599	0.475			

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for Session 1 (Group A: Inserted Question Group; Group B: Pre-question Group).

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	T	p
A	30	13.13	2.909	0.531	58	2.57	0.013
B	30	14.93	2.504	0.457			

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for Session 2.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	12.87	3.35	0.612	58	2.358	0.022
B	30	14.73	2.75	5.3			

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for Session 3.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	13.4	3.069	0.56	58	1.97	0.054
B	30	14.93	2.959	0.54			

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for Session 4.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	13.67	2.783	0.508	58	2.709	0.009
B	30	15.47	2.345	0.428			

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for Session 5.

As can be seen in the above tables, the results of the *t*-tests for sessions 1, 2, 3 and 5 show a significant difference between the performances of the two experimental groups, that is the group receiving inserted questions performed better than the group answering pre-reading questions. The results of session 4, however, show no significant differences between the results of the test of the two groups.

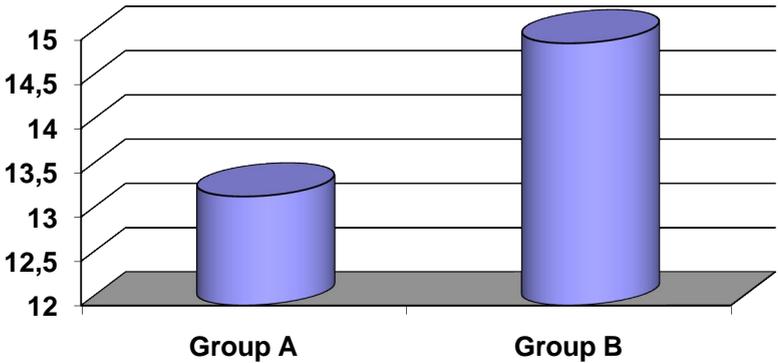


Figure 3: Graphic representation of the total performance of the groups.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	13.23	2.922	0.534	58	2.445	0.018
B	30	14.96	2.557	0.467			

Table 6: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for total performances of the groups.

In order to find out about the total performance of the two groups, another *t*-test was run. Figure 3 shows a graphic representation of the results of this test and Table 6 descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test regarding this test. As can be seen in Table 6 above, the results of the *t*-test show that Group B, that is the group receiving inserted questions, outperformed Group A, that is the group receiving pre-reading questions. This result rejects the first null hypothesis proposed in this study, that is, there is no significant relationship between the location of the reading questions in the text (pre-reading questions and inserted reading questions) and incidental vocabulary learning.

2.3.2. The results of the posttest

The next step was to review the results of the posttest which was administered two weeks after the completion of the experiment and through applying one last *t*-test compare the results of the performance of the two groups. Figure 4 shows a graphic representation of the results of the posttest and Table 7 below shows the results of the *t*-test.

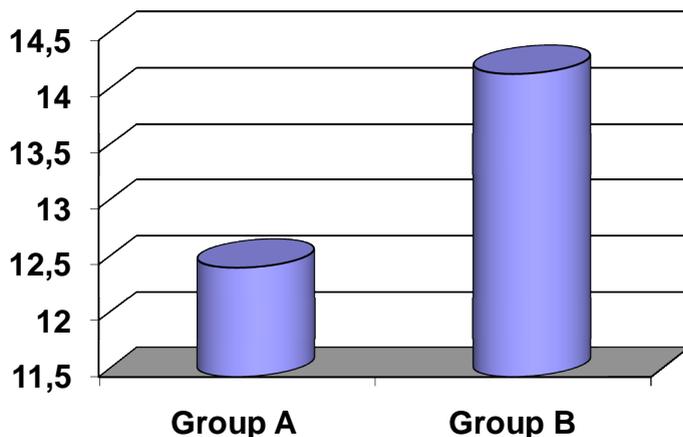


Figure 4: Graphic representation of the results of the posttests.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	p
A	30	12.47	3.048	0.557	58	2.208	0.031
B	30	14.2	3.033	0.554			

Table 7: Descriptive statistics and the results of the *t*-test for posttest.

It can be seen in Table 7 that once again Group B, that is, the group with inserted questions, outperformed group A, the group with pre-reading questions. The results obtained reject the second null hypothesis of this study which proposes that *there is no meaningful relationship between the location of reading questions (pre-reading questions and inserted reading questions) and retention of the incidentally learned vocabulary*.

3. Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine the effect of pre-reading questions and inserted questions on incidental vocabulary learning and retention. In fact, the impact of different reading tasks was investigated in this research. Different reading tasks impose different levels of involvement with the reading passages, thus leading to different ways of reading and different amounts of vocabulary achievement and intention. Because it is a proven fact that much of the second language vocabulary is acquired incidentally, the researcher decided to examine the effect of two different reading tasks on incidental vocabulary learning and retention.

The results of this study showed that participants in both groups learned some words incidentally but they were meaningfully different in the number of learned lexical items. Subjects in Group B who read the texts with inserted questions performed better than those in Group A who read the same texts with pre-reading questions.

Better performance of Group B in vocabulary learning may be attributed to the nature and kind of tasks expected from them. An inserted question can be considered a good prompt to involve learners deeper in the text, thus leading to different amounts of vocabulary learning. To use the term proposed by Loafer and Hulstijn 2001, it can be claimed that the two assigned reading tasks for the two groups of subjects in this study did not trigger the same amount of task involvement. Group A's lower incidental vocabulary learning can be ascribed to their lower involvement with texts.

According to schema theory, comprehension and recall are shaped by readers' ability to access content, to use their prior knowledge, to identify the structure and to read interactively, utilizing both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Goodman (1976) asserts that reading is a meaning making process in which readers use a number of reading strategies. Readers' concern for constructing meaning influences how they use strategies, while their purposes affect what they choose to remember. Some learning researchers, based on the 'mental effort' hypothesis, are of the view that the retention of an inferred meaning is higher than a given word meaning. Clark (1973) maintains that the nature of processing influences recall and learning. It is believed that deeper processing results in a more durable memory trace.

The above-mentioned factors (mental effort hypothesis and nature of processing) are also implicated in the vocabulary retention test of this study. It can be argued that better performance of the subjects in Group B on the vocabulary retention test is accounted for by their degree of involvement. The two groups of subjects, due to their different reading tasks, seem to have employed two different processing patterns which varied in terms of the mental effort required. It could be argued that, compared with the subjects in Group A, the subjects in Group B used deeper processing and put more effort into their task.

4. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to determine the possible effects of different reading activities on vocabulary gain and the time period the new words are retained. Incidental vocabulary learning is a byproduct of reading activity without any focus on vocabulary learning. Researchers believe that much of EFL vocabulary is acquired incidentally when reading for gist (Rott et al. 2002). Incidental word learning is a slow and incremental process but it is valued in that learners do two things simultaneously. As they read for comprehension, they also expand their vocabulary through different strategies. The incidental acquisition hypothesis suggests that there is a gradual but steady incremental growth of vocabulary knowledge through meaningful interaction with texts (Coady 1979). Incidental acquisition of vocabulary is also discussed by Krashen (1989) in his Input Hypothesis, according to which, a new word is acquired when its significance is made clear to the learner.

Given the high correlation between reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary gain, attention should be drawn to strategies of vocabulary development. As the findings of this study indicate, different reading tasks impose different levels of engagement with texts and thus lead to different amounts of vocabulary development and retention. We concluded that inserted questions are more effective than pre-reading questions, with regard to the degree of engagement, the amount of word learning, vocabulary enrichment through reading activities and higher involvement load.

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TEACHING PRONUNCIATION TO ADULT LEARNERS: THE ADVANTAGES OF EXPLICIT TRAINING

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to present and discuss the outcomes of the research which was conducted in the summer 2007. In the experiment two groups of adult learners were taught certain aspects of English phonetics, with the difference that the first group received explicit and the second implicit training. At the end of the course the participants were asked to perform a set of pronunciation activities and their responses were carefully recorded on tape. Thorough analysis of the gathered data allowed to come to the following conclusions. First of all, it appeared that adult learners were capable of improving their pronunciation even though they were past the age of puberty (Lightbown and Spada 1993). Secondly, the outcomes of the research proved that students could benefit more from explicit training and that conscious learning was more effective than subconscious (Harmer 1991). Next, it was shown that pronunciation was as important as other aspects of language such as grammar or vocabulary and therefore could not be "treated as an optional extra in a lesson plan" (Tench 1981: 18). Finally, the author wanted to draw attention to the fact that pronunciation activities, contrary to a popular belief, do not have to be boring but can motivate and inspire students not to mention that add variety to the lesson.

1. Adults as learners

When characterising a language learner, teachers should take into account several issues such as intelligence, aptitude, personality, learning style, age of acquisition and finally motivation (Lightbown and Spada 1993). Adult learn-

ers undoubtedly have the biggest knowledge about the surrounding world if compared to children or adolescents (Brown 1991). They have fixed opinions and consciously show positive or hostile attitude towards other people and their beliefs. Adults also have experience in 'being taught' and are aware of their learning styles and strategies as well as their strong points and weaknesses. They also know how to memorise new information and recall it when needed (Lightbown and Spada 1993). Moreover, they are independent and do not require as much attention as younger students.

Age is another factor that differentiates adults from other groups of language learners. To begin with, the supporters of the Critical Period Hypothesis claim that after puberty students are unable to acquire languages, particularly in terms of a foreign accent (Lightbown and Spada 1993). The ability to learn proper pronunciation is also hindered by the fact that the organs of speech of an adult person are relatively rigid and foremost, used to producing mother tongue sound only (Wieszczeczyńska 2003). Although older students must invest more effort to learn to 'sound correct', they can achieve their aim if proper methods are provided. As people grow older, the work of brain changes and the left hemisphere (responsible for logical thinking) becomes dominant. Therefore, it can be assumed that formal (explicit) training in which rules and explanations are directly provided by the teacher (Harmer 1991) will be the most effective and beneficial.

The last factor that plays an immense role in student's characteristic is motivation (Lightbown and Spada 1993). Adult learners are said to be the most motivated group of students as they understand the need and importance of acquiring foreign languages. Although the reasons why they attend various courses differ, e.g. some want to expand their world view while the others need English at work, all have the same goal which is to learn to communicate effectively (Seildhofer and Dalton 1995). Therefore, teachers of languages should provide training not only in vocabulary and grammar but also in pronunciation since, without this knowledge, learners will not be able to produce comprehensible sentences.

2. The theory of pronunciation teaching

The fact that proper pronunciation is the key to effective communication has been well-known for centuries. Probably, therefore, the issue of teaching this aspect of language has attracted so much attention and so many different approaches have been developed. The 15th century scholars, for instance, believed that students of English should "approximate as closely as possible the native standard" (Jenkins 2001: 6). Next, the supporters of audiolingualism viewed language as a "hierarchy of related structures and on the basis of this hierarchy was the articulation of phonemes" (Brown 1994: 113). In the 1970s, when the 'non-directive and let-it-happen' approaches were introduced, pronunciation instruction was accidental; however, ten years later methodolo-

gists again realized that pronunciation teaching was a key to gaining full communicative competence (Brown 1994). Nowadays, intelligibility is the most important and teachers no longer want their students to master native like pronunciation but would like them to be “understood by the listeners in every situation” (Kenworthy 1987: 13). Also the ideas of Interlanguage (Jenkins 2001) and Polglish (Sobkowiak 2001) are very popular.

In the process of pronunciation teaching two aspects should be highlighted: *accuracy* (the ability to pronounce particular sounds properly) and *fluency* (a smooth joining of phonemes and large elements of an acceptable speed of delivery) (Tench 1981: 61). There are various techniques which can be employed to exercise them. Probably the most popular are drills which are based on repeating a proper sound or a string of sounds after the model. Although they seem to be monotonous, they permit to check students' knowledge in a quick and reliable way (Kelly 2000). The next well-known activities are minimal pairs in which the learners are asked to discriminate between two words that differ in one sound only e.g. ‘fain’ – ‘vain’ or ‘think’ – ‘sink’ (Rodman and Fromkin 1993). Their biggest advantage is that they “train ears through the perception of contrast and make this contrast clearly audible” (Tench 1981: 59). Also the use of tongue twisters is one of the most commonly cited methods of pronunciation teaching. Tongue twisters can be defined as “phrases or sentences that are difficult to pronounce because of the alliteration or the appearance of the same sounds in close proximity” (Bowen and Marks 1993: 29), e.g. ‘Roberta ran rings round Roman ruins’. They are very popular as they not only exercise the pronunciation of particular sounds but also smoothly and in a funny way introduce the idea of connected speech and intonation. Finally, songs and rhymes can be used to introduce the suprasegmental features e.g. word or sentence stress in a non-threatening and motivating way (Griffiee 1992: 4).

Despite the profound knowledge of methodology and the availability and variety of pronunciation activities, in real-classroom situation teachers “consciously or subconsciously avoid teaching this aspect of English language because they regard it difficult and time consuming” (Bowen and Marks 1993: 2). Many trainers also claim that adult students are unable to master foreign accent and claim that explaining the rules of proper articulation is pointless. Although it cannot be denied that the process of pronunciation teaching is long-lasting and certain aspects, e.g. connected speech, are particularly hard to master, there are also features that can be easily explained. Consonants appear to belong to this group.

3. Characteristics of consonantal sounds

Consonants are said to be the skeleton of English words that provide them with their basic shape. If, for instance, a sentence ‘Could you pass me the salt, please?’ was deprived of vowels, the phrase would still be understood

(O'Connor 1989: 24). In order to form consonantal sounds, the airstream through the vocal tract must be obstructed in some way. Therefore, consonants can be classified according to the *place* and *manner of this obstruction* (Ladefoged 1993: 5). The previous can be defined as "a location where a particular sound is produced" (Seildhofer and Dalton 1995), e.g. labial, alveolar or velar. The manner of articulation, on the other hand, "reflects the way the air stream is affected as it travels from the lungs to the mouth and nose" (O'Connor 1989: 141) and allows for the division into plosives, fricatives, or nasals. There is one more criterion that should be taken into consideration when characterising consonants – *voicing*, which refers to the state of vocal cords, whether they vibrate and produce voiced sounds or are wide apart and voiceless sounds are created (Ladefoged 1993: 5ff).

Problems with acquiring native-like pronunciation are usually the result of dissimilarities between the systems of the mother-tongue and the target language. In the case of consonants the difficulties are connected with differences in the place and manner of articulation or voicing. Polish learners, for instance, find interdental /ɗ/ and /ɟ/ difficult as those sounds have no equivalents in Polish (Krzyszowski 1976: 78). Still, as Sobkowiak (2001: 72) states "due to the inherent difficulty of articulating both students and teachers tend to devote a lot of attention to these sounds and words which contain them". As far as the manner of articulation is concerned, Poles have problems with pronouncing nasal velar /ŋ/, retroflex /r/ or plosives (Avery and Ehrlich 1996: 143ff). Finally, students from Poland have a tendency to devoice obstruents (stops, fricatives and affricates) in word final positions (Sobkowiak 2001: 58).

4. Method

4.1. Participants and procedures¹

The sample consisted of 12 participants (two males and ten females) who volunteered to take part in the experiment. The research was conducted in the summer 2007 in Goszczanowo (Poland) during a 60-hour course. All the subjects were citizens of Poland and the educational level was university graduate. The students ranged from 25-55 years of age with an average of 34. Their level was pre-intermediate and none of them had experienced any training in pronunciation before.

The participants were divided into 2 groups. The first group was explicitly taught certain aspects of English phonetics (only consonantal sounds) whereas the second group did not receive any formal training. Each participant was asked to read four texts at the beginning and at the end of the course.

¹ I would like to thank all the participants who devoted their time and agreed to take part in my experiment.

Their speech was recorded and carefully analyzed. Each text put emphasis on one issue only (Text 1 – /D/, Text 2 – /Q/, Text 3 – /N/, and Text 4 – voiced obstruents in word final position) and the number of target sounds in each case was 7 (four sounds in isolation and three phonemes in context). The experiment was aimed to answer the following questions:

- (1) Are adult learners able to improve their pronunciation skills?
- (2) Which method of training is more effective: implicit or explicit?
- (3) Which consonants are the easiest for Polish learners and which are the most difficult to master?
- (4) Which pronunciation activities are the most involving for students?

4.2. Results

Tables 1a-4b present the results of the experiment for each tested sound separately: Tables 1a and 1b – /D/; Tables 2a and 2b – /Q/; Tables 3a and 3b /N/ and Tables 4a and 4b – voiced obstruents in word final positions. Each table has a number which is accompanied with a letter that indicates whether the group received *implicit* – a, or *explicit* – b training. The numbers show how many times a given phoneme was read correctly during the first and second reading. The last column informs about the subject's progress and improvement in the articulation of the tested sound. P1 to P6 refer to participants.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	4	4	0
P2	4	4	0
P3	3	3	0
P4	4	4	0
P5	7	7	0
P6	2	3	+1

Table 1a: Implicit – /D/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	4	5	+1
P2	4	4	0
P3	5	5	0
P4	1	4	+3
P5	2	4	+2
P6	3	5	+2

Table 1b: Explicit – /D/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	4	6	+2
P2	1	2	+1
P3	2	3	+1
P4	4	3	-1
P5	7	7	0
P6	2	2	0

Table 2a: Implicit – /Q/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	7	7	0
P2	4	5	+1
P3	5	4	-1
P4	2	4	+2
P5	3	4	+1
P6	3	5	+2

Table 2b: Explicit – /Q/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	-	-	0
P2	-	-	0
P3	-	-	0
P4	-	-	0
P5	-	3	+3
P6	-	-	0

Table 3a: Implicit – /ŋ/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	-	3	+3
P2	-	4	+4
P3	-	3	+3
P4	-	4	+4
P5	-	-	0
P6	-	1	+1

Table 3b: Explicit – /ŋ/.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	1	1	0
P2	2	3	+1
P3	-	1	+1
P4	1	1	0
P5	2	3	+1
P6	-	1	+1

Table 4a: Implicit – voiced obstruents.

	1st reading max 7	2nd reading max 7	sum
P1	4	4	0
P2	1	1	0
P3	1	4	+3
P4	1	3	+2
P5	-	3	+3
P6	-	4	+4

Table 4b: Explicit – voiced obstruents.

Tables 5a and 5b summarize the performance of all participants and their aim is to show which sounds were read correctly the biggest number of times (the easiest to articulate) and which phoneme was the most difficult to pronounce. The column sum presents by how many the proper pronunciation of a tested phoneme increased during the second reading.

	1st reading max 42	2nd reading max 42	sum
/D/	24	25	+1
/Q/	20	23	+3
/N/	0	3	+3
Voiced obstru- stru- ents	6	10	+4

Table 5a: Implicit.

	1st reading max 42	2nd reading max 42	sum
/D/	19	27	+8
/Q/	24	29	+5
/N/	0	15	+15
Voiced obstru- stru- ents	7	19	+12

Table 5b: Explicit.

Tables 6a and 6b show which participant made the biggest progress and which phoneme was the most difficult or the easiest to pronounce for him/her.

	/D/	/Q/	/N/
P1	0	+2	0
P2	0	+1	0
P3	0	+1	0
P4	0	-1	0
P5	0	0	+3
P6	+1	0	0

Table 6a: Implicit.

	/D/	/Q/	/N/
P1	+1	0	+3
P2	0	+1	+4
P3	0	-1	+3
P4	+3	+2	+4
P5	+2	+1	0
P6	+2	+2	+1

Table 6b: Explicit.

4.3. Discussion

1. Are adult learners able to improve their pronunciation skills?

According to the data, adult learners are capable of improving their pronunciation skills and can truly master the proper articulation of English phonemes. Out of 12 participants, four (33%) made significant progress in pronouncing at least three tested sounds (see Tables 6a and 6b), six (30%) managed to utter two types of phonemes in a good way and only 2 subjects (17%) did not improve their pronunciation at all. Furthermore, adults (5 from explicit and 1 from implicit group) learnt to pronounce nasal velar /N/ correctly, although they had not 'known' this sound before. Finally, it is worth highlighting that the student who, according to the data, made the biggest progress (P4 from explicitly trained group) was 55 years old and was the oldest participant who took part in the experiment.

2. Which method of training is more effective: implicit or explicit?

Thorough analysis of the data included in Tables 6a and 6b shows that adults who received explicit training managed to improve their pronunciation skills more effectively. The results indicate that the number of correctly uttered sounds during the first reading is comparable for both groups (see Tables 1a-4b). Interdentals were properly read by most participants, no learner knew how to pronounce nasal velar and only a few subjects remembered that obstruents in word final positions should be voiced. However, during the second reading the situation changed and those adults who were taught by means of formal methods managed to improve their pronunciation. Their results are relatively significant as about 50% of the targeted sounds (in particular those phonemes that had not been explained before: nasal velar /N/ and voiced obstruents) were correctly pronounced whereas in the case of students who received implicit training the results are much lower (with the exception of P5).

3. Which consonants are the easiest for Polish learners and which are the most difficult to master?

The gathered data shows that voiced obstruents in word final positions were the most difficult sounds to master. Only four subjects (all from the explicit-

ly trained group, see Table 5b) managed to make significant progress. However, it should be noted that learners remembered about 'voicing' only while reading minimal pairs. In the remaining phrases, the sounds were devoiced. Next, it appears surprising that none of the participants managed to pronounce nasal velar /ŋ/ correctly during the first reading. It means that no previous language trainer bothered to pay special attention to this phoneme. The situation improved during the second reading as 5 students (P1, P2, P3, P4 – explicit group and P5 – implicit group) articulated this phoneme properly. Finally, it can be observed that interdental /ð/ and /θ/ were pronounced correctly the biggest number of times (if compared to other sounds) even during the first reading. It proves the fact that those phonemes receive great attention from both teachers and students.

4. Which pronunciation activities are the most involving for students?

It appeared that participants did appreciate pronunciation activities and found them useful and involving. They particularly liked songs (one of the songs the author used was Elvis Presley's 'Loving you' to introduce the /ŋ/ sound) and tongue twisters, both in English (e.g. 'Thirty-three thieves thought it was Thursday') and Polish (e.g. 'Czy tata czyta cytaty z Tacyta' or 'zmiażdż dżdżownicę'). The subjects also enjoyed reading Polish words and phrases in an English manner and found them funny and involving. I adopted those activities from *American English for Poles* by F. Grucza and used them to practice plosive sounds. As it might have been expected, the participants did not appreciate performing minimal pair exercises; however, they described them as useful, particularly in discriminating sounds.

5. Final conclusions

The aim of this article was to present the outcomes of the author's research and take issue with those who claim that adult learners are incapable of learning how to articulate English sounds properly and teaching pronunciation is boring and pointless. The results clearly show that adults can acquire proper pronunciation particularly if explicit training is provided and target sounds are firstly precisely explained (also from the articulatory viewpoint) and then practiced through various techniques. Next, thorough analysis of the data allows us to state that pronunciation truly is one of the most neglected aspects of the English language and most teachers treat it as 'optional extra' in their lesson plans. It should be reminded here that in the beginning of the course none of the participants knew how to read the nasal velar /ŋ/ correctly. This approach is appalling as adults do want to know how to pronounce various sounds properly so as not to be laughed at while interacting with others. Moreover, the knowledge of being phonetically correct may help to overcome the fear of speaking and encourage communication. Finally, it

appeared that there are certain sounds that are particularly troublesome for Poles either due to mother tongue influence (e.g. voiced obstruents in word final position) or inflexible organs of speech (as in the case of nasal velars). On the other hand, however, even phonemes that are absent from the Polish system (e.g. interdental) can be correctly pronounced if only proper and exhaustive explanation and training are provided.

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IN SEARCH OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR L2 PRONUNCIATION TEACHING AND LEARNING

ABSTRACT

The contribution reports on a study aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of L2 pronunciation instruction. It is based on a series of surveys conducted among the students of English phonetics concerning the use of strategies employed during pronunciation classes and outside the classroom context. The student feedback questionnaires focus on the mainstream and alternative methods of pronunciation instruction and their effect on the affective domain. The survey aims at exploring students' evaluation of the efficiency and usefulness of particular self-directed tactics as well as at the pooling of expertise and sharing a repertoire of strategies employed in pronunciation training.

1. Introduction

The contribution reports on a study aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of L2 pronunciation instruction. It is based on a series of surveys conducted among the students of English phonetics concerning the use of strategies employed during pronunciation classes and outside the classroom context. The student feedback questionnaires focus on the mainstream and alternative methods of pronunciation instruction and their effect on the affective domain. The survey aims at exploring students' evaluation of the efficiency and usefulness of particular self-directed tactics as well as at the pooling of expertise and sharing a repertoire of strategies employed in pronunciation training.

2. Factors conditioning L2 phonological acquisition

In order to establish a general framework for investigating second language phonological acquisition it is necessary to identify and categorise various factors that exert an impact on the process of L2 pronunciation learning. The potential sources of individual variation have attracted a lot of attention in SLA research (cf. Ellis 1994: 472 for a comprehensive overview) and different typologies of learners' traits have been proposed including such aspects as age, aptitude, social-psychological factors (i.e. motivation and attitude), personality, cognitive style, hemisphere specialisation and learning strategies. These factors that are generally recognised to be responsible for differential success in L2 learning are also amongst the most relevant determinants of L2 pronunciation success (see Figure 1).

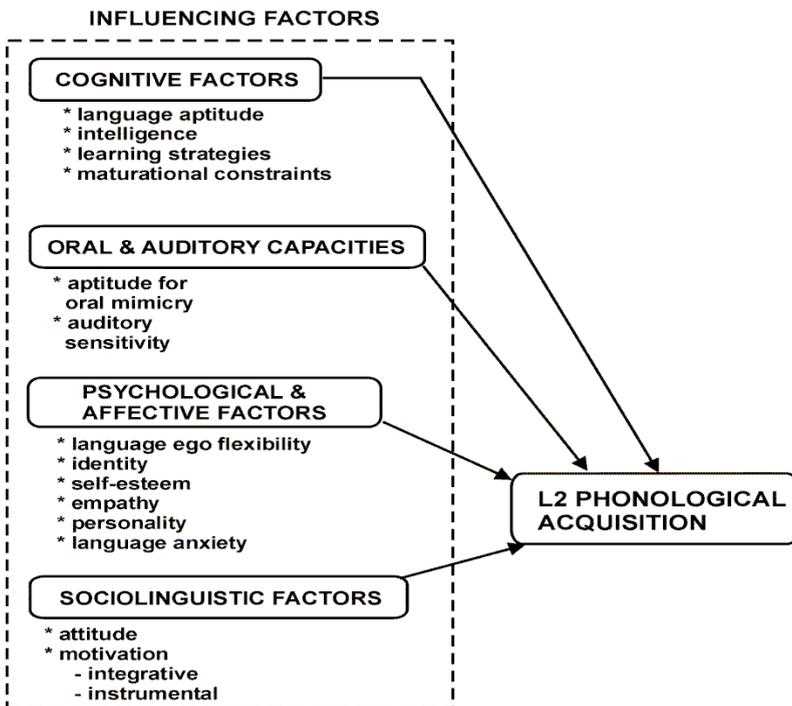


Figure 1: Factors conditioning L2 phonological acquisition.

A number of researchers attempted to study the ultimate level of L2 pronunciation achievement, particularly with respect to such factors as age, attitude, learning style or hemisphere specialisation (cf. e.g. Flege 1987; Elliott 1995). For instance, Bongaerts et al. (1997) attribute the native-like performance of their subjects to very high professional motivation. Similarly, Moyer's (1999) exploration of ultimate attainment in L2 phonology contributed

further empirical evidence for the importance of motivational variables and the co-existence of maturational, cognitive and affective factors. As far as personality is concerned, Markham (2000) identifies talented learners acquiring foreign language pronunciation as risk-takers, performers and naturally inquisitive learners. Moreover, positive correlation has been found between accurate pronunciation and such psychological variables as intuition, empathy, self-esteem and ego-permeability, i.e. a subject's flexibility in identity (cf. Guirora et al. 1972; Leather and James 1991). The focus of the present contribution, however, is the influence of a rather unresearched factor, namely, that of learning strategies on foreign language pronunciation learning.

2.1. Pronunciation learning strategies – introduction

Learning strategies are commonly defined as “sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information” (Wenden and Rubin 1987: 19). These techniques or approaches taken by learners are aimed at making language learning more successful, enjoyable and self-directed (Oxford 1989). Different attempts have been undertaken to investigate learning strategies and their impact on learners' attainments. Research findings indicate that successful language learners have a wider repertoire of language learning strategies and use them more frequently than their less successful peers (cf. O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990).

Although language learning strategies have been one of the focal interests of SLA researchers and educators for over three decades now, surprisingly little has been done in this respect in the field of pronunciation pedagogy. As Vitanova and Miller (2002: 1) put it “(m)ost of the literature on pronunciation deals with what and how to teach, while the learner remains an abstract, silent body in the classroom”. It has only been in the early 21st century that pronunciation learning strategies have gained some due attention with the emergence of new studies and pedagogical designs aimed at enhancing more autonomous and conscious learning of foreign language practical phonetics (cf. Peterson 2000; Osborne 2003; Pawlak 2006; Eckstein 2007; Pawlak 2008; Varasarin 2007).

2.2. Previous studies on pronunciation strategies

The first comprehensive study devoted entirely to pronunciation learning strategies was conducted by Peterson (2000) with the use of self-report diaries and interviews. Her analysis of quantitative data generated from 11 participants (English learners of L2 Spanish) resulted in a detailed classification of the reported strategies. Peterson identified 12 pronunciation learning strategies, based on Oxford's 1990 taxonomy, and 43 specific tactics, including as follows:

- (1) Representing sounds in memory (e.g. making up songs or rhythms to remember how to pronounce words).
- (2) Practicing naturalistically (e.g. recalling and imitating teacher's pronunciation and articulatory movements; listening to TV, music; concentrating intensely on pronunciation while speaking, mentally rehearsing before speaking, speaking slowly to get pronunciation right).
- (3) Formal practice with sounds (e.g. pronouncing a difficult word over and over again, repetition – silent and aloud, slow and fast).
- (4) Analysing the sound system (e.g. noticing contrasts between L1 and L2 pronunciation, forming hypotheses about L2 pronunciation rules).
- (5) Using proximal articulations.
- (6) Finding out about TL pronunciation (e.g. acquiring a general knowledge of phonetics).
- (7) Setting goals and objectives (e.g. focus on learning particular sounds).
- (8) Planning for a language task (e.g. preparing for an oral presentation by identifying words difficult to pronounce).
- (9) Self-evaluation (e.g. audiotaping oneself and listening to one's pronunciation).
- (10) Using humour to lower anxiety (e.g. humorous treatment of mispronunciations).
- (11) Asking for help (e.g. asking the teacher or peers to pronounce sth, asking for correction).
- (12) Co-operating with peers, e.g. studying with or tutoring other learners (as adapted from Peterson 2000: 26-27).

In another research project on reflective practice in pronunciation learning, Vitanova and Miller (2002) identified some learner-centred strategies elicited by means of an anonymous response journal. This small-scale study focused on metacognitive strategies such as

- self-correction of poor pronunciation, and
- active listening to native pronunciation.

Osborne (2003), in turn, investigated pronunciation strategies of advanced ESOL learners through monitored interviews in which the participants' language learning biography was elicited. The applied methodology involved retrospective oral protocols (Think Aloud Protocols – TAPs) while the participants attempted to monitor and improve their L2 pronunciation performance. The following strategies employed by the participants were reported (Osborne 2003: 135-137):

- focusing on memory and imitation (i.e. imitating the interlocutor's pronunciation);
- focusing on paralinguistic (i.e. speed, volume and clarity of speech);
- focusing on individual words;
- focusing on single sounds;
- monitoring global articulatory gesture (i.e. voice quality setting);

- focusing on prosodic structure (i.e. stress, intonation, rhythm);
- focusing on individual syllables.

In his 2006 research, which constituted a part of a pilot study of the Polish version of the *European Language Portfolio*, Pawlak resorted to a closed-item questionnaire and a diary to investigate the use of selected pronunciation learning strategies among Polish advanced learners of English at secondary and tertiary level. The strategies under investigation involved as follows:

- learning pronunciation rules;
- repeating words and sentences;
- listening to recordings;
- audio-taping contributions;
- paying attention to stress and intonation;
- practicing in front of the mirror;
- using phonetic transcription.

Eckstein (2007) administered a strategic pronunciation learning scale to 183 adult learners of English and correlated the use of strategies with the participants' scores on spontaneous pronunciation performance. The results of a statistical analysis indicated that such strategies as:

- frequently noticing others' mistakes,
- asking for pronunciation help, and
- adjusting facial muscles

correlated significantly with better pronunciation skills. Moreover, this large scale study provided further evidence for the claim that strong pronunciation learners rely on pronunciation strategies more frequently than poorer learners. Furthermore, Eckstein (2007: 35) proposed a new taxonomy of pronunciation learning strategies based on Kolb's (1984) learning construct involving 4 stages of pronunciation acquisition: input/practice, noticing/feedback, hypothesis forming, hypothesis testing. An extra category – motivation was added to account for affective and motivational aspects of strategic pronunciation learning.

In yet another study, Varasarin (2007) evaluated the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction enhanced by strategy training and pointed to its influence on the improved speaking confidence and intelligibility in case of Thai learners of English.

As evidenced by the presented overview of previous studies on pronunciation learning strategies, the only attempts to bridge the existing gap in this field of SLA research have been made fairly recently.

3. Strategic pronunciation learning survey

The study conducted by the present author was intended as a survey of pronunciation learning strategies employed by advanced learners of English at tertiary level. It constituted a part of the final evaluation of a 2-semester pro-

nunciation course taught to first year students at the School of English, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. The major goal of the study was to provide feedback on pronunciation strategy training which was introduced as an inherent element of the course taught by the author and to evaluate students' opinions on the effectiveness and appeal of specific tactics used in L2 pronunciation pedagogy.

3.1. Research design

3.1.1. Participants

The participants of the study included 32 first year students of the English philology and were surveyed in two consecutive years. The first group of respondents (Group 1, N=21) was presented with a questionnaire on strategic pronunciation learning in May 2006 following a 2-term English pronunciation course. The same procedure was applied for the second group (Group 2, N=12) in May 2007.

3.1.2. Instrument

The research instrument selected for the study was a questionnaire as an introspective (mentalist) method able to generate both quantitative (measurable) and qualitative data. The adopted approach was illuminative rather than conclusive as the author mostly hoped to throw some new light on the topic by eliciting students' opinions, evaluations and attitudes towards the use of strategies in L2 pronunciation training.

As far as the data collection procedure is concerned, the questionnaire was anonymous and was distributed at the final class at the end of the 2nd term in the two consecutive years. The questionnaire design involved different question formats including:

- closed questions;
- Yes/No format;
- ranking (5-point Likert scale, 1 – very useful/enjoyable, 5 – useless, not enjoyable);
- open-ended responses.

The aim of the strategic pronunciation learning survey was to elicit students' opinions on the effectiveness of pronunciation learning strategies presented during one year pronunciation course, to identify the most and the least enjoyable tactics and to elicit further strategies applied by the learners.

The pronunciation learning strategies that were selected for evaluation in the survey are listed and briefly described in Table 1. The students were familiarised with these tactics during strategic pronunciation training and they actively used them throughout the whole academic year.

In search of effective strategies for L2 pronunciation teaching and learning

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
articulatory descriptions	Explicit instruction in the sound system of the target language in the form of phonetic description and articulatory diagrams.
articulatory warm-ups	Exercises that aim at a greater articulatory agility and conscious control over the process of articulation through pre-speech physical preparation including massaging face and jaw muscles, lip and tongue activation as well as warming the voice and releasing resonance.
contrastive analysis	Conscious noticing of differences and similarities between the L1 and L2 sound systems.
dialogue memorization	Passages or dialogues for learners to practice by reading aloud focusing mostly on prosodic features. This technique may involve memorisation and acting out of the text.
dialogue reading and performing	
drama performance	
ear training	Acting out fragments of films or theatre performances to help reduce the stress connected with pronunciation practice and deal more efficiently with learners' emotions. The learners become more expressive and willing to experiment with sounds or intonation patterns.
ear training	The training of auditory skills may take various forms ranging from simple discrimination and identification tasks to analytic listening.
kinaesthetic feedback	Appeals are made to learners' different senses and modalities to enhance the process of foreign language learning. Multi-sensory reinforcements involve e.g. hands raising corresponding to word stress placement patterns, finger correction, practising stress and rhythm with Cuisenaire rods, and stamping or walking the rhythm.
lab	Self-study at a pronunciation laboratory.
relaxation and breathing exercises	Conscious relaxation of the muscles of the articulatory apparatus and the whole body. Assuming an appropriate frame of mind, which can be achieved by means of breathing exercises, relaxation or visualisation techniques.
repetition drills	Drilling typically starts at the word level and then is carried on at the sentence level.
speeches and presentations	Prepared/rehearsed or spontaneous speeches (either focusing on a selected feature of pronunciation or representing a global approach).
tape recordings (at home)	Audiotaping one's own contributions (text reading, spoken production).
tapping the rhythm, tracing intonation	Rhythmic gestures (e.g. tapping hands and feet or tracing stress and rhythm patterns) that accompany speech practice help learners internalise new speech rhythm of a target language.
transcription	Phonemic transcription exercises (written transcription, reading from phonemic script, transcription games or quizzes).
vowel charts, vocal tract diagrams	Visual reinforcements enhancing theoretical training including sound classification tables, vowel charts, pitch-contour notation, charts of the vocal apparatus, snapshots of lips position or head cross sections.

Table 1: Brief characterisation of selected pronunciation learning strategies.

3.1.3. Results and discussion

The present study differs from the previous research on pronunciation strategies in a considerable manner as it did not aim to take frequency count measures but rather it targeted the preferability rankings of strategic behaviour employed by advanced pronunciation learners. The generated results shall be presented first separately for each group, and then jointly.

The overall evaluation of the usefulness and enjoyability of specific pronunciation learning strategies in Group 1 is presented in Figure 2, whereas Table 2 illustrates students' preferences with respect to the two categories separately.

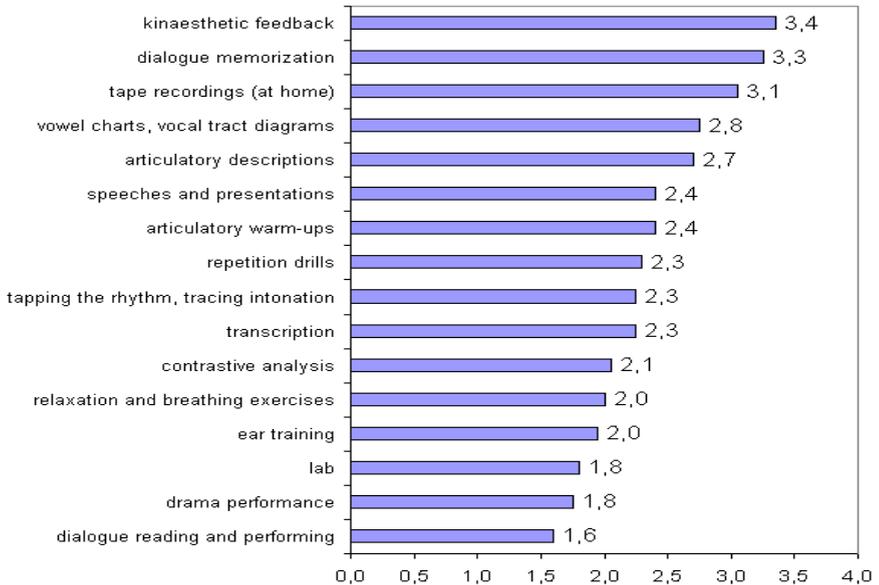


Figure 2: Overall strategic preference ranking for Group 1 (1 – very useful, 2 – useful, 3 – rather useful, 4 – rather useless, 5 – useless).

The mean value of the perceived usefulness of the listed pronunciation learning strategies in Group 1 totalled 2.1, which means that on average all strategies were considered useful. As regards the perceived enjoyment measures, the mean score was 2.6, which corresponds to a relatively good ranking (i.e. rather enjoyable). The usefulness ratings of the listed pronunciation strategies were on average by 0.5 points better than those of enjoyability, which indicates that the students were able to acknowledge the importance of particular strategies, although they did not always consider them to be equally enjoyable.

In search of effective strategies for L2 pronunciation teaching and learning

	Useful		Enjoyable
TECHNIQUES 2005/6		TECHNIQUES 2005/6	
dialogue reading and performing	1.5	dialogue reading and performing	1.7
ear training	1.6	drama performance	1.7
transcription	1.6	relaxation and breathing exercises	1.7
repetition drills	1.6	lab	1.9
lab	1.7	ear training	2.3
drama performance	1.8	contrastive analysis	2.3
contrastive analysis	1.8	articulatory warm-ups	2.3
tapping the rhythm. tracing intonation	2	tapping the rhythm. tracing intonation	2.5
speeches and presentations	2	speeches and presentations	2.8
relaxation and breathing exercises	2.3	transcription	2.9
articulatory descriptions	2.3	repetition drills	3
vowel charts. vocal tract diagrams	2.4	articulatory descriptions	3.1
tape recordings (at home)	2.4	vowel charts. vocal tract diagrams	3.1
articulatory warm-ups	2.5	kinaesthetic feedback	3.4
dialogue memorization	3	dialogue memorization	3.5
kinaesthetic feedback	3.3	tape recordings (at home)	3.7

Table 2: Usefulness vs. enjoyability rankings in Group 1.

A similar tendency was observed in the case of Group 2 (see Table 3) for whom the average measure of usefulness of the listed strategies was very high and equalled 1.6 (i.e. a value between very useful and useful), whereas their perceived ranking in terms of enjoyability was by 0.5 lower, standing at 2.1. On the whole, the second group's ratings were on average 0.5 point higher than those of the first group.

A detailed analysis of the hierarchies of strategy preference indicates that such tactics as drama performance, relaxation and breathing exercises as well as dialogue reading and performing ranked high as the most enjoyable ones both in Group 1 and 2. On the other hand, the tactics that were deemed the most useful in both groups included phonemic transcription as well as dialogue reading and performing. However, there was considerably less overlap between the groups in the choice of the pronunciation learning strategies

that were considered the most useful as Group 1 pointed also to ear training and repetition drills, whereas the contrastive analysis of the native and target sounds as well as speeches and presentations were indicated as the preferred ones in Group 2. On the other hand, both groups agreed that kinaesthetic reinforcements and articulatory warm-ups were among the slightly less useful strategies. The less enjoyable strategies reported by Group 1 and 2 featured audiotaping, dialogue memorization and kinaesthetic reinforcement.

TECHNIQUES 2006/7	Useful	TECHNIQUES 2006/7	Enjoyable
transcription	1.1	drama performance	1.4
contrastive analysis	1.2	contrastive analysis	1.5
dialogue reading and performing	1.2	relaxation and breathing exercises	1.6
speeches and presentations	1.2	dialogue reading and performing	1.7
tapping the rhythm. tracing intonation	1.3	tapping the rhythm. tracing intonation	1.7
repetition drills	1.5	articulatory warm-ups	1.8
drama performance	1.6	lab	2
vowel charts. vocal tract diagrams	1.6	articulatory descriptions	2.1
articulatory descriptions	1.7	transcription	2.3
ear training	1.8	speeches and presentations	2.3
dialogue memorization	1.8	vowel charts. vocal tract diagrams	2.4
tape recordings (at home)	1.8	ear training	2.4
relaxation and breathing exercises	1.9	kinaesthetic feedback	2.5
articulatory warm-ups	1.9	repetition drills	2.6
lab	2.2	dialogue memorization	2.8
kinaesthetic feedback	2.4	tape recordings (at home)	3.2

Table 3: Usefulness vs. enjoyability ranking in Group 2.

Figure 4 below illustrates the overall evaluation of the usefulness and enjoyability of specific pronunciation learning strategies in Group 1 and 2 treated jointly (1 stands for very useful/enjoyable whereas 5 for useless, not enjoyable).

In search of effective strategies for L2 pronunciation teaching and learning

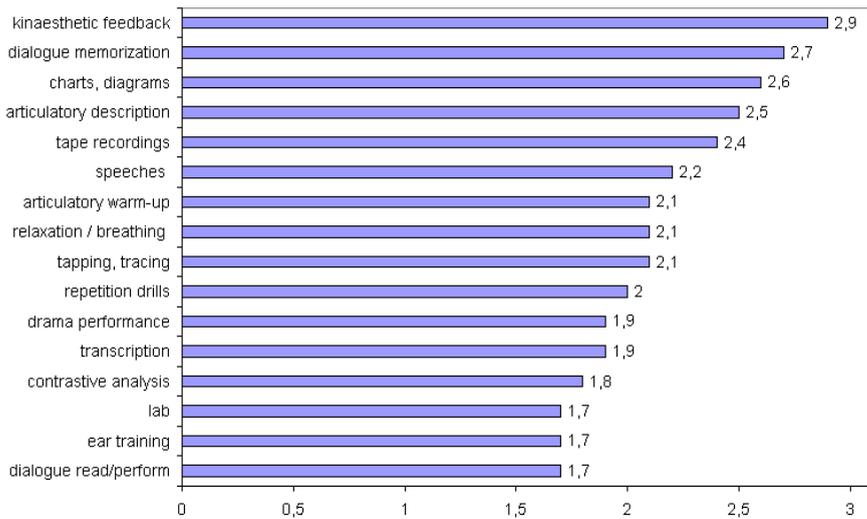


Figure 4: Overall ranking of strategic behaviour for both groups.

On the basis of an overall ranking for both groups it appears that the most preferred strategies (value < 2.0), that were both thought of as the most useful and enjoyable, featured dialogue reading/performing, ear training, laboratory work, contrastive analysis, transcription and drama performance. The least preferred strategies (in the 2.5-3.0 range) included kinaesthetic feedback, dialogue memorization, and a visual representation of charts and diagrams. It is particularly noteworthy that the measures never went beyond the mid value on a 5-point scale, which corresponds to rather useful/enjoyable, into the more negative end of the continuum.

If one attempts a classification of the observed strategic behaviour, the most preferred strategies represented mainly fairly common cognitive strategies of practising and repetition (in the form of dialogue reading and drama performance) as well as grouping (i.e. resorting to contrastive analysis of the native and target sounds) and resourcing (employing transcription to aid pronunciation learning). Moreover, ear training, which can be identified as a metacognitive strategy of selective attention, received very high rankings.

The less preferred of the listed pronunciation strategies, which received the mid-scale ratings of rather useful/enjoyable included a rather innovative strategy of directed physical feedback (in the form of kinaesthetic reinforcement) as well as memory strategies (i.e. memorisation of dialogues with specific sounds), imagery strategies (i.e. visualising sounds by means of vowel charts or vocal tract diagrams), deduction (represented by articulatory descriptions) or self-monitoring and evaluation (in the form of audiotaping).

The researcher was particularly interested in students' feedback on the employment of some alternative tactics that were introduced during pronunciation strategy training, including breathing and relaxation as well as

articulatory warm-up. It is difficult to classify them and they would probably fall in the category of a metacognitive strategy of self-monitoring as they consist in conscious monitoring of the speech production process. The strategies in question ranked high at the 2.1 level as useful and enjoyable.

All in all, the results evidence a fairly positive general attitude of the participants to the range of pronunciation strategies that they had been trained in and that they tend to employ in the process of learning practical phonetics.

In the second part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to enumerate additional pronunciation strategies apart from the previously listed ones, that they frequently draw upon when practising L2 pronunciation outside the classroom (see Table 4).

Strategies listed	%
listening to English radio/TV	91%
referring to a pronunciation dictionary	86%
talking with friends in English	67%
talking to oneself	42%
audiotaping	42%
imitating/pretending to be native speakers	40%
singing English songs, "transforming" American accent into RP	17%
reading aloud	8%

Table 4: Additional self-directed strategic behavior.

The majority of the participants (91%) pointed to the reliance on extensive listening, which represents a metacognitive strategy of directed attention. Almost an equally high number of the respondents (86%) reported that they employ one of popular cognitive strategies of resourcing by frequently consulting a pronunciation dictionary. A third top tactics of talking with other students and friends in English with a particular attention paid to pronunciation was declared by 67%. A surprisingly large number of the participants (42%) used fairly challenging metacognitive strategies of self-monitoring or self-evaluation in the form of audiotaping one's oral performance. The remaining strategic behaviours that the students resorted to on a regular basis featured mainly the cognitive strategies of practising and repetition (42% – talking aloud to oneself, 40% – imitating and pretending to be a native speaker, 17% – singing English songs and 8% – reading aloud).

The final part of the survey focused on affective strategies since, as it has been established, pronunciation is very sensitive to emotional factors (Brown 1995) and its nature is strongly related to students' ego, identity and the level of self-confidence. Therefore, new trends in teaching practical phonetics put a strong emphasis on the affective or emotional domain of learning to counterbalance the traditional focus placed exclusively on intellectual learning. Research findings indicate, that a relaxed frame of mind and a degree of confidence facilitate an accurate production of L2 sounds. Con-

sequently, creating a non-threatening student-friendly environment is amongst prime concerns of modern pronunciation instruction.

This part of the survey concerned the students' reactions to the teacher employing certain socioaffective strategies in an attempt to lower anxiety, for instance, by using the sense of humour. When asked about their emotional states experienced during their phonetics classes, the respondents declared that they often feel appreciated, and rather often – satisfied, happy and relaxed. They admitted that sometimes though they feel ashamed and stressed, however, they are rarely frustrated and never indifferent (see Table 5).

appreciated	2.3	stressed	3.0
satisfied	2.5	ashamed	3.3
happy	2.5	frustrated	3.8
relaxed	2.6	indifferent	4.6
praised	2.7		

Table 5: Emotional states experienced during pronunciation classes as reported by the students (1 – very often, 2 – often, 3 – sometimes, 4 – rarely, 5 – never).

4. Conclusions

The present survey was targeted at investigating students' reactions to the pronunciation strategy training that was administered during a 2-term English pronunciation course. The aim of the training was to widen the scope of tactics employed by the learners, to introduce more autonomous learning behaviour, and, consequently, to make pronunciation training more enjoyable and effective. On the whole, it was found that the participants' evaluation of the usefulness and appeal of the selected strategic behaviours was fairly positive.

It needs to be emphasised, however, that the study concerned advanced, highly motivated students of English at the tertiary level and that the findings cannot be generalised to a wider audience. Therefore, the directions for further research involve a larger scale investigation that would cover a wider spectrum of proficiency levels and age groups.

As Pawlak (2006) claims, the degree of learner autonomy is a significant factor that determines the effectiveness of L2 pronunciation training. The ultimate goal of research on pronunciation strategies may, however, be to explore to which extent particular tactics may contribute to success in foreign language phonological acquisition. However, the problem of evaluating the effectiveness of strategic behaviours in the realm of pronunciation is still open for future investigation.

COGNITIVE	Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drills • repeating after the tape/model • dialogue reading • imitating T's articulatory gestures • imitating native speakers • lab
	Practising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speeches/presentations • talking aloud to oneself • drama performance/role-play • practising mock-talk
	Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transcription • consulting a pronunciation dictionary • using pronunciation software
	Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representing sounds in memory • dialogue memorisation • making up rhythms or stories to remember pronunciation of particular words • sound symbolism • colour associations
	Imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visual representation, vowel charts, vocal tract diagrams • drawing intonation contours
	Directed physical feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kinaesthetic feedback • tapping the rhythm, tracing intonation
	Deduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquiring general knowledge of phonetics • contrastive analysis • articulatory descriptions
	Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contrastive analysis • consciously applying rules • articulatory description • colour associations
METACOGNITIVE	Directed attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language laboratory exercises • listening to radio/CD/music • intent listening
	Selective attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ear training • discrimination exercises
	Self-monitoring/self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • audiotaping/listening to one's own recording • self-correction • monitoring one's progress (e.g. diaries) • using clear energetic speech, slower rate
	Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning pronunciation learning • pronunciation priority checklist
SOCIOAFFECTIVE	Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using sense of humour to lower anxiety
	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking with others in TL • cooperating with peers • asking teacher for help • requesting correction

Table 6: Classification of pronunciation teaching and learning strategies (based on O'Malley et al. 1985).

The present contribution ends with a new proposal for a categorization of pronunciation learning tactics (see Table 6), based on the taxonomy by O'Malley et al. 1985, in the hope of widening the repertoire of strategies employed in pronunciation training. The underlying idea is to promote learner strategy awareness and through conscious reflection on the nature of L2 pronunciation learning to encourage teachers and educators to integrate strategy training into their pronunciation syllabi. Furthermore, it is hoped that strategy-oriented research may help learners discover self-directed means of developing their confidence and enhance their motivation towards acquiring target language pronunciation.

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Part III

ISSUES IN TEACHING LANGUAGE SKILLS

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BILINGUAL KNOWLEDGE
AND INTERLINGUAL SKILLS:
A DISCUSSION OF THE BENEFITS
OF TRANSLATION TASKS FOR
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the benefits of translation tasks for second language learners' developing bilingual knowledge. Translation is viewed here as a comprehensive language exercise which requires a creative use of bilingual knowledge. Regrettably, however, it is rarely used in the SL classroom. Yet, as the results of the study reported below show, it is an enjoyable and beneficial activity for students of English as a foreign language. By placing clear processing demands on the student/translator it gives them an opportunity to utilize their knowledge of grammar and lexis to transfer meaning across language barriers. The experience of translation raises students' linguistic self-awareness, shows problematic areas and encourages them to learn more. If used in accordance with the principles of Modern Translation Studies, translation tasks can make an important contribution for the students' developing linguistic self-confidence. Repeated translation practice has the potential to help SL students gain more control over their bilingual knowledge. Last but not least, it helps students to realize that language when used in translation has to be viewed in its holistic sense with relations holding between its communicative context including culture and reality.

1. Introduction

At the time when having the knowledge of more than one language has become a desired norm, still little is known about how two or more linguistic systems interact with one another in the bilingual or multilingual mind. Although it remains unquestionable that the first language provides a tem-

plate for any other languages to be acquired, it has been successfully banned from the second language (SL) classroom by the communicative method. The learner's native language is most often mentioned in the context of negative transfer and blamed for undesired erroneous analogies students draw in an attempt to organize their evolving bilingual knowledge.

In this article I would like to argue that there are benefits that can be drawn from letting students employ both linguistic systems at the same time (see also Stoddart 2000). In other words, I would like to speak in favour of using translation tasks in the second language classroom with students whose level of English is at least intermediate and preferably higher. First, drawing from cognitive sciences, psycholinguistics and Translation Studies I will try to justify why translation tasks are beneficial for developing bilingual knowledge. Next, I would like to present three areas in which, in my opinion, students can benefit the most from being involved in the practice of translating either from their foreign language into their native language or vice versa. I will support my points by data gathered in a questionnaire study which I conducted among students of English as a foreign language in the English Department at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

2. Why translation tasks are beneficial for developing bilingual knowledge

It has to be mentioned that using translation tasks in SL teaching has a bad history because of the grammar translation method (see Richards and Rodgers 1986) which was rightly condemned for enforcing on students the illusion of perfect equivalence and symmetry between languages. However, a lot has happened since then in linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive studies and the young discipline of Translation Studies, which allows me to look for the benefits of translation tasks.

There is an undisputed interdependency of bilingual knowledge and interlingual skills which allow a bilingual speaker to mediate meaning across language barriers. There is also a lot of misunderstanding about what is needed to translate. Common opinions that anybody who knows two languages can translate clash with the expert view that the knowledge of two languages is necessary but not sufficient to translate professionally. Today, however, I want to talk about what can be gained from translating not as a profession but as a language task, a task which from my teaching experience has a positive influence on the student's ability to control their language use.

Translation tasks as a kind of problem-solving activity which simultaneously involves linguistic forms and requires interpretation of meaning puts a learner in the position of a decision-maker who has to actively use their linguistic knowledge in order to complete the task. It is plausible that the repeated experience of translating raises students' awareness of their

linguistic knowledge, shows possible deficits and gradually leads to improved self-confidence from feeling more in control of both languages. As supported by neurolinguistic research (for example Paradis et al. 1982; Green 1986, 1998; Fabbro 1999; Paradis 2004), a control process constitutes an essential part of language processing (Bialystok 2005; Rodriguez-Fornells et al. 2006). To quote De Groot and Christoffels, "non-pathological language use not only requires intact language (sub)systems and intact connections between them but also the means to activate and inhibit these systems and to inhibit inappropriate outputs of the systems" (2006: 190).

Because of their processing requirements, translation tasks can be perceived as a versatile comprehensive language exercise where many linguistic skills need to be employed including the receptive skill of reading and the productive skill of writing. For both skills to be used, a creative manipulation of the student's linguistic knowledge is required. This practice in manipulating linguistic knowledge is in itself an exercise which helps to build up a sense of control over foreign language structures and rules internalized in the process of second language acquisition. A brief discussion of the processing requirements involved in the task of translating will illustrate the comprehensive nature of translation as a language task. For the sake of clarity I shall divide the process of translation into its three traditionally distinguished stages: (1) comprehension of the source language text, (2) transfer of meaning and (3) target language text production. It needs to be stressed, however, that the division is purely technical as in reality there are rarely clear-cut boundaries between the processing stages which quite often can overlap one another or take place nearly simultaneously (see Lörcher 1991; Kusmaul 1995; Whyatt 2000).

2.1. Source language text comprehension

First, prior to translation the skill of comprehension has to be employed. A statement that there can be no translation without interpreting the meaning of the source text may seem trivial but in reality it is not devoid of problems (Gile 1993, 1995). A major reason stems from the fact that comprehension for the purpose of translation has to be very detailed and requires an in depth interpretation of meaning of individual words, entire sentences and the logical connections between them in terms of the contribution they make for the meaning of the entire text. Research shows that reading for translation differs tremendously from reading for other purposes (see Dancette 1992; Whyatt 2003). In contrast to a reading comprehension exercise, the reader cannot focus on searching for specific information while ignoring other elements of the text. When reading for translation, every text element can prove important. This means that translation is first an exercise in text analysis at the macro and micro level. Practice shows that foreign language students tend to focus on the micro level analysis while overlooking the

macro level. In other words, they tend to focus on the individual text items and tend to overlook their contextual and situational meaning relations. This procedure, however, will cause problems at the next stage of the translation process, that is the stage of meaning transfer. The problems that they experience later on when trying to search for equivalent means in the other language teach them that when analyzing a text for the purpose of translation they need to gather information from the macro level of the text as a whole. This usually includes information hidden in the text which has to be made explicit and which allows the reader to find out who the text was written for, whom by, when, for what purpose and what is the writers attitude reflected in the style of the text. Gathering this kind of information about the text often requires a journey into the extralinguistic factual knowledge needed to interpret references that are made in the text which may include a whole range of events and situations. Any comprehension problem that appears will have to be solved so that the task of producing a translation can be possible. If a student/translator comes across a problematic item, he/she will have to search in their own mental lexicons for appropriate meaning, they will have to analyze the context to narrow down the search or, if the word which causes a comprehension problem is unknown, they will have to use dictionaries and match the potential meanings to fit their specific context. As a result of this experience the student's bilingual knowledge will be verified, enriched or strengthened.

2.2. Meaning transfer

At the stage of meaning transfer both languages come in close contact and coping with two linguistic systems simultaneously is for many foreign language students a novel experience. If we follow Grosjean (1997, 2001) and his distinction of language modes that a bilingual can choose between, it is clear that when translating we are in a truly bilingual mode, or perhaps we should go a step further and say that we are in fact in an inter-lingual mode. This is the stage when the students' interlingual capacity comes into play. According to Harris and Sherwood (1978), humans are predisposed to mediate meaning, that is to translate, and their ability to translate, as claimed by Toury (1995: 248), depends on their interlingual capacity, that is the ability to establish similarities and differences between languages. At the stage of meaning transfer the language learner is forced to make numerous semantic decisions on which word to choose as being able to carry the desired meaning. Anderman (1998: 39), for example, quotes Christopher Hampton, British playwright and translator of Ibsen, who likened the process of translation to a "gigantic crossword puzzle involving a huge number of tiny decisions", from the choice of words to striking the right stylistic note, making the right decision on a number of different linguistic levels". Indeed, decisions on lexical selection at this stage incorporate not only the inter-lingual

meaning relations but also the issue of style and contextual/cultural appropriateness. Quite often they are very difficult to make because of the lack of linguistic self-confidence in the lexical judgments students have to make. Yet, they have the potential to awaken the SL learner's awareness of intricate meaning relationships cross-linguistically as well as within each of their two languages. When transferring the meaning across language barriers, they have a chance to experience asymmetry and the incompatibility of items which quite often for them were taken as semantic equivalents. For example, English equivalents of the Polish word 'zapłata' may include: 'payment', 'salary', 'fee', 'wage', 'earnings', 'reward', 'remuneration' and 'reimbursement' but they all cannot be used interchangeably as their usage is restricted to certain situations. In this way, attempting to transfer meaning from a source language text into a target language text is an excellent exercise in organizing lexical knowledge stored in one's mental lexicon.

2.3. Target language text production

Finally, at the stage of writing down the translated text, if the task involves foreign language to native language translation, the students have a chance to experience the impact their foreign language has on their native language skills. Very often, much to their surprise, students unconsciously map their foreign language structures onto their native language and as a result they produce odd sentences. This is the case, for example, in translating a sentence, 'You need to invest in an area where there is some potential for your capital to grow while you still have an income' as 'Powinieneś inwestować w koszyki dóbr wykazujące potencjał wzrostu dla twojego kapitału podczas gdy wciąż otrzymujesz dochód'. Becoming aware of making such mistakes teaches students that monitoring their own production processes is an important aspect of their bilingual language control.

If the translation proceeds from the students' native language into their foreign language, then the skill of text production is put into practice. It is similar to their writing tasks and at the same time different because their creativity is constrained by the meaning of the text they are translating. In this way they cannot use avoidance strategies and choose structures and lexical items which they feel confident about. They have to be specific rather than general, precise rather than vague. In this way mistakes revealed in the final translation will show their language problems either in the area of grammar or word usage. The analysis of their individual problems can make them more aware of their weak areas that need to be improved. The stage of target language text production also includes editing the first draft and getting it ready for a potential reader of the final translation. Looking at the way the student's translation is received by their peers or their teacher is also an important step in teaching foreign language students to become more objective towards their own piece of writing. It makes them aware that it is

always addressed to somebody else than themselves who will assess its quality and may point out mistakes. This in turn stimulates their self-monitoring for potential mistakes and learning the skill of self-assessment and self-criticism needed at the stage of editing their translation draft and producing the final version. Learning the skill of editing is difficult but essential in translation which is commissioned to serve other people not the translator. This requires care for its communicative quality, transparency of meaning and primarily taking into account the potential reader of the translation.

2.4. Some data confirming the comprehensive nature of translation as a language task

In the study which I carried out among students of English as a foreign language at a university level, the subjects manifested awareness of the comprehensive nature of translation tasks. In the questionnaire I asked 104 students (57 students had just completed their translation course (2nd year BA) and 47 were two years after the course (1st year MA) whether in their opinion translation is a kind of a brain teaser (see Gorlee 1994 and Whyatt 2008 on translation as a game for bilingual minds). 96% said yes and there was no significant difference (1%) between both groups of subjects. Furthermore, 91% of the subjects said that they treated translation tasks as a kind of challenge. What is more, 83% of the students said that they enjoyed doing translation tasks. There was only a 7% drop between 2BA and 1 MA students in this respect as demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

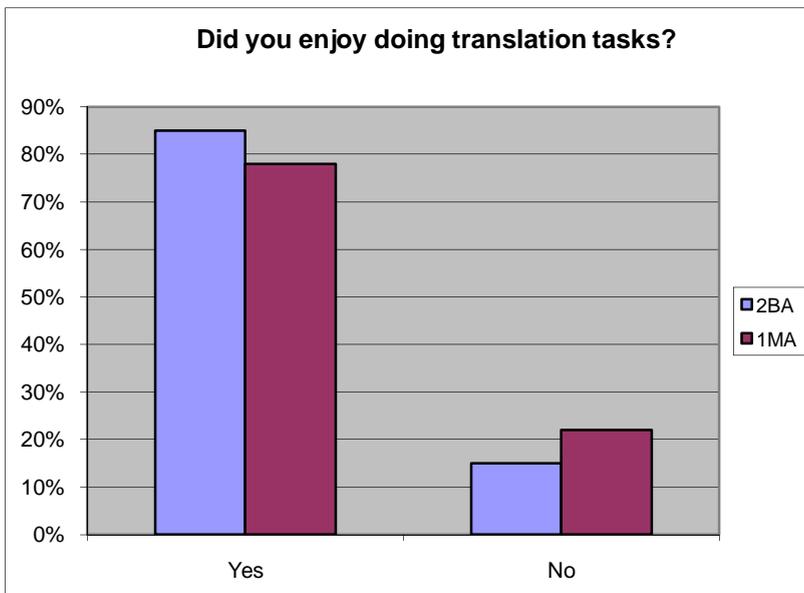


Figure 1: Students' enjoyment with translation tasks.

The data shows that students have a positive attitude towards translation. Finally, 99% of the students said that practice in translation was beneficial for their linguistic skills. They treat translation tasks as a chance to put their bilingual knowledge to the test. Let us have a closer look at the benefits of experiencing translation tasks for the students' evolving bilingual knowledge.

3. Benefits of translation tasks

Such a virtually unanimous assessment of translation tasks in terms of the contribution they made in the students' opinion to their developing linguistic skills requires a careful analysis of the areas in which most benefit can be gained. I would like to focus on three such areas which I believe benefit the most from the interaction between inter-lingual skills and the bilingual knowledge of SL learners. These are:

- (1) restructuring of the students' bilingual lexicons;
- (2) filling gaps in SL socialization;
- (3) getting a neo-Whorfian perspective on linguistic relativity.

3.1. Restructuring of the students' bilingual lexicons

It is predictable that the number of errors in students' translations will be dominated by lexical/semantic/idiomatic mistakes (see Anderman 1998: 40; Hansen 2006: 17). This, in my opinion stems from the lack of internal organization of their bilingual lexicons which is normal for SL learners whose bilingual knowledge is in the making. In the questionnaire study, 104 subjects were asked to estimate how well organized their English vocabulary is. On a rating scale of 1 to 5, the majority (63%) chose 3 (see Figure 2 below).

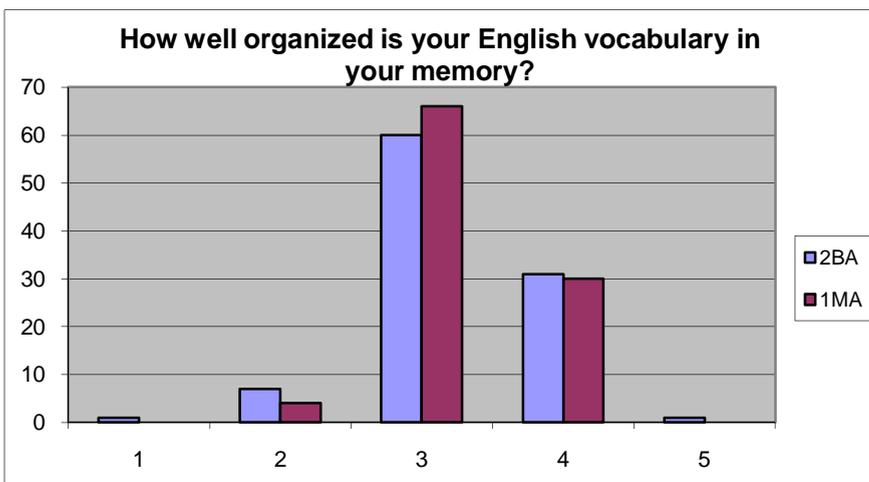
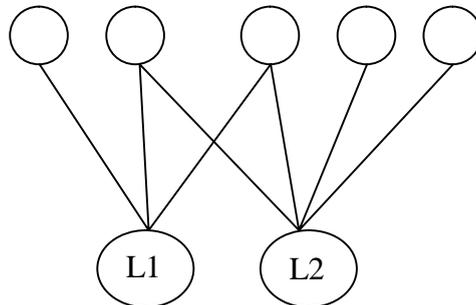


Figure 2: Students' opinions on the organization of English vocabulary in their memory.

This subjective perception of insufficient internal order is well reflected in students' translations. To refer to Rogers (1996), the tenet that to know a word is to know its form and meaning has led many FL learners to confusion; meaning is too often associated with a nuclear item in the semantic field. Most lexical errors betray that the subjects have a simplified perception of meaning (Dunbar 1991:4) and they tend to play safe by focusing on core meaning overlap and give up on nuances which could improve the overall tone of the TL text. Also, as pointed out by Ivanova (1998: 96), "translation requires deeper-level processing which is beneficial to increasing the fluency of lexical retrieval" (Kroll 1993).

As revealed in my earlier study (Whyatt 2007) and confirmed in the questionnaire results, through translation students become more sensitive to the nuances of word meaning in both languages (98%). They said that translating made them more cautious about their English (79%) and more concerned about their Polish (74%). These answers suggest that a major reorganization of the subjects' bilingual lexicons must have taken place (Kroll 1993). The progression reflects an approximation of what Kroll called the revised hierarchical model of bilingual lexicon where the meaning is perceived as a bundle of features (see Figure 3 below) which cross-linguistically can be absent or present, become activated by the context or remain dormant (Kusssmaul 1995).

Conceptual layer



Lexical layer

Figure 3: The revised distributed model (adapted from De Groot 2002: 49) of the bilingual mental lexicon that can account for partial non-equivalence of meaning between the two language systems. Both L1 and L2 lexical items share only some semantic features (see Whyatt 2006).

From my experience, the most benefits of translation tasks are in the area of conceptual competence which, as pointed out by Pavlenko (2005), is a problematic area of bilingual knowledge even for proficient bilinguals (see

Rogers 1996: 46 on undermining conceptual connections in language teaching methods). These problems with internalizing the conceptual layer of the SL in one's bilingual lexicon stem from the fact that most SL learners acquire their SL through classroom instruction rather than social/cultural immersion (Gardner 1979; Rubinfeld et al. 2006). As advocated by Pavlenko (2005: 446), conceptual transformation must follow second language learning. Through translation tasks the SL learner has a chance to get in touch with the SL conceptual reality. This brings us to the second area which can benefit from translation tasks.

3.2. Filling gaps in SL socialization

According to Lévy (1967), texts are best perceived as pictures of reality. A translator treats a text as a frame (Fillmore 1977: 61) and in the process of understanding the text it has to develop as representing a scene with all the necessary extra-linguistic associations. If we follow these two guidelines from research into the process of translation, we can see that for SL students translation tasks can become a kind of virtual reality game. It is a language game where they find themselves in virtual reality situations and they have to use their knowledge to solve problems and make decisions. It is possible that neither the students nor their teachers realize how little some SL learners know about every day life, habits, routines, social values and the cultural heritage of the people whose language they are learning. To give a simple example, ask your students how to translate 'drugie śniadanie' into English, and you will see how confused they become finding that their native routines do not have direct equivalents cross-linguistically. This will probably stimulate further discussion of the layout of the day in both realities, meal-times, working hours, people's expectations, etc. (see Gonzales Davis 2004 on translation activities that can be employed in the SL classroom).

Through translation a change in the students' language processing patterns occurs and affects mostly their comprehension (Dancette 1992: 379) where students become aware that a thorough comprehension of a text requires constant reference to the knowledge of the reality it describes, its cultural norms, values, habits – all the repertoire of knowledge which is acquired together with one's native language and most of the time it is taken for granted by native speakers of the language (see Whyatt 2007). In translation tasks it becomes clear that FL learners lack this kind of knowledge or at least have serious gaps.

The effect is the all enriching experience of learning what is behind the foreign words we acquire, of learning more. A long-term effect is becoming aware of the similarities and differences that hold between the two language systems and their respective realities (Lakoff 1987; Lucy 1996; Levinson 2003). This brings us to the third area where students can benefit from translation tasks.

3.3. Getting a neo-Whorfian perspective on linguistic relativity

The experience of translation has a powerful eye-opening effect on linguistic relativity. Through translation, the mental space in terms of relationships (overlap, proximity, distance) holding between their two languages can become less blurred, less gray and more approachable.

Wittgenstein (1953) once said, "the limits of my language are the limits of my world". As pointed out by Pavlenko, it cannot be refuted that bilinguals, especially those who acquired their second language later on in life, "see themselves as living in two different and often incompatible worlds (see Kellman 2000; Pavlenko 2005) and as a consequence they perceive the world differently "through the lenses of their two languages" (Wierzbicka 1985: 187). This argument echoes Rossi-Landi's view (1973: 33) that "whoever learns a new language becomes a new person". I truly don't know if the issue of learner's identity has been extensively researched to help students find order in their emerging bilingual mind. From my teaching experience I know that putting an SL learner in the position of language mediator gives him/her the chance to step outside their languages and observe the intricate web of similarities and differences in the way they express certain concepts. It teaches them the difficult skill of crosscultural empathy (Rubenfeld et al. 2006; Whyatt 2007). Translating also allows our students to experience how the powerful need to communicate, exchange ideas, negotiate contracts, understand one another helps to overcome linguistic barriers through translation (see Nord 1991: 47; also Toury 1995: 245).

Undoubtedly students find translation activities very motivating. It is also plausible that translation tasks provide students with "the desire to communicate" what Paradis (1998) calls the microgenesis of an utterance. This strong motivation is typical of L1 acquisition but it is mostly missing in the learning of an L2 in a school environment, resulting in the lack of dopamine release (Schumann 1998). Finally, it is not without significance that translating is a humanistic task as it involves the use of the students' bilingual knowledge and inter-lingual skills to help monolinguals to communicate despite the existing language barrier.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to argue for the use of translation tasks in the SL classroom. First, translation tasks were described in detail as a comprehensive language exercise which involves the creative use of the students existing bilingual knowledge in practice. It was pointed out that in order to translate, students have to perform a series of tasks including source language text comprehension, meaning transfer and target language text production. All the stages require mental effort on the part of the foreign language student who, when processing information, has to make numerous decisions. Since most of these decisions are open ended in the sense that in translation

there are few or no predetermined rules to follow, the task itself stimulates students' creative thinking and teaches responsibility for the individually made communicative decisions. The benefits were pointed out in three areas:

- (1) restructuring of the students' bilingual lexicons;
- (2) filling gaps in SL socialization;
- (3) getting a neo-Whorfian perspective on linguistic relativity.

If applied according to the principles of Modern Translation Studies, where translating a text is not perceived as a process of linguistic transcoding, but as an instance of meaning transfer, translation tasks have the potential of enriching the learner's language experience. This consequently will lead to raising students' motivation to learn more, getting more linguistic self-confidence and eventually will lead to improved language control in their bilingual minds. To quote, "many lovers of languages love to translate, it is a very motivating activity, more so perhaps than some other language learning activities conducted exclusively in the target language. This feature is perhaps something teachers can capitalize on" (Sewell 1996: 139).

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UMCS Lublin

READERS, REVIEWERS,
AND REVISERS: L2 WRITERS'
STRATEGIES IN PROVIDING
AND ACTING UPON PEER
FEEDBACK

ABSTRACT

Advocates of process approaches to writing instruction, especially those operating in L1 educational contexts, see peer collaboration as an essential ingredient of the process of text composition. Provision of feedback on writing at different stages of composing is one facet of this cooperation. The benefits of peer response mentioned most frequently in the subject literature include an increased sense of audience and text ownership, opportunities for the clarification and refinement of ideas through discussion, the possibility of writing for an extended and qualitatively different audience and thus obtaining a more varied response, to name but a few. The question arises whether peer response experience can be equally profitable to non-native student writers, struggling to learn how to write in a foreign language alongside learning that language.

The paper presents the findings of a study investigating EFL undergraduate writers' strategies of responding to peer' papers and of utilizing peer feedback in revision of own writing. Specifically, by exploring the types and sources of revisions and their impact on improvement of composition drafts, the project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of peer response as an additional source of feedback on writing. The results seem to indicate that in order to be at least modestly effective as an instructional procedure leading to writing development, peer response tasks need to be prepared in advance, carefully structured, monitored by the instructor, and carried out with high regularity in writing programs.

1. Introduction

It is a matter of a continuous debate whether, or to what extent, the provision of feedback and revision are actually helping students to become independent writers. While teacher feedback, although not without its limitations, has traditionally been the main source of information on students' written work, process-oriented approaches to writing, emphasizing the development of strategies for generating content, composing in stages, responding to feedback, and revising texts on all levels, see peer intervention and collaboration in the process of composition as vital and complementary to the teacher's guidance and evaluation.

2. Aims of the study

Whereas peer feedback is a widely recommended element of process-approach, multiple-draft writing instruction, the effect that this feedback and resulting revision has on the improvement of student writing is as yet undermined. EFL research concerning revision as a result of peer response in writing is relatively scarce. Few of the existing studies are concerned with draft improvement as a result of peer feedback (e.g. Chaudron 1984; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1992), not much data exists as far as long-term effects of peer-response and self-evaluation training and practice are concerned, and, finally, in many cases, conflicting findings have been obtained with regard to the impact of peer feedback on revision (e.g. Connor and Asenavage 1994; Mendoca and Johnson 1994; Paulus 1999). One study (Berg 1999) revealed that training L2 students in peer response makes them produce better drafts, higher quality revisions and more meaning-level revisions than those produced by untrained students, but it did not determine if the effects of training outlived the duration of the project.

The main goal of the study discussed in this paper was to investigate the revision and response strategies of undergraduate students of English in relation to writing improvement. By studying improvement in draft quality, the project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of peer response as a source of feedback. It also went one step further to determine if the effects of training and practice in peer response, self-assessment and revision are long-lived. Specifically, the project was intended to provide answers to the following main research questions:

- (1) Does peer feedback affect student revisions in a multiple-draft writing process?
- (2) What types of revisions are made by students in their written work?
- (3) Does the revision undertaken as a result of self- and peer-evaluation improve the quality of students' written work?

- (4) Are there any long-term effects of training and practice in self-evaluation and peer response?

3. Description of the project

10 undergraduate students of English Department at UMCS (3 male and 7 female) participated in the project, which consisted of two parts. During Part 1, lasting one academic year, the subjects regularly participated in oral and written self-assessment and peer response activities which were an integral component of their general writing course, preceded by a month's training in evaluation of own and other students' written work. In particular, the subjects were trained to provide feedback on the issues of content, organisation, and language of the compositions, using a set of guiding questions on the evaluation forms. During Part 2 of the project, which lasted another semester, the subjects did not engage in any peer response or overt self-evaluation tasks, only receiving teacher feedback on their writing, following which, the students were expected to revise their papers according to the suggestions received. At the end of this period, students produced an essay that was subjected to self-evaluation and peer-response using the procedures from Part 1 of the project and subsequent redrafting. In peer response tasks, the students worked in non-reciprocal pairs of corresponding proficiency level.

4. Methodology

Revision and response behaviour of the analysed population was investigated through the analysis of students' composition drafts. The sources of students' revisions were established by marking all changes made on second drafts compared with first drafts, and then coding the changes as resulting from peer review or the writer himself. Both own and peer review-triggered revisions were traced to written comments on self-evaluation/peer-response forms as well as changes suggested or made to the text of the composition. Students' revisions were analysed using the Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy of revisions, at the heart of which lies the distinction between changes that affect the meaning of a text (meaning changes) and those that do not (surface changes).

Meaning (or *global*) changes are those that affect the information in the text, by either adding, deleting, or rearranging ideas. Meaning changes are divided into *microstructure changes* and *macrostructure changes*. The former are minor changes that elaborate existing ideas or give additional supporting information without affecting the overall gist or direction of the text, while the latter are major in-depth changes that affect the summary of the text or the reader's interpretation of particular sections of it, including changes in the focus of the text, relevance to the topic, consideration of audience,

overall purpose and pragmatic unity. *Surface* (or *local*) changes made to a text are those that do not bring new or delete old information from the text, but only alter the surface structure. Surface changes are further sub-divided into *formal changes* (i.e. copyediting or proofreading changes of spelling, tense, punctuation, and format) and *meaning-preserving changes*, primarily syntactical or lexical changes, which include paraphrases of existing content without changing the essential meaning, and which are recoverable by inferring the information. The question whether each individual instance of revision resulted in an improvement (i.e. a more accurate linguistically version) was not of interest here. The focus was on whether the text improved as a whole, as a unit of discourse.

In order to establish reliability in categorizing these types of changes, after marking the changes on the revised drafts, the researcher asked an independent rater to analyse 16% of the data using the taxonomy. The researcher also analysed the data sample. The two raters reached 95% agreement, following which the researcher analysed the remaining data herself.

Students' compositions were analysed on three occasions (i.e. Essay 1 at the end of the first semester, Essay 2 at the end of the academic year, and Essay 3 at the end of the first semester of the next academic year) in terms of the number and type of revisions that students made as well as the sources of revisions. The analysis of the three essays, at three different points in time, was to demonstrate if and how trained and practised self-and peer-assessment of L2 writing affects the quality of written products over time and if the effect is a lasting one.

The anonymous copies of the first and second composition drafts were scored independently by two general writing course teachers of similar experience. To ensure reliability in the rating, the raters were trained in the use of the assessment tool and participated in the calibration session. The researcher was excluded from the rating. Each rater read some of the first and second drafts of the essays, but not the first and second drafts of the same composition. The grading scale that was adopted for the purpose of the project was the scale normally used in scoring students' writing, i.e. 7-point scale including the following grades: 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, 4, 4.5, 5. The average of the two scores was used as the final score unless the discrepancy was more than one grade on the scale, in which case the raters were asked to reconsider their scores and reach an 'acceptable' consensus. That failing, the third rater was called upon and her score was averaged with the one that was closer to it. Interrater reliability was 95%.

To determine if the improvement between drafts was significant – a repeated measures *t*-test was applied. To determine if there was a significant correlation between the amount of improvement and number/types of changes (meaning and surface) – a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated.

5. Results

5.1. Sources and types of changes

The subjects overwhelmingly preferred to introduce their own changes rather than those suggested by peers, although with time they tended to use more peer suggestions. The number of suggestions made on peers' work increased slightly with time and tended to remain at the same level even when subjects were no longer regularly involved in the evaluation process. The increase, however, was largely due to the growing number of surface changes so it can be concluded that students take self-peer-evaluation less seriously when it is just a one-off experience. The number of suggested meaning changes was more or less the same in all three essays. Table 2 also shows that the lack of regular practice in evaluation in instruction affects negatively the amount of attention given to meaning suggestions, 63% of them going unheeded in Essay 3. At the same time, the subjects increasingly followed their peers' surface suggestions. On the whole, the number of ignored suggestions was approximately the same after a year of regular participation in peer response as it was after a few months of being deprived of this experience.

Revisions	Own revisions	Peer-triggered revisions
ESSAY 1	87%	13%
ESSAY 2	81%	19%
ESSAY 3	76%	24%
TOTAL	82%	18%

Table 1: Percentage of revisions by source in three essays.

	Number of peer-suggested changes per 100 words			Ignored peers' suggestions		
	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Surface</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Surface</i>	<i>Total</i>
ESSAY 1	0.9	2.3	3.2	39%	30%	33%
ESSAY 2	1.0	3.0	4.0	31%	23%	25%
ESSAY 3	0.8	3.1	3.9	63%	16%	26%

Table 2: Peer-suggested changes and ignored suggestions in three compositions.

	Meaning changes	Surface changes
ESSAY 1	22%	78%
ESSAY 2	29%	71%
ESSAY 3	19%	81%
TOTAL	23%	77%

Table 3: Percentage of revisions by type.

	Macro	Micro	Formal changes	Meaning-preserving changes
ESSAY 1	6%	16%	27%	51%
ESSAY 2	5%	24%	25%	46%
ESSAY 3	6%	13%	36%	45%
TOTAL	5%	18%	29%	48%

Table 4: Percentage of revisions by sub-categories.

The sweeping majority of revisions were surface ones (77% compared to 23% of meaning changes). The most popular type of changes made in general were meaning-preserving changes (48%) (consistent with Paulus 1999 and Tagong 1991). Interestingly, there was no change in the number of macrostructure changes throughout the duration of the project.

Types of revision	Essay 1 (3254 words)			Essay 2 (3447 words)			Essay3 (3413 words)		
	<i>Own</i>	<i>Peer-triggered</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Own</i>	<i>Peer-triggered</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Own</i>	<i>Peer-triggered</i>	<i>All</i>
<i>Surface changes</i>	8.9	1.2	10.1	8.5	2.0	10.5	6.3	2.3	8.6
<i>Meaning changes</i>	2.3	0.4	2.7	3.5	0.7	4.2	1.6	0.3	1.9
TOTAL	11.2	1.6	12.8	12	2.7	14.7	7.9	2.6	10.5

Table 5: Frequencies of revisions from different sources per 100 words for three compositions.

The greatest number of changes was made by the subjects in Essay 2, which was written at the end of the academic year. There was an increase in the number of changes from Essay 1, which was produced at the end of the first semester. Essay 3, produced the smallest number of changes (both surface and meaning ones). As for the type and source of changes combined, own surface changes decrease while peer-triggered surface ones increase with time. Both own and peer-triggered meaning changes grow in number from Essay 1 to Essay 2 only to fall in Essay 3.

5.2. Writing improvement

The difference in draft quality between draft 1 and 2 of Essay 1 was negligible despite the fact that the subjects made more revisions than in Essay 3. Moreover, only half of the subjects produced drafts 2 which were better than drafts 1. The statistically significant improvement in Essay 2, produced at the end of a long period of regular and consistent practice in self/peer-

evaluation, was the largest, with only 2 writers (out of 10) who did not manage to improve their drafts. In Essay 3, written after a period of time when no explicit self-/peer-evaluation was required, draft improvement was smaller approximately by half, but it was still larger than in the case of Essay 1.

ESSAY 1		ESSAY 2		ESSAY 3	
<i>Draft 1</i>	<i>Draft 2</i>	<i>Draft 1</i>	<i>Draft 2</i>	<i>Draft 1</i>	<i>Draft 2</i>
3.225	3.300	2.950	3.775	3.200	3.650
Difference		Difference		Difference	
0.075		0.825		0.450	
Number of improved essays: 5 out of 10		Number of improved essays: 8 out of 10		Number of improved essays: 7 out of 10	

Table 6: Mean draft scores and differences between means for three compositions.

No correlation was found, however, between improvement and the number of changes. Actually, correlation scores of individual students indicate that students with fewer revisions made greater improvement. This lends support to the claim, confirmed by other studies, that the amount of revision is not always directly related to writing improvement, rather it is the quality of the changes that affects the quality of written work. In general, draft improvement in all three essays was found to be due primarily to own surface meaning-preserving changes. Peer-triggered revisions (both global and surface) as well as writers' own surface ones were found to positively correlate with improvement in Essay 3, which means that the effects of training in self-evaluation and peer-response outlived the period of extensive practice in the two forms of evaluation.

5.3. Individual students' results

Tables 7, 8, and 9 present the results of individual subjects. The 'highest' values are bolded whereas the 'lowest' ones are in bolded italics. The best writer in the group, Julia, was the one with the highest mean draft improvement (1.4), the greatest number of own changes, the highest total number of changes, as well as all of the peer-suggested meaning changes utilized. Her improvement, however, was largely due to surface changes. The other writer with the same draft improvement, Jan, also accepted a considerable number of his reviewers' surface suggestions, offering (like Julia) a considerable number of such suggestions to other writers. Interestingly, both Julia and Jan im-

proved their essay drafts each time and considerably despite having made a very small number of macrostructure changes.

Name of subject	2nd drafts mean scores	Mean between-draft improvement	Number of own revisions per 100 words			Number of peer-triggered revisions		
			<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Julia	4.66	1.4	2.6	11.4	14.0	4 (100%)	9 (75%)	13 (81%)
2. Iza	4.50	0.3	4.7	7.8	12.5	5 (29%)	11 (58%)	16 (44%)
3. Jan	4.16	1.4	2.8	7.1	9.9	4 (57%)	35 (88%)	39 (83%)
4. Wioletta	3.75	1.1	2.5	6.1	8.6	8 (80%)	33 (87%)	41 (85%)
5. Kaja	3.50	0.7	3.0	7.4	10.4	9 (82%)	19 (79%)	28 (80%)
6. Sara	3.16	-0.8	1.6	7.4	9.0	4 (57%)	13 (77%)	17 (71%)
7. Inka	3.16	0.9	1.8	10.0	11.8	2 (33%)	16 (84%)	18 (72%)
8. Ilona	3.08	0.3	1.9	9.2	11.1	7 (77%)	23 (70%)	30 (71%)
9. Michał	3.08	-0.5	1.75	6.05	7.8	2 (29%)	20 (77%)	22 (67%)
10. Karol	3.00	0.3	2.4	7.0	9.4	3 (60%)	7 (64%)	10 (63%)

Table 7: Results of individual subjects in three compositions with respect to sources of revisions.

Name of subject	Number of ignored peer's suggestions in own work			Number of suggestions received ¹			Number of suggestions given ²		
	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Julia	0	3	3	4	12	16	12	38	50
2. Iza	12	8	20	17	19	36	6	50	56
3. Jan	3	5	8	7	40	47	18	22	40
4. Wioletta	2	5	7	10	38	48	6	18	24
5. Kaja	2	5	7	11	24	35	6	35	41
6. Sara	3	4	7	7	17	24	9	35	44
7. Inka	4	3	7	6	19	25	11	25	36
8. Ilona	2	10	12	9	33	42	8	30	38
9. Michał	5	6	11	7	26	33	5	12	17
10. Karol	2	4	6	5	11	16	11	24	35

Table 8: Individual students' results with respect to peer feedback ignored and offered.

¹ The number of suggestions received does not include changes suggested by peers on their copies of the evaluated draft which were identical with the changes made by writers themselves on theirs. The latter were coded as own changes.

² The number of suggestions given comprises the total number of suggestions offered to writers, including changes which writers themselves also made.

	Total of meaning changes	Meaning changes per 100 words	% of all revisions	Total of surface changes	Surface changes per 100 words	% of all revisions	All changes	All changes per 100 words
1. Julia	29	3.0	19.5%	120	12.3	80.5%	149	15.3
2. Iza	56	5.2	37.1%	95	8.8	62.9%	151	14.0
3. Jan	30	3.2	22.9%	101	10.8	77.1%	131	14.0
4. Wioletta	36	3.2	26.3%	101	9.1	73.7%	137	12.3
5. Kaja	32	4.1	29.6%	76	9.8	70.4%	108	13.9
6. Sara	24	1.9	18.6%	105	8.4	81.4%	129	10.3
7. Inka	20	2.0	14.8%	115	11.7	85.2%	135	13.7
8. Ilona	26	2.7	18.7%	113	11.5	81.3%	139	14.2
9. Michal	21	1.9	19.4%	87	7.9	80.6%	108	9.8
10. Karol	25	2.7	26.0%	71	7.7	74.0%	96	10.4

Table 9: Students' individual scores in three essays with respect to different revision types.

On the other hand, Iza, another good writer, revised for meaning most often in the group (4.7 meaning changes per 100 words, including the greatest number of macrostructure changes in the group), but her improvement in draft quality was quite modest (0.3) (similar to Kaja who made the second largest number of macrostructure changes and little overall improvement). As for the source of changes, Iza made the smallest number of peer-suggested changes in the group, ignoring the greatest amount of advice given, and, at the same time providing the largest number of suggestions (especially surface ones) herself.

Alternatively, Michal and Sara, rather less successful writers in the sample, made no improvement as a result of engaging in self-evaluation and peer-response tasks (mean between-draft improvement = -0.5 and -0.8). Both of them improved on only one essay in the whole project and both made the smallest number of revisions in general and meaning changes in particular. They made few own meaning changes as well. Additionally, Michal introduced the smallest total number changes and was among those who incorporated the fewest peers' suggestions in general, and suggestions related to issues of meaning in particular. He also offered the fewest suggestions to his peer, including the fewest meaning-related comments.

The analysis of individual students' results suggests that there is no direct correlation between the number and type of changes made and improvement in draft quality, at least in the case of inexperienced writers who participated in the project.

6. Conclusions and pedagogical implications

Firstly, students seem to use peer suggestions in revision increasingly more often and to greater benefit (although for superficial revisions) with time,

writing experience and regular practice in evaluation. Students seem to need a considerable amount of time to derive benefits (even modest ones) from the experience of responding to other students' writing and acting upon peer feedback. Time is needed in particular to familiarize oneself with the procedure and then to engage honestly in extra work. In other words, students' participation needs to be educated and involved. Preliminary training, monitoring, accountability procedures, teachers' feedback, and follow-up also seem to be essential for the success of peer response sessions. It must also be noted that even with training and regular practice, the results in terms of writing improvement may be far from the expected or hoped for ones. This is naturally even more true when students are deprived of peer response experience on a regular basis as the findings of the project discussed above demonstrate. Peer feedback appears thus to be an instructional technique of some potential (e.g. social gains, overall L2 development, opportunities for reflection) but no immediate and spectacular results should be expected as far as writing improvement is concerned.

Secondly, inexperienced writers, trained in self- and peer-evaluation produce both meaning and surface changes, but essay improvement is largely due to surface revisions, especially meaning-preserving ones. The subjects approached revision primarily as a language practice exercise, an activity that gave them an opportunity to experiment with and manipulate grammatical structures, syntactic patterns and vocabulary items. The subjects tended to be rather unwilling and/or unable to experiment with meaning changes, which are more challenging, risky and intellectually demanding. Not surprisingly, this tendency seems to be enhanced when students are not explicitly required to analytically reconsider and reflect on their essays in peer response/self-evaluation tasks. Perhaps, activities focusing on texts as acts of communication, based on reworking stretches of discourse, reorganising text structure, modifying and refining content in accord with writers' goals and readers' understandings should replace tasks based on isolated sentence practice frequently encountered in writing manuals.

Thirdly, peer response training appears to have long-term effects in terms of impact of peer-suggested changes, both surface and meaning ones, on writing improvement. The students seem to have maintained their response skills over time for their feedback led to an improvement in drafts. The improvement, however, was not as substantial as before, which can probably attributed to the absence of the peer response component in their writing course.

Fourthly, revision in and of itself is not sufficient for writing success. Writing improvement does not seem to be related to a high number of revisions and even meaning changes may lower the quality of drafts. High numbers of revisions as well as a high number of meaning changes (including macrostructure ones) was found to lead to negligible improvement and vice versa. Apparently, inexperienced writers, able or otherwise, find it difficult to distinguish between effective and ineffective revisions and, despite efforts,

to produce good-quality changes that would positively affect text quality. This is why student writers need to be helped to see the incongruities between their intended meaning and what they actually communicated to the reader in their writing. It seems also that insisting on excessive revising may be as ineffectual as abandoning the idea of revising altogether.

Finally, there exists a considerable variation among individual students with respect to revision and response behaviour irrespective of the amount of improvement made or writing ability. It was expected that revision and evaluation behaviour might in some degree be linked to writing ability as reflected in essay scores or in the amount of improvement made. Some variation, however, was observed in revision and evaluation behaviour of individual writers, irrespective of ability or improvement. From the pedagogical point of view, it seems that student writers should be assisted individually (through conferencing) in analysing their existing writing and revision strategies and helped to improve them or replace with more effective ones.

In conclusion, it seems that although peer feedback cannot be thought of as a true alternative to teacher feedback in terms of the triggered improvement in writing, considering other advantages of peer response sessions, communicated by students (i.e. enhancing a sense of "real" audience as well as ownership of text, providing opportunities for collaborative learning, fostering critical reading and thinking skills, providing access to additional sources of foreign language input), peer response to writing should be considered as valuable complementation to that of the teacher.

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ESP WRITING FOR TOURISM: A GENRE-BASED APPROACH IN TEACHING WRITING TO IRANIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The work presented in this article investigates the effectiveness of using a genre-based approach in teaching ESP writing to the intermediate Iranian university students. To achieve its objectives, this research benefited from 60 sophomore female university volunteers categorized into two groups of experimental (genre) and control (non-genre). The students in experimental group were to evaluate six authentic tourist information texts which lasted for six successive sessions. They were encouraged to find out the major constituent moves previously discussed in class. They were encouraged to produce texts of the same genre following the rhetorical structure of the tourism texts extracted from brochures already analyzed in class. Regarding the non-genre group, a common teaching approach was applied in which the same six authentic texts were used for such activities as cloze exercises, sentence joining activities and error-correction exercises.

The design of the study considered two major variables: a) move index and b) texture index in relation to the independent method variable. Move index investigated how well the subjects performed on the use of appropriate move structures. The texturing index examined how well the writing assignments were textured. Taking the two groups into consideration, and in order to discover if general writing proficiency improves through using a genre based teaching, an ANOVA statistical measurement was used to measure the effect of teaching method in the subjects' pretest and posttest. The results revealed that the subjects in the genre group outperformed the non-genre group both in their use of allowable move structures and texturing criteria.

1. Introduction

Swales (1990) defines genre as a definite and conventionalized communicative event with some determined goals composed of a series of constituents called moves. These moves are either obligatory and essential for the genre to achieve the communicative goals, or optional in that they do not make any significant change to the main purpose of communication; rather they help to express the communicative goals effectively. The tourist information genre consists of four obligatory moves: 1) identification (I): name of x, 2) location (L): location of x, 3) description (D): description of what x contains or has that makes it worthy of notice, and 4) facilities and activities (F): features not in D that provide the tourists with something extra or unusual to do. There are also four optional moves which include: 1) explanation (E): more detailed information on x, 2) how to get there (T): instructions on how to get there, 3) brief history (H): a brief history of x, 4) motivation (M): some motivating terms that reveal the reason for going to x (Henry and Roseberry 1998).

In modern EFL teaching approaches writing generally has been viewed as something of a taboo area which spends valuable classroom time and detracts the class from the development of oral skills. However, the functional/notional approaches invest more in practical writing requirements and consequently make various attempts to develop a top-down approach to the teaching of EAP writing, devoting attention to the issues of genre and discourse. Considerable attention has been paid to the notion of genre as one aspect of rhetorical organization in teaching writing. The genre-based approach originates mainly from the works of Halliday (1978), Swales (1981, 1990), and Bhatia (1993). In this approach learners' awareness of the rhetorical organization and the linguistic features of a specific genre is raised. And the goal is to remove the writing difficulties which exist in the traditional writing methods.

2. Statement of the problem and the rationale

In a research study carried out on advanced EAP learners' written productions, Henry and Roseberry (1998) demonstrated that a teaching approach focusing on the rhetorical organization of written discourse can be effective in improving writing performance. In their study, three types of criteria formed the major focus of data analysis: *motivation index*, i.e., the degree of motivation the text creates for potential tourists to visit the place, *move index*, which represents the generic structure of the text, and *texture index*, which demonstrates how a text satisfies the conditions required for textuality. The results of their study indicated that the two variables, motivation and texture, made a difference in the writing quality of students who participated in a writing class where the method of instruction focused on the generic or-

ganization of written texts compared with a method which did not focus on generic characteristics of writing. This study focused on data collected from intermediate EFL Iranian university students, bearing in mind the same research questions with participants who are intermediate university students. Textual quality is measured with standards of textuality, and move structure of written tourist information texts is studied in relation to treatment variable. However, the motivation score is omitted since it did not display any observable effect in the obtained results. The aim was to focus on two variables: move index and texture index. We attempted to discover whether or not using a genre-based approach would have any significant effect on learners' writing ability and whether the results would be congruent with Henry and Roseberry's (1998) findings.

Having discovered the fact that an EAP course is possible with students who are at least of intermediate language proficiency, the questions are: Can a genre-based type of instruction a) help the learners in producing appropriate texts by considering the allowable move structures, b) improve the learners' ability in texturing their writings and c) improve the learners' writing ability in general?

3. Review of literature

Halliday (1994) suggests that language performs three main functions: ideational considering propositional content, the aspect which is considered to determine the genre of a given discourse, interpersonal dealing with social relations, and textual focusing on the arrangement of the message in appropriate sequences; this aspect requires the texturing skill of the EAP writers. This view of language encompasses the two distinct notions of genre and text structure suggested to be useful in teaching writing (Clark and Ivanic 1997). The quality of texturing can be examined by using the criteria introduced by Hamp-Lyons and Heasley's (1984) standards of textuality: Table 1 illustrates the seven conditions for a text to be considered of textual quality.

The term *genre* has been defined variously from different points of view. In Miller's (1984: 70) point of view, genres are considered as "typified ways of purposefully interacting in and among some activity systems". They are not only texts with similar formal features, they are similar expectations among group(s) of people. They are ways of finding how vocalization and inscriptions can help the participants act together purposefully (Maybin 1994). Bazerman (1994) believes that genres cannot be regarded best as textual forms but as forms of life ways of being, frames for social action, as well as environment for both learning and teaching. Brent (1994: 10) remarks that "genres emerge from and in turn shape the goals and epistemological assumptions" and also shape those practices concerning knowledge-making which are done in a discourse community. Martin (1984) defines genre as a staged, goal oriented, and purposeful activity in which speakers engage as

members of a culture. In Swales' (1990) opinion, genre is a definite communicative event underlying a series of communicative purposes. Genre consists mainly of a series of segments called moves which are either obligatory necessary in achieving communicative goals, or optional compounding the effectiveness of the text. The most noticeable view of genre is offered by Hawkes (1977: 101) who believes that "a world without a theory of genre is unthinkable and untrue to experience".

Standard	Definition of scope	Possible realizations as syllabus items
Text-based		
1. Cohesion	The connection of the components within a sequence.	Tense, aspect and junction, ellipsis, pro-forms.
2. Coherence	The ways in which the configuration of concepts and relations underlying the surface texts are accessible and relevant.	Rhetorical acts (e.g., defining, classifying, exemplifying, etc.).
Discourse-based		
3. Intentionality	The manipulation of cohesion and coherence features to provide a text which can fulfill the writer's intentions.	Ordering strategies (e.g., time order, etc.) brevity, clarity.
4. Acceptability	Awareness of reader's expectation that the text will possess certain features and will be of use and relevance.	Conventional textual features (e.g., instructions in recipes), aspects of text grammar (e.g., use of passive, etc.).
5. Informativity	The extent to which the elements in the text are expected/unexpected, or known/unknown/uncertain.	Marked/unmarked sequences, given/new information, topic/comment, maintaining/breaking text conventions.
6. Situationality	The relevance of a text to the situation in which it occurs.	Topic selection and development, situational constraints (e.g., formal letters, etc.).
7. Intertextuality	The factors which make a text accessible for a reader dependent on knowledge of, or access to, other texts.	Use of source material, quotes, references, bibliographies.

Table 1: Standards of textuality.

The underlying philosophy of a genre-based approach in teaching EAP writing goes back to the communicative language teaching which, according to Galloway (1993), makes use of real-life situations that necessitate com-

munication. In Hyland's (1992) point of view, applying genre-analysis to teaching writing does not imply a fixed teaching formula, rather it provides opportunities for students to discuss the use of language in a special context and develop their creativity by noticing the existing generic conventions. Genre analysis relies on what the reader expects from a given text (Chandler 2000). In addition to that, genre helps the reader to have a preferred reading which is normally in accordance with the dominant ideology.

Since early 1980s applied linguists particularly in the domain of EAP teaching have taken numerous steps in genre-based approaches to the analysis of written and spoken discourse.¹ Swales (1990) analyzed 48 research article introductions, 16 from biology/medicine and 16 from the social sciences, and discovered a move structure: establishing the domain, referring to previous research, and, as the third move, preparing for the research at hand. Bhatia (1993) found the following moves for the introduction of research articles: 1) introducing the main goal, 2) talking about the methodology, 3) summarizing, and 4) conclusion. In the same line of research, Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988), by analyzing the results and discussion sections of sociology articles, introduced eleven moves: 1) background information, 2) statement of result, 3) (un)expected outcome, 4) reference to previous research (comparison), 5) explanation of unsatisfactory results, 6) exemplification, 7) deduction, 8) hypothesis, 9) reference to previous research (support), 10) recommendations, and 11) justification. Similarly, Holmes (1997) analyzed discussion sections of 30 articles, 10 from history, 10 from political science and 10 from sociology; he discovered the same moves mentioned by Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) and Brett (1994). Hammond et al. (1992) investigating letters of complaint recognized eight moves: 1) sender's address, 2) receiver's address, 3) salutation, 4) identification of complaint, 5) justification of complaint, 6) demand for action, 7) sign off, and 8) sender's name. And Henry and Henry and Roseberry (1998) analyzed 20 tourist-information written extracts and discovered four obligatory and four optional moves. The obligatory moves were 1) identification, 2) location, 3) description, and 4) facilities as well as activities. The optional moves were: 1) explanation, 2) the way to get there, 3) a brief history, and 4) motivation. Hewings (1993) focused on the conclusion section of MBA dissertations in teaching writing. In Henry and Roseberry (1998), tourist information genre was used as the basis for a genre-based approach in teaching writing. Alford (1997) elicited data from 15 engineering participants; he made use of a genre approach in teaching engineering students how to write abstracts. The results revealed, despite some difficulties in using the approach, it was a valu-

¹ However, in contrast with the views mentioned here, reservations have been pointed out which claims genre analysis and genre-based approaches are restrictive in that they lead to the lack of creativity, motivation, and enthusiasm in the learners. We do not deal with such ideas due to shortage of space (see Kay and Dudley-Evans 1998).

able method for effective writing instruction. When students have an immediate need to work within one genre, a focus on that single genre can be an effective teaching method (Caudery 1998). According to Gallagher (2000), a genre-based approach is a matter of analyzing a text in terms of how it creates meaning in its context of use and then how this knowledge can be manipulated by students to write for especial purposes. Show and Liu (1998) demonstrate that students' participation in writing courses with such principles will help them make their texts closer to the conventional language of academic writing. Freedman (1993) believes that teaching about and increasing the students' awareness of the importance of generic factors can be valuable to all writers.

4. Methodology

This work investigates the effectiveness of a genre-based approach in teaching EAP writing to the Iranian EFL students. In what follows, the details of subject participation procedures, instrumentation, data collection, treatment, data analysis, and finally the design of the study will be presented.

4.1. Participants

The subjects selected for this study were 60 selected out of 80 sophomore female students majoring in English Translation at Shahrekord Payame Nour University. The selection of the participants was based on a test of homogeneity taken from a TOEFL intermediate collection of multiple-choice questions. The score considered to be desirable was used as a passing criterion for the students' participation. In order to further meet the condition of homogeneity, GPA was also considered as a criterion for the selection. These procedures ensured the existence of a fair degree of homogeneity.

4.2. Materials and instruments

Six authentic texts of tourist information genre were extracted from tourist brochures. A text of the same genre with some deliberately made missing moves was also prepared for the purpose of course activities and eliciting written performances. The six tourism passages were chosen in order to be used as teaching materials of the course, and the text with missing moves was applied in getting the students involved in text producing activities. The subjects had to produce two texts of 90 to 120 words with the characteristics of a tourist advertisement genre in which they would describe their most favorite place of interest in Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiary Province. One of these texts was written at the beginning of the instruction process (i.e. used as pretest), and the other one was produced in the last session (used as post-

test). Both these pieces of writing were used to measure the students' writing proficiency before and after the treatment. Their writing assignments were mostly about attractive and historical places and landscapes of the province places such as: Dashte Laleh, Ghaleh Chaleshtor, Saman, and Ghaleh Dezak.

4.3. The treatment

As mentioned earlier, genre-based writing instruction, which involved analyzing the tourist information genre and finding its constituent moves, was introduced for the treatment group, while for the control group, a common traditional method was applied in which the teaching instructions included cloze, sentence joining, and error correction activities. No explicit attention was paid to the genre and its constituent moves.

In the genre group, 6 authentic tourist information texts were assigned to the learners, with one passage for each session. The students were asked to read the texts and identify their optional as well as obligatory constituent moves. Before getting students involved in analyzing the texts and discovering the moves, the concepts of genre, constituents of the genre, and the difference between optional as opposed to obligatory moves were discussed in class. After six successive sessions being devoted to analyzing tourist information texts and identifying their allowable move structures, the learners were asked to rewrite a text of the same genre which lacked some deliberately made missing moves. The text also had some texturing problems such as lack of cohesion and consistency of either agreement in numbers or tenses. The subjects also had a free writing opportunity in which they could select one place of interest in Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiary Province and try to promote this piece of writing to the best of their ability. The two writing tasks, i.e. rewriting a text and free-writing exercises, were corrected by the teacher. The correct forms of these writings were then offered to the learners as models for their future writings. The free writing was considered to measure the two dependent variables: a) move index: the correct use of the move structures and b) texture index: considering texturing criteria such as use of conjunctions, connectivity, and other essential criteria in producing the text.

Regarding the non-genre group, the same authentic texts offered to the genre group were introduced with a traditional teaching approach in treatment. Each session involved students in working with cloze passages, sentence joining, and error correction exercises. No attention, either implicit or explicit, was paid to the kind of genre and its relevant move patterns. Having worked for six successive sessions on authentic tourist information texts, the subjects were asked to rewrite the same badly written text, i.e. the text with some deliberately made missing moves and texturing problems, the one which was offered to the genre group. The subjects also had an opportunity to produce a text about their favorite place in their free writing task. This piece of writing was considered to measure the two dependent variables,

i.e. move index and texture index. The common errors, such as inconsistency among numbers and tenses, which were likely to be committed by the learners, had already been discussed in class. Finally the two writing tasks were corrected by the teacher.

4.4. The pilot study

After assigning a proficiency test to the learners, 20 out of 40 were selected and were then divided into genre and non-genre groups, each consisting of 10 learners (the participants were estimated to be of an elementary level of proficiency). A pretest was administered, then the treatment, and finally the posttest. Having examined written assignments, we found out that no considerable improvement could be observed in the writings by the genre group. Taking into account the subjects' final written assignments (posttest) in the non-genre group, we discovered that, contrary to our expectation and in contrast with the genre group who did not display any considerable progress, more satisfactory results were observed; the degree of mastery over some essential grammatical points and ability in error correction had increased. At the elementary level, students are more concerned about points of sentence grammar. They developed some passive lexical and grammatical knowledge of judging the meaning and finding out which sentences had grammatical errors.

4.5. Procedure

At the beginning of the study, a proficiency test (TOEFL) was administered to a group of 80 sophomore female volunteers majoring in English translation field. Then 60 subjects were selected according to their range of scores in the proficiency test, i.e. Mean + 1 SD. To further meet the condition of homogeneity, GPA was also used as a passing criterion. For pretest, both groups were requested to compose a text of at least 90-120 words about one of the landscapes or historical places of Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiary Province that they wished. The text had to be written in such a way that it could attract as many readers as possible. Then, two raters both post-graduate students preparing their PhD theses, rated each text by taking into account two dependent variables: a) Move Index, and b) Texture Index. Then the average of the two ratings formed the final score for the pretest.

$$\text{Move score} = \frac{\text{MP} - 0.5 (\text{IM} + \text{MM})}{\text{OM}}$$

MP: the number of obligatory moves present in students' written assignments.

IM: the number of inappropriate moves.

MM: the number of misplaced moves.

OM: the number of the whole obligatory moves which ought to be present in the genre.

Table 2: Move structuring measurement instruction.

The move score, designed to evaluate how well the subjects could master the appropriate use of the move structure, was calculated according to the formula borrowed from Henry and Roseberry (1998), illustrated in Table 2. According to this formula, a text that has all the obligatory moves present in the correct order without any inappropriate moves will receive a score of one, while a text containing none of the obligatory moves will receive a negative score. The texture index provided information on the devices that make a text look appropriate and grammatical. Because of the special characteristic of the tourist information genre in which most of the moves are located in the initial part of the text, texturing criteria were evaluated for the first six clauses of each text.

The obtained result was averaged over all the other clauses. The two raters examined the texts and one point was devoted to each criterion. As we dealt with seven standards of textuality, the whole texturing variable consisted of seven points. So the result was put on a scale of one to seven: a range of 1-3 was representative of a poorly textured text, 3-5 reflected acceptable texturing and a range of 5-7 could represent a well-textured one. By following this procedure, the subjects' written texts (pretest) were rated in order to be compared with their posttest writings. The main part of the study was the instruction process that consisted of two stages for both groups: 1) elaborating on six authentic tourist information texts, and 2) two opportunities for writing tourist information texts. The instruction process consisted of 16 hours over a 3-week period.

At the start of the period of instruction, both groups were motivated in different ways, since what we expected of this study was the active involvement of the learners during the instruction process. Therefore, to motivate the students, they were informed that the selected texts would be published in the monthly journal of the university. The subjects were also told the fact that despite having several tourist attractions, the province is not well known to most Iranians. They can introduce these attractions by writing some informative texts in the most attractive way.

A genre-based teaching approach was manipulated for the genre group. They had to read each text and identify the constituent moves existing in the genre. At the beginning of the treatment, the terms *optional moves* as well as *obligatory move* as constituents of each genre of discourse were discussed in detail. Therefore, based on the students' knowledge of tourist information genre and the relevant constituents, one extracted authentic text was analyzed in each session. The subjects decided which moves were optional and which ones were obligatory. They also discussed whether replacing or deleting each move for the other would cause any difference in the text. The role of the teacher was to chair the class discussion rather than to provide definitive answers. This procedure went on for six successive sessions.

The students then had two opportunities to create the genre in the class. In the first, they were requested to rewrite a text that contained some

missing moves and some grammatical errors. The second was a free writing exercise in which the students chose their favorite place of interest and produced a piece of writing, to be in a length range of 90 to 120 words, as attractively as possible. These two written performances, i.e. rewriting a text and free writing of a tourist information text were corrected by the teacher. The free-writing task was considered as the posttest, for us to examine the two dependent variables, i.e. move index and texture index.

A set of traditional non-genre activities were provided for the control group. The teaching technique applied cloze exercise, in which missing words from the text were to be identified via multiple-choice exercises, sentence joining, in which students chose the appropriate conjunctive words, and error correction exercises in which grammatical errors such as errors in tense sequence, agreement, phrasal expressions, etc. were to be identified and corrected. Course activities also included sentence joining activities which required students to order scrambled sentences correctly. Finally in each session, with the contribution of the students in collaboration with the teacher, the correct version of each passage was written. All the six prepared texts were then kept as models for students' later writings. No focus was allocated explicitly or implicitly to the generic as well as move structures. Like the genre group, the non-genre group was encouraged to use the authentic texts as models for their writings. In the seventh session, the students were asked to examine and rewrite the same badly written text with some missing moves and grammatical errors, the ones given to students in the genre group. Finally in the last session, the subjects were requested to compose a piece of writing about one of the tourist resources of their province in the most attractive way to be a representation of their free-writing task. Both writing performances were examined to measure their success rate in producing sound generic as well as textual structures the ultimate aim being: to find out if the treatment improved the results previously obtained from the pretest.

5. Results

As was mentioned earlier, for the pretest, both groups were asked to write a text consisting of about 90-120 words and describe attractions of a tourist resource in their province. The writings were then rated by the two raters. First, in order to make sure that the subjects were homogeneous regarding their writing skill in the beginning of the course, a *t*-test was run to compare the means of the two groups the results of which revealed that the difference between them was not significant (Table 3: $t = -.507$, $p = .921$).

Group	No.	Mean	SD	df	T	p
Genre	30	5.6017	2.0406	58	-.507	.921
Control	30	5.8767	2.1597			

Table 3: The Results of the *t*-test on the pretest.

The posttest data elicited after the treatment in the last session of the course were dealt with in two steps. As a first step, a *t*-test was applied to find out about the major question of the study: if the treatment made any significant difference between the two groups (Table 4); as it is obvious from the table, the difference between the two groups is statistically significant ($t = 2.397$, $p = .02$), which indicates that the genre class proved more useful compared with the traditional method class.

Group	No.	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Genre	30	11.0450	3.5785	58	2.397	.02
Control	30	8.8933	3.3711			

Table 4: The results of the *t*-test on the posttest.

In the next step, the results were compared through using a one-way ANOVA. The reason for employing a one-way ANOVA was that there were two groups and two variables, that is, move index and texture index. Table 5 shows the results of the ANOVA.

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p
Group	1	26.65	26.65	6.92	.010
Variable	1	2446.68	2446.68	635.01	.000
Error	116	450.8	3.90		
Total	118	2924.13			

Table 5: The results of the ANOVA measurements.

According to the statistical information presented in the table, there is a significant difference between the two groups for both indices. The answers given to the research question are all in favor of the usefulness of a genre method of writing. We can conclude that a genre-based approach to teaching writing does have a significant effect on students' writing performance. The difference observed can be explained by the fact that students need a framework for effective text organization. They can improve the ability to make well-formed sentences and join them together to form a paragraph. What is needed for them is to have a clear plan for organizing their writing. Given they use their linguistic competence to make sentences and join them into paragraphs, they experience little difficulty in consciously avoiding errors which are grammatical in nature. Their major focus in their productive performance would be how to organize their thoughts according to what they are conscious about; in other words the generic plan of their writing is already known to them.

6. Discussion

As the examination of the data revealed, the learners' awareness of the generic structure of the text leads them to arrange the materials in an adequate

way, both grammatically and textually. The writers know how to achieve their communicative goals, as they already are aware of the organizational plan of the genre they want to produce.

Structuring texts by using appropriate moves was more successful in the genre group than in the non-genre group. The type of instruction employed in the genre-group in which the learners were made aware of the genre and the relevant move patterns led to greater ease in writing the texts. On the other hand, the learners in the non-genre group had no obvious knowledge on the constituent moves of this genre. They had exclusively learned how to put the scrambled sentences together or how to correct the errors of each text. In the study conducted by Henry and Roseberry's (1998), no considerable difference was observed between the two groups taking into consideration the role of the move index; i.e. both groups produced comparable texts with respect to using appropriate move structures, while in this study, move structure of the produced texts by the genre students was revealed to be better than the quality produced by the students in the control group. The reason for this difference between this finding and the finding by Henry and Roseberry can be attributed to the participants of the Henry and Roseberry's (1998) research who had acquired English in the context of its use. The students in their study were ESL learners who acquired the English language in an English speaking environment, where English is spoken by mono and bilinguals. In other words, ESL learners had close contact with English since they lived in ESL environments where English was widely used. But the participants in this study were EFL learners who had learnt in classrooms with no previous knowledge of tourist information genre and its constituent moves.

Referring to the second research question, it was discovered that, with respect to the genre group, there was a high degree of increase in texture index, since the rhetorical structure and texturing devices were taught implicitly by focusing on the main constituents of the text. But the subjects in the non-genre group gained high mastery over error correction skills, and this finding agrees with the conclusion Henry and Roseberry (1998) arrived at. They suggested that since more time was available for the learners to develop error correction skills in the non-genre group, their performance made the improvement more observable. According to Shaughnessy's (1977) findings, students reduce their errors from 15-30 per 300-word texts to 8 during the course of a semester. In most language classes grammar and texturing devices are taught explicitly; one grammatical point is introduced, then a series of examples are offered, and rarely may the learners have an opportunity to make use of these points in creating a piece of writing; that is, less opportunity is assigned to the learners to highlight all the observable texturing elements of a text and derive the rules behind each by themselves. It is the teacher who reveals the elements and rules. The students' role in this regard is to memorize these grammatical and texturing criteria so as to be able

to make use of each for their future writings. But in the genre-based approach the subjects analyze each text and find all the obligatory and optional moves introduced by the teacher and at the same time they can become more familiar with the texturing pattern presented.

Considering the third research question, we came to the overall result that manipulating the genre-based teaching approach will be more helpful than using a traditional approach. The students in the experimental group had opportunities to inspect more closely the texturing elements which are needed for cohesion, the given/new structure of information, time order and tense sequence and discover their uses. The students learned that tourist information genre consists of four optional and four obligatory constituent moves which are recognized as the major building blocks of this genre. They found out that replacing one obligatory move for the other or even missing one obligatory move may lead to a weakly textured piece of writing. Keeping in mind all the texturing criteria essential for writing seems to be a frustrating task for EAP learners. If they manage to derive out the texturing devices present in each text, these devices will not be forgotten. Also, concentrating on one genre at a time and analyzing its features and constituents will be an effective way for achieving the mastery required for efficient writing. As evidence of the importance of using a genre approach we mention a suggestion given by Gallagher (2000), who pointed out that work on a genre approach in Australia has been applied successfully to all levels of school including high schools and even kindergarten.

The genre-based teaching approach can lead us to better results than other traditional teaching approaches which do not pay any attention to the function of language. They mostly account for the form of language to be acquired. One of the main advantages of genre-based approach is its focus on both the form and function of language; i.e., selecting appropriate and grammatically acceptable patterns to convey the message and achieve special predetermined communicative goals.

In traditional writing methodologies, the focus is on text producing in general in which students do not get the chance to become genre conscious. It is almost impossible to teach all the various forms and functions essential in writing in a single course, since each genre has its own forms and functions. Concentrating on one genre and its unified features and constituents at a time, we can derive out texturing patterns behind each and make writing focused in terms of text structure. The genre approach is appropriate particularly when there is an immediate need to gain mastery over writing one specific genre. In this case, that genre will be taught separately by considering all its constituents. The approach can be beneficial for both teachers and learners since by concentrating on a constrained area of writing devoting less time, more desirable outcomes will appear. The teacher is not the mere lecturer in the class; rather, all students contribute to class activities. The approach provides the opportunities for knowing how to analyze texts and

grasp their underlying grammatical and texturing aspects. Students can share their findings with the class and this increases cooperation among learners. In traditional methodologies, producing a well-textured and grammatical piece of writing is the ultimate goal of writing classes. This can be a source of anxiety for learners who do not see any limit to the skill they are trying to develop.

A useful implication of the genre-based approach, one which particularly deals with tourist information as its major goal of instruction, is in tour-leader training programs. That is, intermediate, or advanced EFL students can receive one text on tourist information genre. Later, they can make use of these models for their own writings. It will be definitely of value in improving the learners' ability in speaking about places of interest, while listening to foreigners and knowing the main ingredients of a tourist information genre. In brief, both speaking and listening are the major beneficial outcomes of using tourist information genre in the genre-based teaching approach.

Translation skill is also a field which may benefit from this approach. Knowing the constituent modules of each genre and the relevant functions will help the translator to relate all these constituents together and reveal the texts' overall message. Style and rhetorical devices are language and culture-specific; each genre in different languages may have various moves according to the conventions of that language (Clark and Ivanic 1997). Knowing these cultural inconsistencies is an important factor in translation.

7. Conclusion

Comparing methods of writing can bring insights to EFL writing instruction. The application of each method can be advantageous considering what aspects of writing are taken into account. EAP writing requires students to be skillful in writing for specific purposes. Tourist information texts have characteristics which make them distinct from other genres of writing. The focus of the writing course can be either how to make and connect sentences to form paragraphs with topics or how to take into consideration what requirements, in addition to writing ability, should be present for a specific genre. When students get involved in purposeful writing, they become conscious about genre structure. Teaching writing by focusing on the characteristics of various genres is more useful than traditional ways of writing instruction; the reason is that to write purposefully, students should be skillful in text structuring, and in addition to that, genre structuring.

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EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF USING ON-LINE TOOLS (WEBLOG-FORUMS) IN A WRITING COURSE IN EFL SETTINGS

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the integration of an Internet-based application into process-oriented writing instruction in an EFL setting. More specifically, it sought to investigate what kind of attitudes the students developed towards in-class process-oriented writing instruction through the use of a forum-based blog. The study was designed as quasi experimental research. The participants in the study consisted of 238 undergraduate students in the Department of Basic English of School of Foreign Languages at Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey. A forum-based Internet application (*www.ydyowriting.com*) was developed and integrated into the traditional writing class. The students and writing teachers received a workshop training about the use of the online tool. Intermediate Students were directed to use the forum-based blog for 16 weeks. At the end of the treatment, a student questionnaire was conducted to learn students' perceptions, ideas and experience with the use of Internet application for process-oriented writing instruction. The online tool itself provided a key source of statistical information about the number of postings per person and how long and how frequent each student used the system. The results revealed that the participants developed a very positive attitude towards the application of an Internet-based tool. Perhaps the most remarkable result was that the students, a great majority of whom had a low image of writing skill were very much motivated to write more because of the interactive, authentic, attractive features of the online application.

1. Introduction

At a time when daily life is changing to be even more reliant on technology, we teachers cannot resist technology infusion in EFL classes. There is little question that the school use of computers and other related information technology resources is rising at an ever accelerating pace, strongly necessitating a formidable change and challenge. From touch-sensitive interactive whiteboards, smart boards to forums, weblogs, various multi-media software Internet tools are on the way to be integrated into the pedagogy of many language teaching activities and materials. Whenever innovations emerge in science, we constantly examine them to find out any possibilities in the hope of making instruction easier, effective and meaningful on the part of learners. Technology is so interwoven with instruction that it is not a matter of personal choice any more. Therefore, we, as educators and teachers, cannot afford to fall behind our students in using new technology at a time when virtual tours through Internet are getting more common among students. Evidently online world offers an incredibly energetic, individually rich way of personalized learning and a great chance to rescue students from being passive receivers of information from teachers in the relatively unchanged format of formal learning at school.

World Wide Web technology has found its way to offer an immense potential as a valuable tool for teaching and learning in a second language in school context. It did not take long for learners to welcome a number of applications of online tools in education given the fact that majority of learners are well familiar with the Internet and enjoy using it for a variety of purposes such as searching for information, writing e-mails, communicating, using online chat-rooms. Among them are weblogs and forum-based blogs which can be a powerful motivator and can promote the efficiency of language teaching by enriching the quality of teaching and learning.

2. The use of on-line tools (Weblogs and forum-based blog) in process-oriented writing instruction

A weblog can be thought of as an online collection of personal commentaries, thoughts, reflections or an online journal that an individual can update with his own ideas and choice. It is a web-based space for people to write whatever they want, with an option for the other readers to comment on. The term has just found a place in the 2007 edition of certain published dictionaries. As indicated by Ward (2004: 1), "the true meaning is almost as random as the process it describes". The exiting literature on the use of weblogs is in the process of accumulating and similarly the research is in its infancy although there have been serious attempts to explore the potential use of weblogs with EFL/ESL classes (Campbell 2003, 2005; Easment 2005).

The main issue is whether such online tools can be of any pedagogic value in education. To this end, there are a number of educational weblogs that can be used as source of information for educators and teachers. A great deal of schools are creating and maintaining their own weblogs to communicate and share the information with their target population. What encourages teachers to use weblogs appears to come from their dynamic and interactive nature since interactive online blogs turn student readers to writers who can share their personal thought and increase their voice in expressive and interactive ways. Secondly, creating a blog is very easy and takes only a couple of minutes with a minimum of technology know-how as there are blogging services (like *www.blogger.com*, Google's Blogger) which provide clear guidance for each step to be taken.

Although educational technology such as weblogs and similar web-based online applications has found its way to offer an immense potential as a valuable tool for teaching and learning in a second language in many school contexts, this, however, poses a big challenge to the traditional learning-teaching classroom atmosphere, extending the boundary of school to outer areas both in time and space. So we find ourselves facing the constant challenge of understanding the nature of technology and its potential uses along with its strengths and weaknesses.

Weblog came at a time when the process approach in writing in EFL settings was deeply suffering from a lack of genuine audience and authentic communicative content. Nothing could be better than a blogging application to fulfill many of the needs required for the effective implementation of the process-oriented approach in our writing classes. Having emerged from the individualist-expressivist tendency, process approach was thought to liberate the students from the narrow definition of writing based on the notions of correct grammar and usage. This relatively new ideology which placed great emphasis on developing a personal voice, and also promoted the learner-centered concept appear to fail to create the expected result since the effective use of process approach in EFL setting is quite difficult in practice. First, the process oriented writing instruction suffers from greatly a lack of a real audience and consequently a sustained motivation for writing. Second, this recursive model based on pre-writing activities and multiple drafts (Grabe and Kaplan 1996) requires a very continuous circle of feedback between drafts, which is not easy to achieve in traditional classes. Third, feedback options are very much limited to the teacher. Finally, this complex, recursive and creative process approach creates an extremely huge amount of papers to deal with for the teachers. For these reasons, many process oriented writing courses end up with product approaches.

With the advent of push-button Internet-based publishing, we can overcome the drawbacks and difficulties encountered in the effective implementation of process oriented writing instruction in school settings. Due to the new knowledge sharing technology, including weblogs and forums, a

transparent exchange of information and ideas between different participants of learning environment has become quite easy, fast and relatively inexpensive. Weblogs provide opportunity for the students to publish their work instantly online and exchange their ideas encouraging the exploration of other related websites for acquiring new information. Weblogs also offer a valuable tool to enhance learning with their powerful interactive, authentic, interesting and communicative nature. The most fundamental issue of using online Internet systems is that students can: (a) have real audience, (b) raise their authorial voice, (c) enjoy self-discovery (d) utilize a variety of feedback options, and (e) have a sustained motivation.

In addition to integrating Internet-based applications into classes, teachers can create their own blogs easily from many free blog hosting services and share the information, edit, change, adapt their teaching materials such as lecture notes, presentations, assignment and readings.

3. Research

3.1. Purpose

This quasi experimental research was an attempt to investigate the potential benefits of using an online forum-based blog in process-oriented writing instruction in an EFL setting. The study also aimed to discover the students' attitudes towards the integration of forum-based applications into the traditional classroom learning environment. In particular, we sought to see whether the use of forum-based blog could make any contribution to the effective implementation of process-oriented writing instruction as adopted at Karadeniz Technical University where the research was conducted.

3.2. Background

Although writing is one of the most basic communication skills, and a valuable tool in the process of mastering a second or foreign language, it did not receive much welcome from our students for two main reasons as it became clear from our ongoing curriculum evaluation in the School of Foreign Languages: (1) our students were found to be very much focusing on the narrow definition of writing based on the notion of correct grammar and usage; (2) the students did not have a real audience and sustained motivation for increasing personalized voice with a working feedback system. In pursuit of a solution to this problem, process-oriented writing instruction through the use of an online tool was adopted as a strategy to writing course which was included in the syllabus as effective from 2004 when the author of this paper became director of the School of Foreign Languages.

3.3. Setting and sample

This research was conducted in School of Foreign Languages at Karadeniz Technical University (KTU) in Trabzon, Turkey. Each year about 1300 first year university students are enrolled in our school for a year of intensive compulsory English course prior to their subjects in their departments. The students are placed in beginning, pre-intermediate and intermediate classes depending on the result of the proficiency test done at the beginning of the academic year. Those who get at least 70 out of 100 from the written exam sit for an oral one. If found satisfactory, they are exempted from the compulsory English program. The reason why the students have to take a one-year English course compulsorily is that they are required to take certain courses in English in their major subject and write papers in their own field of study. The syllabus consists of writing (6 hours), reading (4 hours), speaking/listening (6 hours) and grammar-translation (8 hours). The writing course aims at making the students familiar with different paragraph types and subsequently essays. Classroom activities are designed in such a way that they are able to write their own paragraphs and essays in the long run. To this end, a package of materials is compiled by a committee of lecturers for the use in writing courses. In 14 classes a total of 238 undergraduate students participated in the study. They were all intermediate as measured by the proficiency test.

3.4. Procedure

Following one-year pilot work, this quasi experimental research was conducted in the School of Foreign Languages at Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey. Preliminary results of a very similar study with a very limited number of students by Kızııl (2006) in our school revealed a positive correlation between the use of weblogs and autonomous learning. The weblog in Kızııl's study was used with a group of 27 students in her own class. We decided to extend the use of weblogs to the whole school with 55 classes and 950 students. What was important for us when choosing a blogging application was to do very much with the implementation of process-oriented writing instruction identified in our syllabus. This means that it should allow our students to post, edit and comment with ease. Therefore, instead of webblogs where students have their own individual space (blog) we choose to develop a forum-based common blog (<http://www.ydyowriting.com>) which turned out to be technically easier and more friendly to use with a large number of students. The new domain name is now <http://writingportfolio.net/forum/>. In addition to numerous features and application, the use of www.ydyowriting.com in our study was basically to meet two stipulations that all of the students had a place (blog) for publishing their writings in such a way that all postings were viewable by all students and teachers with a feedback option. The online system also allowed anyone from outside to read their writing and send comment if necessary. Per-

haps the best part of the system was that our students had a real audience to read their writing and receive comments from others. The automatic archive of all past posts by date or theme enabled teachers to maintain systematic feedback system between different target groups of people. Teachers could monitor students' progress. A huge amount of papers were stored and organized in such a way that both teachers and students had access to any part of the information at any time at their own convenience.

Writing instruction in the program focused on paragraph-essay types including descriptive, process, compare-contrast and cause-effect. Students were given some theoretical information and practice on each in traditional classroom. They were required to write essays for each type and post their drafts to *www.ydyowriting.com*. A forum-based writing blog was created by the school in such a way that all classes had their own places on opening the page. When a student was required to post a writing task, or read a post the only thing to do was to click a couple of buttons.

4. Analysis

After a four-month experiment with the use of forum-based blog for EFL writing class, a questionnaire was designed and conducted primarily to collect quantitative data to determine the impact of an Internet based application on students' attitudes towards writing. Because of space constraints, only some of data obtained from the questionnaire was shown here.

		Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Using <i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> is easy.	N %	97 40.8	85 35.7	21 8.8	20 8.4	11 4.6
<i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> improved my computer skills.	N %	71 29.8	91 38.2	31 13	24 10.1	14 5.9

Table 1: The use of *www.ydyowriting.com*.

Table 1 above surveys the responses of the students to the items concerning the technical use of forum-based writing blog. The vast majority of the students were observed to find the use of the on-line system easy. It appeared that *www.ydyowriting.com* improved their Internet and computer use indirectly as there were some other applications connected to the system.

		Highly Positive	Positive	No idea	Negative	Highly negative
What attitude(s) towards writing have you developed by using <i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> ?	N %	72 30.3	108 45.4	41 17.2	13 5.5	4 1.7

Table 2: Attitudes towards writing.

Perhaps the most remarkable result of this quasi experimental study was that a great majority of the students as in Table 2 (75.7%) appeared to develop a positive attitude towards writing. Given the fact that writing was the least favored skill among our students, this result was very encouraging and promising not only for the integration of a web-based writing tool into the traditional classroom but also for the effective implementation of process-oriented approach in our program.

How often do you use online blog (www.ydyowriting.com)?		Once a day	A number of times in a day	Once in two days	Once in three days	Once in four days	Once a week	Other
	N	10	9	23	26	19	5	36
	%	4.3	3.8	9.8	10.9	8.1	2.1	15.3

Table 3: Frequency of use of the online system.

According to Table 3, a substantial number of students visited forum-based blog more often than they needed to post their own writing papers online as outlined in the syllabus. Such findings indicate that in addition to mandatory tasks, they voluntarily spent much more time going through the pages of the blog.

		strongly agree	agree	no idea	disagree	strongly disagree
Thanks to www.ydyowriting.com , I don't have so much used paper stuff in hand after the teacher's correction.	N %	92 39.5	77 33	26 11.2	15 6.4	23 9.9
Thanks to www.ydyowriting.com , I do not waste time to write my writings again and again after each correction.	N %	91 38.2	71 29.8	31 13	14 5.9	24 10.1
It is so beneficial to have my writings filed by date and the task.	N %	87 37.7	82 35.5	32 13.9	13 5.6	17 7.4

Table 4: Practicality of forum-based blog.

As indicated in Table 4 above, a significant percentage of the students (roughly over 70% in all items) appeared to appreciate the great advantage of using an on-line system in terms of keeping their papers well organized and spending considerably less time on revising and editing their drafts. In the absence of such online Internet-based system, students' job would be more difficult and boring. Given the fact that the essential part of process approach is for students to write multiple drafts, www.ydyowriting.com provided flexibility and created extra time.

		Strongly agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is very good not to wait for the next lesson to see the feedback of my teacher.	N %	52 22.3	97 41.6	40 17.1	17 7.2	27 11.5
Viewing what other people write is very good.	N %	72 30.9	98 42.1	30 12.9	13 5.6	20 8.6
It is very good that others can view my own writing.	N %	55 23.7	68 29.3	70 30.2	11 4.7	28 12.1
I believe that reading the writings of other people is a waste of time.	N %	20 8.7	33 14.3	51 22.2	70 30.4	56 24.3
I want to impress others with my writing posts.	N %	30 13.6	69 31.2	42 19.0	57 25.8	23 10.4
I pay more attention to my writing since I know that not only my teacher but also the others read my writing.	N %	29 13.4	59 27.2	54 22.7	57 23.9	18 7.6

Table 5: Having papers on the net.

As shown in Table 5 above, 63.6% of the students were found to wait for their teachers' comment on their draft on the web with some excitement. Another encouraging point was that 53% of the subjects appeared to be well motivated by the fact that they had an audience to read their papers. Only 16.8% reported developing negative attitudes towards being read by other people. Being read positively correlates with the idea of writing and posting papers to the web to impress others. Similarly, it appeared that the students enjoyed viewing what other students wrote (73%). Considering that only 14.2% of the students felt negative about being viewed, most of them did not use forum-based blog solely to post their writing. In other words, they were interested to see other papers, thus creating a kind of interaction behind the screen.

		Very much	Much	A little	Little	Not
<i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> has improved my language skill to form grammatically better sentences.	N %	24 10.6	61 26.9	83 36.6	43 18.9	16 7.0
<i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> has improved my vocabulary knowledge (using new words).	N %	48 21.4	70 31.3	77 34.4	20 8.9	9 4
<i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> has improved my writing ability to write an appropriate topic sentence.	N %	34 15.1	85 37.8	64 28.4	29 12.9	13 5.8
<i>www.ydyowriting.com</i> has improved my writing ability to write an appropriate introduction part.	N %	78 34.5	24 10.6	82 36.3	29 12.8	13 5.8

www.ydyowriting.com has improved my writing ability to develop supportive ideas for the topic sentence.	N %	86 36.1	25 11.1	20 8.4	84 37.2	11 4.9
www.ydyowriting.com has improved my language skill to use punctuation appropriately.	N %	17 7.5	79 34.8	69 30.4	51 22.5	11 4.8

Table 6: Improvement of writing skills.

Table 6 above deals with the items concerning the objectives specified for the writing course in the existing syllabus of the school. While the process approach was an overall strategy adopted towards writing instruction, there were certain linguistic elements and writing traditions which our students were expected to cover such as writing an appropriate topic sentences, introduction part, or supporting and concluding sentences. Interestingly enough, a great majority of the students were observed to utilize our forum-based blog to master these elements. Over 50% of the students expressed a very strong agreement with the idea of improving their ability to write appropriate topic and supportive sentences. Similarly, increasing vocabulary and using new words received a highly positive response from the participants (overall 87%). This indicates, as supported by students' responses given to the other items in the questionnaire, that our students paid attention not only to what other students wrote but also how they put. In other words, they were given many examples of papers from which they could select a good model for themselves.

How would you prefer to do writing course in your English Prep Program?		Only weblog	Only teacher centered classroom learning	Both using www.ydyowriting.com and traditional way
	N	184	31	21
	%	78.0	13.1	8.9

Table 7: Preference for writing course.

In response to the question concerning their preference for the way the writing course was to be done, 78% of the students, as shown in Table 7, surprisingly appeared to choose the option of 'only online model'. This indicates that the students were very much motivated towards using process-oriented writing instruction on the basis of forum based blog. This may be accounted for by the fact that the students felt more involved in writing process in real sense in a very interactive atmosphere. It can also be speculated that they enjoyed independence and autonomy to some extent in their writing experience as they found an opportunity to discover their strength and weaknesses in writing.

		Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I visit the blog very soon to see my teacher's feedback after I post my writing.	N %	53 22.7	88 37.8	55 23.6	19 8.2	18 7.7
After I post my homework to the blog, I read my friends' writings.	N %	33 13.9	58 24.4	81 34	36 15.1	23 9.7
First I read the writings of my friends and then post my own writing.	N %	72 31.2	56 23.5	57 23.9	34 14.3	12 5.0

Table 8: The use of blog.

Overall, the analysis of the items in Table 8 provides support for the items in Table 5 indicating that most of the students appeared to be diligent in using the forum-based blog, not for the sake of completing the assignment but for benefiting from what and how other students expressed themselves and their ideas. The students were simply interested in what others wrote. From the students' point of view, the forum-based blog was not a place to which they only posted their writing, but a place they used for various reasons in the course of the implementation of process oriented writing approach. It can be inferred on the basis of the responses given to the item "First I read the writings of my friends and then post my own writing", that a substantial number of students used the web to get more ideas from the papers posted by others.

5. Conclusion

The current research on the use of forum-based blog (www.ydyowriting.com) for the implementation of process-oriented writing instruction revealed that the student developed a very positive attitude not only towards using an Internet-based application, but also towards writing as a skill which was, until then, ignored by most of our students. Most probably, very much of the credit should be given to the fact that the students had a real audience other than the teacher and had a sustained motivation as a result of continuous circle of feedback for their drafts. The students found a real opportunity to publish their work instantly online in a very interactive, authentic, attractive atmosphere since the forum-based blog is not static; rather designed to be constantly updated for the students to post their writing, comment and responses.

Technically, it was easy to use a forum-based blog as in our example because it did not require much technical or Internet knowledge. Therefore, any school or class can start it without having any background or preparation. There are many user-friendly services, mostly free, which lead us through a couple of steps in creating our own Internet based application. Automatic ordering of all past posts by date or theme created a lot of fun, and made it easy to keep track

of all of our students' postings and readers' responses in a very speedy and manageable way. This becomes more important considering the fact that an essential component of high quality education in foreign or second language teaching is obviously to monitor the students' learning process.

Learning was extended to the outside the school walls, resulting in a great learning-teaching experience. Students were much more on their own to decide when, how and where to connect and use the system. This evidently appeared to foster independency and autonomous learning in students' endeavor to master the conventions of writing skill.

However, there are some negative points concerning the integration of www.ydyowriting.com into process-oriented writing instruction. In spite of all our effort, a substantial number of students appeared to be reluctant or somehow have hesitation in posting comment or feedback to what their class or schoolmates wrote. Unfortunately but not surprisingly most of the comments were from teachers and other local contributors. While some of the students received a considerable amount of feedback from class-schoolmates or teachers, some were simply ignored. This can be explained partly by the fact that the forum-based blog in our study was offered as part of mandatory tasks, not a voluntary basis.

Not having Internet access all the time at school because of a limited number of computers, and also at home, many students had to find commercially available Internet to connect to the website and post their writing tasks online. This created an awkward situation for the students to use the tool for self-expression, personal involvement and interaction as part of a learning community.

It is, however, to be remembered that no technological product has the inherent ability to teach any foreign language. It can only work and be of value with the help and command of a human. All materials and tools need to be specified, directed and planned by the teachers to be of pedagogical value in language teaching. Therefore, teachers should stay up-to-date in their knowledge and keep up with innovations in this field. Innovations can only be fully successful only where teachers volunteer to support them. They cannot turn out to be an educational aid in EFL setting unless used properly for teaching purposes.

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WHAT DO TERTIARY LEVEL EFL WRITING TEACHERS SAY BUT FAIL TO DO WHEN PROVIDING FEEDBACK?

ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to discover tertiary level EFL teachers' error analysis and feedback practices and priorities in the writing skill. More specifically, it sought to investigate why some EFL writing teachers give priority to the mechanics of writing in their evaluations at the expense of ignoring content and the organization of ideas, and others encouraging students to create meaning at the risk of violating even the basic mechanical rules in writing. The subjects were 35 EFL teachers teaching English in Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey. Data collection procedures consisted of a retrospective protocol with EFL teachers, and a teacher questionnaire. The protocols and the questionnaires were aimed at understanding the possible diversities in EFL teachers' feedback practices in their evaluations of the writing papers. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data were analyzed manually while SPSS (v11) for Windows was used to analyze the quantitative data.

Investigating the error correction and feedback practices of EFL writing teachers' plays an important role in understanding the reasons why there is a diversity of reactions on the parts of the EFL writing teachers towards student errors in writing. One of the major conclusions of the study in relation to the perceptions of EFL teachers' about writing is that what EFL teachers say about writing isn't always consistent with what they do. Another interesting finding is that EFL teachers are most keen on correcting grammar and organization errors. In other words, they consider errors in the surface structure as more important than those in the deep structure of a text in evaluating students' writing in the class although they claim to be thinking the otherwise.

1. Introduction

In understanding language teachers' perceptions of any skill, it may be important to refer to the ways in which these teachers respond to errors and the ways they give feedback. A thorough study of error correction and feedback in writing may provide important clues about the ways teachers perceive that particular skill. What is more, a careful study of teachers' responses to students' errors may provide us with insights into the internal processes of teachers and an understanding of the teachers' perception of the importance of writing.

On the other hand, there is a common consensus by now that in the analysis of learner errors, the opinions and practices of EFL writing teachers remain deeply divided. Some teachers focus their attention only on the mechanics of writing, while others on content, or on both content and mechanics (Coffin et al. 2003). Allwright and Bailey (1994) argue that writing teachers should ask themselves some questions such as "Why do students make errors?" or "Are these errors really important?" or "Do their responses make any difference in students' writing?" in order to resolve the conflict in their analyses of students' written performances. EFL writing teachers should also know when to correct errors, who will correct errors, which errors to correct and how to correct errors.

It is also possible to assume that many EFL teachers treat errors with some already pre-conceived notions in their heads. However, when these notions do not have clearly defined values, or they do not have objective criteria, then it will be virtually impossible for teachers to make consistent judgments on students' written texts based on these vague values or criteria. Thus, they will only focus on particular flaws such as punctuation, spelling, or word-order, and this will make them more or less proofreaders rather than critical readers. Worse, students will be made to assume that successful texts are the ones with no grammar errors whatsoever.

2. Background of the study

The ways EFL writing teachers assess their students' written performance and the ways they analyze errors and give feedback accordingly are all important factors for the teaching of writing. On the other hand, Zamel (1985) claims that despite teachers having really good intentions while they are responding to their students' writing, they nevertheless misread the student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to the texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content-specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text. Moreover, Kroll (2001) holds the view that we can hardly expect teach-

ers to adequately serve their students when they are equipped simply with a general understanding of methods and materials and the strong teacher is the one who is reflective and who brings to the class a philosophy of teaching and a set of beliefs about teaching and learning.

3. Statement of the problem

In the ELT world, there are many different opinions as to the ways writing skill can be most efficiently implemented in classes. During their evaluation of writing papers, some EFL writing teachers are focusing their attention on the mechanics of writing in their evaluation, such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word recognition and so on at the expense of ignoring content and the organization of ideas. On the other hand, other EFL teachers encourage their students to create meaning at the risk of violating even the basic mechanical rules in writing. And still some other teachers, according to Coffin et al. (2003), focus on both content and form of the writing, that is the language used, the text structure, the construction of argument, grammar and punctuation. Investigating the error correction and feedback practices of EFL writing teachers' plays, therefore, an important role in understanding the reasons why there is a diversity of reactions on the part of EFL writing teachers towards student errors in their writing papers and what they always say is not consistent with what they always do when giving feedback.

4. Literature review

Error correction and feedback are two of the most debated topics in the field of second language teaching. Ferris (2003, cited in Lee 2003) points out that teachers have to decide whether to correct or not to correct errors, identify or not to identify different types of errors, and to locate or not to locate errors directly. Moreover, questions such as "Should teachers correct errors for students?", "When do we correct errors?", "When do we ignore them?", or "How do we correct them?" are important for teachers. It seems that ignoring them completely is not a solution but that direct and overt techniques do not serve students very well, they are affectively damaging and do not help to improve students' proficiency in the TL (Fathman and Whalley 1990).

In his research study, Lee (2003) conducted questionnaires with 206 EFL teachers in Hong Kong who had varying teaching experiences. Those teachers were asked about what their main purposes of providing feedback on student errors were. The responses those teachers gave are as follows. The numbers show the frequency of the answers.

- for increasing students' awareness of errors (65 times);
- for helping students avoid the same errors (45 times);
- for helping students improve their writing (30 times);

- for helping students correct their errors (15 times);
- for giving students encouragement (9 times);
- for learning how to express ideas or write better (7 times);
- for learning grammar/cohesion/coherence (5 times);
- for helping students reflect on their writing (4 times);
- for helping students locate their errors (2 errors);
- for long term benefits such as promoting self-learning (2 errors).

These findings show that EFL teachers want their students to become aware of their errors and to correct them. These two goals are the immediate goals of helping students. But as far as long-term goals are concerned, only a few of them want their students to locate errors and reflect and promote self learning (Lee 2003).

In the same study, participant teachers were also asked what their beliefs regarding error feedback were, and 91% of them preferred indirect feedback or selective feedback. However, in reality these teachers were under pressure to mark all the errors, and for this reason 60% of them agreed that it is the teacher's job to locate errors and provide corrections for students. This inconsistency in their responses came through various channels such as the demands of the students and principals. So, the idea of empowering the students or putting the responsibility on the students only remained a thought in the teachers' minds (Lee 2003).

In another study, Usui and Asaoka (1999) found that Japanese EFL teachers lay greater emphasis on formal accuracy of the students' texts than do native speaking teachers of English. For this research, participants both native and Japanese were given erroneous sentences or a passage containing errors and specifically instructed to correct the errors they saw. They evaluated the paper and gave feedback as they would normally do as an EFL writing teacher. Four Japanese and four native-speaking teachers participated in the study. The result of this study was that both groups of teachers seemed to have similar ideas about what is important in writing, such as that writing is an ongoing process, cooperative learning is important and students' autonomy is crucial. On the other hand, they seemed to differ in types of feedback, types of problems and feedback procedure. Some participants showed concern about the affective aspects when giving feedback such as giving positive feedback, credit for sincere efforts, or not giving too much feedback at one time. The types of feedback were also different. Most of them were in favor of giving written feedback, but some gave long and detailed feedback whereas others did not. Most of them commented that they would give oral feedback or use traditional conferencing. Those differences can be attributed to their beliefs, prior experience, previous program or goals and expectations. It was also found that factors such as time, focus of assignment, relationship between the teacher and the student all have an influence on how teachers give feedback and what types of feedback they give.

5. Methodology

The aim of this study was to find out what tertiary-level EFL teachers say but fail to do when providing feedback in their writing classes. As stressed in the introduction, analyzing EFL teachers' feedback practices can reveal the true nature of their stance towards writing as a language skill. It is also believed that teachers themselves can better explain the processes they go through while teaching writing, analyzing errors and giving feedback respectively. This study attempted to find answers to the following questions:

- (a) What features of writing do EFL teachers consider as important in evaluating students' papers?
- (b) What kinds of errors are particularly highlighted by EFL teachers in writing and correction?
- (c) What types of feedback do EFL teachers prefer to give in writing courses?
- (d) Do EFL teachers consider errors in the surface structure as more important than those in the deep structure of a text in evaluating students' writing in the class?

In this study both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed and as one part of the triangulation, quantitative data was obtained through a teacher questionnaire in the collection of data. This was to allow us to understand the perceptions and the actual practices of teachers in teaching writing. However, the quantitative data obtained in this way did not allow for in-depth explanation of the current practices and the ways teachers treat errors in the teaching and grading of writing in their courses. In other words, the authors believe that the actual feedback practices of teachers in responding to writing can not be ascertained by a reliance on a questionnaire alone. For this reason, qualitative data was also incorporated in the design of the study. The inclusion of such data was aimed at complementing the findings of the quantitative data. Through qualitative data obtained by the use of protocols, it was intended to shed light on the actual processes of the teachers while evaluating the students' written performances and giving feedback.

5.1. Setting

The setting of the study was the Department of Foreign Languages of Karadeniz Technical University. During the course of the study, the Foreign Languages Department held 65 English lecturers and 40 of them taught in English preparatory classes. These teachers were required to teach grammar, reading, writing and listening for at least 30 hours in total each term. They used the same course materials, but were free to bring their own materials to class. There were 35 classes in the department, and the students came from many different departments. Some of the lecturers employed in the department were experienced teachers but most were not. At the start of their professions as teachers of English, some of them had not received any formal edu-

cation in English language teaching (ELT). Indeed, at the time of writing, university preparatory schools in Turkey do not require formal ELT training from their teachers. Very few of the lecturers had an MA in ELT and few had participated in seminars or certificate programs in ELT. One common attribute that almost all the lecturers shared was that they did what had been done in the past and what was being done currently in terms of the curriculum and the content, and the materials they used had little value in and of themselves.

5.2. Subjects

This study was conducted with 35 EFL teachers, teaching for the prep-classes in the School of Basic English, at Karadeniz Technical University. All the subjects, which were chosen randomly, were teaching grammar, reading, writing and listening in English preparatory classes for an average of 30 hours a week. Most of the subjects were very eager to take part in the study because they taught that the findings would bring solutions to some of the important problems that the current curriculum presented. Also they thought that the findings of the research project would assist them to gain insight into their writing, thus contributing to their notion of writing and the successful classroom implementation of it.

Feature	No	%
Sex		
Female	15	42.9
Male	20	57.1
Age		
23-29	17	48.6
30-36	11	31.4
37-44	5	14.3
45-above	2	5.7
Years of profession		
Less than a year	1	2.9
1-4 years	11	31.4
5-8 years	10	28.6
9-14 years	8	22.9
More than 15 years	5	14.3
Undergraduate degrees		
Teaching English as a Foreign Language	26	74.3
English Language and Literature	9	25.7
Degrees or Qualifications in ELT		
MA (Master of Arts)	2	5.7
Certificate	2	5.7
Summer School	-	-
Seminars	2	5.7

Table 1: Information about the participants.

5.3. Data collection procedures

The following data collection procedures were used in the study:

- (a) teacher questionnaire;
- (b) retrospective protocols.

6. Data analysis

This study aimed to find out whether EFL teachers are aware of the approaches and techniques in teaching writing and what kind of error analysis EFL teachers perform in their writing courses.

6.1. Analysis of the questionnaire responses

Item 1:

What is/are your favorite course(s) to teach?

Thirty-five participant EFL teachers answered this question and the results obtained are as follows. The descriptive analysis of this question shows that EFL teachers like to teach reading, speaking, grammar, translation, and listening courses more than writing. The least popular course for EFL teachers is writing. Almost 86% of the participants clearly stated that writing is not among their favorites. There may be many reasons behind this finding. One of the main reasons for this lack of interest in teaching a writing course can be the fact that those teachers, themselves, may not have received enough training in writing during their education. This naturally causes some concerns on the part of the teachers as to whether they can successfully implement writing courses.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	2.00	10	14.5	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	59	85.5		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.1: Favorite course to teach.

Item 2:

How Long Have You Taught Writing?

The responses for this question revealed that only 37% of the teachers have been teaching writing for 4-8 years. Another 20% percent of teachers have been teaching writing for 1-3 years and an equal percentage of teachers have not taught writing yet.

Item 3:

How would you rate the following features when you, as a teacher, are writing in English?
 From the responses given to the item, the table below was created. From Table 6.2 it can be seen that 45.7% of the teachers stated that content would come first for them in writing. Following content, the second biggest concern on the part of the teachers is organization. 43% of the participants put organization into second for themselves.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1.00	5	7.2	14.3	14.3
	2.00	8	11.6	22.9	37.1
	3.00	6	8.7	17.1	54.3
	4.00	16	23.2	45.7	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.2: Content features of writing for teachers.

Item 4:

I think I should provide feedback mostly on content (meaning) for my students in their writing.

Item 5:

I think I should provide feedback mostly on form (grammar) for my students in their writing.

From Table 6.3, it is seen that almost 83% of the teachers think that they should provide feedback mostly on content. Based on these responses, it can be speculated that teachers are well aware of the importance of content. However, in the related item 5, the same teachers were asked to give their opinions about providing feedback on form. Table 6.4 shows that 37.1% of the teachers agreed to give form feedback, and another 37.1% disagreed, the other 25.7% remaining neutral. These findings are very interesting and to some degree inconsistent. It can be speculated considering the number of neutrals that many teachers are not sure whether providing feedback on grammar is appropriate or not for their students' writing.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	disagree	4	5.8	11.4	11.4
	neutral	2	2.9	5.7	17.1
	agree	29	42.0	82.9	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.3: Feedback on content.

What do tertiary level EFL writing teachers say but fail to do...

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	disagree	13	18.8	37.1	37.1
	neutral	9	13.0	25.7	62.9
	agree	13	18.8	37.1	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table: 6.4: Feedback on form.

Item 6:

I think I should correct every error in student writing.

Item 7:

I think I should correct some errors in students' writing.

It can be seen from Table 6.6 that almost 66% of the participating teachers said that they should correct some errors in their students' writing. Another 34.3% of the teachers said they should correct every error. A majority of the teachers are for correcting some errors and this idea is confirmed by Ferris (2001), who argued that teachers need to be selective, and to prioritize in correcting errors so that students can find ways to self-edit their papers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	disagree	17	24.6	48.6	48.6
	neutral	6	8.7	17.1	65.7
	agree	12	17.4	34.3	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.5: Correct every error.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	disagree	9	13.0	25.7	25.7
	neutral	3	4.3	8.6	34.3
	agree	23	33.3	65.7	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.6: Correct some errors.

Item 8:

I would like to give feedback to my students about their writing by...

From Table 6.7 it is seen that 60% of the teachers would choose to give the written responses to their students separately. This is somewhat a traditional way of giving feedback. In this way it is hoped that teachers can provide clear and constructive written responses for the purpose of effectively facilitating rewriting.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1.00	21	30.4	60.0	60.0
	2.00	5	7.2	14.3	74.3
	3.00	4	5.8	11.4	85.7
	5.00	5	7.2	14.3	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.7: Feedback to my students about their writing.

Item 9:

I think I should correct errors most in students' writing.

Option 1: Content/ideas.

Option 2: Organization.

Option 3: Grammar.

Option 4: Style.

Option 5: Range of vocabulary.

Option 6: Neatness.

Option 7: Punctuation.

Table 6.8 shows the 'most important' choice of the teachers. It can be seen that almost 49% of the teachers stated that they would correct content errors most in their students' writing. This is followed by grammar errors at 42%. Then, 36% of them stated that they would correct organization errors mostly. Another 25% of them stated that they thought errors in the range of vocabulary were the most important. The remaining percentages of other options are very low. The four error types mentioned here received the greatest level of concern by the teachers. The findings in this question indicated once more that most participant teachers have the biggest concern for the content of their students' writing. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that content is followed by grammar and organization.

What do tertiary level EFL writing teachers say but fail to do...

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	1.00	1	1.4	2.9	2.9
	2.00	7	10.1	20.0	22.9
	3.00	10	14.5	28.6	51.4
	4.00	17	24.6	48.6	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.8: Content errors in students' writing.

Item 10:

Which of the following error correction techniques do you use most while correcting students' papers?

Option 1: Only underline errors and correct them (e.g. 'has went gone').

Option 2: Underline errors, correct and categorize them (e.g. 'has went gone') (verb form).

Option 3: Underline errors but do not correct them (e.g. 'has went').

Option 4: Underline errors, categorize them, but not correct them (e.g. 'has went') (verb form)

Option 5: Only categorize errors in the margin.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	.00	2	2.9	5.7	5.7
	1.00	4	5.8	11.4	17.1
	2.00	9	13.0	25.7	42.9
	3.00	20	29.0	57.1	100.0
	Total	35	50.7	100.0	
Missing	System	34	49.3		
Total		69	100.0		

Table 6.9: Only underline errors and correct them.

Table 6.9 shows the 'always' choices of the teachers. It seems that 57.1% of the teachers always underline errors and correct them while they are reading their students' papers. The remaining error correction techniques were reported as used in very low percentages. It is interesting to note that corrections are always done by most of the teachers in their students' papers. However, as was previously stated, learners' errors are important indicators for the teaching and learning of language skills. A pedagogical perspective of teaching pedagogy requires a good understanding of the nature of error in order to find appropriate ways to get rid of that error. Theoretical perspec-

tive of teaching pedagogy on the other hand, points that the study of learners' errors enables us to study systematically.

4.2. Data analysis of the retrospective protocols

This section initially describes the data taken from the teachers' responses to the retrospective protocols, and further examines the relationships, differences and similarities between the questionnaire and the protocol findings. This chapter concludes with an overall discussion of the key points emerging from questionnaire and protocol data. In order to analyze retrospective protocols encoded categories for teachers' retrospective accounts of their evaluation of two writing papers were designed. These categories included seven basic features of teaching and grading writing papers. These are:

- (1) content/ideas;
- (2) organization;
- (3) grammar;
- (4) style;
- (5) range of vocabulary;
- (6) punctuation;
- (7) neatness.

After collecting protocol data, which was tape-recorded, the investigator examined the data and put each piece of data under relevant columns in the encoded categories. This process took longer than expected, since the investigator had to listen to and type each account of the respondents and to categorize each sentence correctly. In the encoded categories almost all the teacher accounts were focused on grammar and organization errors of the students. Only in two categories both teachers focused their attention on content features of their students' writing.

5. Discussion of the results

Although the majority of the EFL teachers responding to the questionnaires claimed that they would rate *content* feature as the most important one, and that they should provide *content feedback* mostly for their students in their writing, they actually provided feedback mostly on grammar and organization in the retrospective protocols. When they are correcting their students' written papers EFL teachers are most keen on correcting grammar and organization errors. The first thing they look for is grammar. Grammar is followed by the organization problems. This finding concurs with the findings of another study that was done at the Brazilian English as a Foreign Language Institute. The results of that study showed that the focus of teacher feedback was the mechanics rather than the content, and that the EFL teachers expressed their views in such a way that the students benefited most from comments about mechanics, grammar, and organization. The results of another study carried

out by Radecki and Swales (1988) also appear to concur with the findings in the current study in that teachers tend to give feedback in grammar and organization because their students want their surface errors to be corrected.

According to the researcher, the finding above is not surprising, because both language teachers and students see writing as a skill that helps reinforce grammar. That is why, many Turkish EFL teachers and students prefer form-focused feedback to content-focused feedback. One of the reasons for this is the sets of beliefs of teachers and students about language learning – especially of teachers teaching in EFL contexts in Turkey. They are generally used to making analytic surface-level corrections rather than content-focused feedback. The reason for this may be the past experiences of teachers in that these teachers may have been more exposed to rule-based and sentence-level feedback.

EFL teachers consider errors in the surface structure as more important than those in the deep structure of a text in evaluating students' writing in the class. This is true for the many EFL teachers who give feedback directly to surface level problems such as grammar and organization in the students' papers. In addition, EFL teachers prefer to give written feedback to their students and they do this by using the technique of underlining errors and correcting them accordingly. This finding is concurrent with the findings of Ferris (1997), who carried out research using 47 students in a first-year college composition course and concluded that students made good use of teacher feedback and overwhelmingly tended to improve their writing as a result of the teachers' written feedback. On the other hand researchers such as Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti (1997, cited in Reesor 2002) also argue that written feedback allows for a level of individualized attention, and teachers have the chance of one-on-one communication with their students, written feedback also encourages motivation in the class. In another study, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that students want their teachers to provide them with written feedback. Students then tend to make good use of written feedback they have received from their teachers in written form.

According to the findings presented in this study, the majority of EFL teachers' feedback consisted of only underlining grammar, spelling, and writing convention mistakes and many EFL teachers also provide correct forms, thus, not allowing students the chance to correct their own errors. These results are concurrent with the findings of Gosse (2001), which he obtained in an EFL English department. Gosse found out that teachers, if left unsupervised, overemphasize the mechanistic rules of language and expect their students to produce mechanically correct sentences in their compositions. The results of the Robb, Ross and Shotreed (1986) study were also concurrent with the findings of this study to the extent that EFL teachers, in particular, often place greater emphasis on responding to only surface level features such as mechanical errors than on responding to the overall content. The researcher thinks that an over-emphasis on mechanics

of writing or on surface level problems will make teaching writing a rather mechanistic activity in which both teachers and students will find themselves doing grammar revision. Naturally, in this process teachers will feel obliged to provide correct forms and rules for their students. However, the researcher is of the opinion that content level problems or deep level problems should also be the focus of an EFL writing classroom. Thus, it is hoped that writing classes will be more interesting and enjoyable than ever for teachers and students alike.

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THE SPACE BETWEEN 'YES' AND 'NO': HOW ITALIAN STUDENTS QUALIFY AND BOOST THEIR STATEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Hedges and boosters – linguistic devices to mitigate or amplify a statement – play a key role in the development of pragmatic fluency in second language learners. In academic discourse they allow writers to achieve several communicative purposes, such as adopting positions, making claims with an appropriate degree of caution and indicating allegiances. In this way they help create a credible authorial presence. Equally importantly, such items also fulfil an important function in many types of discourse because of their contribution to building reader-writer relationships. Often, however, these interpersonal devices seem to be 'lexically invisible' to second language writers, and the ability to use them effectively can be challenging even for students of higher proficiency levels.

This paper describes a small study which uses corpus analysis to explore how a group of high intermediate Italian students use hedges and boosters in their writing. The findings illustrate that, in common with previous studies of L2 writers, the student population investigated here rely on a small pool of modal verbs, overuse informal devices typical of spoken discourse, and tend to overstate their commitment to propositions.

It concludes by discussing implications for second language writing pedagogy and gives some suggestions for consciousness-raising and form-focused practice in the L2 classroom.

1. Computer learner corpora

In recent years Corpus Linguistics (CL) has allowed us to examine authentic native English and observe which linguistic and lexical patterns occur typically in different writing contexts and discourse communities. This 'new perspective on the familiar', as Hunston calls it (2002), also has useful applications in language teaching and pedagogy. One developing field of enquiry in corpus linguistics is the analysis of Computer Learner Corpora (CLC). This allows us to make an electronic collection of authentic learner output and compare it to NS data from a similar field or domain.

Such comparison can give us information on *misuse*, highlighting the kind of errors and the frequency with which they occur in L2 writing. It can also reveal the type of error occurring typically at different levels. For example, Neuman (1977, cited in Wolfe-Quintero et al. 2002: 36) found that when the number of word order errors are plotted along the L2 writing interlanguage continuum, then the graph resembles an upturned developmental U. In other words, this type of error occurs frequently at lower levels, decreases at intermediate level and then re-emerges with advanced writers. This may be because writers are becoming more rhetorically ambitious, and need at times to make a trade-off between accuracy, fluency and complexity (Wolfe-Quintero et al. 2002: 46).

Equally interesting are the insights which comparing learner and NS corpora gives us about the phenomenon of *under-use*, which does not lead to errors, but to under-representation or avoidance of words or structures (Van Els et al. 1984: 63). By observing items which are avoided or distributed differently to comparable NS language, we are able to identify language items which present difficulties for specific groups of learners at different points on the interlanguage continuum.

This information can yield insights about range, complexity and typical performance at different levels. Computer learner corpus analysis can be especially useful if it focuses on higher level student production, since this is an area which we still know very little about. If we are able to identify typical errors or avoidance strategies which still need to be addressed at this level, we can then try to feed work on these areas into our teaching. Therefore learner corpus analysis offers great potential for describing and understanding student writing at different levels and in different writing contexts

2. Focus of this study

This study was prompted by a previous investigation by Hyland and Milton (1997) into how Hong Kong students express qualification and certainty in their writing. According to the authors, flexible use of epistemic devices to mitigate and boost statements is crucial to academic discourse for the following reasons:

(1) Mitigators or 'hedges' allow writers to:

- avoid absolute statements;
- acknowledge the presence of alternative voices;
- express caution in anticipation of criticism.

(2) Amplifiers or 'boosters' allow writers to:

- demonstrate confidence and commitment in a proposition;
- mark their involvement and solidarity with the reader.

My intuitive impression teaching Italian students is that they have firm control of amplifiers but are less likely to mitigate their statements. For example, several years ago one student, Chiara,¹ wrote a well-structured, generally accurate essay on the subject of teenage pregnancies in Britain, but was disappointed to receive a slightly lower mark than she had expected. This was because she had failed to navigate the "area between 'yes' and 'no'" as Halliday (1985: 335) defined modality and used only categorical statements. The resulting essay was argued with inappropriate strength of claim and gave an overall impression of over-zealous emphasis (Milton 1999: 238). If Chiara had qualified her statements more "to make space for alternative positions" (Hyland 2005: 93) her essay would have been more reader-friendly. As Hyland says, "meaning is not synonymous with 'content' but dependent on *all* the components of a text (...) both propositional and metadiscoursal elements occur together, (...) each element expressing its own 'content': one concerned with the world, and the other with the text and its reception" (Hyland 2005: 24).

Skelton (1998: 107) too considers hedges and boosters to be a significant communicative resource for student writers at any proficiency level. The ability to express qualification and certainty, then, is believed to play a central role in establishing the tone and style of academic writing, and influences the reader's assessment of not only the referential but also the affective aspects of the text (Hyland and Milton 1997: 185). Furthermore, hedges and boosters are considered to be important politeness strategies not only in writing but in speech too. Carter (2005) comments on the important interpersonal function of these devices as a way of keeping lines of communication open, in the same way that they allow us to open up a discursive space in written discourse.

All this seems to suggest that flexible use of modal devices is equally important as an interpersonal feature and a communication strategy in L2 production in general. It is because of their all-pervasive nature in many types of discourse, as well as their significance in academic writing, that I decided to carry out a pilot study using learner corpora to investigate the frequency and occurrence of hedges and boosters devices in my local teaching context at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia.

¹ A pseudonym was used here.

3. This study

The learner corpus used here is very small but I was encouraged by a comment by Granger (1998a) that small corpora compiled by teachers of their own students' work are of considerable value and allow us to draw attention to an individual or group profile of learner language. Clearly for any corpus to be useful it must be based on strict design criteria. In the case of learner language it is particularly important to control for the many different types of learner language and situations, taking into account variables such as the following :

Language	Learner
medium	age
genre	sex
topic	L1
task	level
task setting	learning context

Table 1: Variables in corpus design (adapted from Granger 1998b: 9).

The students in this project were in their second year of a degree in European languages and culture at an Italian university. There were 50 students involved, 8 male and 42 female, and their language level ranged from B2 to low C1. I decided to conduct the study with this group of high-intermediate students hoping that their firm control of grammatical and lexical resources would allow them to reflect upon using language to achieve different rhetorical purposes. I wanted to observe whether and in what way they hedged or boosted their statements; therefore the focus here was on appropriateness, rather than accuracy.

4. Methods

The data used are two small corpora based on student writing carried out at the end of the first and second semesters. CORPUS 1 was compiled of two short argumentative writing tasks submitted in the first semester. The handwritten scripts were transcribed by the students themselves and left uncorrected. I then proofread the scripts to correct typographical errors only and analysed them using Wordsmith Tools text retrieval software to examine the type and frequency of hedges and boosters occurring in the scripts. CORPUS 2 was compiled from two further assignments submitted at the end of the semester and a similar analysis was carried out.

5. Findings

In order for a learner corpus to be meaningful, it needs to be compared to some kind of norm. For this I used Hyland and Milton's taxonomy of the most frequently appearing epistemic items in academic discourse (1997: 205) and observed which of these items occurred in these two learner corpora.

5.1. Informal items

It emerged, unsurprisingly perhaps, that the students used a considerable number of informal items, mirroring previous findings (Hyland 1994; Milton 1999; Hinkel 2005), which suggests that L2 writers rely more on items from spoken language and conversational discourse. For example, in this particular study, overuse of 'heavy duty' items such as 'really' used as an intensifier occurred.

not obligatory, they are really important. For
mmon to find people who really like travelling and
met outside of school will really help you in your li
s experience, it doesn't really concern only scho
on these facts to be really effective; teachers
so work experience can really help you to grow
ce, that's why you're really interested on it.
at the world of sport has really changed today an
uring the meeting are really serious and that it
have turned out to be really appreciated by pe
multi-cultural society, it is really useful to develop a
ogies have become a really important part of e
semester. What students really need is to enjoy t
ising" cultures might be really dangerous. The ris
lescence, indeed, is a really essential moment
res. Their existence is really precious to us and
ery wide, and it would really be wrong to dismiss

Table 2: Overuse of 'really' in the data.

Expert NS writers, in a similar argumentative task, might have achieved this emphasis more formally. For example, they may have replaced 'really important' with 'crucial', 'really help you' with 'can be of considerable help' and 'really appreciated' with 'very much appreciated'.

5.2. Predominance of central modals

The same central modal verbs 'will', 'should', 'would', 'could', together with the epistemic verb 'think', appeared in the top ten tokens of both Corpus 1 and Corpus 2, and in the top five in Corpus 1 and Corpus 3 (a control corpus of postgraduate writing included to give a broader picture).

	Corp 1	Corp 2	Corp 3.
Words	23,470	29,560	40,396
Texts	99	75	88
could	60	30	36
couldn't	1	0	0
may	7	9	24
might	5	4	8
should	39	20	37
shouldn't	0	0	0
would	81	29	71
wouldn't	0	0	0
will	123	31	104
won't	0	2	0
Total	316	125	280

Table 3: The use of modals.

Again, this mirrors previous findings (Hyland and Milton 1997; Hinkel 2005) that both NS and NNS writers use the same pool of items in their writing, albeit with different frequency patterns. This may be partly developmental, or partly interlingual. It may also be a result of teaching or large amounts of attention devoted to these items in text books. It does, however, seem to confirm Hyland's suggestion that modal verbs are easier to manipulate for NNS writers than lexical modal devices, modal nouns or adverbs.

5.3. Epistemic verbs

After modals the next most frequent items were epistemic verbs such as 'think', 'know', 'believe', together with usuality markers such as 'always' and 'usually'. Hinkel's finding that 'think' rather than 'believe' is preferred by NNS writers is replicated here with 'think' appearing in third and second position in Corpus 1 and 2.

CORPUS 1	No.	%	CORPUS 2	No.	%	CORPUS 3	No.	%
will	123	5%	in fact	41	1.4%	will	104	2.5%
would	81	3.5%	think	34	1.2%	would	71	1.8%
think	61	2.7%	will	31	1.2%	should	37	.9%
could	60	2.6%	could	30	1.1%	could	36	.9%
should	39	1.7%	would	29	.9%	in fact	26	.6%
always	26	1.1%	always	29	.9%	may	24	.6%
in fact	24	1%	quite	28	.9%	think	23	.6%
know	19	.8%	should	20	.7%	often	21	.5%
usually	18	.8%	clear	16	.5%	always	18	.4%
possible	15	.6%	believe	15	.5%	indeed	17	.4%

Table 4: The use of epistemic verbs.

Several studies have confirmed this overuse of 'I think' as a popular sentence builder used by L2 writers, which occurs 3 to 5 times more frequently in NNS writing compared to NS writing (Granger 1998a).

5.4. Predominance of boosters

It is also interesting to note that boosters (to amplify) rather than hedges (to mitigate) predominate in the list of ten most frequently occurring devices in this corpus. This may be a result of some L1 cultural fingerprinting, although this hypothesis would need to further research for an Italian context. Past learning experience, or instruction where students are encouraged to express their views assertively, may also be contributory factors.

5.5. Overuse and sentence position

Previous studies of complexity in L2 writing have found that, possibly because of the multiple demands of the composing process, learners frequently default to safe usages such as 'thing' instead of 'topic', 'issue' or 'question' when composing. In this corpus, too, the same phenomenon occurs when expressing opinions. For instance, many students in this corpus reverted to personal subjectivity markers such as 'in my opinion', an item which could be described as a 'lexical teddy bear' (Hasselgren 1994).

7	ly the young ones, and, in my opinion, most of t
8	news programmes, but in my opinion there is a
9	tre have to pay 5 euros. In my opinion it would b
10	rder. On the contrary, in my opinion the worst
11	ne word: NEUTRALITY. In my opinion, neutrality
12	rned, Rai 1's program is, in my opinion, the best
13	interest at national level. In my opinion, in effect,
14	day only to go to work. In my opinion it would
16	oth sides. Furthermore, in my opinion this kind
17	this measure because, in my opinion, it isn't ac
18	occured in the country. In my opinion, it is good
19	city-centre of Cagliari. In my opinion if there w
20	ed of ratings; moreover, in my opinion, their ensl
21	etequattro's one but still, in my opinion, is too m
22	r then the other and, in my opinion, there are
23	tiative will be success. In my opinion it is nece
25	center via Trento Trieste. In my opinion the best
26	to watch Tg 2, because, in my opinion, it is the
27	tch the T.G. 1, because in my opinion it is the le
28	must across the zone. In my opinion even the r
29	his kind of imposition. In my opinion the traffic
30	with respect to this trend, in my opinion, the traditi
31	round the city centre. In my opinion, it is an e

Table 5: Overuse of the phrase 'In my opinion'.

It is also interesting to observe where these hedges are used, and how positioning influences the degree of writer commitment. In this corpus 'in my opinion' occurs mostly at sentence initial position, in contrast to NS writers who tend to place them in a subordinate or clause-initial position:

- (a) "*In my opinion* it is a *right* solution also for many other problems that a city might have such as pollution".
- (b) "*In my opinion it's not right* to make a tax, because many people could pay it and continue to pollute the city".
- (c) "*In my opinion the best way* to reduce air pollution would simply be to stop the possibility of entering the street forever".

It is arguable whether 'in my opinion' at sentence-initial position is successful at mitigating statements, or whether instead it might actually amplify writer commitment. However, such an effect might change if it were embedded or at clause-initial position. It may be that NNS writers tend to use fixed phrases in sentence initial position because they are often presented in school text books in this way, and this makes them implicitly available for uptake by students. A similar phenomenon has also been noted in students' use of linking devices. This might be something we want to draw students' attention to when using published materials in which opinion markers are presented in decontextualised lists

5.6. Examples of complex epistemic devices

Despite the predominance of boosters in this learner corpus, there were also some clear attempts to qualify assertions. For example, some students tried to use compound hedges in an 'epistemic cluster', not always with harmonic results. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that such clusters, which are typical of expert writers (NNS or NS), also occurred in this high intermediate corpora. This seems to indicate an emerging socio-linguistic awareness even in this high intermediate student population:

- (a) "*If it is possible for me to make a suggestion*, my advice *would be* to try to reduce the number of cars circulating".
- (b) "(...) or *rather I would say that I feel the need to express my opinion* concerning (...)".
- (c) "*Personally, I think that* imposing a daily "congestion charge" *could be a good idea*".
- (d) "This restriction *seems to me not quite* right".

Some researchers (Hyland and Milton 1997: 185) have found that students who modify their statements with more tentative expressions tend to have a higher level of general language proficiency. Others, instead, suggest that although greater linguistic competence is an important prerequisite, it does not automatically imply the parallel development of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig 1999).

5.7. Possible reasons for lack of control over these devices

Even in this small study of a relatively homogenous student population there was some variation both in the degree of formality and the degree in the use of tentativeness: This may be connected with one or more of the following factors:

- Language level, even within this relatively homogeneous student population.
- Writing competence, as opposed to language competence.
- Task effect: the way a writing prompt is worded can elicit a more or less assertive response from the writer.
- General lack of register control may result in a predominance of informal items.
- Individual differences in communicative competence exist, and some students will instinctively express their assertions more directly than others (as indeed is readily observable with some NS use of hedging and boosting).
- Cultural differences in rhetorical style may account for differences in expressing qualification or certainty.

6. Discussion

This initial experiment suggests to me that while many students are attempting to use hedges and boosters, they may need to expand their range of these beyond the rather narrow range of modal auxiliaries they are relying on at this stage. It is clear that the degree of hedging necessary in any discourse is also dependent on contextual factors. However, as these students progress to more complex, pragmatically sensitive writing events in future academic or professional contexts, they will need a broader spectrum of linguistic items to express their meanings.

An equally important consideration is that the improvement of stylistic proficiency is an important objective for many students as they progress along the writing continuum. If this is the case, higher level students especially will want a larger repertoire of structures to allow them to experiment with language and perform interpersonal functions. All this means that as well as attending to improved range and accuracy, we need to help learners discover alternatives to their favourite 'lexical teddy bears'.

7. Implications for teaching

First of all, advanced learners need to expand their lexical resources not only of content items but also of functional language. Vocabulary research (Ringbom 1998: 44-48) has shown that NNS writers consistently use the 100

most frequent words more than NS writers. If the same pattern exists with modal devices then learners will need linguistic alternatives to central modals. We might wish to remind our students of Sinclair's (1991) Idiom Principle, which holds that meaning is attached to the whole phrase rather than the individual parts of it (his Open Choice Principle). Students could be encouraged to notice prefabricated epistemic chunks (lexical expressions) as well as individual epistemic bricks (modal verbs). In this way, not only can students increase acquisition, but they can hopefully also move beyond grammatical accuracy towards an awareness of textual appropriateness.

As well as targeted vocabulary expansion, students may benefit from exposure to appropriate text models through extensive reading of suitable texts. 'Apprentice' texts written by advanced level students (Flowerdew 2000: 373) can be an excellent source of imitable models for students who are working at a slightly lower level. Attention can be drawn to hedging and boosting devices, which are often lexically invisible to learners (Lowe 1996). The various possible purposes of these can then be discussed. For example, devices may be used to express caution in anticipation of criticism, to show politeness and modesty towards the academic community and wider readership, or to open up a discursive space (Hyland 2005: 146).

8. Classroom activities

The following are some suggestions for consciousness-raising (CR) activities (1, 2, 3) and writing activities (4, 5, 6):

- (1) Remove hedges from texts and ask students to discuss the resulting effect on the reader.
- (2) Ask students to explore the function of multi-word items which naturally occur in the target discourse such as 'it would seem that', 'to my knowledge', 'to some extent' or the more informal 'on the whole' in their reading (and notice that they are sometimes embedded in the clause and not in sentence initial position).
- (3) Ask students to distinguish statements in a text which report facts and those which are unproven.
- (4) Students rewrite an academic essay (which uses hedges and boosters) into popular journalistic style (which does not) or vice versa. (Hyland 2005: 188).
- (5) Design persuasive tasks of various kinds on sensitive topics, anticipating the potentially critical views of the reader (Hyland 2005).
- (6) Students reformulate texts to accommodate different audiences, and subsequently compare the before and after effect on the audience.

9. Conclusion

As the late John Sinclair said, "language looks rather different when you look at a lot of it at once" (1991: 100). This pilot study in learner corpora would certainly confirm this and has lifted the lid a little on how these students navigate Halliday's area of meaning between 'yes' and 'no'. Clearly, this study is a point of departure and further systematic investigation is needed. One useful area to examine further would be to look at in what way task variables influence the frequency of these features in student writing. It would also be useful to conduct a learner diary project to explore how much students notice these interpersonal features in their reading or whether they really are 'lexically invisible' as Lowe suggests (1996). Finally, for my own part, these findings have helped to inform my classroom teaching, and encouraged me to raise awareness of these important interpersonal features. Hopefully, in this way, unlike Chiara in her essay on teenage pregnancies, my students will seek to acknowledge the presence of alternative voices.

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Part IV

LEARNER FACTORS

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STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHERS OF FL

ABSTRACT

Within a European context of mobility, language teachers are particularly invested in a policy of multilingualism and multiculturalism. However, perceptions of foreign language teachers are still based on a monolingual paradigm in which the native speaker opposes the non native speaker in strict categories. This contradicts a more plurilingual perspective where 'nativeness' is rather viewed as a continuum and no longer as a dichotomy.

A study carried out in 1997 in France showed that French students had a strong preference for native-speaker English teachers. Another study in 2007 showed that international students in France also preferred Native Speaker French teachers. Thus, it seems that the ideology of native-speakerism pervades the entire foreign language teaching field. Labelling Foreign language Teachers as native or non-native seems to be common to all learners of FL whatever the language taught. Whereas researchers in Applied linguistics have questioned that ideology, learners representations regarding FL teachers largely remain unquestioned.

1. Introduction

In contemporary language teaching, the issue of native-speaking English teachers (NEsts) and non native-speaking English teachers (NNests), to use Medgyes's first acronyms on the issue (cf. Medgyes 1983, 1990, 1992, 1994), has been increasingly dealt with over the last twenty years (Phillipson 1992; Holliday 1994; Pennycook 1994, 1998; Braine 1999; Canagarajah 1999; Jenkins 2000; Kubota 2002; Derivry 2004; Holliday 2005). The fact that English has become so popular or so dominant explains that it no longer currently

belongs to the native speaker (Graddol 1997, 1999, 2006), and this implies that NNests outnumbered Nests in the world. But, can we observe a similar shift of attitudes towards NNests? Are they becoming more popular?

2. Clarifying the notion of *native/non native*: From linguistics to sociology

First, the opposition between *native* and *non-native* can no longer be conceived of as a strict division, but rather as a continuum displaying varied trajectories and situations. The linguistic category of *native speaker* has lost its validity since Bloomfield (1933) or Chomsky's (1965) *ideal native speaker/hearer*. Linguists like Paikeday (1985) or Singh (1998) have deconstructed that category and Davies (1991) with an in-depth analysis of the different school of linguistics on the *native speaker* finally suggested that "it has more to do with a social construct than a linguistic one". I would pursue that argument by emphasizing that within the pedagogical field of teaching, the association of *native speaker* with *native teacher* has been confusing, that the *native-speaking English teacher* is not a linguistic category but rather a social one.

In fact, if the *native speaker* has become a myth for linguists, the move towards a *native teacher* has real and not mythical consequences on the job market (Braine 1999; Canagarajah 1999; Carless 2006; Moszynska 2007; Walkinshaw 2007). Employers within the teaching market seem to promote the very concept of *nativeness* as a commercial and competitive argument for excellence. As a result it is more difficult for non-native teachers of English to be employed within the English teaching business of EFL and ESL than for native teachers.

3. The native-speaking English teacher works as an exemplar of the native-speaking teacher of FL

For the potential business employer the issue seems to be limited to whether the teacher teaches his/her native language to foreigners or not, whether the teacher will or will not meet the requirement of his customers on the language teaching market and the social demand for native teachers. When reading classified ads in France, for instance, native teachers are strongly required: native-speaking English teachers for teaching English and native-speaking French teachers for teaching French. This situation may be equally valid concerning other languages: native teachers teaching their mother tongue as a foreign language or second language hold a leading position over non-native teachers as if they were stamped with a prevailing image of language accuracy and teaching efficiency. This is definitely a social representation which is confusing two different matters: language accuracy and teaching efficiency. Although there is an obvious link between language accuracy

and teaching efficiency there is no equivalence between these two dimensions in language teaching. Some strong social schema is in play mystifying the *speaker* and the *teacher*, the *native speaker* and the *native teacher*.

4. The foreign language teaching field

In order to grasp these pervasive social representations, some historical background should be recalled. In his *History of English Teaching*, Howatt (1984) relates that at the beginning of foreign language teaching which emerged as a formal skill at the time when dominant languages were formalised through grammar and spelling rules in 16th century Europe, the formation of FL teaching took place in a very competitive background. At the time, French was the language to be learnt and competition was fierce between French masters and their English counterparts, the former teaching French as a foreign language in England. Competition became even fiercer between the two kinds of teachers with the arrival of Huguenots. The argument at the time was similar to that put forward nowadays: the native teacher was supposed to be better at teaching the right pronunciation and colloquial or usual French. So, this idea that the 'native' teacher would be a better teacher because he/she was supposed to have mastered the language better or more spontaneously is not part of new perceptions but is rather deeply rooted to the FL teaching field and social schema of representations. The native/non-native divide is not something recent but is part and parcel of historical perceptions developed within the field of foreign language teaching. In 19th century Europe, when schooling was progressively institutionalised, FL teachers were precisely distributed: native speaking teachers of FL pervaded the commercial space of language schools (e.g. Berlitz) whereas non-native speaking teachers occupied the institutionalised space of education.

5. The social structure of the FL teaching field

Using Bourdieu's (2001) concepts on the *linguistic field*, it became a straightforward matter to specify the two social principles of division and perception of the *teaching field of foreign languages* on which it has been structured :

- the teaching contexts (institutions vs. non-institutions);
- the teachers' relation to the language taught (native/non-native).

Using this theoretical framework to analyse foreign language teaching, it is observed that two social teaching legitimacies have developed through time and space. Traditionally, native teachers of FL worked in non-institutional schools such as private language schools (eg. Berlitz) and non-native teachers of FL worked in institutional schools such as state or private schools of general education within their own country. Native and non-native teachers rarely met, as they belonged to different spheres: they had

different objectives in language teaching (more instrumental in language schools vs. more educative in general education), different methods (more communicative or 'natural' vs. more traditional, based on writing, grammar and translation), and different learners (adults vs. children).

Language taught as	'native' speaker teacher	'non native' speaker teacher
A mother tongue in institutionalised contexts of education	Very likely	Very unlikely
A second language in institutionalised or commercial contexts	Very likely	Very unlikely
A foreign language	Very likely in non institutionalised or commercial contexts	Very likely in institutionalised contexts



Table 1: Language of education, teaching contexts and types of teachers: Sketching the field of language teaching.

Separated by the teaching contexts (institutions vs. non-institutions), foreign language teachers were faced with two different social teaching legitimacies. Native teachers were supposed to be 'best' because they were 'models of language' whereas non-native teachers were equally supposed to be 'best' because they were 'models of learning' (if one follows H. G. Widdowson's terms). Consequently, the non-native teachers were also supposed to know their learners better. These two legitimacies compete and clash once the traditional situation of language teaching based on a strict separation of the institutional context from the non-institutional context is deregulated or cast aside.

6. Empirical surveys on English and French native-speaking teachers

In order to conduct further research on current social representations on FL teachers, two surveys dealing with students' representations on their FL teachers have been carried out.

Survey 2007:

- International students attending French as a Foreign language classes as undergraduates at French universities.
- Non Language Students.
- How do they perceive their 'native' speaker teachers of French (FFL)?
- Universities of Paris 6 (UPMC) and of Marne-la-Vallée.

Survey 1997:

- French students preparing a French HND and attending English classes within their course.
- Non Language Students.
- How do they perceive their native speaker teachers of English (EFL)?
- Higher education in the Parisian area.

The questionnaires used sought to compare students' representations of their FL teachers. Would they have similar attitudes and perceptions towards their native teachers of FL either English or French? Would time change perceptions as there is a decade between the two surveys? Apart from time and teachers' subjects, there are nevertheless similarities within the two populations: they are students and non specialists in the language taught. The opinions expressed in the two surveys show that students clearly assert they prefer a *native teacher* as presented in the table below.

	S-1997		S-2007	
	Answers	%	Answers	%
I'd rather have a native speaker as teacher.	232	56	70	84.3
I'd rather have a non native speaker as teacher.	36	9	1	1.2
I do not mind.	146	35	12	14.5
TOTAL	414	100.0	83	100.0

Table 2: Opinion surveys of students towards their native/non native speaking teachers of FL.

So, 56% of the French students preferred a native-speaking English teacher and 84% of the International students preferred a native-speaking French teacher. An analysis of the figures hardly suggests that there would be a shift to even higher demand for native teachers within a decade. In fact, the population questioned in 2007 is much smaller than in 1997 and furthermore, these students have come to France to study in French in 2007 whereas the 1997 students were studying in France and did not go to an English-speaking country to improve their English at the time of questioning. From that very context, we can infer their motivation towards language learning was quite different and could certainly account for the higher percentage given by the International students who made the effort to study in France and improve their French. However, taking into account that specific context, both populations have overtly opted for the native teacher.

Then a content analysis was carried out to compare items and occurrences for their choice of a native teacher in all open-ended questions. The results either in terms of percentages of occurrences and categories are remarkably similar in view of the different contexts, which tends to corroborate

rate that perceptions towards native teachers follow the same line and do not depend on the specific language taught. A more general and deeply-rooted structure operates in such a way as to construct social perceptions. As shown in the following table, the *native teacher* is perceived as having a greater linguistic competence: 76% of the 1997 occurrences and 85% of the 2007 ones. Linguistic competence is prioritised as cultural competence only accounts for 23% of the 1997 occurrences and 15% of the 2007 occurrences. Even though language teachers and experts tend to balance these competences nowadays as an extension of the communicative approach, learners are still very much restricted to the traditional model of the 'linguist' teacher.

Moreover, when the linguistic competence is closely looked into, it is limited to three broad categories by the students (i.e. pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar). What is interesting to point out is that within the linguistic competence, the occurrences of the three categories defined by the students follow the same proportions: greater linguistic competence is characterised by a better 'accent or pronunciation' (61% of the occurrences in the 1997 survey and 45% of the occurrences in the 2007 survey), then the percentages are the same for 'grammar' (32% of the occurrences in both surveys) and 'vocabulary' represents 7% in the 1997 survey and 24% in the 2007 one.

	S-1997	S-2007
Greater linguistic competence	76.5%	85%
- accent, pronunciation	61%	45%
- vocabulary, phrases and idioms	7%	24%
- grammar, style, 'no mistakes'	32%	32%
<i>Linguistic competence</i>	100.0%	100.0%
Greater cultural competence	23.5%	15%
Linguistic and cultural competence	100.0%	100.0%

Reading : Percentages of occurrences in students' discourse from a content analysis applied to their opinions

Table 3: Positive opinions towards 'native' speaking teachers of FL.

7. 'Cultural competence' of the 'native' speaking teacher

The words used by the students to express the cultural competence of the native-speaking English teacher and the native-speaking French teacher are strikingly similar in content:

'know France better', 'learning a language, it's for me learning the culture of the country, so a 'native' teacher is better', 'it's more cultural', 'owns the intelligence of France', 'understands French culture', 'we learn French culture', 'knows the French culture more and better' (S-2007).

In both corpora, ownership of culture is attributed to the 'native teacher': he/she represents the culture, so he/she knows better and therefore is a better teacher...

'owns the English culture', 'love their countries', 'more involved to speak about his/her country', 'has more knowledge on his/her country', 'brings his/her culture', 'knows more on his/her country', 'better knowledge of culture', 'knows more on culture', 'a better approach to English-speaking culture', 'is knowledgeable on English history', 'owns the English culture', 'more bathed in English culture', 'knows the English culture better', 'brings more on his/her country', 'brings the culture of the country', 'knows the country', 'knows the country better', 'masters the culture', 'knows everything on the country', 'good knowledge on English-speaking life', 'has more facts on English-speaking countries', 'richer on culture', 'knows more on cultural practice', 'knows the country and customs' (S-1997).

The same reified dimensions are at work when the linguistic competence is characterised by the students. 'Accent' represents the main criterion for 'native' teachers' greater linguistic competence according to students:

'for an impeccable pronunciation', 'much better for pronunciation which is perfect', 'it's easier to understand other native speakers', 'have a better pronunciation', 'teach students to speak without an accent', 'owns a good accent to better understand interaction and sounds we do not have', 'accents of spoken language are difficult', 'pronunciation is difficult, so it's better with a native speaker', 'has a better knowledge of pronunciation', 'for listening and for getting a good understanding', 'to pick up the good accent', 'for phonetics', 'with listening, we learn more', 'it's good for pronunciation', 'for phonetic subtleties', 'for speaking with native speakers' (S-2007).

Whereas 'accent' concerns nearly half of occurrences in 2007 with 45% and represents 61% in 1997, statements to describe that category are amazingly similar again:

'for the accent', 'one acquires a better accent', 'has the English accent', 'has the right accent', 'brings the accent', 'perfect accent', 'good accent', 'has a better accent', 'for diction', 'for being bathed in a genuine accent', 'has the right accent of the country', 'has a pure accent', 'an authentic accent', 'speaks with a rapid delivery, which is not something that a non-native speaker can do', 'accents plays a paramount part', 'prefer his/her accent', 'one gets more used to the accent', 'one gets more used to delivery', 'nice for the accent', 'has no accent, which allows to hear genuine English', 'has a perfect accent', 'has a better accent', 'has the accent', 'reliable accent', 'an acquired accent', 'a better pronunciation and accent', 'his/her accent often sounds more natural, so it's better', 'they speak quicker, so we have to listen more carefully', 'a correct accent', 'pronunciation is the key', 'it's English in live' (S-1997).

Further, 'grammar and vocabulary' combined make for the other main criterion of 'native' teachers' greater linguistic competence according to students:

'for phrases', 'knows bad words', 'can explain vocabulary better', 'will use words well', 'explains every word in French', 'has a better knowledge of vocabulary', 'knows the mean-

ing of words better', 'doesn't make any mistakes', 'can explain grammar better', 'for explaining things in French', 'for phrases and grammar', 'has a better knowledge of style which is very important', 'for style', 'doesn't give mistakes to the students', 'has the sense of language', 'for phrases and specific sentence structure', 'has good grounds in French', 'knows the language perfectly', 'won't make any mistakes', 'will use words well' (S-2007).

In both corpuses, the terms used by the students are almost identical. Ownership of language is attributed to the native teacher: he/she represents the language, so he/she knows better and therefore is a better teacher...

'for vocabulary', 'a rich vocabulary', 'a more useful vocabulary', 'has more vocabulary', 'has got appropriate words', 'brings all shades of meaning', 'a reliable vocabulary', 'knows all the subtleties of language', 'a perfect knowledge of the language', 'twists the language less', 'knows the traps', 'for phrases and structure', 'for grammar', 'knows what he/she says precisely', 'thinks in English', 'masters the language better', 'makes fewer mistakes', 'knows all the difficulties of the language', 'we are sure he/she doesn't make any mistake in English', 'explains more easily the meaning and subtleties of language', 'a more refined analysis of language' (S-1997).

So, the comparison of the two surveys sheds lights on social representations on FL language teachers inasmuch as they are not restricted to native-speaking English teachers but are extended and relevant to the whole social notion of 'native teachers'.

8. Substantialist connotations on native and non-native teachers

If the *native speaker* as a linguistic category has been criticised for its substantialism or essentialism, this connotation applies equally well to the category *native teachers* of FL. As Holliday (2006: 385) puts it, "Native-speakerism is a pervasive ideology within ELT (...)" and I would add to the whole foreign language teaching field. The two teaching legitimacies that have been defined (*native teacher* as a model of language and culture and *non native teacher* as a model of learning) can be perceived either in competitive or complementary terms, but the substantialist connotations (Kubota 2002, 2006) are still valid. If we deconstruct this category of *native* and *non-native* teachers of foreign languages, it allows us to assess the competence of FL teachers, based on knowledge and know-how acquired through education, experience and qualifications, and not based on 'essence'. The ultimate objective would be to define what the linguistic teaching competence really is within a multilingual world in which the *monolingual-monocultural* norm progressively switches towards a *pluri/multilingual-cultural* kind of norm (Widdowson 2000).

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DO WE KNOW OUR LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

ABSTRACT

We as language teachers do prefer to work with good language learners, who are highly motivated, equipped with effective learning strategies, and achieve well. However, the reality of the instructional setting does not always meet our professional preferences. One of the possible ways to remedy the situation, to deliver more efficient instruction, and to promote better learning is to discover our learners' individual characteristics. The growing professional concern with the learner, learning process and outcomes requires studies in this direction. If we want to be master teachers, we must attempt to discover whom, what and why we teach (Scherer 1999). This survey research aimed to examine motivation and language learning strategies across different achiever categories among the researchers' students at the Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus. Two sets of data (quantitative and qualitative) were collected through administration of two questionnaires, previously piloted and administered at the institutional preparatory level. The analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that all students were extrinsically motivated, had an adequate degree of motivational strength, and favourable attitudes to the target language. However, the underachiever category was reported to be the least motivated intrinsically, whereas the high achievers were the most motivated in this regard. Moreover, all the achiever categories did not report an adequate operation of language learning strategies. The findings provided the researcher with valuable insights to consider in her prospective instructional practice.

1. Introduction

We as language teachers do prefer to work with good language learners, who are highly motivated, equipped with effective learning strategies, and achieve well. We would like our learners to be uninhibited, attentive, willing, analyti-

cal, and communicative in terms of language learning and use (Rubin 1975). However, the reality of the instructional setting does not always meet our professional preferences.

One of the possible ways to remedy the situation, to deliver more efficient instruction, and to promote better learning is to discover our learners' individual characteristics. The growing professional concern with the learner, learning process and outcomes requires studies in this direction. If we want to be master teachers, we must attempt to discover whom, what and why we teach (Scherer 1999).

The language teaching pedagogy developed certain characteristics of the *good language learner*, motivation and learning strategies being amongst the most significant ones. However, not every language learner exhibits motivation since it is "a state rather than an observable action or a conscious thought process" (Gray 2003: 10). Therefore, motivation cannot be defined only in terms of observable classroom behaviors.

Studies of the *good language learner* (Rubin 1975; Stern 1975; Naiman et al. 1995) focused on the identification of this learner category, and language learning strategies, employed by successful learners and promoting second language learning. Language pedagogy can promote the language learner's motivation and learning strategies through realistic instructional goals, effective materials/resources, and efficient classroom management. However, "The ways in which learners differ are potentially infinite as they reflect the whole range of variables relating to the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of a human being" (Ellis 1995: 35).

2. Literature review

As van Lier (1996: 120) points out, "Language educators agree with admirable unanimity on the supreme importance of motivation in language learning". The major motivational determinants are considered to be learner attitudes to the target language/community and learners' communicative needs (Gardner and Lambert 1972). Gardner's (1985) view of motivation comprising a goal, effortful behavior, a desire to attain the goal, and favourable attitudes has been influential on the motivation related research. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994: 14), "Motivation reflects the power to attain the goal which is reflected in the motivational orientation. This power stems from the desire to attain the goal, positive attitudes toward learning the language, and effortful behavior".

Motivation to learn a language comprises both *internal* and *external factors*. Internal, attitudinal factors include interest in L2, relevance, expectancy of success/failure, and outcomes. External, behavioural features refer to the learner's decision to choose, attend to, and engage in L2 learning, his or her persistence over an extended period of time and return to it after interruptions, and maintenance of a high activity level (Crookes and Schmidt 1991).

People make sense of the influences that surround them in ways that are personal to them, and they make their own choices about how to act (Williams 1999). Motivation is viewed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act, and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain previously set goal. A motivational framework comprising four constructs of *identity*, *attitudes*, *sense of agency*, and *external influences* has been proposed recently (Williams and Burden 2000). Motivation is viewed as a nexus, as a web or network in which each constituent part is connected to all the other parts (Gray 2003).

Different dichotomies of motivation have been proposed in the field. In this regard, *instrumental motivation* refers to language learning for short-term and/or practical objectives, whereas *integrative motivation* to language learning for intellectual, social, and cultural development (Gardner and Lambert 1972). *Global motivation* relates to a general orientation/goal of L2 learning, *situational motivation* varies dependent on the learning situation, *task motivation* is involved in performing a learning task (Brown 1981). *Causative motivation* has an effect on learning, whereas *resultative motivation* is influenced by learning (Ellis 1995). *Intrinsic motivation* derives from within the person, and *extrinsic motivation* from outside the person (Deci and Ryan 1992).

Intrinsic motivation arises from innate needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci et al. 1991). According to van Lier (1996: 108), transformation of these needs into goals is the main focus of pedagogical actions. He explain that "The various forces that bear upon the individual's learning activities include a range of factors known as extrinsic motivation" (1998: 109). Extrinsic motivation comprises four types distinguished in terms of internalization and self/other-regulation, such as *external*, *introjected*, *identified* and *integrated regulation* (Deci and Ryan 1985).

Motivation influences how well students perform on achievement tests and how high their general proficiency level becomes (Oxford and Shearin 1994). Achievement relates to three motivational drives, universal needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Construction and manifestation of these achievement aspects is individual specific (van Lier 1996). The intrinsically motivated learner is independent of extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic motivation is accompanied by a sense of self-determination, a feeling of knowing, and a view of the learning process as an end in itself (van Lier 1996). However, the exact relation of motivation to success has become a controversial issue. The dilemma is whether learners are more highly motivated due to success or vice versa (Skehan 1989). As Ellis argues, "It is likely that relationship between motivation and achievement is an interactive one" (1995: 515).

As Oxford and Shearin (1994: 12) explain, "Research shows that motivation directly influences how often students use L2 learning strategies (...)". Language learning strategies (LLS) have been extensively examined in SLA research (e.g. Bialystok 1978; Tarone 1980; Chamot 1987; Rubin 1987;

O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990). The related studies concentrated on three major aspects: strategies *per se*, diverse instructional, social, cultural and affective factors influencing learners' LLS choice(s), and pedagogical applications for ESL/EFL (Tamada 1997).

Various definitions, classifications, inventories of LLS have been proposed in the field. LLS are regarded as "optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language" (Bialystok 1978: 71), "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language" (Tarone 1980: 419), "techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information" (Chamot 1987: 71), "strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs and affects learning directly" (Rubin 1987: 23), "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 1), or "production sets that exist as declarative knowledge and are used to solve some learning problem" (Ellis 1995: 533).

Strategies have been classified into *production*, *communication* and *learning strategies*. The former two strategies have been referred to strategies of language use. However, the distinction is somewhat problematic since a strategy may be motivated either by a desire to learn or communicate. A distinction is made between *language learning strategies* and *skill learning strategies* (Tarone 1988). Strategies have also been categorized into *metacognitive*, *cognitive* and *social/affective strategies* (Chamot 1987).

Oxford (1990: 8) defines LLS as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". L2 learners may choose to employ the best strategies for apprehending, internalizing, and using the target language. On the basis of earlier research, Oxford introduces a comprehensive taxonomy of strategies as a hierarchy of levels. Her strategy inventory comprises strategies classified into *direct* and *indirect* LLS, affecting learners' second language learning directly and indirectly, respectively. Three categories of *memory*, *cognitive* and *compensation strategies* are referred to direct LLS, the other three categories of *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social strategies* are referred to indirect LLS (cf. Oxford 1990: 14).

It is believed that second language learners can employ effective strategies to speed up learning (Cohen 1984) and improve their performance through learner training (O'Malley et al. 1985). Several studies endeavoured to examine potential benefits of learner training (Esch 1997), and strategy training (Politzer and McGroarty 1985; O'Malley 1987; Vann and Abraham 1990). Extensive material has been proposed for learner training (Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Dickinson 1992) and strategy training (Oxford 1990; Wenden 1991).

The L2 learner's choice of language learning strategies is influenced by motivation, attitudes and other factors (Oxford and Shearin 1994). Moti-

vation, learning strategies, and success are interrelated since "in effect, 'successful' or 'expert' or 'intelligent' learners have learned how to learn. They have acquired the learning strategies, the knowledge about learning, and the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of a teacher. Therefore, they are autonomous" (Wenden 1991: 15). An appeal has been made to educators to develop more materials and techniques catering for students' needs in LLS and instructional objectives (Griffiths and Parr 2001).

Oxford and Shearin (1994) advocate expansion of the theoretical framework for motivation through consideration of three major aspects: theoretical and practical issues affecting comprehension of L2 learning motivation, exploration of other motivation and development theories and the implications for L2 learning motivation, and synthesis of related background for second language instruction. Van Lier (1996) argues for a reconceptualization of motivation and proposes a new construct having an intrinsic motivation at its core and dynamically interacting with various forms of extrinsic motivation. The research area on language learning strategies is also still in progress, and new learning strategies, different from the ones proposed so far, may be exhibited in structure-based or communicative instructional settings, and natural acquisition environments.

3. Methodology

This study was a survey research, aimed to examine motivation and language learning strategies of the researcher's students. It was conducted in undergraduate classes at the Eastern Mediterranean University. The study addressed the following research questions:

- (1) How motivated do the undergraduate students report to be?
- (2) Which language learning strategies do the respondents operate in academic studies?
- (3) What differences in motivation and LLS can be identified across the student participants?

A total of 50 second-year students gave their consent to take part in the study. The participants were within the age range of 18-20 years old, 42 female, 8 male. These students were offered oral communication, reading and writing skills, and grammar courses on the commencement of their education. Starting from the second year, the undergraduates were engaged in academic studies which required an adequate degree of motivation and effective language learning strategies.

A student's overall academic achievement at the institution is expressed by *Cumulative Grade-Point Average (CGPA)* index calculated by dividing the total credits earned by the total credit-hours completed (EMU Bulletin 2000-2001: 24). On the basis of the departmental official academic records, the participants in this study were referred to 5 different achiever categories

as follows: 6 high achievers (HA category, CGPA 4-3.5); 16 adequate achievers (AdA category, CGPA 3.49-3); 8 average achievers (AvA category, CGPA 2.99-2.5); 14 low achievers (LA category, CGPA 2.49-2); 6 underachievers (UA category, CGPA 1.99-below).

Two sets of questionnaires, on motivation (Ogane and Sakamoto 1996) and on language learning strategies (Oxford 1990), respectively, were administered by the researcher to her students in two different sessions. These instruments were employed for the research purposes due to the fact that they are comprehensive, and reflect various aspects of individual learner characteristics. Moreover, the questionnaires had previously been piloted and administered to EFL learners at the preparatory level of the institution (Sinal 2002; Yildiray 2003). The use of structured questionnaires, calling for retrospective accounts has been found successful (Ellis 1995: 534).

On the administration days the researcher explained to the students that their participation would provide their teacher with valuable insights for delivering more effective instruction, and that it would have no effect on the course assessment. She answered the respondents' questions to ensure comprehension of the questionnaire instructions and content. In order to secure confidentiality of the participants' identities, they were assigned codes.

The motivation questionnaire (Ogane and Sakamoto 1996) comprised 34 multiple-choice motivation description statements to be completed by the student participants in accordance with the five-point Likert-type scale, and 3 open-ended questions. The instruction noted that there were neither right nor wrong answers. Therefore, the participants were requested to report accordingly. The LLS questionnaire (Oxford 1990) consisted of 6 parts, with a total of 50 multiple-choice LLS description statements. Again, the respondents were requested to report their use of learning strategies across the five Likert-type scale and complete the questionnaire accordingly.

The questionnaire data from the undergraduate students were analyzed in terms of frequency of their positive responses regarding a particular type of motivation and language learning strategy. The data analysis aimed to identify differences, if any, across 5 different achiever categories. The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data was completed by the analysis of the qualitative data on the open-ended questionnaire items.

4. Results

On the motivation questionnaire, all undergraduate students reported to be adequately motivated extrinsically (see Table 1), with the reasons for learning English varying from more job opportunities to impressing other people. Interestingly, the analysis of the reports from the opposite respondent categories, the underachievers and high achievers, revealed the highest frequency means for extrinsic motivation ($M = 10.1$ and $M = 10.6$, respectively). However, in relation to intrinsic motivation, the data analysis dem-

onstrated an increase in this type of motivation towards the high achiever category, with the lowest mean ($M = 5.8$) for the underachiever category, the highest mean ($M = 7.8$) for the high achiever category, the reasons being as diverse as being keen on studying English, or enjoying the challenge of learning the target language.

	Motivation descriptors				CGPA mean
	Extrinsic/12	Intrinsic/8	Attitude/4	Mot.Str./10	
Achiever categories	Mean/SD				
UA category (n = 6)	10.1/1.9	5.8/2.8	3.3/1.4	8.3/1.4	1.44
LA category (n = 12)	6.7/4.4	6/2.7	3.1/1	6.7/3.2	2.26
AvA category (n = 10)	9.8/1.9	6.9/1.2	3.5/0.5	8.3/1.1	2.81
AdA category (n = 16)	9.5/1.5	7.4/0.7	3.5/0.6	8.1/2.5	3.28
HA category (n = 6)	10.6/1.3	7.8/0.3	3.6/0.2	9.5/0.5	3.75

Table 1: Quantitative data on motivation.

All undergraduate students reported their positive attitudes to the target language. The analysis did not reveal major statistical differences in this regard, with the reasons being that English is necessary in today's international world, or that it is a very important subject. Moreover, the analysis of the questionnaire responses on motivational strength showed the highest mean ($M = 9.5$) for the high achievers, an adequate mean ($M = 8.3$) for the underachievers, the reasons being such as planning to continue studying English for as long as possible, or preparing for English classes.

Interestingly, the analysis of the underachievers' reports revealed the highest dispersion, specifically in terms of intrinsic motivation ($SD = 2.8$) and attitude ($SD = 1.4$), whereas the high achievers' reports showed the lowest spread in this regard. The respondents also provided valuable qualitative insights through their responses to 3 open-ended questions asking them what really made them want to study English, what motivated them to study English, what kinds of things they would like to study in English.

On the LLS questionnaire, the undergraduate students reported that they most frequently used the compensation strategies, followed, in the descending order, by the metacognitive, affective, social, memory, and cognitive strategies. Interestingly, the analysis of the questionnaire responses across all 6 LLS categories almost consistently revealed the lowest frequency means for the underachievers, an increase towards the adequate achievers,

relatively higher means for the high achievers (see Table 2). However, even the high achiever category reported just an adequate operation of the memory, and interestingly, the affective strategies. The analysis of the underachievers' questionnaire responses consistently revealed the highest spread across all LLS categories, whereas the high achievers' responses mostly demonstrated the lowest dispersion in this regard.

Achiever categories	LLS descriptors						CGPA mean
	Memory/9	Cognit/14	Compen/6	Metacog/9	Affect/6	Social/6	
	Mean/SD						
UA category (n = 6)	2.3/3.3	4.1/5.9	1.8/1.9	2.5/3.5	2/2	2.5/2.5	1.44
LA category (n = 12)	2.8/2.6	7.8/3	3.9/1.9	5.9/2.3	2/1.9	3/2.2	2.26
AvA category (n = 10)	2/2	6.3/4.5	3/1.8	4.2/3	2.1/1.9	2.6/1.9	2.81
AdA category (n = 16)	4/2.1	6.6/4.2	3.3/1.5	6.6/2.3	2.2/1.8	3.8/2.1	3.28
HA category (n = 6)	4.5/2.5	10.3/1.4	5.5/0.7	8.1/0.6	3.5/0.5	4.5/1.1	3.75

Table 2: Quantitative data on LLS.

5. Discussion

An adequate degree of extrinsic motivation and attitude as expressed by all achiever categories can be accounted for by their informed decision to enroll in an English-medium tertiary institution and major in ELT. However, on intrinsic motivation, the lowest degrees, reported by the underachievers and, conversely, the highest degrees, indicated by the high achievers, may be interrelated to their academic achievement. "Achievement and motivation are closely related" (van Lier 1996: 121).

The qualitative reports from different achiever categories regarding what made them, what motivated them, what kind of things they would like to study in English showed an interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (*ibid.*) (AvA38 "I want to be an English teacher and then I want to make a master in a different country so English is very important and necessary for me."; HA16 "My grades motivate me to study English. Also my willingness of studying English motivates me. I like English very much and I think this is the reason why I am studying"). Some responses referred to extrinsic motivation (HA30 "The environment around me and my mum"; UA2 "Teachers, is very important for me because, if the teachers are not good, the students will hate English subjects"); other responses were related to intrinsic motivation (LA17 "Because like English very much and I want

to use English in my future job”; AdA18 “As I love English I enjoy studying it so I can be easily motivate myself to study English”). The qualitative reports also reflected the respondents’ favourable attitudes (UA1 “Because it is an international language”), and motivational strength (LA8 “I think that we should not study only in the class. Also out of the classroom we should spent extra time to improve our English”).

Interestingly, the examination of the high achievers’ responses to the open-ended questions mostly revealed their intrinsic motivation. Van Lier (1996: 13) notes that authentic actions realize a free choice and express a person’s genuine feelings and beliefs. This can be related to the following response from one of the high achievers: HA4 “The way the English is spoken, British people, their culture attracts me a lot”. Deci et al. (1991: 328) believe that “(...) intrinsically motivated behaviours are engaged in for their own sake – for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from their performance”. This insight is reflected in the following response: HA30 “I don’t know what it is, but it is coming inside of me. I love English and I’m studying it”. A desire to learn more, increased curiosity, confidence in one’s abilities, a greater awareness of values and social issues equal intrinsic achievements (van Lier 1996: 223), this is illustrated in other high achiever reports (HA25 “I believe in my ability and capability in speaking and using English”; HA16 “It can be anything related to English. I want to study discoveries, invention or old cultural ruins. I want to study interesting things. But whatever I study about English is interesting for me”). Thus, the analysis of the qualitative data on motivation backed up the related quantitative data.

The need for examining intrinsic motivation of the L2 learner has been emphasized by the recent motivational research (Crookes and Schmidt 1990). Motivation deriving from academic success “(...) can be developed by careful selection of learning tasks both to achieve the right level of complexity to create opportunities for success and to foster intrinsic interest” (Ellis 1995: 119). Comprehensive practical steps in the language classroom can enhance the learner intrinsic motivation (Breen and Littlejohn 2000; Williams and Burden 2000).

In foreign language contexts, learner motivation is determined by attitudes and beliefs about foreign language and culture. Therefore, their needs related to psychological or emotional security enabling them to take risks in the target language learning should be taken into account (Stevick 1976; Brown 1987; Oxford 1990). A range of motivational strategies, specifically to create basic motivational conditions, to generate initial motivation, to maintain and protect it, and to encourage positive self-evaluation can be taught by language teachers (Dörnyei 2001).

Contrary to the promising study findings on motivation, the data analysis demonstrated the respondents’ inadequate competence in LLS to cope with academic studies. Overall, the LLS deficit revealed by the questionnaire analysis can be due to lack of familiarity, insufficient development, practice

and employment of strategies in the students' previous language learning experiences. In the present study, the cognitive and memory strategies, crucial for successful academic studies, were reported to be used least frequently by the respondents. Foreign language students do not rely on cognitive strategies to a sufficient degree (Chamot et al. 1987). Teachers can not and should not expect students to employ the same strategies, but they can promote their awareness, selection, and application of the most effective and suitable strategies for themselves.

Interestingly, the underachiever category reported the lowest degree of intrinsic motivation and LLS use, whereas the high achiever category reported the highest degree of intrinsic motivation and the relatively higher degree of LLS operation. Motivation is a powerful, influential factor in the application of language learning strategies (Oxford and Nyikos 1989). As Ellis (1995: 542) explains, "The strength of learner's motivation can be expected to have a causal effect on the quantity of learning strategies they employ". The statistical differences can be referred to the differences in the students' academic status since a capacity to use strategies is considered to be one of the major aspects of successful language learning (Wenden 1991). Good language learners use language learning strategies flexibly and appropriately (Chamot et al. 1988).

The questionnaire administration provided the teacher-researcher with the LLS profiles for prospective instructional design and delivery. The data analysis showed an individual variation in the number and types of strategies employed by the students within respective LLS categories. However, the findings necessitated learner training (Dickinson 1992) and strategy training (Oxford 1990).

Effective training requires discovering what strategies/combinations of strategies should be taught, taking into account learners' own preferred learning strategies, and convincing learners that strategy training is worth while. It should also clarify whether learner training will work best when it exists as a separate strand in language programme or when it is fully integrated into the language teaching materials. Training should also consider timing, deciding whether learners should be made conscious of the strategies they are taught, or whether just providing practice opportunities is sufficient (Ellis 1995: 557-558).

According to van Lier (1996: 99), "What we need to seek is a responsible course of action which balances intrinsic and extrinsic resources and constraints, and the needs and goals of the individual with the needs and goals of society". He adds that "Extrinsic motivation can be used to marshal the productive forces of intrinsic motivation" (1996: 111). Equipped with effective LLS, language learners can gradually learn to think, explore, and produce successfully in the target language. To quote Prodromou, "To transform failure into success we must first of all believe that all learners are capable of success and that failure is only success in disguise" (1999: 89).

6. Conclusion

The study provided the researcher with valuable insights on 'whom' she taught, and prospective plans for 'what and why to teach' (Scherer 1999). It demonstrated interesting statistical differences in terms of intrinsic motivation and language learning strategies across five achiever categories, especially between the high achiever and the underachiever categories. The findings revealed that all students required strategy training for successful academic studies.

We should encourage our students to use language learning strategies meaningfully and extensively, in class work and homework. In a supportive environment, in addition to providing extrinsic rewards, teachers can help learners self-evaluate their own learning progress and achievement objectively, and thus build up intrinsic incentives. Learner motivation can evolve from an enjoyable learning process itself (Burstall 1979).

Prospective language classroom research can consider examination of the *good language teacher* (Prodromou 1999). Professional language teachers should continuously develop their ability "to promote joy and success in their students' learning" (Underhill 1999: 8). They should also help their students develop motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills to become independent learners, communicators and individuals (Littlejohn 1997).

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LISTENING ANXIETY AND THE EFFECT OF TEXT TYPE ON ITS OCCURRENCE

ABSTRACT

Every foreign language learner feels inadequate, ineffective and helpless at a certain period in the language learning process. Of the main reasons of these feelings, anxiety has been pronounced more frequently than the other affective variables. The primary concern of this study was to investigate the effect of text type on Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA) which is a situation-specific type of general language learning anxiety. The sample for the study consisted of 130 students in the preparatory English classes of Gaziantep University. As a result of a series of one-way ANOVAs conducted on the data obtained using the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), the current study demonstrated that listening text type was a distinctive factor for Foreign Language Listening Anxiety. It was established that FL learners are sensitive to the type of the listening texts that they listen to. As a result of the comparison of the text types in terms of their effects on listening anxiety, we can draw the conclusion that authenticity of the listening text leads to more listening anxiety. In the present study, three of Kim's (2000) sources of listening anxiety were found to be of greater importance than the others. These sources are Pace of Listening; Intonation, Stress, and Pronunciation; and Number of Unknown Vocabulary Items.

1. Introduction

Every foreign language learner feels inadequate, ineffective and helpless at a certain period in the language learning process. Usually, these feelings add up to create what is known as *anxiety*. Anxiety literature suggests some pos-

sible arguments explaining why language learners become anxious. Horwitz et al. (1986) claim that foreign language anxiety is a unique type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning, and their concept has been buttressed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1991a) and other theorists. They claim that language anxiety is a situation-specific type of general anxiety (trait anxiety).

Stage	Type of anxiety	Effect on learning
Beginner	Very little – restricted to state anxiety.	None.
Post beginner	Situation anxiety develops if learner develops negative expectations based on bad learning experiences.	Learner expects to be nervous and performs poorly.
Later	Poor performance and continued bad learning experiences result in increased anxiety.	Continued poor performance.

Table 1: A model by Ellis (1995) to explain the role of anxiety in language learning.

Table 1 shows that the language learner has very little anxiety, much of which is not related to situation specific anxiety at the beginning of the language learning experience. Gradually, situation anxiety develops if a learner forms negative expectations based on bad learning experiences. This causes the learner to expect to be nervous and to perform badly. So long as the anxiety-provoking experiences increase, the learner continues to feel anxious as a reaction against the learning situation itself.

So far, studies in listening anxiety have focused on overall skills as reflected by the use of course grades as performance measures. The current study attempted to do the same thing with a significant difference. The researcher controlled for text type in order to observe the effect of a certain type of listening text on students' listening anxiety as measured by an anxiometer adopted from MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) and a checklist utilized to determine the sources of anxiety specific to each listening text type.

Listening anxiety is found to be significantly negatively related to listening comprehension (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994; MacIntyre et al. 1997). Nevertheless, these studies do not primarily focus on listening comprehension. Their primary concern is overall second language skills. Therefore, their findings cannot be considered as truly representative of listening anxiety. Kim (2000) realized this gap in the anxiety literature and devised a specific scale for listening anxiety, namely Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (referred to as FLLAS in this study). Her study suggested that foreign language learners do experience anxiety in response to listening comprehension.

In the anxiety literature, it was established that foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA) affects listening comprehension. Whether listening text type can affect listeners' FLLA levels is another questionable issue. The present study tried to find an answer to this question. Thus, it added a new dimension to the listening anxiety issue. The existence of listening anxiety

has been proved by the studies mentioned above and it was established that foreign language learning anxiety and listening anxiety are separate but related phenomena (Elkhafaifi 2005). The first focus of the current study was to find out whether listening anxiety is affected by the text type. Secondly, the current study quantitatively analyzed the sources of listening anxiety and tried to confirm the listening anxiety sources presented by Kim (2000). More precisely, the study tried to answer the following research questions:

- Do different listening text types have a differential effect on students' reported levels of listening anxiety (as measured by the anxometer)?
- What are the sources of listening anxiety created by different types of listening passages?

2. Review of literature

2.1. Foreign language learning and anxiety

According to Scovel (1978: 129), "The research into the relationship of anxiety to foreign language learning has provided mixed and confusing results, immediately suggesting that anxiety itself is neither a simple nor a well-understood psychological construct and that it is perhaps premature to attempt to relate it to the global and comprehensive task of language acquisition". This demonstrates that the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning has been subject to a considerable amount of debate and research since the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the controversy, it is clear that students experience a significant amount of anxiety in their FL classes.

For instance, in a study by Horwitz et al. (1986), 38% of the subjects endorsed the item "I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes". The researchers drew parallels between foreign language anxiety and three related performance anxieties: (1) communication apprehension, (2) test anxiety, and (3) fear of negative evaluation.

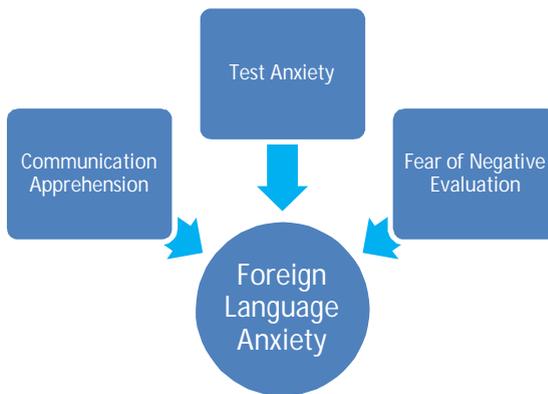


Figure 1: Performance anxieties complementing to FLLA.

Communication apprehension is defined as a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people. *Test anxiety* refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure in the exams. *Fear of negative evaluation* is “apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Horwitz et al. 1986: 128).

2.2. Listening comprehension anxiety

Scarcella and Oxford (1992, cited in Vogely 1998: 67) state that listening anxiety occurs when students feel they are faced with a task that is too difficult or unfamiliar to them. This anxiety is brought about by listeners’ negative *listening self-concept*, which is a low level of self-confidence in the area of listening (Joiner 1986, cited in Vogely 1998: 68). Researchers who are into listening skills have also started agreeing that foreign language listening creates anxiety (Bacon 1989; Young 1992).

More recently, Kim (2000) devised a research project on foreign language listening anxiety, which forms the basis for the current study. The author looked for a relationship between foreign language listening and anxiety. The results of Kim’s study suggested that foreign language learners indeed experience anxiety in response to listening comprehension.

3. Methodology

This study is a descriptive analysis of the participants’ listening anxiety levels and aims to find out about the relationship between foreign language listening anxiety and listening text type. The study will provide information on the possible relationship between listening text type and listening anxiety. It will also look at the sources of listening anxiety as adapted from Kim (2000).

3.1. Participants

The sample for the study consisted of 130 students in the preparatory English classes of Gaziantep University. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 27 with an average age of 19.6. The male-female ratio was 111:46.

Proficiency Level	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Pre-Intermediate level	71	45.2	45.2	45.2
Intermediate Level	49	31.2	31.2	76.4
Upper-Intermediate Level	37	23.6	23.6	100.0
Total	157	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the proficiency level.

3.2. Instruments

Three instruments were employed with the purpose of collecting the data in the study. These included:

1. *The Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS)*

Since Wheelless' (1975) Receiver Apprehension Test which had often been used to measure listening anxiety was specifically designed for first language acquisition, Kim (2000) felt the need to design a scale specific to foreign language learning to better measure listening anxiety. After a thorough preparation and review process, she developed a specific scale in order to measure Foreign Language Listening Anxiety better. The scale was named Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS). For the current study, the items in the FLLAS were translated into Turkish by the author. Then, the translated version was back-translated by 3 ELT MA students and the problematic translations were corrected. Colleagues from the Turkish Language Department were asked to evaluate the final version of the translation and the minor points which may have led to misunderstandings were corrected accordingly.

2. *The scale used to measure the sources of listening anxiety and students' anxiety levels during listening to different texts*

Kim (2000) established some sources of listening anxiety as a result of the qualitative analyses of some semi-controlled interviews. The current study tried to confirm these sources by using them together with an anxometer adapted from MacIntyre and Gardner (1991). The sources were listed and the students were asked to check the one/s they thought affected them. The anxometer used in the scale would give information about the anxiety levels of the students during listening to texts of different types. Below is shown the anxometer used in the scale.

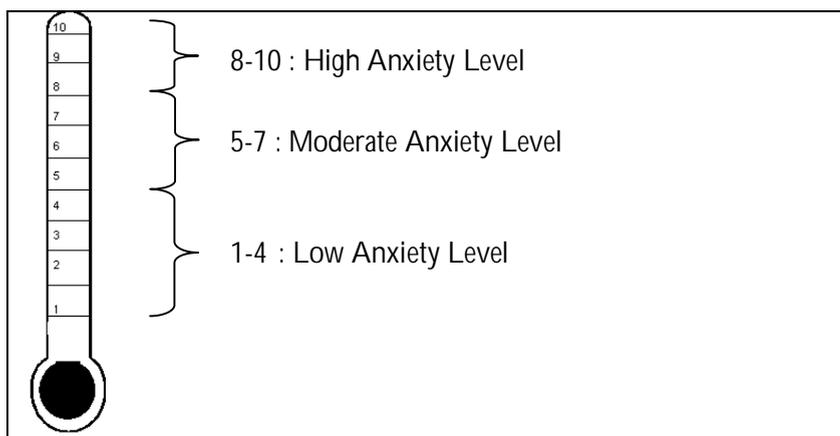


Figure 2: Anxometer (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991).

3. *Listening texts for the elicitation of listening anxiety*

For the elicitation of listening anxiety, nine listening passages were used. Three of these passages were dialogues from everyday life; three were lectures; and the remaining three were extracts from radio talk shows. These three listening types were chosen because the first one reflects the colloquial usage of English; the second one is an example of the academic use of English; and the last type relates to the usage of English in the media which can be regarded as a separate genre. It can be said that there was a wide spectrum of text types. The passages were a little above the students' current listening proficiency ability in order that the students would experience listening anxiety when they had to participate in activities which were more challenging. The difficulty of the passages was checked by the classroom teachers.

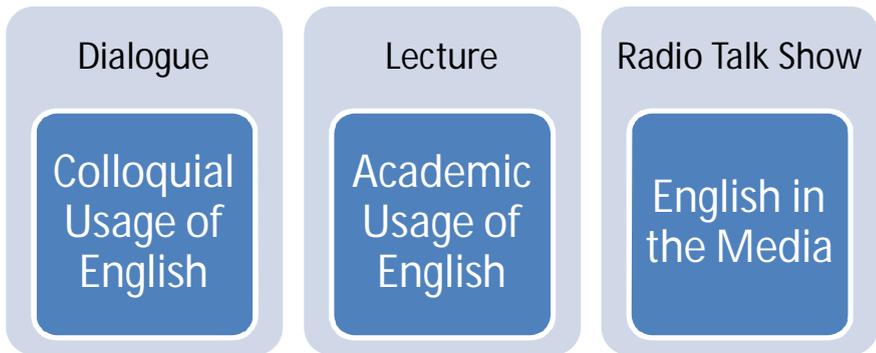


Figure 3: Three types of listening texts used in the study.

3.3. Data collection

The pilot study was conducted in order to measure the time needed to fill out the questionnaires, to clarify the data collection procedures, and to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to fifty-eight students representing an intermediate level of English proficiency. The alpha (α) reliability score for the FLLAS was .90, which showed that the questionnaire would reliably serve the purpose of the study. The same subjects were not included in the main study in order to prevent the effect of the pilot study on the main study.

To analyze the listening process better, the researcher periodically had participants listen to three different types of listening passages with an interval of one and a half months between each two administrations. After listening to the passages, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire with the anxometer. The aim was to determine the level of listening anxiety each type of listening text provoked. As mentioned in the instruments part, the scale also included some (14) sources of listening anxiety that allowed students to describe what the major cause of their anxiety was.

3.4. Data analysis

Having collected all the data required for the investigation, the researcher typed the data into SPSS 15.0 which is a package programme for statistical analyses in social sciences. The first step was to gather the Cronbach's Alpha values for the scales FLLAS. Then, the scores obtained by the use of the anxometer were run in a one-way ANOVA in order to see the effect of text type on participants FLCA levels.

4. Results and discussion

There were initially 33 questions scored on a five-point Likert type scale in the FLLAS. However, as a result of the factor analysis run on the scale, the researcher found out that 9 of these questions were not able to serve the purpose of the current study. The analysis created a scale comprising 24 items with a theoretical range of 24 to 120. Below are the descriptive statistics for the FLLAS after the principal component analysis:

	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean	72.2866	1.09369
Median	73.0000	
Variance	187.796	
Std. Deviation	13.70385	
Minimum	30.00	
Maximum	106.00	
Range	76.00	
Skewness	.360	.194
Kurtosis	.546	.385

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the FLLAS.

The range for the total scores for the FLLAS was 76 with a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 106. The mean was 72.2866 and the standard deviation was 13.70385. For the FLLAS, the skewness and kurtosis values were in the acceptable limits. The Cronbach's Alpha was .86 after the problematic items were suppressed.

Research Question 1: Do different listening text types have a differential effect on GUSFL (Gaziantep University School of Foreign Languages) students' reported levels of listening anxiety (as measured by the anxometer)?

In order to answer this research question, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The first concern was whether the dataset met the assumptions needed for the ANOVA. The dataset of the current study meets the assumption of independence. That is, the groups are independent of each other. There are

two ways we can check the assumption of normality. The first one is to take a look at the skewness value, as used in the previous one-way ANOVAs in the current study.

Statistics

Anxiety Level (out of 10)

N	Valid	364
	Missing	0
Skewness		-.073
Std. Error of Skewness		.128

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for anxiety level.

The skewness value (-.073) is really close to zero, which indicated that the distribution of the dependent variable is close to normal distribution. The second way to check the assumption of normality is to observe the Q-Q plot in order to see whether or not the data skews on the outliers.

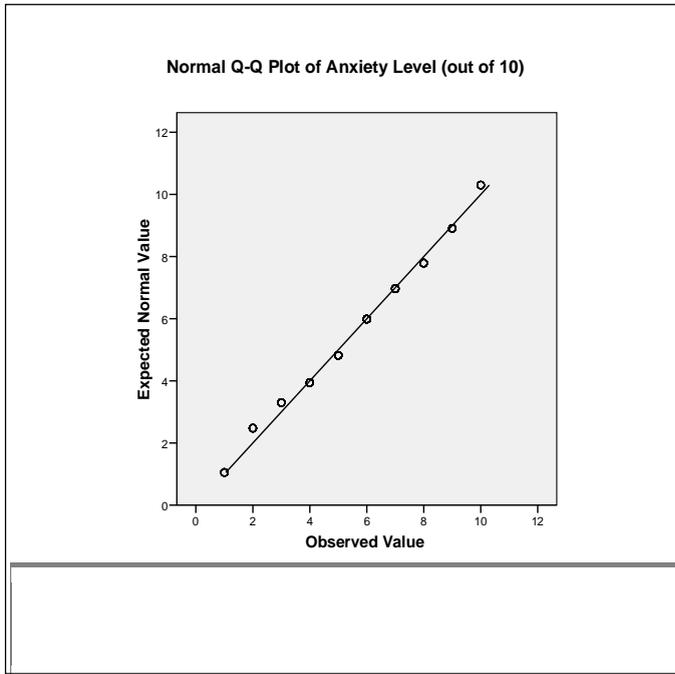


Figure 4: Normal Q-Q plot of anxiety level.

As can be observed on the Q-Q plot, the distribution is truly close to normal distribution. Thus, the assumption of normality is met. The third assumption concerns the population variances. In order to be able to conduct a one-way ANOVA, the variances of the groups should be equal. This can be checked using a Levene’s test.

Listening anxiety and the effect of text type on its occurrence

Test of Homogeneity of Variances			
Anxiety Level (out of 10)			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.505	2	361	.223

Table 5: Summary of the Levene's test for anxiety level.

The significance value is greater than .05 (sig. = .223 > .05). This enables us to assume that the population variances are equal. Therefore, the third assumption is met. The last assumption states that the dependent variable should be at least a scale variable. The current dataset meets this assumption as well. The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 6:

ANOVA (Anxiety Level)					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	533.692	2	266.846	67.304	.000
Within Groups	1431.283	361	3.965		
Total	1964.975	363			

Table 6: Summary of the one-way ANOVA for anxiety level and text type.

The next step was to conduct a post hoc test in order to spot among which groups the difference was present. Table 7 illustrates the findings of the Scheffe post hoc test:

Multiple Comparisons
 Dependent Variable: Anxiety Level (out of 10)
 Scheffe

(I) Text Type	(J) Text Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dialogue	Lecture	-1.53761*	.25374	.000	-2.1613	-.9139
	Radio Talk Show	-2.93932*	.25374	.000	-3.5630	-2.3156
Lecture	Dialogue	1.53761*	.25374	.000	.9139	2.1613
	Radio Talk Show	-1.40171*	.26033	.000	-2.0416	-.7618
Radio Talk Show	Dialogue	2.93932*	.25374	.000	2.3156	3.5630
	Lecture	1.40171*	.26033	.000	.7618	2.0416

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7: Summary of the Scheffe post-hoc test for anxiety level and text type.

The multiple comparisons table shows that the mean differences are significant between dialogue and lecture (-1.53761, sig. = .000), dialogue and radio talk show (-2.93932, sig. = .000), and lecture and radio talk show (-1.40171, sig. = .000). The indication is that listeners in a foreign language are sensitive to the differences of text type. However, the first one-way ANOVA was conducted irrespective of the proficiency level. It should be

plausible to conduct the one-way ANOVA for all three proficiency levels separately in order to eliminate the effect of proficiency.

For the upper-intermediate level, one-way ANOVA yielded significant differences between the means of the groups (sig. = .000). Table 8 shows the mean differences:

Multiple Comparisons^a

Dependent Variable: Anxiety Level (out of 10)

Scheffe

(I) Text Type	(J) Text Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dialogue	Lecture	-1.29832	.55815	.072	-2.6884	.0918
	Radio Talk Show	-2.86975*	.55815	.000	-4.2598	-1.4797
Lecture	Dialogue	1.29832	.55815	.072	-.0918	2.6884
	Radio Talk Show	-1.57143*	.58454	.031	-3.0272	-.1156
Radio Talk Show	Dialogue	2.86975*	.55815	.000	1.4797	4.2598
	Lecture	1.57143*	.58454	.031	.1156	3.0272

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

a Proficiency level = Upper-intermediate

Table 8: Summary of the Scheffe post-hoc test for anxiety level and text type for the upper intermediate level.

The multiple comparisons table demonstrates that the mean differences are significant between dialogue and radio talk show (-2.86975, sig. = .000) and between lecture and radio talk show (-1.57143, sig. = .031). The mean difference between dialogue and lecture is not significant for the upper-intermediate group (sig. = .072). As for the intermediate group, the one-way ANOVA was also significant between groups (sig. = .000).

Multiple Comparisons^a

Dependent Variable: Anxiety Level (out of 10)

Scheffe

(I) Text Type	(J) Text Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dialogue	Lecture	-1.43271*	.40597	.003	-2.4383	-.4572
	Radio Talk Show	-2.81366*	.40597	.000	-3.8192	-1.8081
Lecture	Dialogue	1.43271*	.40597	.003	.4272	2.4383
	Radio Talk Show	-1.38095*	.41509	.005	-2.4091	-.3528
Radio Talk Show	Dialogue	2.81366*	.40597	.000	1.8081	3.8192
	Lecture	1.38095*	.41509	.005	.3528	2.4091

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

a Proficiency Level = Intermediate

Table 9: Summary of the Scheffe post-hoc test for anxiety level and text type for the intermediate level.

The multiple comparisons table illustrates that the mean differences are significant between dialogue and lecture (-1.43271, sig. = .003), dialogue and radio talk show (-2.81366, sig. = .000), and lecture and radio talk show (-1.38095, sig. = .005) for the intermediate group. One-way ANOVA for the pre-intermediate group also proved to be significant (sig. = .000).

Multiple Comparisons^a

Dependent Variable: Anxiety Level (out of 10)

Scheffe

(I) Text Type	(J) Text Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dialogue	Lecture	-1.79787*	.39886	.000	-2.7846	-.8111
	Radio Talk Show	-3.11702*	.39886	.000	-4.1038	-2.1303
Lecture	Dialogue	1.79787*	.39886	.000	.8111	2.7846
	Radio Talk Show	-1.31915*	.40498	.006	-2.3211	-.3172
Radio Talk Show	Dialogue	3.11702*	.39886	.000	2.1303	4.1038
	Lecture	1.31915*	.40498	.006	.3172	2.3211

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

a Proficiency Level = Pre-Intermediate

Table 10: Summary of the Scheffe post-hoc test for anxiety level and text type for the pre-intermediate level.

The multiple comparisons table shows that the mean differences are significant between dialogue and lecture (-1.79787, sig. = .000), dialogue and radio talk show (-3.11702, sig. = .000), and lecture and radio talk show (-1.31915, sig. = .006) for the intermediate group.

As a result of the one-way ANOVAs conducted on the dataset, it can be said that text type is a distinctive factor for FLLA. In other words, different listening text types have differential effects on GUSFL students' reported levels of listening anxiety. In order to be able to comment on the reason why text type creates differential amounts of FLLA in EFL listeners, an analysis on the average speech rates of the three different text types was carried out. The analysis was done on the texts used in the current study. The results are presented in Table 11.

Text Type	Words/minute	Syllables/minute	Syllables/word	Words/sentence
Dialogues	200	250	1.25	7.2
Lectures	187	246	1.37	20.2
Radio Talk Shows	219	277	1.27	13.3

Table 11: Average speech rates for the three different text types.

Based on the results of the analysis presented in Table 11, it can be said that the difference among the text types basically lies in the fact that radio talk shows include more words per minute (wpm). In a dialogue, speakers utter 200 wpm. In a lecture, the number decreases to 187. In a radio talk show, which

is the fastest of all, speakers utter approximately 219 wpm. The indication is that the speed of delivery is the fastest in radio talk shows, which makes them difficult to comprehend; thereby leading to anxiety. In line with this finding, the syllable per minute (spm) ratio is the highest in radio talk shows (277 spm).

The most striking finding is that the number of words per sentence (wps) is the highest in lectures (20.2 wps). This shows that the sentences used in the lectures are longer than those used in dialogues. This might well be the reason why lectures are more anxiety-provoking than dialogues. In radio talk shows, the wps ratio is 13.3. For dialogues, the ratio is 7.2. To sum up, speech rate is clearly an important variable in listening comprehension and listening anxiety. Buck (2001: 40) suggests that "comprehension declines as the speaker talks faster, and the weight of the evidence suggests that the decline in comprehension is rather slow until a threshold level is reached, at which time an increased speech rate leads to a much more rapid decline in comprehension". Since there is wide-ranging agreement on the fact that comprehension and anxiety are negatively related concepts, this may be the reason why different text types create differing amounts of listening anxiety in EFL listeners.

Research Question 2: What are the sources of listening anxiety created by different types of listening passages?

Table 12 provides the reader with information about the frequencies of the FLLA sources. This will show whether different text types create different FLLA sources. The values the table were gathered by asking the students whether they thought the listed sources of listening anxiety affected their levels of listening anxiety. The students ticked the sources that affected their anxiety levels. The answers were coded as 'yes' or 'no'. The values show the percentages of positive answers. The percentages which were over 50% were bolded in the table, since it means that there are more people who think those sources influence their listening anxiety. The values will both reveal the general sources of listening anxiety and will disclose the differences among the sources of anxiety specific to each text type.

Generally, the number of unknown words, pace of listening, intonation, stress and pronunciation are the most influential sources of listening anxiety. Virtually all the participants (88.87%) think that pace of listening is what affects their anxiety most. This may be an indication that authenticity genuinely affects listening anxiety. Since the texts were authentic texts extracted from the Internet or students' textbooks, the flow of the speeches or conversations were real-life-like. Given the fact that the students are accustomed to a kind of 'motherese' used by their teachers in the EFL learning context, comprehension of the authentic speech fragments constitutes a big burden, which directly contributes to their already existing anxiety. Thus, speed of delivery may be considered the most powerful anxiety-provoking factor for listening in EFL. The 'slurring' (Kim 2000: 129) of some words makes comprehension more difficult.

Listening anxiety and the effect of text type on its occurrence

Anxiety Source	Dialogue N = 130		Lecture N = 117		Radio talk show N = 117	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Number of the unknown words	66	50.8	83	70.9	56	47.9
Sound quality (disturbances, low volume etc.)	71	54.6	54	46.2	57	48.7
Number of the speakers	18	13.8	-	-	1	0.9
Pace of the listening	111	85.4	105	89.7	107	91.5
Background noise	15	11.5	19	16.2	12	10.3
Length of the listening text	23	17.7	59	50.4	44	37.6
Unfamiliarity of the topic	11	8.5	30	25.6	14	12
Intonation, stress, and pronunciation	85	65.4	68	58.1	68	58.1
Concentration problem	56	43.1	68	58.1	54	46.2
Lack of visual help (e.g. pictures, videos, maps)	40	30.8	50	42.7	48	41
Inconfidence in listening ability	46	35.4	42	35.9	36	30.8
Lack of skills in listening comprehension	33	25.4	31	26.5	31	26.5
Psychological state	32	24.6	48	41	25	21.4
Difficulty of the multiple-choice questions	8	6.2	19	16.2	12	10.3

Table 12: Frequency table of sources of listening anxiety according to text type.

Intonation, stress and pronunciation are the second major cause of listening anxiety according to the percentages gathered from the study (60.5%). The greatest burden before comprehension is that of 'accent'. Even advanced learners of English confront this problem. Even though they can identify the words, the phrases, and the structures of the statements, they are having difficulty understanding what the speaker means due to some discrepancies between their accent and that of the native speakers in the authentic texts. They may sometimes even miss the words they know owing to this accent problem.

The third concern was the number of unknown lexical items in the listening texts (56.5%). The larger the number of unknown vocabulary items, the greater anxiety learners feel about listening in an FL. Actually, this source of anxiety may be directly related to the previously mentioned sources of listening anxiety, because the pace, intonation, stress, and pronunciation of the words may cause the incomprehension of some words. The listeners may even miss the words they know. This may lead to the conclusion that there are actually more unknown words than they hear. As can be seen in the table, the other sources of listening anxiety received relatively fewer pickings than

the mentioned ones. This indicates that for our group, these sources of anxiety are less distinctive than the three mentioned above.

For the dialogue, the most influential anxiety sources were pace of listening (85.4%), intonation, stress, and pronunciation (65.4%), sound quality (54.6%), and the amount of unknown vocabulary (50.8%). For the lecture, the most anxiety-provoking sources were pace of listening (89.7%), number of unknown vocabulary (70.9%), intonation, stress, and pronunciation (58.1%), concentration problem (58.1%), and length of the text (50.4%). For the radio talk show, the most anxiety-provoking sources were pace of listening (91.5%) and intonation, stress, and pronunciation (58.1%).

5. Conclusion

Previously, Kim (2000) had indicated that EFL learners are sensitive to the text and task type, that is, their levels of listening anxiety change according to the listening text type. However, this claim was based on some retrospective interviews. The current study made the quantitative evaluation of that claim. One-way ANOVA procedures established that text type has a differential effect on EFL learners' levels of listening anxiety.

The listening activities employed in the participants' classrooms mostly include scripted dialogues. Thus, the students experience the least anxiety with this kind of listening text. The lecture poses more challenge to the students because they are not familiar with that text type. The radio talk show is the most anxiety-provoking of all, since its pace, intonation, stress and pronunciation features are truly close to being authentic. Therefore, we can draw the conclusion that authenticity of the listening text leads to more listening anxiety. In the present study, three of Kim's (2000) sources were found to be of greater importance than the others. These sources are *pace of listening, intonation, stress and pronunciation, and number of unknown vocabulary items*.

The findings of the study can also serve as a basis for some pedagogical implications, as follows:

- The most important thing to do to reduce EFL learners' listening anxiety is to make the input comprehensible.
- Providing the students with relevant visuals with each listening text may be beneficial to reduce listening anxiety.
- It would be beneficial to keep the texts shorter.
- Teachers should incorporate strategy training in the listening activities.
- Since this study found that text type is a distinctive factor for the students' listening anxiety levels, teachers should be more careful about text selection both for the classroom activities and for use in the exams. Make use of positive backwash.

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ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR/AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS?

ABSTRACT

This paper is a report on a retrospective ethnographic case study on a dyslexic Chinese student in the context of a boarding school in the UK. The study considers on some of the issues around language acquisition, learning and dyslexia. The study focuses on diagnosis and concludes with findings and recommendations. The aims of the study was to define the criteria which enabled diagnosis of the student's condition and to make recommendations for students and teachers in a similar position.

1. An overview of the student and the school context

The school is an independent co-educational boarding school in a small city in the south east of the United Kingdom. Ming arrived at the school to join his two brothers. He was a complete beginner of English, from Taiwan, and was 12 years old. Ming did not appear to be making progress in language learning and acquisition in the first few weeks. He was good at maths when it was presented in a numerical form but if there were words involved, he found the task more difficult. He had excellent skills in working with drawings and other visual clues. His good visual perception, talent and interest in areas such as Design and Technology and Art enabled him to excel and achieve status in the eyes of teachers and peers. He was also very keen on sports, and represented the school in rugby and hockey. (cf. Hatcher, Snowling and Griffiths 2002). Ming's family confirmed that reading and writing had developed slowly in his first language. They reassured us that there was 'no problem'.

Having established that there were no physical or medical reasons for slow acquiring of L2 and that there had been a similar slow acquisition of the

skills in L1, another explanation was sought. I discovered through interviews and observation that Ming's acquisition of literacy in L1 had been problematic and remained incomplete. He did not read fluently in L1. I was unable to confirm phonological memory in L1, but in L2 a weakness was established. There was some lack of awareness of rhyme and he could not always sequence letters in spelling when the sounds were spoken aloud. He also found it difficult to sequence a story unless he acted it out. It became clear that the delicate motor skills involved with writing (and, for example, with manipulating a knife and fork, or chopsticks) were problematic when writing L1 and also in L2.

Ming had a low level of measurable linguistic competence. However, his ability to communicate was high. He learnt what he needed to communicate with the people around him. As his relationships became established, communication improved. Only part of that improvement was verbal. He became a competent user of metacognitive skills: he decided on the communication goals, assessed, planned and communicated meaningfully. He would frequently ask, "how you say, I want ask...?". These substrategies were central to his communicative competence.

Ming was often frustrated by his poor memory. His memory could be triggered through a hands-on practical mode as well as the use of colour and drawings. Ming was in the low average bracket for his age in using his working memory processing skills, as assessed on the Digit Span. This means that it was difficult for him to consolidate process, rehearse and recall sequences of speech sounds. Ming took risks in trying to communicate. He had a holistic approach to language learning, he was not interested in discrete aspects of language. He enjoyed being with people and made friends with different age groups and different nationalities. He expressed his preference about the environment in which he was taught; he was not an inhibited learner. Investigation around issues of dyslexia became one of the choices of a way forward.

2. Dyslexia

To find a working definition for dyslexia is not straightforward, there does not appear to be a concrete and cohesive understanding. The purpose of constructing a definition is not always clear and it appears that the reasons for a definition may affect the nature of the definition constructed. Generally, it is thought that there are three main ways of understanding and describing dyslexia: a biological understanding which involves an element of genetics and neurology, a cognitive understanding, concerned with the processing of information and, finally, a behavioural understanding.

As part of the investigation of dyslexia and multilingualism I consulted Dr Ian Smythe. The various definitions of dyslexia and how these definitions may converge, diverge or present parallels formed part of the study. This manifestation of dyslexia in any individual will depend not only upon

individual cognitive differences, but also the language used. This idea seems to encompass the neurological, phonological and cognitive aspects and also introduces the significant element of language.

Dyslexia is rightly viewed within a continuum and can overlap with other specific difficulties as they may share similar neurological, biological and cognitive mechanisms. Dyslexia has a universal currency. Furthermore, it is important to remember that no two dyslexic people are the same and there is no evidence that all individuals with dyslexia will show the same traits (Singleton 2005)

3. Appropriate pedagogy

Collaborative and practical hands-on interactive styles were used and the opportunity given to speak before having to write. Ming loved playing games. It is clear from the transcript of an interview that he remembers the games and how they helped him. Games, laughter and general playfulness should not be undervalued.

Ming acquired language naturally; he learnt key verbs in an effort to communicate. Chinese has been described as a 'verb-friendly' language (Tommasello 2003: 46) It could be said that this was a transferred skill from his first language. Another view could be that of immersion versus teaching. If one were to contrast the formal teaching of English as an additional language to access the curriculum, to support social interaction, and for public examinations – with the practice of immersion, it is clear that immersion would be more effective for speed and immediate usefulness (Tijms *et al* 2003). In this case there was a role for both.

In order to evaluate some of the conditions that are identifiable and memorable for him, I interviewed Ming after he had left the school. I asked him, "How did you learn to read, to work out the sounds (...) because it's so different from Chinese?" Ming replied, "Yes. Um, I do have problem with 'th' /t/ but (. . .) um (. . .) well (. . .) um (. . .) Mrs X sometime unwrap sounds um, with me".

Unwrapping the sounds, in essence, is learning to read. When asked about learning to write, Ming confirmed what teachers know: that the development of reading skills precedes and anticipates the acquisition of writing ability. He also spoke about learning to speak before learning to read. The interview provided the evidence, if any were needed, of the acquisition process being observed and reflected on by a learner.

Reading the interview has revealed the fluency with which Ming speaks when he speaks of topics that he is good at, such as, for example, maths and sport, unlike topics about which he is less sure, like reading and writing. Fluency of this kind is perhaps indicative of his growing confidence and self-esteem.

4. Self-esteem and motivation

It appeared that when Ming felt confident and had a positive attitude, the likelihood of success was higher than when he did not. Self-esteem seems to be an aspect of successful learning. Arnold and Brown noted (1999: 2), "Different positive emotional factors, such as self-esteem, empathy or motivation, can greatly facilitate the language learning". Ming was, and still is, a positive individual who is intrinsically motivated and can empathise with others.

Ming described himself as – and believed that he was – unwanted, unloved and unimportant. His early experience of schooling was negative; he had moved schools and felt that he was not good at reading and writing. He was the third child, not important. Human beings – children and adults – need to be liked, valued and appreciated (Samuelson et al. 1999). It is vital that children build a positive self image with the support, initially of family, then of teachers and friends. By the time of his first assessment by the educational psychologist in June 2001, when he had been in the school for five terms, it was noted that, "he recognises his own strengths as in listening, understanding and remembering. He feels he is good at accessing information from diagrams and pictures". How had this transformation come about?

Ming had a sense of belonging to several communities. One was defined by ethnicity and language, Chinese. Another was the wider school community where English was the language spoken. There were subgroups within the larger groups. That sense of belonging was a vital part of his self-esteem. He belonged to the second because he made a firm decision that he wanted to belong. He was afraid that he would lose face in the first group if they found out that he could not read and write Chinese very well. The loss of face would not only be for him, but he thought it might include his whole family. In order to belong to the second group he needed to be and to do what they did. Studies conducted on social identity reveal that identity is not fixed, but dynamic. Ming's identity changed according to which group he was with.

Ming was motivated and began to understand how he learnt. This process of identifying how to learn was a useful tool in his feeling better about learning. Ming was encouraged to choose some of the materials to assist in learning. Bilingual children from cultural backgrounds that are different from their teacher's need to be fully engaged in selecting resources and learning approaches that are appropriate and affirming.

5. Relationships

I have come to realise that one of the fundamental features of the success of Ming is relationships. The relationships and communication between all the teachers involved were crucial in the sharing of information and support for Ming and each other. This suggests that it is difficult to live and learn alone;

we all need support in one form or another. Once we recognise our co-dependency in the group and our strengths as individuals, we may instinctively realise that we all stand to win. Relationships are thought to be vital to all humans and also to be an essential part of learning. The most effective teaching and learning often take place when relationships are established and there is mutual trust and respect. Trust and respect are said to be the result of time and experience (Ramus et al. 2003).

6. Bridging cultures

Culture shock is a universally accepted concept. The culture shock experienced by some international students coming to a UK boarding school is profound and personal. The level of shock can be intensified by institutional life. Most of the students whom I have interviewed in the period from 1997 to the present – over 300 – had never shared a room with people from other countries, nor had experience of a boarding school. A few had been to summer schools or camps. They have all said that they are the first generation to go to a boarding school abroad and that no one in their family had attended such a school in their country. Parents have not been able to prepare their children for the change in their lives. Students have reported that this lack of preparation added to the culture shock experienced. A move to a new language-speaking community is a process which is inextricably linked to issues of culture and identity.

Intercultural competence seems to be necessary in many modern settings. The ability to become a culturally flexible person could have many benefits, personal and institutional. Food is one of the ways communities show that they are prepared to share. In a boarding school setting, sharing snacks and preparing food together is the cement that can bring and hold groups together. The sharing of music and computer games are other *ad hoc* ways in which Ming made friends in the boarding community (Taylor and Walter 2003).

7. Teaching strategies

In terms of pedagogical practice my observations and reports from other teachers confirmed the use of the following teaching strategies:

- Targeted one-to-one support.
- Successful engagement in sports: This area clearly helped with integration and with language acquisition. Aspects of socio- and psycholinguistics associated with immersion were observed. For example, the changing use of body language and the vocabulary linked to sporting activities.
- Practical hands-on tasks.
- Structured teaching in the chosen subjects: Ming's curriculum was limited.
- Scaffolded learning programmes. Chunking was vital.
- Computer games and card games.

- Having fun and friendships.
- The immersion in English.

Ming left the school after GCSE examinations. With the help of an amanuensis he gained eight A to C GCSE grades. He went on to study Art at a sixth form college. He is currently studying for a degree in Art at a university and receiving additional support.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Teacher education

The need for more input during initial teacher training and in-service training days around issues of intercultural awareness and communication are self-evident. A high level of intercultural competence is a necessary instrument for all teachers who encounter international students. The challenge for educators today is to consider culture-fair principles and practices in the identification and assessment processes, classroom practices, the curriculum, the training of teachers, support assistants and psychologists, the selection and allocation of resources, policy and liaison with parents and the wider community.

A reassessment of general teacher training courses ought to include the suggestion that SEN and EAL teachers need crossover training to deliver integrated services that account for learners' second language learning difficulties. Hayley and Porter (2000) further expand this suggestion. It is suggested that such training might be extended to enable all teachers "to address bilingualism and dyslexia with greater confidence" (Deponio, Landen and Reid 2000: 60).

8.2. Pedagogy

The white background of printed texts can produce a glare that sometimes makes it difficult for some students to focus. It was easier for Ming when the paper was not white and the page was 'not too busy'. Perhaps the colour of paper and print could be varied (Lyytinen, Eklund and Lyytinen 2003).

If handouts are given to support class work and the students are told that this will happen at the start of the class, it means that the learners who are predominantly aural learners can concentrate on one mode, perhaps their preferred mode, of learning. It can avoid overloading students with a less favoured mode of learning.

Help for learners could also come in the form of signposts or a road-map of the lesson written on the board. It informs students of the bigger picture and the steps involved. When asked, Ming and two of his friends reported that it was much easier to follow a lesson when they could identify its different parts. Other learners also agreed and one pointed out that it was easy to see what was missed after "wandering off during the lesson". Another

technique that helped Ming and other students who were struggling with literacy issues was a list of key words placed down one side of the board. These words became the basis for revisiting the lesson (Magnan et al. 2004)

8.3. Language awareness

This is a fairly straightforward principle: that teachers should be aware of, and monitor their language. All teachers are teachers of English, and so for every teacher there will be times when language will have to be modified in order to include all learners. Reformulate, rephrase and repeat key points.

8.4. Mentoring

One of the recommendations is to include paired reading in programs for students with difficulty in acquiring literacy skills. Paired reading is where both the learner and the support person read simultaneously at the same pace, pointing at the words as they are read. This technique could help all the participants involved (Ransby and Swanson 2003).

8.5. Learner training

Another area that should be addressed is the subject of culture shock. This could be tackled by introducing pre-boarding school adjustment training that covers socio-cultural, linguistic and affective issues. In discussion with over three hundred students, it is clear that very few felt they were adequately prepared for a British boarding school. A pre-boarding school course, or a prolonged period of orientation are two steps towards helping students with some of the cultural and linguistic shifts which may have to be made. In research conducted at Ming's school, the students reported that they had not had time to adjust and thought they would benefit from time to acclimatise.

8.6. Personal and institutional development

An implication of this study is the influence of affect in educational contexts and how this can spill over into issues of a holistic education. There are pastoral and pedagogical implications here that need to be addressed on an institutional level, with policies to support them. Teachers need time outside their lessons to build relationships with students.

Culture enriching schemes which operate at most schools give learners the opportunity to see their culture being valued and that in turn helps to make them feel wanted and valued. Teachers need to build bridges culturally at both a personal and professional level. The examination of values and beliefs is part of that process. Personal values and beliefs can be revealed in our words and actions. Institutions should assume responsibility for developing reflective practices.

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Part V

SYLLABUSES, RESOURCES
AND EXAMINATIONS

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DESIGN AND EVALUATION OF A TASK-BASED SYLLABUS FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the theoretical principles underlying the design of a task-based syllabus, with the aims of developing fluency and vocabulary in speaking, for upper-intermediate (CEF B2) undergraduates of English at a Polish tertiary institution. A rationale for choosing a task-based approach is offered and the notions of *task* and *task-based syllabus* defined. Discussion of the factors affecting task difficulty follow, with particular emphasis placed on decisions regarding the ordering of the tasks in the syllabus. It was hypothesized that variables including familiarity, preparation time and performance conditions could be manipulated to provide a progression of increasing difficulty of task. On implementation the syllabus was evaluated through assessment of the participants for development of fluency and vocabulary. This was analysed quantitatively. Qualitative data, elicited by means of questionnaires, was gathered on learners' perceptions of the progression of difficulty of the tasks and the reasons they gave for their answers. Hypotheses regarding the sequencing of tasks were found to be valid.

1. Introduction

This paper outlines the theoretical rationale underlying the design and evaluation of a task-based syllabus for a 30 week course in development of speaking skills for first year undergraduates at a foreign language teacher training college in Poland, specializing in English, at upper-intermediate level (CEF B2). While there is a considerable literature on research on tasks and performance, very little has been written on the design of a whole task-based syllabus in a general English context. This study presents an attempt to address this.¹

¹ This paper reports part of a wider study described in an unpublished PhD thesis (Ellis 2004).

2. Rationale for task-based teaching

The rationale for task-based teaching comes from the belief that a foreign language is not learned through being presented with an ordered sequence of structures or functions, but through a more complex process “wherein there is interaction between all the various components of the knowledge system – ideational, interpersonal and textual – and all the abilities involved in using such knowledge” (Breen et al. 1979, in Richard-Amato 1988: 299). This approach calls for content to be organized into a series of tasks and related activities in which the learners will be engaged. “The various activities and tasks would be related by sharing a holistic ‘core’ of knowledge and abilities” (ibid.).

Swain (1985) proposes the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, arguing that it is by speaking that to learn to speak. However, in order to drive language development forward the output needs to be ‘pushed’. If one knows one is going to have to speak one attends more closely to the syntax of input. Speaking provides opportunities to test hypotheses about language and to develop automaticity, which improves fluency (Skehan 1998: 16-17). A well-structured task gives learners motivation to speak.

3. Syllabus objectives

Graduates of teacher training colleges are expected to achieve CEF level C2 after three years (Ministry of National Education legislation 2006). Analysis of entry level performance in speaking indicated ability to handle every day interactions, but difficulty in extended monologue, due to lack of linguistic resources indicated by marked lack of fluency and little use of strategies for maintaining the flow of speech. Syllabus objectives for part one of the course (30 hours) were therefore drawn up as follows. The course aims to help learners: become more confident in speaking English; develop fluency; increase vocabulary; increase awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in speaking and how to improve these; develop compensation strategies. Part Two (30 hours) in addition to the above aims to develop presentation skills and develop the ability to present and justify opinions.

4. Definition of *task*

The literature on tasks is considerable (see R. Ellis 2003, for a comprehensive overview) and space precludes a summary here. For the purposes of the syllabus in question, the following definition of *task* was adopted (based on Skehan 1998: 95):

- an activity in which the learners engage, where communication of meaning is of first importance;
- successful completion of the task is one of the main aims;

- it usually involves some communicative challenge to solve;
- it is open in terms of language ('unfocused'), allowing the learner to use whatever resources they have to complete the task.

5. Task-based syllabus

A syllabus here is understood to be a framework for the organization of the teaching of a course in a particular context. It is designed according to principles based on a construct of belief about how learning takes place. Included in the syllabus are aims or objectives, a selection of content presented in an ordered way, information about how the content is to be taught and learned, information about the materials to be used to implement the syllabus, assessment procedures to evaluate the progress of the learners and evaluation procedures to investigate the effectiveness of the syllabus in use (Stenhouse 1975: 5).

The design of the task-based syllabus content is a complex process involving a range of decisions. These concern the selection and arrangement of tasks to form a sequence, which involves making decisions about the relative difficulty of different tasks *per se*, such as their code complexity (of the language input) and cognitive complexity (the processing demands of the task and familiarity of the learners with the information) (Skehan 1998: 108-118), and also about other factors affecting task difficulty, such as *communicative stress* (Brown and Yule 1983: 34), meaning the amount of preparation time, the organization of the task performance, the number of participants involved and how the interaction will take place, the context, the task format and the amount of support given (Robinson 2001: 31) sometimes described as *performance variables*. These will be discussed in turn.

6. Task difficulty: Shifting parameters

As implied above, the difficulty of a task depends on the context in which it is used and how it is implemented. There are a range of variables which can be adjusted to 'tune' the demands each task places on the learners. Over and above this are socio-psychological factors relating to the individuals involved: their personalities, perceptions of the task, the relationships between those involved and the atmosphere in the learning environment. In short: "Task difficulty is not a constant" (O'Sullivan 2006).

6.1. Easy task

Ellis (2003: 228) summarises the findings of Brown et al. (1984), Skehan (1998, 2001) and Robinson (2001) on the ease or difficulty of a task. Thus, an easy task is one which has input in the form of a picture or other visual,

involves familiar information, high frequency vocabulary and refers to the immediate context (the 'here-and-now'). It relates to a static event involving few elements and has a well-defined, clear, linear structure. It will involve two people, who both speak and can exchange information and the outcome will be descriptive. In terms of a task, it could be illustrated in this way (taken from the syllabus in this study):

- Pair task: Describe your picture so that your partner can identify it from a set of 4.
- Pictures contain few elements, clearly distinguishable by colour, size etc. Pictures are similar but have easy to spot differences.
- Familiar setting, all items known lexis.
- Dialogic task, one learner leads, but the other can ask questions for clarification.

Brown et al. (1984: 63) explain how manipulating any of these features makes the task more difficult.

6.2. Difficult task

In terms of the description task above, it becomes more difficult if you:

- Increase the number of elements in the picture; have several similar elements in the pictures.
- Select sets of pictures which are very similar, with distinguishing features which require linguistic precision, or careful explanation to describe and increase the number of pictures to choose from.
- Choose contexts unfamiliar to the learners; items which are not clear, or difficult to name; ambiguous situations.

Brown and Yule (1983: 107-109) suggest a sequence of difficulty for speaking, developed on the basis of extensive research with native speaker 14-17 year olds. They distinguish between *short turns* (usually characteristic of interactional speech) and *long turns* (or monologic speech). Short turns are easier to manage for the learner than long turns, which require greater linguistic control and cognitive organization. In terms of long turns they suggest a discursive progression from *description* to *description/instruction*, to *storytelling* and then to *opinion-expressing* and *justifying a course of action*. While the purist will question whether picture description can in fact qualify as a task, it can be argued that every day speech contains a great quantity of each of the discourse types mentioned above. In a Monday morning chat at work, for example, it is typical to describe a new restaurant we visited and instruct our friends how to get there, outline the story of a film we saw and express an opinion on it, or tell the story of something which happened to you during the weekend. Thus, while the tasks used in the classroom maybe more pedagogic than real-world, the language learnt and rehearsed while doing them has wide practical application.

7. Performance variables

As suggested above, it is not only the task *per se* that determines difficulty, but also a range of other variables connected with *how, when, where and with whom* the task will be performed.

7.1. Organisation and preparation

Considerable research on the effects of planning on task performance has been conducted (see Ellis 2003: 127-134, for a comprehensive summary), showing that allowing planning time most positively effects fluency and complexity of speech, while findings on the effects of planning on accuracy are mixed. Bygate (2001: 42) reports the positive effects on fluency and complexity of task repetition. Willis (1996) suggests that task-based teaching and learning follow an "input-rehearsal-performance cycle" (in Bygate 2001: 28). Brown and Yule (1983: 34-7) suggest that speaking in a familiar private situation to one person who is known and liked is easier than speaking in unfamiliar surroundings to a group of listeners. From this a pedagogical sequence of task interaction, preparation and performance of increasing demands was inferred for the syllabus in this study:

- Closed pair task (learners first choose partners, later random pairs assigned).
- Closed pair task, followed by preparation of brief report, brief report then made to forum.
- Closed pair task, extend report phase, reduce preparation time.
- Open pair to small group, first after preparation phase, then no preparation.
- Open pair to forum, after preparation or rehearsal, and later without.
- Speaking in forum: first as part of a group, following preparation and rehearsal. Preparation time gradually reduced to exclude possibility of rehearsal. Individuals begin to speak briefly in forum, without preparation, as reporting phase on group work.
- Individual presentation to forum, after preparation on topics chosen by the learner.

In terms of *preparation* and *rehearsal*, the sequencing in the syllabus in this study is as follows:

- Substantial preparation time, plus rehearsal.
- Preparation, (reducing time), rehearsal.
- Short preparation (4-5 minutes), no rehearsal.
- Spontaneous speech.

7.2. Support

Research findings on whether giving some form of support to learners during or preceding a task, in the form of pictures, written or aural input are mixed (Ellis 2003: 119-120). Observation of learners in the classroom, however, suggests that certainly in early stages of a course there is a preference for tasks with pictorial support. As will be seen, lack of support was cited by some learners in this study as a reason for judging a task 'difficult'.

Support can also include pre-task input of various sorts. One way is providing a phase of *activation* of known language, by asking learners to do activities such as *brainstorming* words and phrases on given themes or topics. Working in pairs or groups learners use their own knowledge, the scaffolding of others, dictionaries, or consult the teacher. Some learners benefit from being given quiet time to reflect or make notes before moving into the group stage. Another way may be *exposure* to a recording of proficient speakers doing the same, or a similar task. *Cognitive support* can be offered by *collecting ideas* from a variety of resources (books, magazines, the Internet, peers etc.) in small groups to provide content support for more complex tasks. *Written texts* may be used to set the scene, or present a problem. The learners can be actively involved in creative *visualization* exercises, using their imaginations and memories to awake schema which will be helpful in doing the task.

8. Task/learner variables

As each task takes place in a context involving learners in different settings, there are additional social or psychological variables which have an effect on task difficulty.

8.1. Familiarity

Prabhu (1987: 88) states: "Learners' knowledge of the world can make tasks more or less difficult for them, depending on whether they are more or less familiar with purposes and constraints of the kind involved in the tasks". From this it would seem that task difficulty can be increased by decreasing the degree of familiarity. Familiarity in the classroom setting is also viewed in terms of the type of task, the type of interaction, the classroom procedures commonly followed, the role of the teacher and the relationship with the learners. In this study the syllabus (for first year undergraduates) assumed that tasks typical of the foreign language school-leaving examination (*matura*) would provide a familiar starting point, both in terms of discourse (description), but also in terms of activity (describing a picture). In addition the first topic area was *describing people*, as this was considered a lexical area in which learners would have a solid base. This choice was designed to give learners a sense of security and allow for the new idea of problem-based *tasks*, in the

form of an information gap, to be introduced without causing undue communicative stress. Within the topic *describing places*, which followed, here is an example of a progression from classroom language activity to task:

- Describe pictures of houses (large selection of houses in different settings both European and exotic, modern and old, family homes and historic buildings).
- Parallel activity, using one of the pictures already described: You visited this place last weekend, describe your impressions to your friend (allows for greater creativity and 'pushes' output (Swain 1985, 1995, in Ellis 2001: 56).
- Personalise. Task: Describe a place you often visited as a child. Your partner will listen and comment on any similarities to places they remember.
- Task: Take your partner on an imaginary guided tour of a favourite place you know well. They will later have to explain to someone else where they went and what they experienced.

In the first stage learners start with pictures of buildings which they are familiar with from coursebooks from their secondary schools and from this move on to familiar settings which they may not have been asked to describe in English (e.g. the interior of a church, a derelict house, a Polish stately home, etc.) and then to buildings which are less familiar and in exotic settings. Thus familiarity also becomes one of the parameters for deciding task sequencing. As can be seen the activities also become more demanding on other continua: requiring more structuring from the learner as they become more abstract and less 'here-and-now' (*cognitive complexity*) and requiring negotiation of meaning with the listener (*code complexity*) to ensure that the partner will be able to complete their task.

8.2. Affect

In the foreign language classroom learners achieve varying degrees of success. This is explained in terms of the differences in individuals; affective factors relating to the emotions and feelings of the learner and personality factors. Language anxiety, defined as "fear or apprehension when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language" (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993, in Oxford 1999: 59), can inhibit the learner's willingness to speak, lower motivation and levels of self-esteem. One of the causes of language anxiety may be the learner's attitude to learning and competitiveness in particular. If the learner perceives that the rest of the group are more proficient, this causes anxiety (Bailey 1983, in Ellis 1994: 480). Fear of being negatively assessed by the teacher or other members of the group also contributes to anxiety, with tests being a particular worry. Feelings are also affected by the relationships enjoyed between the individual learner and other

members of the class and by the relationship with the teacher and the group as a whole. The approach taken by the teacher has a direct effect on how learners perform, with teachers who create a positive atmosphere where there is mutual respect and co-operation regarded as the most effective (Brophy and Good 1986, in Williams and Burden 1997: 199). One important area is the teacher's attitude to error. If making mistakes is viewed as a natural part of the learning process and corrections dealt with anonymously through a whole class *reactive focus on form* (Doughty and Williams 1998) activity designed to raise awareness and draw *attention* (Schmidt 2001: 11) to the difference between the form used and a target model, then learner anxiety about accuracy can be reduced. In addition, research reported by Skehan (1998: 110-111) shows that there is a 'trade-off effect' between accuracy, complexity and fluency, caused by limited attention capability. Suggesting that learners focus on accuracy will thus have a negative effect on their fluency. As the syllabus in question had the development of fluency as a main objective, the following decisions were made regarding *affective factors*:

- No overt, direct correction made of individual mistakes (linguistic support given in preparation phase, focus on form of selected items after performance phase).
- Use of dictionaries encouraged.
- No response in open forum requested until after 6 weeks and then brief. If meaning in these responses was unclear, recasting used for clarification.
- Assessment procedure explained at beginning of course; rating criteria focus on task achievement, fluency, and lexical range; individual explanation given of grades using examples noted during performance.

9. Design of the study

A task-based syllabus for developing speaking skills was designed for the context described above with the objectives outlined. The syllabus was implemented with 39 learners, aged 20-42, in three groups, taught by the researcher. In order to evaluate the effectiveness and validity of the syllabus (whether the stated aims were achieved) data was collected to ascertain the progress of the learners and their reactions to and opinions of the course. To gauge progress, learners were assessed three times during the first 15 weeks and recordings made of the assessments. During the second 15 weeks two recordings were made of assessed tasks and extensive observation notes made during the course. The final, summative assessment was also recorded. Quantitative analysis was made of fluency and complexity of speech of the results of the first and final assessments. These were then compared and differences tested for significance.

The second area concerned the validity of the syllabus from the learners' perspective. It was considered that to be effective the course not only

had to produce results, but be perceived as doing so by the participants. Written questionnaires, including open questions and Likert scales, were completed by participants after 15 and again after 30 weeks of the course. These were analysed, classified according to the wording of the response, and reported in terms of percentage of total number of responses. Eight individual case studies were also conducted using recorded guided interviews.

10. Summary of findings

Measures for fluency (number of pauses of one second or longer as a proportion of total amount of speech, number of words per minute, mean length of utterance) indicated that fluency increased over the 30 weeks. Measures for complexity of speech, however, produced mixed results (see Figure 1). The number of clauses per AS-unit (Foster et al. (2000: 365) define this as “a single speaker’s utterance consisting of a *independent clause*, or *sub-clausal unit*, together with any *subordinate clause(s)* associated with either (...)”), as a measure of syntactic complexity, showed an increase after 30 weeks, while the type token ratio (number of adjectives, nouns, adverbs and qualifiers as a proportion of the total number of words) was higher during the first assessment than during the final test, indicating less lexical complexity. There are, however, other variables which could account for this result, including, among others, task complexity, learner perceptions of task requirements, variations in task performance conditions and issues arising from the measurement instrument used. One strong factor may be that pictures used in the final assessment were more complex than those in the first test, containing many more elements. The resulting cognitive complexity may have impacted upon lexical complexity. More research is needed, under more controlled conditions, to investigate this.

Group	Means of Test One, Tasks One and Three					Means: Final Test, Task One				
	MLU	No. of clauses	% pauses	Words/min.	Type token	MLU	No. of clauses	% pauses	Words/min.	Type token
A	11.9	1.05	19.08	70.07	0.31	20.96	2.09	11.83	91.6	0.24
B	8.01	0.77	20.69	63.27	0.28	20.34	1.89	12.87	86.92	0.22
C	10.64	0.81	18.17	65.12	0.33	15.48	1.63	14.2	66.36	0.28

MLU: Mean length of utterance; *No. of clauses*: mean number of clauses per AS-unit; *% pauses*: Mean number of pauses of 1 sec. or longer as proportion of total amount of speech; *Words/min.*: mean number of words per minute; *Type token*: Number of adjectives, nouns, adverbs and qualifiers as a proportion of total number of words (type token ratio).

Figure 1: Measures of complexity of speech.

Any claims that the program for developing speaking is solely responsible for the development of fluency and vocabulary must also be tempered. Learners in this context have 22 hours of contact hours taught in English each week, so the course in speaking is only one element in their overall language development. Qualitative data collected, however, give strong indications that learners perceived the course as achieving the set aims. After 15 weeks, in response to the open question: "In what ways do you think your speaking has improved this semester?" 40% of the participants commented that they had become more confident, 35% felt their fluency had increased, 55% reported an increase in vocabulary, 20% noted improvements in pronunciation, 5% reported they were 'better', 5% felt they had become more accurate, 2.5% felt they could produce more complex text and 2.5% were unsure they had improved. After 30 weeks in response to the same question 26% felt their confidence had improved, particularly when speaking in forum, 28% felt their fluency had improved; 15% thought their pronunciation was better; 13% reported improvement in their communicative skills; 13% felt their vocabulary had increased; 5% found it easier to speak than before; 5% reported being more accurate; 2% said that they now paid less attention to grammar; 2% felt they had become more aware; 2% were not sure if they had improved; 2% felt they had not improved very much and 2% felt they had not improved at all. As these were unprompted responses the fact that fluency and confidence received a high number of mentions in both parts of the course can be considered a good indicator.

Learners were also questioned about their perceptions of task difficulty and task sequencing. The syllabus followed the discursal order suggested by Brown and Yule (1983: 107-109), outlined above. In Part One this was *description*, first of people and then of places, followed by *storytelling*. Part Two opened with *role-play in pairs – everyday situations*, followed by *role-play in pairs – uncooperative/divergent roles*, next came *drama activities using mime in pairs*, then in *groups*. From this point on tasks involved giving opinions. *Drama activities with small speaking parts* came next, followed by *roles in group simulations* which required learners to explain and justify their actions, as did *group tasks involving cooperative presentation (of their own creation) to forum (learners in roles they created.)* The final tasks were *individual presentations to the group (learner-selected topics.)* Learners were also required to engage the audience and manage a follow-up discussion.

Assessment in Part One of the course followed a cycle of three lessons. Assessed tasks were designed to increase in order of difficulty: first, a repeat of a task done earlier, based on a known picture, then an interactive one-way information-gap task, based on new sets of pictures and finally a new task with a brief written prompt. The storytelling cycle was assessed with only two tasks, one familiar and one new, based on a picture story. In the questionnaire after 15 weeks the participants were asked to rate the difficulty and ease of the assessment tasks on five-point Likert scales. In the case of assessment of describing places and storytelling the hypothesized progression

of difficulty was confirmed, but in describing people the interactive task was perceived as slightly easier than the first, repeated task. Each scale was followed by an open question: "Explain which tasks were most difficult for you and why", and then: "Explain which tasks were easiest for you and why". Answers were classified and the number of mentions of similar notions expressed as percentages.

Tasks identified as difficult

- People and places – no support 10%
- People task – no support 10%
- Place – no support 5%
- All unfamiliar tasks 10%
- Places – pair task 5%
- Pair tasks 7%
- Picture story 52%
- Familiar story 2.5%
- Nearly all tasks were equally difficult 5%

Tasks identified as easy

- All pictures seen before 35%
- Describing people 25%
- Describing sb. I knew well 2.5%
- Describing places 15%
- Places: pair task 25%
- Familiar story 35%
- Pair tasks 2.5%
- Picture story 5%
- No easy or difficult tasks 2.5%

The findings sustain the hypotheses that support and familiarity make a task easier. There is also a tendency to view interactive pair tasks as easier than long turns. The decision to sequence description of people before description of places and follow these with storytelling seems to be validated, although there were only slight differences perceived between the difficulty of describing people and places on the Likert scales. Reasons for difficulty focused heavily on *lack of vocabulary* (40% of mentions), *not enough preparation time* (22%), and *not knowing what to say* (17%), which may be interpreted as cognitive difficulty. Reasons for ease were far more varied, but *familiar vocabulary* (42%) predominated. *Interesting task* (10%) and *familiar task* (12%) were the other most frequently mentioned. This also seems to bear out claims for familiarity as one of the syllabus design principles.

In Part Two, assessed tasks were responding to a short written stimulus and making a presentation. 38% reported the first task harder, while 46% selected the presentation. 8% thought both tasks equally difficult. A wide

variety of reasons were given for difficulty. Ambivalence to the *choice of topic* (26%) and *lack of preparation time* (20%) were both mentioned as making the first task harder, while *stress* at presenting in front of an audience received the most mentions (68%), as explaining the difficulty of the presentation. This would seem to support the design principles for starting from pair work and limiting the requirement to speak to the forum. Reasons given for ease of the first task were highly varied and showed no trends, while having *control over the choice of topic* (37%) and having *preparation time* (47%) were given as reasons by those who found the presentation easy.

11. Conclusions

The study set out to design, implement and evaluate a task-based syllabus for developing speaking. The main problem discussed here concerned the question of how to sequence tasks to give a progression from easier to more difficult. In this case a range of parameters were selected first relating to the task *per se* and then to the conditions in which the task took place. The sequencing of tasks as applied was perceived as progressing in difficulty by the participants. The main aims of the syllabus were felt to have been achieved, with quantitative and qualitative data supporting an increase in fluency. Learners reported that their vocabulary improved, but this was not reflected in type-token ratio findings. This, however, is most likely due to other factors and indicates more research is needed. In short, it appears that a task-based syllabus to develop fluency and vocabulary in upper-intermediate level learners is possible.

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THE PLACE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE CULTURE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A FEW MODEST PROPOSALS

ABSTRACT

Language and culture have always been closely bound. One is used to describe the other. In the modern language classroom the target language culture plays an essential role in language learning. Or does it? Despite the widespread access to the target language culture in and outside the classroom students' knowledge about it seems almost nonexistent. What is more, it seems that not only students but also teachers have very limited knowledge about the target language culture, which is even more alarming since most of them had culture classes at the university. The aim of the paper is to show the results of a study conducted in order to investigate the extent to which language teachers use elements of the target language culture in their classrooms. The research also aimed at investigating the level of teachers' knowledge about the target language culture, their opinions about its usefulness as well as to investigate the ways in which it is incorporated into language lessons.

1. Introduction

The main reason for writing the article was a sequence of lessons which the author had recently observed in one of the secondary schools. The main aim of the lessons was presenting some of the most famous celebrities from the world of entertainment. During the lessons the teacher introduced the subject by presenting the images of famous singers and actors. Most of the students were unable to recognize the names and faces of the presented celebrities. It was, to some extent, surprising to find out that the students

had very little knowledge concerning the world of entertainment, especially when the access to the outside world, not only through the World Wide Web, seems to be unlimited.

It would seem obvious to assume that the language one uses defines the culture it originates from. Finocchiaro (1964: 8) defines language as “a system which allows all the representatives of the same culture and all the people who learnt the system of the given culture to communicate and interact”. If so, it is logical to say that simultaneously with language development our students should automatically extend their knowledge concerning the target language culture. It is a well-known fact that presenting elements of the target language culture in the language classroom has a positive effect on developing students’ motivation. If one of the main aims of language instruction nowadays is to make students effective communicators, one has to acknowledge that it will not be entirely possible without the ability to understand cultural differences, as well as the ability to accept different visions of the surrounding world and the varied opinions of others.

The article tries to define the concept of culture, investigate the connection between culture and language learning, introduce a set of proposals concerning teaching culture in the language classroom, as well as, present the results of the study conducted in order to establish the place of the target language culture in the language classroom.

2. Defining culture

The notion of culture has always been considered an important concept in applied linguistics. A sociocultural perspective on culture stands in marked contrast to something that could be described as a more traditional view. Rather than viewing culture as systems of fixed bodies of knowledge possessed equally by all members of well-defined culture groups, a current understanding views it as recurrent and habitual systems of expectations (Duranti 1997: 45). Owing to the fact that we belong to multiple groups or communities, we adopt multiple cultural identities and take part in multiple cultural activities (Hall 2002: 18).

In fact, there is not much point trying to say what culture is. What can be done, however, is to say what culture does. For what culture does is precisely the work of defining words, ideas, things and groups. We all live our lives in terms of definition, names and categories that culture creates. The job of studying culture is not of finding and then accepting its definitions but of discovering how and what definitions are made, under what circumstances and for what reasons (...) Culture is an active process of making meaning and contest over definition, including its own definition (Street 1993: 25).

In order to locate culture, people should not look into the individual mind as an accumulated body of unchanging knowledge but into the dialogue, the embodied actions, "discursively rearticulated" between individuals' in particular sociocultural contexts at a particular moment of time (Bhabha 1994: 177). Such a view depicts culture as a dynamic process located in the discursive spaces between the individuals and links it with the concept of language. In other words, language is at the same time a repository of culture as well as a tool by which culture is created. By this the study of language is by necessity a study of culture (Hall 2002:19).

3. Language and culture in the classroom

Looking back one can see that language and culture learning has been considered an important area of study in applied linguistics for a long time. According to Hall (2002: 48) "(...) current understanding stands in marked contrast to the more traditional view of language and culture learning". The acquisition of language and the acquisition of social and cultural competence are not developmentally independent processes, nor is one process a developmental prerequisite of the other. Rather the two above mentioned processes are intertwined from the earliest moment of entering the society. Knowledge of these cues is the basis for both linguistic and culture competence (Ochs 1996: 407).

As has already been written, language and culture teaching has always been considered an essential ingredient of applied linguistics. More traditional approaches to teaching seem to seldom take into account learners' linguistic and cultural worlds outside the classroom. It was rather assumed that learners entered the classroom as 'empty vessels' to be filled with information concerning the outside world. Obviously, this is not an accurate reflection of reality. Students come to the classroom with some knowledge of the outside world. However, the amount and quality of that knowledge remains disputable. Despite having unlimited access to the outside world students' knowledge of the outside world is very limited (Hall 2002: 71). A situation like that results in asking questions such as:

- Why, despite unlimited access students' knowledge remains scarce?
- What are the benefits of introducing culture in the language classroom?
- What are the guidelines for introducing culture in the language classroom?
- What has to be done to extend students' cultural knowledge?

In the times of unlimited access to information (the World Wide Web, books, magazines, student exchange, travel, UE programmes), the general knowledge of the outside world and target language culture should be at least satisfactory. Moreover, in contemporary language classrooms and in contemporary language coursebooks a lot of time and space is devoted to the introduction of the elements of the target language culture.

One can easily find separate sections focusing on selected culture-related topics. Literature spots, culture corners, listening tasks including songs or poetry are indispensable elements of any language coursebook. Very often grammatical and lexical topics are incorporated into culture topics. Comparing such materials to coursebooks from the eighties, one can easily notice the difference in layout and content. Coursebooks had no colors, no pictures, artificial dialogues and demotivating layout. Contemporary books have up to date information, as well as, an interesting layout.

Additionally, the positive attitude towards the English language and English speaking countries should be an advantage in incorporating the target language culture into language classroom. Unfortunately the reality is somewhat different. It seems that the reasons for such a situation are:

- First of all, access to a variety of sources does not immediately mean that the sources will be used. Students spend hours in front of computer or television screens but it does not mean that they are broadening their horizons.
- Second of all, there seems to be a common indifference among students concerning the outside world.
- Third of all, positive attitudes towards target language countries are usually associated with the possibility of finding well paid jobs, and not necessarily with target language customs or traditions.

Of course, students are not the only to blame. Teachers are partially responsible for such a situation as well because of the following reasons:

- First of all, there are still teachers who do not see the need to develop their students' cultural knowledge, believing that grammar and lexis are the only essential elements of the language knowledge.
- Second of all, there are teachers who believe that having "so much to teach and so little time" they have to focus on the skills development rather than target language culture.
- Third of all, it happens that teachers simply do not see the need for developing their own knowledge concerning the target language culture.

Whether one agrees with the above statements or not, it is worth remembering about a few indisputable benefits resulting from explicit introduction of the cultural elements during language lessons. As has already been pointed out, language is the reflection of culture. One cannot effectively use language if he/she is not willing to notice and accept the existing cultural differences. What is more, by promoting the elements of the target language culture students develop their integrative motivation as well as positive attitudes towards the target language. Introducing elements of target language culture allows teachers to harmoniously integrate all the language skills.

When introducing elements of culture teachers can use authentic audio-visual aids and realia. The use of such materials may result in the increase of students' motivation and make the lessons more attractive. Songs and

films are still very popular during language lessons, regardless of the students' language level and age. Introducing culture through discussions and debates will not only allow our students to develop the TL but also their worldview. When teachers decide to include presentations in their teaching, it can be done with the use of such artifacts as newspapers, magazines, movies, songs, poems, literature photos, posters, or realia. Additionally, recently another very important tool of the target language culture development has been devised. In the introduction to the *European Language Portfolio* one can read that it aims at encouraging students to learn languages throughout the whole life, making them more autonomous and culturally aware.

4. A few proposals concerning teaching culture in the language classroom

When teachers decide to deliberately focus the students' attention on the cultural aspect in the language learning process, they should keep in mind the principles listed below (Gill 1999: 38):

- (1) Cultures are not monolithic.
- (2) We have to try and objectify.
- (3) We need to get away from clichéd images.
- (4) Facts alone are not enough.
- (5) The relationship between culture and language is crucial.
- (6) An element of comparison and contrast is vital.
- (7) What is the relationship of the general and the specific?
- (8) There should be an element of discovery learning.
- (9) The European (world) dimension is important.
- (10) We need to bear in mind broader educational principles.

When teaching culture in the classroom, teachers have to remember that cultures are not just pluralistic but complex, and any attempt to deal with culture in the classroom must recognize this complexity at the outset. The greater the number of people we generalize about, the less likely we are to say something worthwhile (Gill 1999: 38).

If in the classroom teachers are to avoid a relativist view of culture – we are normal, they are funny – then it is vital to endeavor to raise learners' awareness of this. It should not be seen as a simple task but it is essential in effective incorporation of the target language culture in the language classroom (Gill 1999: 39). Stereotyping is a prevalent and powerful tool in presenting cultures. It is perhaps more recognizable in its negative form. However, there is also an equally present positive form of stereotype (ads, coursebooks). Teachers with their students should explore both of them (Gill 1999: 39).

It is essential to remember that facts, although important, should be mainly seen as raw material to work with when developing language skills. Students should not only have their short term memory developed, but they

should also be familiarized with opinions and views related to the target language culture (Gill 1999: 39). During language lessons it is important to constantly show the connection between language and the culture it represents. Students have to become aware that the language they learn defines and describes the culture behind it. Noticing the connection will allow students to fully comprehend the uniqueness of the language and culture (Gill 1999: 40). In order to let students really appreciate the complexity and true nature of the target language culture, teachers should include in their teaching an element of contrast between the TL culture and their students' own culture. Referring to a familiar cultural background will make it easier for teachers to present elements of the TLC in the classroom. It should be done both at the micro and macro level (Gill 1999: 41).

If teachers are to avoid becoming effectively meaningless or remain at a purely anecdotal level, they have to work simultaneously from both points of view, combining general data (statistics, overview articles) with more personal material such as students field work. This process may be either deductive, with general truths being demonstrated through real-life illustrations, or inductive, with a body of evidence being used as a basis on which to posit more general hypotheses. The benefit of such an approach is that discovery learning implies a diversity of outcomes, with learners likely to produce work on different areas in, conceivably, a variety of formats. Discovery learning is believed to increase motivation among students and lead to more effective work in and outside the classroom (Gill 1999: 42).

As teachers go on with their teaching, they should keep in mind that the world constantly changes and that those changes affect the content of the lessons. The elements of the target language culture should be put into a broader cultural dimension. Only then students will be able to fully understand the complexity and uniqueness of the target language culture. There exist broader key elements behind the presentation of the target language culture in the language classroom such as (Gill 1999: 42):

- developing self-esteem;
- learning to formulate ideas;
- engendering sensitivity;
- developing the skills of evaluation;
- promoting understanding;
- development of awareness.

5. The study

5.1. Research question

Despite different approaches and attitudes, the importance of the target language culture in the language classroom seems to be undisputable. The fact

that students' knowledge seems to be limited should not be seen as a problem but rather as a challenge. The general aim of the research project presented below was to identify the place of the target language culture in the language classroom. More specifically, the study aimed at answering the following questions:

- Do (if) teachers use elements of the target language culture in the language classroom?
- What are the ways in which teachers incorporate target language culture in the classroom?
- What is the teachers' actual knowledge concerning the target language culture?
- What are the teachers' attitudes towards cultural content in the ELT coursebooks?
- What do they do when they feel uncomfortable with it?

5.2. Participants

Thirty teachers took part in the research project. All the teachers were from Konin secondary schools. Nineteen of them had eight or more years of experience. Four teachers have been teaching for four years. Five teachers had less than three years of experience and two teachers have just begun their professional careers in schools.

5.3. Description of the research

During the research, the teachers were asked to answer nine questions:

- Do you use elements of the target language culture in your teaching?
- Do you think that language learning is more effective if connected with cultural content?
- What means do you use to introduce elements of TLC to your students?
- Do you try to constantly extend your knowledge about TLC?
- Do you agree that all coursebooks contain cultural information?
- Is cultural content one of your criteria for coursebook selection?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable with the cultural content in the coursebook?
- Why were you uncomfortable?
- What did you do?
 - (1) Use it as the coursebook suggested.
 - (2) Drop it altogether.
 - (3) Adapt it in some way.

5.4. Description of the results

The first question was concerned with the use of elements of target language culture during language lessons. All the teachers taking part in the research acknowledged using elements of culture in their language classroom. All of them (30 teachers) answered 'Yes'. When asked if they think that language learning is more effective if connected with cultural content, twenty three of them (76%) answered positively. Only seven of them answered 'No'. Out of those 23 teachers 11 were inexperienced and 12 of them were experienced.

Question number three concerned the means that teachers use when introducing elements of the TL culture to their students. According to the teachers taking part in the survey, the list of most often used means included:

- coursebook;
- movies/songs;
- posters/pictures/photos;
- articles from magazines;
- objects (authentic materials);
- students' presentations.

In question number four the teachers were asked if they constantly extended their knowledge about the target language culture. Only ten of them (33%) said that they try to extend their knowledge about target language culture. The ways in which they try to do it are somewhat typical (books, films, the Internet, magazines, and travels). Twenty teachers do not see the need to extend their knowledge. All the teachers agreed with the statement that all coursebooks contain cultural information (question 5). However, only for seven teachers cultural content is one of the important criteria in coursebook selection (question 6). In question number seven teachers were asked if they have ever felt uncomfortable with cultural content in the coursebook. Nine teachers (31%) acknowledged the fact of feeling uncomfortable with cultural content in the coursebook.

When asked about the reasons for such a situation (question 8), the teachers provided the following answers:

- *The coursebook presented rather negative picture of the Irish.*
- *The text included oversimplifications and stereotypical view of the English culture.*
- *The exercise included pictures of the World Trade Center.*
- *The grammar exercise included a sentence about the WTC.*
- *The text was about a festival which I did not know much about.*
- *The lesson included a song of a band I did not know much about.*
- *Text about pub culture in England followed by an exercise with vocabulary used when ordering alcohol.*
- *Text was about euthanasia/divorcing.*

The teachers were also asked to say what they did in those situations. Three of them did the activity as the coursebook suggested. Only one decided not to do the activity at all. Five teachers reported deciding to change and adjust the activity. Below one can see the answers they provided in relation to changing and adapting the activity:

- *I changed the situation from a pub to a café.*
- *I designed an extra lesson on stereotypes.*
- *I conducted the lesson on euthanasia but I tried to focus more on skills rather than topic.*
- *I asked the students to make a presentation on the band.*
- *We did the exercise and spent the rest of the lesson discussing the WTC.*

6. Conclusions

When analyzing the results presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Target language culture is the essential ingredient in the process of effective language learning. Not only does it make the process of language learning more attractive but also increases students' motivation. Target language culture provides a meaningful context for more effective language acquisition.
- Teachers generally recognize the importance of incorporating culture into the effective language learning process. However, there is still a strong need for language teachers to match theory with practice and use more of the target language culture in the classroom. Unfortunately, recognizing the importance of incorporating language culture into the language learning process does not automatically mean that teachers will utilize cultural elements during their lessons. College students, who after graduating become teachers, often do not see the value of TLC. The reason may be that in the recent years the number of hours devoted to English language culture and history classes is constantly reduced.
- Teachers should be more aware of the constant changes occurring in the TLC. As has been already emphasized, cultures are dynamic. The changes occur every day. It is essential for language teachers to monitor the changes and try to keep up with the latest cultural events. Being a teacher implies constant development. There is always something new to discover, and target language culture allows good language teachers to develop and increase their knowledge and teaching skills.
- Teachers should also be more active in extending their cultural knowledge. Nowadays, the access to the outside world seems to be unli-

mitted. Not only students, but also teachers have more means to extend their knowledge of the outside world.

- There are still topics and activities in coursebooks which make some language teachers uncomfortable. As the study shows teachers can approach such situations in at least three different ways. Ignore, modify or accept the content as it is. All of the presented options are acceptable if chosen carefully by the language teachers.

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THE NEGATIVE WASHBACK EFFECT OF A HIGH-STAKES EFL EXAMINATION ON THE ENGLISH TEACHING PRACTICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The present study reports on the washback effect of the National University Entrance Examination – specifically its foreign language component (FLE). Students are selected for the language programs of universities based on their performance on this examination. The classroom practices of six English teachers from three different high schools were observed, accompanied with an observation sheet and tape-recording, to identify any test-related features of their classroom instruction. Semi-structured teacher interviews were carried out between observations, and finally a questionnaire was administered to teachers and students to elicit their perceptions and attitudes related to classroom instruction and the high-stakes examination under scrutiny. Results of the study pointed to certain differences and similarities between teachers from different school settings. The FLE most definitely had a great influence on what teachers taught, how they taught it, and how they carried out internal assessment in their classrooms. An analysis of the classroom discourse gave further support to the argument that FLE has a great influence on the dynamics and contents of classroom instructions. The educational and social consequences of the washback phenomenon are discussed briefly in the conclusions part of the study.

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of washback

The term *washback* (Alderson and Wall 1993), or *backwash* (Briggs 1995), was introduced into the field of education to refer to the influence of testing on

teaching and learning. This situation is also referred to as *measurement-driven instruction* (Popham 1987). The study of washback has given direction to recent developments in language testing and measurement-driven reform of instruction in general education. Alderson (1986) argued for innovations in the language curriculum through innovations in language testing. Similarly, Davies (1985) introduced the concept of *washback validity*, which describes the relationship between testing, teaching and learning. In order to examine the washback validity of a test, testing researchers would have to walk into the classroom to observe the effects of their tests in action.

1.2. Positive versus negative washback

The potentially bidirectional nature of washback has been expressed in Messick's (1996: 241) description of washback as "the extent to which a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do that *promote* or *inhibit* [emphasis added] language learning". Messick (1996) also suggested that a test's validity should be appraised by the degree to which it manifests positive or negative washback. After considering several definitions of washback, Bailey (1996) concluded that more empirical research is needed to be carried out in order to document its exact nature (positive or negative) and mechanisms.

Vernon's (1956) observations regarding negative washback is what most educators would have witnessed at one time or another in their teaching careers. Alderson and Wall (1993) call it negative washback when tests do not reflect the learning principles or the course objectives which contextualize the test. Studies carried out in North America (in the US, Anderson et al. 1990; Smith 1991; and in Canada, Widen et al. 1997) investigated the detrimental effects of high-stakes testing and reported their results with the conclusion that testing programs:

- reduce the time available for instruction;
- narrow curricular offerings and modes of instruction;
- reduce the capacities of teachers to teach content and use methods and materials that are incompatible with standardized testing formats; and
- lead students to adopt more of a memorization approach with reduced emphasis on critical thinking.

On the other hand, researchers that believe in the possibility of bringing about beneficial changes in teaching by changing examinations argue that good teaching-learning tasks are directly usable for testing purposes. These varying arguments related to negative and positive washback on teaching and learning show us that there is no consensus regarding this issue among researchers.

1.3. Aspect of washback and factors mediating it

Hughes (1993) developed a trichotomy which focuses on participants, processes, and products to illustrate the complex mechanisms through which washback occurs in actual teaching and learning environments (see Table 1).

- (a) Participants – students, classroom teachers, administrators, materials developers and publishers, whose perceptions and attitudes toward their work may be affected by a test.
 - (b) Processes – any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning.
 - (c) Products – what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of the learning.
-

Table 1: The trichotomy backwash model (adapted from Hughes 1993: 2).

The research to date (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons 1996; Shohamy et al. 1996; Brown 1997) suggests that various factors seem to be mediating the process of washback. These are *test methods* (e.g. test methods, test contents, skills tested, purpose of the test, decisions that will be made on the basis of the test results, etc.), *prestige factors* (e.g. stakes of the test, status of the test within the entire educational system, etc.), *personal factors* (e.g. teachers' educational backgrounds, their beliefs about the best methods of teaching and learning, etc.), *micro-context factors* (e.g. the school setting), and *macro-context factors* (e.g. the society where the test is used). These aspects will be illuminated for the case of the present study.

1.4. The present study

The main focus of the present study is the first component of Hughes' (1993) trichotomy; namely, the classroom teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward their work and the examination under question, and whether this may change from one schooling context to another. The second component of the trichotomy, the processes, will be our concern when examining the classroom practices of the English teachers from three different types of schools, to look for any patterns that might be explained as the washback from the national examination.

The test which is under scrutiny here is the Foreign Language Examination (hereafter named FLE), a component of the Turkish University Entrance Examination. It consists of the following task types in the given number of items and all in the multiple-choice format: sentence-level cloze (22), paragraph-level cloze (9), sentence completion (11 items), matching a question to a given answer (4 items), translation from L1 to L2, L2 to L1 (8 items), paragraph completion (5 items); dialogue completion (5 items), contextualized response (5 items); reading comprehension items (21), and achieving textual coherence (10 items).

Apparently, the contents of the test do not directly assess the speaking, writing and listening abilities of the language learners. The basic language components being assessed are grammar, vocabulary and idiomatic expressions in shorter or longer contexts. The questions are all multiple choice type assessing recognition rather than production. There is reason here to

predict that teachers and their teaching will be influenced by these features of the examination.

It is a high-stakes examination because all the universities in Turkey accept students into their language programs based on their scores from the FLE. The status of the test is, therefore, a highly honored and trusted one. As for the personal factors that mediate the effect of washback, teachers' educational backgrounds as well as other demographic information were established under the relevant part of the study. The micro-context factors were also covered relating to the school setting. Products and the macro-context factors were not examined within the framework of this study. The research questions, therefore, took the following form:

- (1) Do secondary school English teachers at different schools hold different perspectives and attitudes toward their job and the EFL National Examination?
- (2) Do the contents and format of the EFL National Examination influence teachers' classroom teaching practices and beliefs? If yes, what is (are) the variable(s) affected by the washback effect?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants of the study were high school teachers of English and their 10th and 11th grade students preparing for university entrance examination. Including a comparative element is a common feature of washback studies. This study, therefore, included three different school types, both with a one-year intensive English program for all its students starting secondary education. The subjects were six teachers from three Anatolian High Schools (AHS); five teachers from two Private High Schools (PHS); and two teachers from one Super Lycée (SL), making a total of 13 teachers. Students that prepared toward the language programs of universities are exposed to 20 hours of English per week in class sizes of 5-12 students.

2.2. Measures

This study was designed to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods. Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and questionnaires (methodological triangulation) were employed to acquire firsthand, sensory accounts of the nature of the classroom discourse. The questionnaire adopted by this study was originally developed for the Korean context by Hee-Jeong Hwang (2003) in requirement for a Master's thesis carried out in McGill University, Canada. It was translated into the teachers' native tongue and certain changes were made to make it conform to the setting of the current study. The questionnaire included five point Likert-scale items (5 =

strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree), 'yes' or 'no' response items, and open-ended items.

2.3. Procedures

The collection of data took place in the fall of 2006. Classrooms were observed for only six teachers each totaling between 240-285 minutes; however, the questionnaire was administered to all the teacher participants. Observing researcher made detailed notes in real time on the activities and episodes that occurred during the lesson using a pre-selected guideline. The linguistic features of classroom talk were tape-recorded. Classroom notes and tape-recordings were analyzed with the purpose of identifying specific test-related features of the course: any test-related activities initiated by the teacher; times when the teacher gave the students information about the test, or discussed test-taking strategies; instances when the teacher worked with individuals or small groups while the rest of the class continued with the main task; the amount of time the teachers spent reviewing answers to tests, etc. Semi-structured teacher interviews were carried out between observations to explore the reasons/intentions behind teachers' behaviors and their beliefs related to FLE. The questionnaires were administered at the end of classroom observations to avoid undue influence on teachers' classroom behaviors.

3. Results

The results of the study will be discussed from three perspectives: responses to the questionnaire, information from classroom observations presented in a table format, and information gathered from interviews with teachers.

3.1. Responses to the questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire elicited the educational background of the participating teachers.

If we summarize the table on school basis, teachers with the longest years of experiences teaching English were in AHS (an average of 18 years), and PHS (an average of 19 years). All the teachers of the AHS held ELT degrees, which automatically qualified them for teaching in the schools of the Ministry of Education. Teachers with English Language and Literature diplomas had auxiliary English teaching certificates, participating in a one year program mandatory for all such teachers. The experiences with teaching FLE groups varied between 1 and 10.

Participants	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Age	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	50-59	30-39	30-39
Sex	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F
School type	Anatolian High	Anatolian High	Anatolian High	Anatolian High	Anatolian High	Anatolian High	Private High	Private High	Private High	Private High	Private High	Super Lycee	Super Lycee
Degree	BED.	BED.	BED.	BA.	BED.	BED.	BA.	BA. MED.	BED.	BA & MA.in ELT	BA. & MA.in Edu.	BA.	BA.
Major	ELT	ELT	ELT	ELT	ELT	ELT	English Literature	English Literature	ELT	English Lit. & ELT	English Lit./ELT Education	English Literature	English Literature
Years of teaching	21	18	20	19	10	20	6	8	21	30	30	9	9
Years of teaching FLE groups	6	3	10	1	6	NA.	1	4	8	3	3	5	-
Number of students	9	12	NA.	NA.	9	9	NA.	5	NA.	8	8	12	9
Certificate(s)	English Teaching Methods	English Teaching Methods & Computer Usage	-	-	-	-	Teaching Certificate	Teaching Certificate; TOEFL, Fulbright	Cooperative Teaching NLP	-	-	Teaching Certificate	Teaching Certificate, Counseling

Table 2: Background information about the participants.

3.2. Awareness of the curriculum

According to the questionnaire, all thirteen teachers (100%) claimed that they know the overall philosophy of the curriculum, understand its goals and objectives, and follow its guidelines in their teaching. They are all familiar with the linguistic skills and knowledge assessed by the FLE: "reading comprehension, grammar, using knowledge of English language, making inferences, translation, open-cloze, dialogue completion, paragraph completion, specifying irrelevant sentence, sentence completion, use of English, interpreting information". Eleven teachers believe that the examination "mainly aims to evaluate students' academic competence", and two believe that it is "to choose prospective students".

One open-ended question asking opinions on the relations of the curriculum and the FLE drew the following comments from various teachers: "The official national curriculum of the Ministry is not strictly binding. We prepare our own curriculum (...) The question types on the FLE should be added to the curriculum (...) There is no FLE resource book for 10th graders, so we have to use books for the regular English classrooms. Examination system and the curriculum should be aligned; if we were to study speaking for four class periods, we would drift from our goals".

3.3. Attitudes toward the Foreign Language Examination

The attitudes of teachers toward the FLE differ according to schools. In response to:

- (a) "The FLE reflects the aims and goals of the school curriculum", five AHS teachers were undecided ($X=3.00$, $s.d.=1.00$), five PHS teachers almost agreed with it ($X=3.40$, $s.d.=.55$), while both SL teachers totally agreed ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.00$).
- (b) "FLE can validly assess learners' communicative skills", all six AHS teachers ($X=2.00$, $s.d.=.63$) and the SL teachers ($X=2.00$, $s.d.=.00$) totally disagree with it; PHS teachers had a similar tendency to disagree ($X=2.40$, $s.d.=1.51$).
- (c) "FLE enriches students' knowledge of the English language", all the teachers strongly agreed with this suggestion: AHS ($X=4.50$, $s.d.=.54$), PHS ($X=5.00$, $s.d.=.00$), and SL ($X=4.50$, $s.d.=.70$).
- (d) "FLE improves students' proficiency in English", teachers were once again in agreement with this statement: AHS ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.00$), PHS ($X=4.20$, $s.d.=1.78$), and SL ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.00$).
- (e) "FLE motivates students to study English", there was a general agreement with some teachers agreeing more strongly than others: AHS ($X=4.20$, $s.d.=.83$), PHS ($X=4.60$, $s.d.=.54$), and SL ($X=4.50$, $s.d.=.70$).

- (f) "My students should adjust their learning strategies to the requirements of the FLE", the general tendency is for agreement with this statement: AHS ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.63$), PHS ($X=4.20$, $s.d.=.83$), and SL ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.00$).
- (g) "FLE forces my students to study English harder", agreement is once again quite strong: AHS ($X=4.60$, $s.d.=.54$), PHS ($X=4.60$, $s.d.=.54$), and SL ($X=4.50$, $s.d.=.70$).
- (h) "I enjoy the teaching of the practice tests in preparation for the FLE", teachers appear to be taking pleasure in this type of teaching: AHS ($X=4.20$, $s.d.=.83$), PHS ($X=4.75$, $s.d.=.50$), and SL ($X=4.50$, $s.d.=.70$).
- (i) "When I teach my students for the FLE, I feel pressured", teachers' opinions seem to vary slightly but the general tendency is disagreement: AHS ($X=2.40$, $s.d.=1.51$), PHS ($X=1.60$, $s.d.=.54$), and ($X=2.00$, $s.d.=.00$).
- (j) "Teaching for the FLE is contrary to my teaching philosophy", SL teachers seem to diverse quite significantly in their attitude toward the EFL when compared with the others: AHS ($X=3.80$, $s.d.=.83$), PHS ($X=3.20$, $s.d.=1.48$), but SL ($X=1.50$, $s.d.=.70$).
- (k) "FLE must be changed in some ways", quite interestingly, all teachers, despite conflicting responses to some earlier items, tend to agree with the need for a change: AHS ($X=3.60$, $s.d.=.54$), PHS ($X=3.20$, $s.d.=1.30$), and SL ($X=4.00$, $s.d.=.00$).
- (l) "FLE students fail to develop some types of language knowledge and skills", teachers of some schools tend to agree strongly with this assertion while others almost agree to it but not uniformly: AHS ($X=4.20$, $s.d.=.83$), PHS ($X=3.40$, $s.d.=1.51$), and SL ($X=3.50$, $s.d.=2.12$).

In answer to the first research question, the differences between schools could be summarized in the following way: a) only AHS teachers doubt that FLE reflects the aims and goals of the school curriculum, b) only SL teachers believe that FLE can validly assess learners' communicative skills, and for them teaching for FLE is not contrary to their teaching philosophy, and c) teachers are uniform in their (dis)agreements on all other matters related to FLE.

3.4. Attitudes toward coursebooks used

In response to some of the open-ended questions on the names of coursebooks being used and who chooses them, teachers reported that a team of teachers from each school choose the coursebooks from amongst a set approved of by the Ministry of Education, and their criteria are said to be in conformity to the contents of the FLE. The list of books included were FCE Use of English, ELS periodicals, Building Skills, Advanced English Grammar, Word Power, Assessment Tests, Paragraph Studies, English Through Reading, etc. Eight teachers wrote that their text books contained many

practice tests for the FLE, and seven believed that full coverage of their text books could bring students high success on the FLE.

3.5.1. Views concerning teaching: What to teach

Three elements are mainly considered under this category: the parts of the textbook taught, supplementary materials, and linguistic areas being emphasized. Based on the questionnaires, eight teachers taught the entire textbook while five skipped some parts, and seven teachers reported modifying the contents of the textbook according to the FLE. All of the teachers use supplementary materials in their classes such as past exam papers and commercial exam preparation books.

In FLE classrooms (Table 3), priority is given to the teaching of vocabulary and grammar as the two most important areas, with reading follows them. For the AHS teachers speaking the FL maintains its importance, as does listening with PHS teachers. Writing loses its importance altogether. In non-FLE classrooms generally, speaking is a priority for AHS teachers, reading is ranked first by PHS and grammar first by SL teachers. For PHS teachers, grammar reared to the fifth rank but vocabulary kept its importance.

	Grammar	Vocabulary	Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking
AHS	1	2	5	3	4	3
PHS	4	2	5	1	3	5
SL	1	2	5	3	4	3
total average	1	1	5	2	3	4

Table 3: Skill areas that are emphasized in FLE classrooms.

An overall comparison of the three tables will show that vocabulary, grammar and reading are the components mostly emphasized in the teaching of these teachers, irrespective of FLE or non-FLE classrooms. It was concluded from the reports of classroom observations that teachers barely taught any writing or speaking, and teachers confessed in interviews that they ranked these two skills because they were asked to do so although the two skills did not receive any attention in their classrooms.

3.5.2. Views concerning teaching: How to teach

The 'how to teach' category is designed to ask about three elements: teaching methods used, activities in class, and lesson plans.

All teachers, with the exception of two, are quite confident in the success of their teaching methods, which are listed as following: "Question-answer, teaching the subject with examples, revision, reading, writing, making students do worksheets and practice tests, eclectic, direct, communica-

tive methods, suggestopedia, natural approach, grammar translation, brain storming, translation, visual and affective, listening-speaking, class participation". Nine teachers argued that they followed the guidelines outlined under Teacher's Guide of the curriculum. Teachers' responses to this section do not seem to agree with classroom observations but only express the ideal reality. However, some concerns have been noted as: "only language knowledge is focused on with no practice of language use; cannot teach English in the way I know best because no student pays attention to aspects not being tested".

Almost all the teachers believed their methods were helpful to students. As the FLE approached, practice tests and question-answer sessions are believed to be emphasized more: "As we focus on practices of speaking when they are 9th and 10th graders, we go into the linguistic details of the FLE when they are 11th graders (...) [I make] frequent use of questions and answers. I focus on used FLE questions (...) I focus on using test time economically". Even teachers, who answered "No" to this question, stated in interviews that they increase the number of practice examinations.

When asked to describe briefly what activities they employ in their classrooms, they stated, "group work, reading aloud and sometimes one-to-one teaching; learner or teacher-centered studying; role-play; working with the whole class; teaching and evaluating; student presentations; pair-work; variety is the key; question-answer explaining the key items and distracters one by one; and revision". Seven teachers commented that they try to give psychological support to students to reduce the pressure and anxiety of the approaching exam.

3.5.3. Views concerning teaching: How to assess

The 'how to assess' category examines three elements in terms of 'internal' classroom testing: evaluation methods used, content of the tests, and types of questions on the tests. Five teachers based their tests on the contents of their textbooks and the FLE materials, while three teachers totally conformed to the FLE; four teachers based their internal assessment on the coursebooks and resource books. Further comments were, "test techniques are different, they require speed and correctness; I include various question types to raise awareness for the FLE; all my exams include question types which appear in the FLE".

In response to an item, they stated that they use the following item types: multiple choice tests, cloze tests, rewriting (paraphrasing), reading comprehension questions, guessing vocabulary from context, all types of questions from FLE, word-formation, writing, error correction. Further comments on this issue were as follows: "I think that my assessment is only geared for FLE and lacks the communicative skills (...) I wish I used clas-

sical type of exams (...) Multiple choice tests are suitable for the students to develop their test-taking skills".

In sum, neither the course content (see Table 4), the methodology being employed, nor the internal assessment methods include speaking, writing or listening; all the assessment techniques were measuring recognition rather than production.

3.6. General views on the school setting and the FLE

In order to describe the impact of FLE on teachers' professional satisfaction, teachers generally had positive attitudes, saying: the exam preparation keeps their English "fresh" and their professional expertise "admired and respected"; it is a constant challenge to their teaching ability; they mostly enjoy the small class size and the ambition of the students to learn, which in turn motivates them to do their best performance.

The FLE has a very positive effect on students in that, "they behave more maturely; English becomes the one and only purpose and concentration of their lives in and out of school; they start feeling like colleagues with their teachers and take English seriously". It also has negative effects in that they get demoralized under the pressure of the exam and teachers have to pull them out of it.

The rate of success on entering university language programs is reported as 65-90% for AHS, 90% for PHS, and above 50% for SL. Eight teachers are aware of the changes made in the FLE in the recent years, and five teachers assert that they have made the necessary adjustments in their teaching. Five teachers value EFL instruction as a valuable experience for themselves, but four teachers that feel a negative influence have made the following comments: "more effective teaching methods are neglected in favor of more exam-oriented ones; test-type questions replace creative answers, which doesn't leave room for literature appreciation; linguistic knowledge gains priority over practical use of the language"; two teachers accept both sides of the argument.

Among the factors that strongly impact their teaching, teachers identified "preparing students for the FLE" as the most important factor influencing their teaching, and "class size" and "student motivation" as factors of secondary importance. The other factors received markings in various rankings:

- (a) Preparing my students for the FLE (12).
- (b) The number of students in my class (7).
- (c) My students' motivation to learn (7).
- (d) The audio-visual instruments at my disposal (3).
- (e) The school administration (3).
- (f) Parental contribution and support (3).

	AHS teachers			PHS teachers		SL teachers
	A (240min.)	B (285min)	C (240min.)	D (240 min.)	E (240 min.)	F (280 min)
Teacher gives the students tasks under test conditions (administered weekly by all teachers during 4 class hours)	–	–	–	–	–	30 (of the total of 150 mns.)
Instructions given to students to do the test at home (self-timed)	13	–	–	5	10	–
Teacher gives feedback on student performance item by item	56	50	25	40	75	10
Teacher identifies answers in a text and explains	50	20	35	40	50	5
Teacher asks students to consider their strength and weaknesses with respect to the test requirements	7	1	–	8	10	2
Teacher sets tasks under strict time pressure	30	4	85	30	–	40
Teacher gives information on effective strategies to use in the test	8.5	10	15	20	10	5
Practice with sections of the FLE						
Fill in the blank with the most appropriate word or phrase	40	110	35	50	25	75
Sentence Completion	35.5	80	45	40	35	35
Find the appropriate question to the given answer	–	–	–	–	–	–
Translation English-Turkish	–	–	–	–	–	–
Translation Turkish-English	–	–	–	–	–	–
Finding closest in meaning	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dialogue completion	–	–	–	5	–	–
Paragraphs (sentence- or word-level cloze)	–	–	10	15	20	78
Total use of English; % of observed time (teachers)	%55	%6	%20	%40	%40	%30
Total use of English; % of observed time (students)	%20	%15	%10	%10	%5	%20

Table 4: Aspects of classroom discourse.

- (g) My colleagues (1).
- (h) The training and education I received in my university years (6).
- (i) The enthusiasm I feel towards teaching English (12).
- (j) The general student portrait of the school (5).
- (k) The cultural make-up of the school's neighborhood (1).

4. Conclusion

The general conclusions to be drawn from this study are as follows:

- (1) Most teachers in the FLE classes have unanimously and 'comfortably' adjusted their teaching practices to match the requirements of the target examination. Grammar, vocabulary and reading instruction constitute the basic core of all teaching, leaving out speaking, writing and listening.
- (2) Teachers tend to ignore skills and activities that do not contribute directly to success on the FLE. There is no variety in classroom setting such as group work, pair work, or project work.
- (3) Interviews reveal that teachers with ELT degrees are more aware of the detrimental effects of the FLE on the classroom activities but admit that there is nothing they can do under the circumstances.
- (4) In consideration of the social consequences of the FLE use, it is seen that after six years of English instruction in high schools (including the last two years of intensive English for the FLE groups) little has been achieved in the way of acquiring the language skills necessary for academic study. Most students spend another year in the prep English departments of universities, which is an unnecessary burden on the economy of their families and the country as a whole.
- (5) The class sizes appear to be more than ideal, students are reported to be highly motivated and field-oriented, and yet teachers do not implement communication-oriented teaching.
- (6) Classroom instruction was largely conducted in Turkish, with the exception of reciting reading passages and paragraphs for comprehension activities.
- (7) The teachers provide most of the input and guide activities in a teacher-centered setting.

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TOWARDS A PERFECT EDUCATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES WEB SITE: THE USABILITY OF AMERICAN HISTORY ONLINE RESOURCES TO EFL LEARNERS

ABSTRACT

The article is a discussion of the educational character and usability of selected, popular American history WWW resources with regard to how they fit the frame of constructivist-oriented Web-enhanced teaching in an EFL setting. It is intended to show both promising as well as ineffective WWW solutions, focusing, however, on the latter to show that the Internet rarely lives up to our educational expectations. Special emphasis will be placed on the difficulties an average EFL learner may encounter while setting out on an Internet excursion in search for American history material. Also, in conclusions, an attempt will be made to suggest some ways of overcoming these difficulties and make the Web more usable to EFL learners.

1. Introduction

The popularity of using Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT) in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is not a new phenomenon and it has already brought a lot of research with often conflicting results as for its effectiveness. Whereas the world of EFL was relatively quick to take in modern technology and adapt it to its needs, other domains have been quite reluctant to embrace the computer, the Internet, and the World Wide Web (WWW). Social studies, history, or cultural studies departments at universities and colleges seem to have always showed an amount of suspicion towards technology, which largely slowed down the process of incorporating the computer and other technological novelty into their curricula.

Luckily, within the last 10-15 years the omnipresence of technology has, in a way, forced all humanities to accept or, at least, become more open to ICT as a valid pedagogical tool of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Even if history or social studies teachers do not offer Web-based or Web-enhanced computer laboratory instruction as such, the ICT is present in the background of the classroom: in the form of Internet research, using word processing software, or extensive use of synchronous/asynchronous computer-mediated communication. In this context, the realm of American Studies is no exception. The humanities' interest in technological advancements has brought about a proliferation of WWW material that is used so extensively by our students that fewer and fewer of them actually pay a visit at the school library.

In the case of EFL university level students in Poland, where English speaking countries' culture and history are a staple ingredient of the curriculum, the use of the WWW as a source of information is as popular as, I assume, anywhere else. What causes concern is (1) the content-related quality of these WWW resources which students use outside the classroom without any teacher control as well as (2) the linguistic difficulty and correctness of such resources – features which are of vital importance to an EFL student (and teacher).

With that in mind, this paper will explore the issue of the adequacy of selected American History Web sites to the needs of an average Polish EFL student, paying special attention to whether American history WWW resources are EFL student friendly. This will be done by way of an insightful analysis and observations of 20 carefully selected American history Web sites. The actual analysis will however be preceded by a discussion of the links among computer-assisted instruction (CAI), EFL, and social studies as well as a short literature survey of what is to be expected of the Web in the context of American studies (history), which is to be later confronted with the findings of the afore-mentioned analysis.

2. Social studies, CAI and EFL

Even though the above domains may not seem to go together, at least at the first glance, the links among them are very visible in the case of Polish EFL university departments. In many European countries, Poland including, American Studies are an inseparable part of neophilology studies. As Ickstadt (1996) writes: "In most parts of Europe, especially the south and east, American literature and culture are taught as part of a course of studies that prepares students for a teaching certification in English literature and language".¹

¹ Even though the quote from Heinz Ickstadt comes from his analysis of European American Studies written in 1996, there have not appeared many independent institutes awarding MA degrees specifically in American Studies since then. Except for a few well-established programs (such as the American Studies Center at Warsaw University or the JFK Institute for North American Studies in Berlin) the majority of American Studies programs in Europe (and Poland itself) are still tied to English philology studies.

In the Polish neophilology tradition, both American and British studies have always been inseparably connected with EFL teaching, EFL teacher training colleges, and university level schools of English. Astor and Bandler (1996) observe that, after interviewing American studies teachers who taught in Polish tertiary education, "those taking (...) American studies courses tend to be language students, or teachers of English who want to improve their skills".

Additionally, it needs to be said that there is an observable growth in the popularity of American studies MA programs at Polish universities (just to mention University of Łódź, Warsaw University, or Jagiellonian University) and an increasing number of students tending to view these MA programs as a tempting alternative to a traditional MA in English as a Foreign Language. It seems, therefore, that in the case of the tertiary level education in Poland, the two "natural allies", as Wach (1996) calls language acquisition and acculturation, are closely related and often tend to be taught together or, at least, side by side.

It is safe to say that, despite the amount of reluctance on the part of some humanities teachers, which I mentioned in the Introduction, social studies and ICT/CAI are another promising pair of natural allies. Since the constructivism-oriented approaches started to become popular in the late 80s, early 90s of the previous century, the social studies teachers' interest in educational technology has been slowly growing. In the case of American history teaching, which is the main focus of this paper, for a relatively long period of time, instructors, and instruction designers 'dodged' the use of technology. In order to illustrate this, it suffices to observe that in the last three decades there have been scarce instances of authoritative publications devoted to helping historians with incorporating technological advances in their research or teaching. The most notable of those are Shorter's *The Historian and the Computer: A Practical Guide* (Englewood Cliffs 1971), Schick's *Teaching History With a Computer. A Complete Guide for College Professors* (Lyceum 1990), Mawdsley and Munck's *Computing for Historians. An Introductory Guide* (Manchester University Press 1993), Greenstein's *A Historian's Guide to Computing* (OUP 1994), or the more recent and up-to-date Trinkle and Merriman's *The U.S. History Highway. A Guide to Internet Resources* (M. E. Sharpe 2002 and 2006). Greenstein (1994: 1) explains that this shortage of literature should not be attributed to the reluctance of publishers but to "historians' unwillingness to dissociate computers from quantitative social science history with which they made their first debut in the 1960s".

More promising are the results of newer research from Trinkle (1999) and Trinkle and Merriman (2001) who present the outcomes of a survey, piloted by the *American Association for History and Computing* (AAHC), into the practices of teaching history with technology. The survey gave an extensive overview of the use of technology in 101 American colleges and universities by 485 history instructors. What is perhaps the most fundamental result of this research is Trinkle's forthright conclusion that the "marriages of history and technologies have occurred" but he also observes the following:

- (1) There is no unanimous agreement as to how and how much technology should be involved in the teaching of history.
- (2) There is a tendency to incorporate more and more technology into the history classroom, especially email and the Internet for research exercises, projects, and papers. However, there are concerns expressed about the quality of Internet-based information.
- (3) It becomes common practice for history instructors to devote class time to teaching computer skills and evaluation skills.
- (4) Instructors tend to produce their own class Web sites with pre-evaluated links to online history materials.
- (5) Twenty-seven percent of instructors have begun asking students to produce individual Web sites for their courses and twenty-one percent require or encourage students to develop group Web projects.
- (6) The Web sites produced by instructors (see 4 above) are in most cases limited to presenting a syllabus in an electronic form and providing links to a limited number of external WWW resources relevant to the course.
- (7) There are documented cases where the use of technology in the classroom negatively affected students' interest.

As can be seen above, the 'marriage of technology and history' has indeed occurred but is not a fault-free relationship and it appears that there are more dilemmas and challenges than already answered questions. What we get to know from the above findings is *what* is the state of affairs in computer assisted history teaching and learning. What we cannot, however, infer from AHACS' study is *why* it might be worth incorporating technology into the history syllabus and what the advantages as well as pitfalls of it are. Because of that it was decided to carry out a short literature survey in order to illustrate what are some of the CAI-related aspects, services, applications and/or technologies of the WWW that are usable in teaching/researching social studies online.

3. American history and the Internet

Before I proceed to discussing particular technologies and classroom applications used in teaching and learning history (or, more broadly, social studies), it seems a reasonable choice at this point to examine a certain common theme that runs through many sources describing these technologies. An analysis of research dealing with practical applications of ICT in social studies and history instruction reveals that writers devote considerable attention to the fact that all *effective* uses of ICT must rest on the idea of developing *higher order thinking/cognitive skills*. There appears to be a unanimous agreement among researchers that the more an activity or a technology used is connected with the thinking process, the more effective it appears to be in the teaching/learning process (Easley 1998; Ferez 2001; Lewis 2001). There are numerous ways in which ICT may be incorporated into instruc-

tion depending on the level of the cognitive skills used in the learning process and these may vary from simple word processing, synchronous and asynchronous communication over the Internet, to students' heuristic use of the Internet or compiling Web sites based on their own.

Of the many practical ICT (and especially the Internet) applications that are eagerly emphasized by researchers, one of the most common seems to be the use of graphics or, to be precise, *(still) visuals*. There is no denying that the visual enhancement of text, especially if accompanied by other multimedia, is generally considered a great advantage of electronically-assisted instruction. Bredekamp (1995: 8) contends that "highly technological societies are experiencing a phase of Copernican change from the dominance of language to the hegemony of images". Even if this remark is exaggerated, it is hard not to agree with Staley (1998) who observes that the modern electronic culture is more visually than linguistically oriented.

The uses of digital (or digitally prepared) visuals range from very simple ones, such as displaying graphs and images through a multimedia projector, to more complicated ones, such as producing graphically enhanced Web sites or preparing digital maps. What needs to be emphasized is that the technological revolution not only allows wider use of digitally stored images; equally important is the fact that history instructors are themselves capable, with little cost and energy, of producing their own visual aids, such as custom maps, graphs, collages, or digital representations of primary sources (if "in compliance with copyright laws", as Braun (2003: 227) points out).

As simple and widespread as visuals may appear to be in a modern history classroom, their use cannot be underestimated, since the benefits they bring may seriously reinforce absorbing information by students. Some of the most significant advantages of (still) visuals include the following:

- durability and, if backed-up properly, longevity (Diamond et al. 1998);
- effectiveness in generating discussions and promoting critical thinking skills for small, seminar-type classes (Plane 2001);
- used for other than decorative purposes (still) visuals may help higher-level interpretation, such as causing students to develop a certain mental image of a place, fact, or person (Fahy 2004);
- their use in the classroom breaks "the verbal contents of a lecture into more easily digestible bits" (Greenstein 1994: 39).

If the above-mentioned visuals may be applied to a lecture hall as well as a computer laboratory, the aspects of ICTs that are inseparably linked to Web-enhanced teaching/learning are *hypertext and non-linearity*. These are features of the electronic teaching/learning environment which are eagerly associated with constructivist approaches as they allow an individual path of inquiry for each student and a non-sequential approach to studying (history). Interestingly, it is perhaps this idea of non-linearity which causes the greatest amount of reluctance on the part of many historians and history instructors

(Staley 1998; Andersen 2000; Trask 2000; Solli 2001). This reluctance comes from the very nature of non-linearity which, by definition, stands in opposition to the traditional, sequential historical narrative. Solli (2001: 45) observes: "Academic texts with the line of arguments of one interpretation, or a pro-et-contra discussion of interpretations, are fundamental to the academic tradition in the history discipline and to all academic disciplines".

Historians write about and view the past as a linear phenomenon; they focus on sequence, cause and effect, and chronology as bases for generating a proper, in a traditional sense, historical understanding (cf. Staley 1998; Trask 2000). Consequently, the traditional historian tends to disapprove of the 21st century student relying on the WWW in search of answers to historically valid questions. There is, however, an agreement about certain advantages of hypertextual environments for students of social studies. Such environments tend to be:

- user controlled (cf. Laurillard 1993; Price 1998; Lee 2002);
- autonomous;
- democratic/pluralistic;
- allowing students to take responsibility for their learning path and pace.

If hypertext in its canonical form links texts or text documents in an electronic environment, the technology of *hypermedia/multimedia* is then a natural extension of the term hypertext, which encompasses a combination of hypertext with other (audio and/or visual) media (Laurillard 1993). Even though the results of research into the effectiveness of hypermedia in education are conflicting (Veermans and Tapola 2004), there is an agreement to at least a number of advantageous uses of hypermedia. Heinich et. al. (1996: 263) enumerate four main benefits of hypermedia-based instruction. These are:

- engrossing, i.e. holding the interest and attention of the learner;
- multisensory, i.e. offering the opportunity to absorb information by both aural and visual channels;
- individualized, i.e. allowing a considerable autonomy in the choice and pace of material retrieval;
- collaborative (if in an online context), i.e. allowing for instant sharing of information and for creating students' own hypermedia documents.

From an instructional design viewpoint, Hoogeveen (1995) adds to the list of benefits that a reasonable use of hypermedia improves also:

- user-friendliness and "thus man-machine interaction";
- impact of messages on the audience;
- higher levels of concentration among the learners.

Similarly to hypertextuality, the idea of interactivity (particularly in the form of historic games and simulations) has been readily adopted by constructivists for whom a simulated event allows teachers to situate cognition, to personalize information for the learner, and, as was the case with hypertextuality, to have students choose a learning path for themselves.

Some of the noted advantages of interactive environments with regard to teaching and learning history are the following:

- students assume (active) roles of historical characters or historians (Schick 1990; Lewis 2001);
- the 'interactor' makes choices and decisions themselves (within the structure of the simulation);
- "the algorithms (...) allow for non-linear outcome of events" (Taylor 2003);
- simulations tend to be far more dynamic than static media (Taylor 2003);
- simulations are motivating and engrossing for both students and professors (Taylor 2003);
- simulation may be a platform for answering the "what if" (historical) questions;
- a simulation is the connection for learners between abstract ideas and the (as-if) real life experience (Newmark 2001; Schick 1990).

Another frequently praised feature of WWW-enhanced history is the unprecedented access to *primary sources*. When the use of computers in history was just a budding discipline, one of the biggest criticisms voiced by computer opponents was, as Greenstein (1994: 35) reports, the misconception that computers would "require the cultivation of vocational skills and thus impede the historian from essential immersion in primary sources". The reality proved otherwise; technology has not turned historians into computer analysts and, contrary to what had been expected, it has significantly improved and popularized access to primary sources. More and more publications related to computer-assisted social studies are emphasizing the benefits of placing primary sources of historical significance online. The benefits of it are copious. First and foremost, primary sources in a technology-rich environment are easily and immediately accessible (Craver 1999). Secondly, they provide students (and teachers) with better, faster, and educationally efficient ways of interacting with historical material (Mason and Hicks 2002). Thirdly, on a more practical level, online primary sources are a time and energy saver, for students do not have to physically move to a library to look at a manuscript. Lastly, as Eamon (2006) suggests, the very fact of placing a historical text online adds to its attractiveness (as opposed to microfilms, slides, or photocopies).

There is yet another important aspect of online availability of primary sources: the technology of OCR (Optical Character and Recognition), thanks to which it is possible to get a text version of a primary source, allows for a fuller, faster, and perhaps, more detailed analysis of manuscripts, documents, and the like. The electronic (text) version of a primary source as opposed to its original form is characteristic of what Lee (2002) named *structural differences*. These include, among others, (1) *manipulability*, i.e. "the ability

to manipulate digital documents in ways that enhance the document's usability" by highlighting, cutting, pasting, annotating, translating, etc., (2) *searchability*, i.e. the ability to search inside documents as well as text-search whole collections of primary sources, and (3) *flexibility*, i.e. portability and hypertextual capacities of digitalized manuscripts.

As can be seen from the above discussion, most applications of ICTs in teaching history bring numerous benefits to both students and teachers. All these advantages, found in relevant literature, might lead to a conclusion that the Internet is a teacher/learner 'promised land' where multimedia, interactivity, visuals, copious primary sources, and hypertextuality all interweave to create a constructivist-friendly teaching/learning environment for social studies. Therefore, the valid question to ask is whether these great expectations generated by theoretical sources stand up to reality. In other words, what is the real educational usability of American history Web sites? The following sections of this paper will deal with an analysis of how usable are the most popular American history resources to an average EFL student with some general remarks on both good and poor practice found in the Web site analysis.

4. Usability study of selected online American History resources

In order to assess the usability of online resources it was necessary to devise an evaluative tool which would include a set of stable criteria for educational Web sites evaluation. Such criteria have already been formulated by miscellaneous Web site usability experts, metainformation specialists, teachers, librarians, educators, and others, in the form of Web site evaluation guides and procedures. With that in mind, a meta-analysis of existing evaluation guides was performed in order to synthesize a set of criteria suitable for evaluating *educational* Web sites. Fifteen Web site evaluation guides² were chosen for the analysis. A great deal of care was taken so that there would be a spectrum of different guides: from simple questionnaires and tip sheets, through librarian set of criteria, to more comprehensive procedures by ICT consultants. The meta-analysis revealed that the most commonly used criteria in evaluating Internet resources can be grouped in two main categories:

- (1) Relevance/Comprehensiveness containing the following evaluation criteria:
 - Authorship/credibility
 - Accuracy of content/scope
 - Objectivity
 - Purpose
 - Audience

² The list of hyperlinks to the 15 online evaluation guides can be found at <http://bartwol.webpark.pl/guides.html>

- (2) Technical issues/Structure containing the following evaluation criteria:
 - Currency
 - Navigation/hypertextuality/links
 - Style, design and functionality
 - Graphics and use of multimedia
 - Special features
 - Accessibility/connectivity
 - Cost
 - Interactivity

The above criteria were subsequently enhanced by adding strictly educational and EFL related features. As a result, a comprehensive Web site usability tip sheet was compiled which functioned as a usability measure tool. The tip sheet, which I named the Synthesized Set of Criteria for Measuring Usability of Educational Web sites, is available online at <http://bartwol.webpark.pl/tipsheet.html>.

4.1. Web site selection

In order to reflect a real-life situation in which (EFL) students of American history attempt Internet search for America history Web sites, 93 American History course attendees (all EFL students) were asked to come up with the actual phrase – a search string – which they would use looking for a comprehensive early American history Web site.³ The students suggested 42 different search strings altogether, among which the most popular (suggested by 24 respondents) was the phrase 'early American history' in inverted commas so as to ensure the inseparability of the phrase. Subsequently, the most popular search string as suggested by students was used in 5 most popular search engines/directories, i.e.: Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), MSN (www.msn.com), Google (www.google.com), AOL (www.aol.com), and AskJeeves (www.aj.com). The five searches yielded a collection of 200 URL's (Uniform Resource Locators), as first top 20 hits (from each search engine/directory) were taken into account. In the pre-evaluation phase, a moderated collection of 20 Web sites⁴ was selected by excluding faulty/unaccessible Web sites, numerous irrelevant ones which happened to include the phrase 'early American history', many of which were university

³ The main reason for choosing early American history as a point of reference is its (usually) unargumentative character. Early (colonial) American history is a period of relatively low controversy (as opposed to for instance the Civil War or 20th century American history) and, therefore, the analysis of Web sites related to this period enabled me to focus on material presentation, techniques used, and technologies applied, etc. rather than historical disputes, controversies, and discrepancies in facts/opinions presented.

⁴ The complete list of the 20 Web sites with their URL's can be accessed at <http://bartwol.webpark.pl/websites.html>

course descriptions, publishers' advertisements and press releases, online bookstores' pages, and the like. Specifically, the pre-evaluation involved assessing the following areas:

- (1) relevance of the contents in relation to the searcher's expectations i.e. site is indeed related to early American history;
- (2) the scope of the Web site contents (the more comprehensive the better; Web sites treating only some aspects of early American history were not however excluded);
- (3) technical infallibility i.e. easy and relatively quick access; no coding errors, etc.

At this point, the 20 Web site moderated collection was left for analysis, constituting what I believe is a set of resources to be most likely encountered by a potential user/student of (early) American history.

4.2. Findings and discussion

The collection of 20 Web sites was analyzed by means of the Synthesized Set of Criteria (resulting in some statistical data) and in-depth observation. Here, it is my intention to focus on observational findings with a special emphasis on the EFL aspect of the Web sites in question.

What draws attention immediately after having analyzed the selection of Web sites is the unfriendly image of the Internet as a pedagogical aid (at least for studying early US history by EFL learners). A very easily discernible trend is that it is common practice to create Web sites that have no original contents. Rather, most of the analyzed WWW resources are collections of links to well-established governmental sites or compilations of primary or copyright-free secondary sources. Additionally, what may instantly be observed is the reiteration of many of the resources, i.e. most link sections of the analyzed Web sites point to a certain limited group of US government-based (and -financed) resources or other well-respected Web sites (such as www.pbs.org or www.historychannel.com).

From the pedagogical perspective, it is important to notice that the 20 Web sites retrieved from the most popular search engines to a large extent reflect the premises of behavioral/cognitivist schools of thought rather than constructivism. This can be illustrated especially by the shortage of those ICT applications which are naturally linked to constructivism (see 3. American History and the Internet for further discussion). It appears that the analysis revealed rare instances of interactivity and multi/hyper media (with the exception of occasional Flash! animations); also, there appear to be virtually no simulations, interactive games/tasks or Web quests, which would indicate a creative and imaginative approach to studying the past. Besides, the analyzed Web sites feature no open ended enquiries, for example ponderous questions or treasure hunt type of exercises, which would be typical of constructivist approaches to instruction, not to mention limited teacher sup-

port. Consequently, the above findings lead to a conclusion that in the realm of early American history the WWW offers little more than what could be offered by means of traditionally published material.

On a positive note, it needs to be acknowledged that most Web sites do foster learning autonomy, understood as a degree of personalization of the learning process. In this respect, some of the Web sites (such as quiz portals) provide an opportunity for learners to learn/review material at their leisure and own pace. However, wanting to use the Web sites in the classroom might actually be a time consuming process as the analyzed Web sites fail to feature ready-made lesson plans/hints for teachers. Thus, material needs to be converted and/or adopted for classroom use.

With regard to EFL support, none of the Web sites retrieved through search engines/directories is specifically designed for an EFL classroom and none has EFL learners as intended audience. Therefore, as can be easily anticipated, the Web sites offer no methodological guidance or tips on how to utilize them in an EFL environment. With that in mind, it is apparent that a close observational analysis of the language learning/teaching aspects of each Web site does not reveal any ready-made EFL solutions (such as language exercises or links to such). Consequently, wanting to use the Web sites effectively in teaching an integrated compound of American studies and the English language in an EFL setting, instructors must, inevitably, rely on their own creativity and their ability to adapt the existing material to the needs of their students. Interestingly, even such obvious language aids as glossaries or outward links to definitions of difficult terms/vocabulary items or dictionaries are a rarity among the selected Web sites (only one instance of a glossary was found in the analysis). Also, regrettably, the analyzed American history resources feature no audio enhancements, which in the case of EFL instruction, would be an asset not to be underestimated.

5. Conclusions

In summation, the educational usability of the selected early American history Web sites to EFL learners leaves a great deal to wish for, especially in terms of the linguistic support for EFL students. This leads to a conclusion that wanting to utilize such Web sites in the teaching process, instructors who teach social studies in an EFL setting need to provide language support themselves in the form of dictionary links, glossaries, explanations of difficult concepts, or additional language exercises. Without such assistance, especially in the context of self-study, EFL learners might become discouraged from using a potentially usable Web site for the sole reason of having linguistic difficulty. Alternatively, a reasonable solution is to equip students with the necessary ICT skills (searching and using miscellaneous online services) in finding linguistic support on the WWW on their own, but this, as can be

anticipated, may have to be done at the expense of teaching the actual subject, be that American History or any other content course for that matter.

Language support aside, the pedagogical and technical features of the analyzed Web sites do not seem to live up to the expectations set by relevant subject literature. What is eagerly emphasized in theoretical publications (such as interactivity, simulations, historical games, or hypermedia) is not necessarily easily accessible on the Internet. As the analysis reveals, most of the beneficial ICT applications do not seem to be seriously represented among the 20 selected Web sites. This is not to say that technologically advanced multimedia collections or simulated historical events cannot be found on the WWW; rather, the analysis shows that they cannot be accessed through a simple search string in the most popular search engines/directories. This leads to another far-sighted conclusion: choosing to encourage students to make good use of the WWW, either in the classroom or outside of it, may, and will, entail teaching students effective search techniques and offering alternative ways of obtaining resources on the WWW; by the same token, there seems to be a necessity to teach our students to critically evaluate Web site contents so that they do not rely on the first three Google retrievals and Wikipedia definitions, which, as my observations of students attending my computer-enhanced American History and American Studies courses cause me to believe, is common practice. Unfortunately.

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EXPERTISE IN ELT TEXT-
BOOK WRITING: WHAT A CASE
STUDY OF AN EXPERIENCED
MATERIALS DESIGNER AT
WORK CAN REVEAL ABOUT
MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

ABSTRACT

Although there is a body of literature dedicated to the theme of materials design, resources focused on the empirical investigation of textbook development are lacking. This factor provided the impetus for a study of expertise in textbook writing, to discover how an expert, or experienced, materials designer went about his work in order to identify how the writer approached textbook development. The aim of this work was to offer a research-informed look at expertise in textbook design. In studying expertise in textbook design, the researcher gathered data – via the use of interviewing and introspective techniques – from this established educational materials developer for the purpose of forming a case study of his writing practices. Using a grounded approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998) to data analysis, themes were teased out from the data which provide a look at how expertise in textbook writing is manifested. Preliminary indications of this analysis point to certain strategies and techniques the expert, or experienced, designer used when engaged in the work of textbook development. In this paper, the author will focus on how empirical research can inform textbook design. With this aim in mind, the motivation for the project will be described, with a description of the study to follow. Lastly, characteristics of the writer will be discussed in the section on research findings.

1. The need for an empirical study of textbook writing

The writing of language learning textbooks and/or materials is a topic that has been covered in the literature of ELT materials development, mainly through *a priori* reports of how those who design materials should proceed with their work. Samuda explains that “Most accounts of what is involved in the process of materials development have been largely based on experienced writers’ own intuitions of what they do, and examples from published materials” (2005: 235). And while this literature may provide a basis for instruction on textbook development, it nevertheless offers little research-based insight into how textbooks are actually written by seasoned professionals who work in the trade. The one notable exception to this situation is research in the area of expert pedagogic task design (Ormerod and Ridgway 1999; Ridgway, Ormerod and Johnson 1999; Johnson 2000; Samuda, Johnson and Ridgway 2000; Johnson 2003; Samuda 2005). This work has mainly involved empirical study of the principles that experienced task designers use when developing language learning activities, which has provided a foundation for understanding the writing proficiencies of experts. But textbook design is, in fact, much more than task design; it involves syllabus, curriculum, examination, publishing, and marketing considerations, in addition to other such matters as educational value. Thus, there is room to expand the research on materials production to take into account whole textbook design. It is this niche I aimed to fill by carrying out an empirical study of expertise in ELT textbook writing – expertise being characterised as “effortlessly acquired abilities, abilities that carry [individuals] beyond what nature has specifically prepared [them] to do” (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993: 3). In so doing, my goal was to discover how an experienced textbook designer – referred to here as TW1 (or Textbook Writer One) – went about his work, i.e. what processes and procedures did he follow when engaged in textbook development, as well as to uncover the facets of expertise displayed in his work.

2. Using an expertise approach

In studies like this one, which focus on the empirical study of experienced, or expert, participants, “the analysis of expertise is characterized by the examination of the cognitive processes employed by subjects classified as experts (...) in a particular subject-matter domain as they perform domain-specific tasks” – in this case textbook development (Housner and Griffey 1985: 46). The empirical nature of this project seemed appropriate since I was interested in discovering what TW1 actually did in his work. This is important because, “If we know what constitutes expertise in an area, we will be provided with essential information on which to base the training of

experts" (Johnson 2003: 6). And although it is not yet known whether expertise can be taught, part of the reasoning behind this research – similar to the investigation of expertise in pedagogical task design described in Johnson (2003) – was to explore that prospect.

3. The role of experience in participant selection

In order to study textbook writing expertise, I collected empirical data from TW1 as he was composing a series of units for a European-oriented ELT textbook-development project designed for special needs students with cognitive learning disabilities. This was a cooperative endeavour whereby he worked along with a group of special needs teachers and psychologists who consulted on the project. When the project commenced, TW1 had been writing ELT textbooks and materials for more than five years on a professional basis. He was also teaching materials development to graduate students and had been employed as a teacher and teacher trainer for 21 years, both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

TW1's amount of design experience is consistent with a number of other expertise studies like Housner and Griffey (1985) Clarridge (1990), Sapers, Cushing and Berliner (1991) and Johnson (2003), which use five years of service, among other external factors, as the means for identifying experts. And while there are problems with equating expertise with experience, "it is impossible to develop expertise without experience" (Tsui 2005: 169).

4. Constructing a case study of the textbook writer

In this project, I collected data from TW1 via the use of interviews, concurrent verbalisation and stimulated recall in order to formulate a case study of him in action. By combining these data-collection techniques instead of just relying on one research method, the principle of triangulation was addressed. The approaches chosen were also designed to address various aspects of expertise in textbook writing which, when used in combination in the development of the case study, provided unique insight into the whole nature of textbook authoring, thereby addressing the goals of the study.

I will now move on to focus on the individual research techniques which were used to gather data for the case study under discussion.

4.1. Interviewing

In order to delve into the practice of textbook writing from the point of view of the participant (for the purpose of constructing a case study of his work), I interviewed TW1 both before his think-aloud sessions in order to gain a clearer understanding of his educational background, his teaching and

textbook writing experience, his own views on his work, and his approaches to the project at hand, and after the periods of concurrent and retrospective verbalization to clear up any uncertainties about his approach to writing. And since this research focused on the process of the experienced textbook writer's efforts, it was crucial that I captured some glimpse of his cognitive activities. For this reason, I chose to restrict my questions to the open-ended variety for the purposes of the study in order to collect as complete a picture of TW1's thought processes as possible while attempting to reduce the impact of my impressions of the act of composition on his responses. It was also hoped that this style of interviewing would help to add validity to the study by allowing TW1 to reveal himself through the course of the interview interactions.

4.2. Concurrent verbalisation

In order to help capture, with some degree of immediacy, TW1's cognitive processes, I also chose to utilize the research technique of concurrent verbalisation, which helped to ensure the provision of a rich data set from which to extract observations about textbook development. This data collection technique – whereby a participant is asked to say aloud everything that comes to mind while he or she is engaged in a certain activity, thereby producing a think-aloud protocol of their thought processes from which the researcher can deduce conclusions regarding the subject under investigation – has been widely used in studies of expertise and is valued for its ability to allow the researcher at least some glimpse of what is happening inside the minds of participants, even if that glimpse is sometimes partial due to the fact that it is self-reported data. In particular, the technique “has the advantage of gaining access to a deep and broad pool of information about the writing process without unduly distorting it” (Swarts, Flower and Hayes 1984: 55-56).

The point has been raised, with respect to verbal protocoling, that the data from such reports is extensive, requiring a great deal of time and effort to transcribe, code, and analyze. For this reason, I chose to focus on one textbook writer for the case study project, following the advice of Ericsson and Smith (1991: 20): “Analysis of think-aloud verbalisations is time-consuming, and therefore researchers in expertise using these types of data tend to collect data on (...) individual subjects for a large number of tasks (case studies)”.

4.3. Stimulated recall

In an attempt to build a more complete understanding of the cognitive elements involved in textbook writing, I also decided to use the technique of stimulated recall in data collection. In this scenario, TW1 viewed video of a design session – during which he had concurrently verbalised – and was thereby encouraged to experience again the act of textbook writing in order

to comment upon it. This provided him with the opportunity to reveal aspects of his thinking with regard to textbook development.

5. Data coding and analysis

After collecting data for the project via the methods set out above, I looked closely at the data to identify prominent motifs in the work and coding categories were thereby developed based upon these subjects. Given that the coding themes were extracted directly from the data in this manner, coding proceeded via a grounded approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This mode of data analysis seemed to fit with the objectives of the study since the research essentially addressed a new avenue of inquiry within expertise study and ELT research.

A close review of the coded data revealed a number of findings about the research topic. And while it must be stated that the generalisability of these findings is necessarily limited due to the small-scale nature of the study, the results nevertheless point to areas of importance in developing a theory of expertise in textbook writing.

6. The research findings

Prior to addressing the research findings, I would like to note that TW1's approach to design was complex; therefore, I have had to be selective in the choice of topics under consideration here in order to keep within the limits of what is practicable in a short paper of this sort.

6.1. TW1's design process was cyclic in nature

In looking at the design process that TW1 followed, it must be stressed that his style of writing was characteristically cyclic in nature. This meant that rather than him progressing through the design route in whole discrete steps, he instead tended to work through certain steps together in small repeated segments, sometimes returning to what he had previously done again and again in order to make changes or amendments for the sake of those principles which were important to the design of the book. TW1's adherence to this cyclic style of textbook designing indeed seemed to be evident, for example, in his attempts to address what he considered to be "bittiness" (TW1 2006, May 31; TW1 2006, July 19) in the textbook. In that case, his concerns with continuity, substance, variety and repetition – all design principles – led him to revisit certain activities on multiple occasions during data collection. In fact, during one concurrent verbalisation session (TW1 2006, May 31), TW1 took up the "bittiness" issue four separate times; he engaged in trying out several ideas for activities but eventually problema-

tised certain aspects of these possibilities – this was in the midst of engaging in other various steps in the design process. TW1 returned to the “bittiness” issue again during the stimulated recall session to follow, at which time he was still trying to work out how to address the problem:

TW1: *Ya I...think in relation to what I've said...before about it being a bit bitty and repetitive...I really...wanted some way of changing...the mode of it because it seemed to be all sort of listen react listen react...listen react produce a bit produce a bit and so on...And I wanted something that...they could just do more at their own pace like a reading text or something like that but it's difficult to do that because I don't think they've got much reading...ability in...L1 so what I'm...searching for is something which is a bit...less intensive on their concentration (TW1 2006, May 31).*

In his efforts to alleviate what he perceived to be a “bittiness” (TW1 2006, May 31; TW1 2006, July 19) problem in certain textbook sections, TW1 worked in a cyclic manner, re-examining these sections several times, thereby working through certain steps in the design process on multiple occasions; this was in an effort to ensure that the textbook indeed fitted with the design principles of the project and was appropriate for the intended audience of special needs learners.

The observance that good task designers sometimes design *cyclically* was made by Johnson (2003: 134) in his study of pedagogic task design (emphasis in original) and seems to apply here since the practice allowed TW1 to refine areas of the textbook in small sections while also taking into consideration the larger details that impacted upon the development of the entire book, such as the task of infusing continuity, substance, variety and repetition into the book, as mentioned above, as well as the need to introduce new concepts or vocabulary in little steps – another design principle – so as to avoid overloading the special needs learners for whom the textbook was being written. While designing in a cyclic fashion, TW1 engaged in constantly reviewing what had already written – which constituted a step in the design process. For instance, when considering the matter of bittiness in the textbook, he repeatedly reviewed the activities he had written whilst attempting to refine them: “I think I need something with a bit more substance with all these mini dialogues. Let's go back through it and see what it looks like” (TW1 2006, May 31). This practice of reviewing was also used by the good task designers in the research conducted by Johnson and effectively helped TW1 to avoid “[becoming] bogged down in consideration of one variable, losing track of the whole” since in materials design “a large number of variables have to be juggled with at the same time” (2003: 113). Furthermore, as Johnson (2003: 134) notes, cyclic design coupled with continual reviewing allows for an “even descent into detail” which guards against the occurrence of “a single variable [being] highly developed at an early stage”

with the likely result "that the variable will control the task's development, possibly to an undesirable extent".

6.2. TW1's understanding of the design process helped him to clarify issues that arose during the writing of the textbook

Whilst TW1 was engaged in a seemingly complex design process when writing, he was also cognisant of the various stages of textbook development as he was working. Consequently, his transcripts were peppered with talk about these stages of design and the textbook-development cycle in general. Piloting was indeed a stage that was given some importance within the construction of the textbook. This was because TW1 seemed to rely at times on what was discovered during piloting in order to help him to proceed with design: "It might be a little bit of overkill on TPR but ah it seems to have gone down well in the practise lesson the pilot lesson" (TW1 2006, May 31). In what follows TW1 makes it known why piloting was so important in a materials-writing endeavor of this nature.

TW1: *I mean one of the things that...some of the partners wanted was this...you know lessons must fit into a ninety minute block and so on and that was one of the things I was quite strongly against because I think when you're writing materials especially for a group you don't know at all...you just haven't got a clue...how long it will take...and as we're in the pilot stage I think we'd be much better trying them out and the teacher saying this took 25 minutes...so then we can say to other teachers when it was piloted...with this group it took 25 minutes there's a what you would call a ball-park figure (TW1 2006, May 16).*

In a case such as this where TW1 had no history of working with the group of learners for whom the book was designed, piloting was vital to working out the logistical aspects of the textbook.

The author acknowledged that piloting was also important when taking account of design principles. For instance, TW1, at several points during data collection, discussed how "varied repetition" (TW1 2006, May 16) was an important aspect of design when writing for the intended audience of special needs learners: "And we've been told to take them in very little steps and that they need lots of repetition" (TW1 2006, May 31). He further elaborated in relation to this point: "So ya this is they get multiple repetitions of the question but with different answers so they are getting that continuity but with a bit of variety which is really what we are trying to achieve with these" (TW1 2006, May 16). But while repetition was a plus in the materials, TW1 was wary of adding too much of it to the textbook, thereby building monotony into the units. He commented that piloting was useful in helping to determine where to draw the line with repetition: "It would be helpful if you could watch watch somebody do this with a class and see if it is too

repetitive work them all out or if the continuity's is actually a good thing" (TW1 2006, May 31).

In TW1's awareness of the design process, as exemplified by his recognition of the value of piloting, the author was displaying what is understood to be "metacognition" or "strategies used to monitor, assess and manage behaviour" (Johnson 2003: 133). Johnson (2003: 133) notes that "[metacognition] (...) is generally thought to be associated with expertise" and, indeed, in the case of TW1, the metacognitive statements made with regard to piloting seemed to help him to clarify issues within the design of the textbook.

6.3. TW1 took guidance from outside sources in order to meet learners' needs when writing the textbook

While TW1 was writing a textbook designed for individuals with special needs, he acknowledged during data collection that he himself had never had any experience with teaching or designing materials for such students. Furthermore, when asked what sort of cognitive learning disabilities the students had, he said that "It seems to cover quite a range and this is something that we're really not sure about until we pilot them" (TW1 2006, May 16). Although TW1 admitted that he was flying blind in this area of textbook design, this factor did not seem to hamper his ability to envisage ideas for the textbook or for how it would be used. This was because TW1 abided by the design principles which had been set out during conceptualization of the project by the previously-mentioned team of seven psychologists and special needs teachers who had had contact with groups of learners similar to those for whom the textbook was intended. And in his capacity as ELT Specialist on the project, TW1 was able to mesh these design principles with certain methodological concepts in English language teaching – like Total Physical Response, for instance – in order to develop workable ideas for the textbook. In the following transcript selection TW1 outlines some of the principles adhered to in the project for learners with special needs:

TW1: *Well the materials were amply justly received by the first pilot class which I'm pleased about because I don't think they're particularly revolutionary I just think that I think what we're doing is just to make make things extra clear and extra systematic and build in a lot more physical activity than I normally would do but other than that I don't think there's anything in the principles which is very very different from mainstream teaching perhaps I like to say that it's the same the same ingredients but a different recipe. (TW1 2006, May 16)*

The principles that TW1 discussed during data collection were indeed intended to reflect the needs of the target group of learners regardless of his knowledge of their learning challenges, since "putting a name to a difficulty is not always

necessary; as teachers it is not usually our job to diagnose, but to respond to the needs of the individuals in our classes" (Smith 2007: 180-181).

While it was the principles of the textbook project which guided TW1's writing practices, it was his willingness to follow those principles, as well as the advice of the other individuals working on the book that provided a view of his expertise. In other words, TW1 was experienced enough to know when his experience was insufficient and was open to looking to outside sources for the materials writing guidance he needed when he deemed it necessary or desirable.

6.4. TW1's variety of experience helped him to see how the textbook would be used in practice

Whilst writing, it was clear that TW1's focus was on the end users of the textbook and his efforts were directed in making the package of materials as user friendly as possible not only for students but also for teachers. Furthermore, it seemed that his experience as a teacher, teacher trainer and materials writer helped him to conceptualise how the book would ultimately be used by educators. In fact, TW1's ability to view the act of textbook development from several vantage points enabled him to articulate the intended teacher training function of the textbook.

TW1: *I think that one of the main aims is actually to give teachers...an idea what kind of materials you can use what kind of activities...might work what kind of methodology...might work so rather than us producing masses of coursebooks I think we're just trying to produce something which will be a good source of ideas...An exemplar which is a bit too strong a word but...A framework.* (TW1 2006, May 16).

As a teacher and teacher trainer TW1 recognized the influential role that materials play in the classroom and as a textbook writer he was able to translate this knowledge into a comprehensible format. It seemed that his expertise, which had been shaped by his various employment experiences within the field of education, helped him to visualise the roles that the textbook would play.

6.5. TW1 respected teacher and student autonomy while also satisfying educational aims

Given that TW1 had extensive experience not only as a creator, but also as an end user of teaching materials, it was natural that there was evidence in the transcripts of his reverence for those teachers who would be using the developing textbook. In those instances, he placed some degree of importance on teacher autonomy within the design of the textbook and its package components, i.e. the teacher's notes, teacher's manual, accompanying

video, etcetera: "I think the idea is (...) to really get over to the teachers that it's meant to be used flexibly (...) and that there might be eight activities in a unit but that they're not necessarily meant to use all of them if they don't want to (...) They can slot in" (TW1 2006, May 16). In this way, TW1 acknowledged the professionalism of the teachers, promoting the idea that how they made use of the textbook in the classroom was just as important as the textbook itself.

While TW1 actively promoted teacher autonomy in designing the textbook package, he did so with a guiding hand. This was done not only to provide for teacher training but also to help to ensure that the learning objectives of the textbook were fulfilled. The transcript segment to follow exemplifies how TW1 accomplished this balancing act:

TW1: *Make two groups. I'll make it absolutely explicit. Um the first group ... to put all the body parts all the sticky parts all the sticky labels in the right place is the winner. Alright. Now what do we do with all these when they go in the right place? Um something like Simon Says but I've done that in a previous unit but can put it there as an option. Oh ya I need to say I need to say which words as well don't I or do I should I give them the freedom? But it might even in future activities so I need to specify at least a few of those um. Um. Alright ya ok. I'll give them the option but I'll specify some um role plays um... Consider how many body parts to teach. Please include what do you want head back knee stomach head back knees stomach shoulder how can you shoulder tooth* (TW1 2006, May 31).

Here, although TW1 provided for some degree of independence in how the textbook activities were used in the classroom – in this case by supplying options – he did make specific suggestions to the teachers in order to ensure that certain target vocabulary was recycled within the book, thereby helping to advance one of the educational aims of the textbook – L2 lexical development. This practice also helped contribute to continuity within the book, which was one of the principles promoted in its design.

Just as TW1 was proactive in supporting teacher autonomy within the design of the textbook, so too was he committed to the idea of promoting independent learning among students who would be using the book. Once again, this tendency reflected his overall concern for those who would be engaging with the textbook when it was completed. The following segment provides evidence of this concern for the learners: "I just think (...) the script this is actually what I was thinking about before I think it's important to to let the students off the leash a little bit because everything else is so tightly controlled for good reasons but I think they need a an opportunity just to let rip as it were" (TW1 2006, July 19). In other words, while the nature of this book was such that there were a number of considerations and/or guidelines to be taken into account in its design given the audience of learners it was intended for – for whom literacy, mobility, and so forth

could be challenging – and that this for the most part resulted in the incorporation of what might be considered rather restrictive rubrics, nevertheless, TW1 was determined to allow the students some degree of freedom in making use of the textbook.

In his advancement of teacher and learner autonomy, which was coupled with his desire to promote the educational goals of the textbook, TW1 was again revealing an element of his expertise – the ability to keep a number of considerations in mind when progressing through the design of the book. Johnson (2003: 137) calls this characteristic *maximum variable control* and he notes that in the case of the good task designers who took part in his study, this attribute enabled them to “produce tasks (...) with attention given to a wide range of variables so that their tasks [were] sensitive to as many issues and constraints as possible”.

7. Summary and conclusion

To summarise, the findings of the study revealed the following aspects of TW1’s textbook-writing expertise:

- TW1’s design process was cyclic in nature.
- TW1’s understanding of the design process helped him to clarify issues that arose during the writing of the textbook.
- TW1 took guidance from outside sources in order to meet learners’ needs when writing the textbook.
- TW1’s variety of experience helped him to see how the textbook would be used in practice.
- TW1 respected teacher and student autonomy while also satisfying educational aims.

As has been noted, empirical research was indeed key in discovering these findings and it is hoped that this work will provide a starting point for further research-based investigation in the area of expertise in ELT textbook writing.

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