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Book Reviews

Foreword

Welcome to the June 2010 issue of the Asian EFL Journal. We are happy to present a broad range of papers once again, reflecting a wide variety of research and writing styles. Those tired divisive distinctions between native and non-native, local and expatriate no longer seem relevant when we read through this issue. Much Global ELT teaching and learning takes place in Asia and for me the strength of Asian EFL is in its diversity. Journals like ours, whether online or at our conferences, attempt to provide forums for intercultural interaction and cooperation between proponents of very different approaches.

We have recently re-emphasized our willingness to encourage alternative approaches to research and to article writing. At the International Conference on English as an International Language in Izmir, Turkey organized by our sister EIL journal (October 2009), Michael Fennell gave a paper on English in Palestine presented in the form of a letter. This letter will be published in our sister EIL Journal. I was just one of the audiences who were both moved and intrigued by this approach. Discussion developed afterwards about the appropriateness of Michael's attempt to use the epistolary style in his PhD at the Institute of Education, University of London. In our first 'article', a *Letter from Nicaragua*, written entirely in the form of a letter addressed to his supervisor, he details the struggles and the lessons learnt. We will happily consider reactions to this letter for publication and actively encourage any other attempts to challenge received norms of article drafting.

Our encouragement of alternative approaches is certainly not intended to suppress other more standard forms of relevant and competent research writing. In our first research paper, *Reading Strategy Use, Self-Efficacy and EFL Reading Comprehension*, Hui-Fang Shang focuses on reading efficacy. Meta-cognitive strategies were the most frequently-used strategies to support efficacy. Shang also found a significant positive relationship between the use of reading strategies and perceptions of self-efficacy. However, in Shang's study, a relationship could not be established between reading strategies and reading achievement, which need not be interpreted to mean that there is no

relationship.

Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen and Peter Hudson (*Preservice EFL Teachers' Attitudes, Needs, and Experiences about Teaching Writing and Learning to Teach Writing Before Their Practicum: A Case Study in Vietnam*) examine preservice EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences about learning to teach writing in English before their practicum in Vietnamese high schools. Nguyen and Hudson suggest that, in spite of intrinsic motivation, the preservice EFL teachers benefited from mentors who model effective teaching practices and share their teaching experiences. Trainee teachers were best motivated by enthusiastic and supportive mentors who provide constructive feedback.

In *Vocational College Students' Perceptions on Standardized English Proficiency Tests*, Mei-Ling Chen and David Squires investigate vocational college students' perspectives on the measures taken to fulfill requirements of a minimum proficiency in English to graduate. The study revealed that opinions were divided on these measures. Those in favor suggested that the measures taken enhanced their English proficiency and increased competitiveness for future studies and career. Interestingly, they did not feel that university measures enhanced their motivation to prepare for the tests.

Defining the competence of English teachers is a sensitive issue. Ozgur Yildirim (*Washback Effects of a High-Stakes University Entrance Exam: Effects of the English Section of the University Entrance Exam on Future English Language Teachers in Turkey)* investigates the effects of high-stakes exams on future EFL teachers' language proficiency, and on their performance in their first-year classes at university in one context. The English Component of the Foreign Language University Entrance Exam (ECFLUEE) is taken by tens of thousands of high school seniors each year in Turkey. It is an exam that determines the future of most of its users being the only English exam used for student admissions to EFL teacher training programs in Turkish universities. Results indicated that the exam has some negative effects on students' language proficiency and on their performance in their first year classes at university. Some possible changes to the exam are discussed.

The Asian EFL journal welcomes studies from beyond Asia that address global themes relevant to all our readers. In *Summary Production: A Topographical Analysis of the Strategies Used by University ESL First Year Science Students*, Ambrose B.

Chimbganda provides an African insight. He looks into the almost universal 'outcry' in institutions of higher learning about students' lack of academic literacy skills. The study examines the summary production strategies of ESL first-year science students at the University of Botswana and how they combine ideas to form a coherent text. Chimbganda documents the ways in which ESL students who live in a multi-lingual environment select the main ideas of a text written in the language of education, English. Findings indicate differences between 'high-proficiency' 'average' and 'low-proficiency' students.

In another study of self-efficacy in relation to reading, *An Empirical Study of Reading Self-efficacy and the Use of Reading Strategies,* Yusheng Li and Chuang Wang explore the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies from a cognitive perspective. The results allowed them to identify three significant subcategories: meta-cognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; and social/affective strategies. The study identifies the need to nurture English language learners' reading self-efficacy beliefs.

In a third study focusing on reading ability, *The Impact of the Retelling Technique on Chinese Students' English Reading Comprehension,* Lu-Fang Lin examines the impact of the retelling technique on English reading comprehension. The results indicate that retelling has several benefits for learners, helping them, for example, to learn general concepts during reading and to retain a synopsis of the story in their memory. In this study, however, retelling did not lead to the improvement of the ability to remember details of expository texts.

Proportionally AEJ does not receive enough submissions addressing oral skills and performance. Heng-Tsung Danny Huang and Shao-Ting Alan Hung (*Effects of Electronic Portfolios on EFL Oral Performance*) investigate improved oral performance through the incorporation of e-portfolios into EFL conversation classes. EFL college students constructed individual speaking e-portfolios, uploading recordings of their opinions on assigned topics, paying regular visits to their peers' e-portfolios, and providing feedback on their peers' work. Huang and Hung provide convincing evidence of improvement in terms of lexis. The use of e-portfolios also appears to have motivational benefits.

Seyyed Ali Ostovar Namaghi (*Parameters of Language Teaching in the Context of*

High Schools of Iran: A Data-First Approach) advocates the improvement of teachers' practice, not only by developing teachers' conceptual knowledge, but also by developing a critical awareness of contextual constraints and the situated nature of teaching knowledge. Namaghi presents evidence using his grounded theory approach to indicate that contextual constraints are an important aspect of teachers' core beliefs which influence their behavior. However, they tend to be ignored by teacher trainers based on the false assumption that conceptual knowledge can be applied universally.

In his qualitative case study, *One Teacher's Development as a Reflective Practitioner*, Mark Wyatt explores a language teacher's development as a reflective practitioner in a middle eastern context. Observation and interviews revealed evidence of growth in teacher's reflective qualities, skills and capacity to reflect critically. Wyatt also draws interesting conclusions about the effect of the interpersonal environment on a teacher's personal growth.

In *The New Role of English Language Teachers: Developing Students' Critical Thinking in Hong Kong Secondary School Classrooms,* Jane Mok also uses case studies, but within a holistic perspective of a curriculum initiative in a whole schools system. The study investigated whether the top down innovation was actually translated into meaningful practice of critical thinking in the classroom. Mok covers more than 1600 minutes of classroom teaching, but could only identify two brief critical encounters in which students were given the time and space to think critically and exchange ideas genuinely in a supportive learning atmosphere. Institutional constraints and external pressures appear to have made the implementation of the innovation impossible – surely yet another reminder that if an innovation is to be successful, the daily interaction of teachers and students needs to be the main focus of attention.

Much classroom discourse across the globe is still enacted in a teacher-fronted manner, but my experience both as an author and an editor suggests that it is more difficult to get published when reporting such settings. In the final piece, *Classroom Interaction in Story-Based Lessons with Young Learners*, Chen-Ying Li and Paul Seedhouse evaluate the innovative introduction of a story-based approach in EFL classrooms with young learners in Taiwan through detailed analyses of classroom discourse in a teacher-fronted classroom setting. A story-based approach was found to

result in a broader variety of interaction patterns, with more student initiations, expressing a wide range of language functions, although student initiations tended to be in Chinese. Li and Seedhouse also found that the story-based approach encouraged more engagement from students.

Roger Nunn,
Chief Editor

A Letter from Nicaragua

Michael Fennell

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Bio Data:

Michael Fennell has twenty-two years experience working in TEFL in England, Italy, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine. This has included language school to university, student/staff workshops to introducing volunteer graduate teaching assistants and community based projects, most recently as Assistant Professor (TEFL) at the Arab American University Jenin, Palestine.

Dear Liz,

Just two years before starting my PhD, Hargreaves (1998) wrote: "Teaching is a 'passionate vocation'. They [teachers] are emotional, passionate beings who fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy." As an English Language teacher I wanted to transfer just that (which I recognised in myself) into the writing of my thesis.

My letters from the field gave me the idea of trying to write the entire thesis as a letter. You in London, I in Nicaragua – they were to keep us connected. Do you remember the one about attending the TESOL conference? *'The bus, an old American school bus, as are nearly all buses in Central America, loomed out of the darkness; warning lights flashing – Managua Express emblazoned in red across the windscreen…Miguel complained of bringing too big a bag – a half empty duffel bag. I later discovered that it contained a cotton sheet, a cotton blanket, a towel, bathroom slippers, soap, shampoo, toiletries, a torch, cold chicken, bread and a metal drinking cup. Nicaraguans certainly know how to pack!'*

I recognised that writing the literature review (the literature of the 'self', the 'teacher-self' in particular, its construction as biographical experience, moral and pedagogical orientation to the good, leading into classification and framing – the teacher-self in practice) let alone a review of pedagogy and language pedagogy with the specifics of English Language Teaching in Nicaragua in particular, was beyond me. I also acknowledged that continuing with the epistolary style in the Methodology chapter without, as you said in one supervisory meeting, leaning towards the lazily journalistic style of writing, and one with which you quarreled - would be difficult.

You constantly urged me to find out what the literature had to say about the epistolary style so that the reader when confronted with a letter wouldn't ask: "What is this? What is going on here? Do we really need this?" I remembered stretching the truth a little citing Geelan in his book 'Weaving Narrative Nets' where he urged the research student to "keep writing the personal stuff, the fun stuff. That's where your mind gets to play" knowing full well that he was referring to writing as a distraction from that of the writing of the PhD. He did, though, incorporate personal narrative in one of the chapters of his thesis.

Why letters then? Are letters a legitimate research procedure which meets the 'external' quality of an awarding academic body and not a "genre [that] can destabilize and defamiliarise" (Gilroy and Verhoeven 2000, p.17)? In an unpublished conference presentation titled 'Intimacy and Emotion: The place of letters in Research', I argued that letters are an opportunity for researchers to engage in critical writing with an intimacy that is missing from the standard prose of academia (Gilroy and Verhoven, 2000). In the writing up of research, intimacy highlights the personal and emotional content of knowledge construction. This is important when the research design involves participant observation, with the researcher interacting with rather than acting on or responding to the phenomena being observed (Boyer, 2000). Letters help the researcher to mainstream a sense of emotional connectedness, which according to Coffey "should be acknowledged, reflected upon and seen as a fundamental feature of well-executed research" (1999, p.29). The letter form, therefore, is the embodiment of subjectivity, which, in research that is based in the interpretative paradigm, should be embraced and taken forward.

Then, there was that serendipitous find in the library a book by two leading

advocates of narrative enquiry – Clandinin and Connelly (2000). In it they described a thesis that they had supervised in which the opening chapters were those we are accustomed to see in a thesis – Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology. Yet Chapters Four, Five and Six were different, taking the reader into a series of letters that told the stories of the researcher's experiences with two of his participants, concluding with his own stories of life as a school principal.

In my submission of the first complete draft – a year before my Viva – Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven were letters written to each of my four participant teachers, Miguel, Enrique, Vilmar and Franco. I was reasonably self-assured as I had already had a trial run. For in my successful upgrading – the one sample data collection chapter was a letter addressed to Miguel. I quote from the upgrade report: "There are considerable strengths to the work, notably the detailed consideration of the methodological issues, the diligence with which the fieldwork has been conducted and the quality of writing and sensitivity of the accounts given." This, however, was qualified: "It is not, though, a mechanical process to move from what you have thus far to an acceptable thesis. You need to have a clear image of the kind of work you are producing, where it fits with other work of its kind, what the expectations are of the particular part of the academic community you are seeking to join and participate in, and what criteria are used to judge research in this field." So we were back to the 'mismatch' between the internal quality of my writing and the external quality expected of the academic community.

Yet, nearly three years on, I was reasonably sure in my conviction that the mismatch had been resolved. Such conviction proved to be a delusion. In the margins of the pages you scribbled time and time again: "Analysis?" "Analysis" "Analysis!" and "Where is the interpretation?" "Interpret!" In the accompanying written report you were just as forthright.

In the introduction you wrote "The five data chapters (four case studies and a chapter which summarises these and locates them in a framework) would not be accepted as PhD level work, for one simple reason: there is no demonstration of rigorous systematic analysis of data, across cases, testing hypotheses or answering searching questions in a critical and reflexive way. Instead you have substituted sympathetic life-stories, or the uncritical interpretation of your own interpretation of your own experiences

of them as individuals and professionals….What is weak here is <u>not</u> your decision to use a narrative/epistolary mode, since this is one way among many of presenting complex data in an accessible and convincing manner; it is the failure to marshal evidence systematically and to demonstrate that your interpretation has been thorough and searching."

Of the case studies themselves you were equally blunt. Chapter Four Miguel – "This is an engaging and subtle account but I am unsure how it contributes to the thesis." Chapter Five Enrique – "I have very similar feelings about this case study, which is a lively and evocative rather than an analytical account: as such it does not offer *thick description*, which would make the meanings of the anecdotes and descriptions intelligible, but simply personal stories, which offer no connections with theory and typologies." Chapter Six Vilmar – "Again, I have no idea how this chapter informs a reader of the 'thesis' about 'teacher-self'. I find myself trying to do some analysis as I read, but this should not be necessary!" Chapter Seven Franco – "This chapter of course stretches the convention of the letter to its limits: who writes 30 – page letters full of quotations from field notes?"

In your recommendations for the case study chapters you wrote: "if you wish them to take this form, I suggest you make each more succinct and insert intercalated short chapters of analysis, showing how you got from your raw data to your interpretation of each case."

Clearly a major rewrite was required and in meeting these requirements I followed your recommendations - best illustrated in the final titles of the four data collection chapters:

Chapter 4: Biographical map of the teacher-self

Chapter 5: Orientation map of the teacher-self (moral and pedagogical)

Chapter 6: Pedagogical map of the teacher-self

Chapter 7: Understanding the 'complete' map of the teacher-self

So was the time and effort that I had invested in pursuing the epistolary style wasted? No, because the process enabled me to hold on to the passion and emotion of my own teacher-self and to fuse in my writing the creativity, pleasure and joy which I associated with being a teacher. The evidence for this was compelling. Firstly, I was

able to use what was, in the words of the author, 'a coffee table book' to frame the thesis. The book in question was written by my external examiner, Dr. Lez Smart, and was entitled: 'Maps that made history: the influential, the eccentric and the sublime'. For instance there was no chapter entitled 'The literature review' rather 'The teacher-self: Its realisation and evolution', and it began as follows:

> The desire to exercise a degree of control over one's environment is a
> distinguishing human feature. One of the prerequisites of being able to do
> this successfully is to have an awareness of where one is and what's it like
> in relation to other places (Smart, 2004, p.18).

The above quote is about maps and like a map; the self too, is a feature distinctive to humans. Framed as a narrative on the journey of life, it permits us an awareness of where we are, who we are and what we are like in relation to others, helping us to make sense of our lives. Mapping the self shows how life-experiences – biographical, integrational and situational – are formative features of the teacher-self; its navigation involves not only reading features but also making decisions about orientation before taking action.

Secondly, in the Examiners Report after my Viva, the following was noted: "The examiners congratulated the candidate on the quality and clarity of the presentation of the study and accessibility of his style of writing."

OK but was the epistolary form lost all together? No, because as I write in the introductory chapter titled: 'Poverty and Education: A continuing hardship for the teachers?' – "This chapter starts with a letter to my supervisor in which I address the following questions: Why Nicaragua? What is the rationale for the present study? This is followed by a broad discussion on the Majority-world, poverty, education, and the situation in Nicaragua at the time of the present study's fieldwork.

In this chapter and in all but one of the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I have chosen to include a letter to my supervisor, as a reflective device, before moving into the more conventionally descriptive or analytic reporting which forms the main body of each chapter. This device, and its implications for the type of knowledge the thesis constructs, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. Here, the letter offers a rationale for my study."

Here is an extract from that Chapter Three: 'Mapping the Teacher-Self: Developing

a Methodology' which justifies my use of the epistolary style.

The letters have become for me a reflective device leading into the more objective, descriptive, analytical reporting required of a PhD; as well as a channel for the 'retelling' of my own relevant stories of life-experience. Relevant because "cognizant of the realisation that no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge… it behoves us to remain as attentive as possible to life as we live it and to the infinite variety of possible human experience and possible explications of these experiences" (Van Manen, 2002, p.7). Adhering to this, I remained aware that fieldwork in a culture different to my own might result in personal bias. There was the danger of what anthropologists term 'going native' (Hastrup, 1992, p.120), of identifying too closely with the participants and their culture. Then, there was the risk of being the centre of attention and accorded "a certain status associated with having a 'western friend'" (Scheyvens and Novak, 2003, p.105). To succumb to either of these dangers might mean my only having good things to say about the participants (Agar, 1980). My letters to you show how I sought to maintain an open mind. They are part of a reflective process through which I sought to "observe and experience, to monitor [my] emotional experience and to examine whether these are warranted or not" (Scheyvens and Nowak, 2003, p.105).

To sum up this letter, I'll slip back into the emotive, and away from the more academic, using words taken from our recorded supervisions. "You must show that what might appear as flights of fancy are in fact based on solid ground….. It has to be said or someone who opens the thesis is just going to be surprised and you don't want them to be surprised. You have to make it easy for them….. I agree that the style of the narrative of each teacher is fine. But what I have been looking for is that which you cannot justify having there – anecdotes which don't have a direct bearing on the point that you are making…. On the literature review – the writing style (interspersing vignettes and exemplars into the research writing) usually works well and is often forceful and persuasive. This seems to be a worthwhile path to pursue, so long as it is substantiated by theorists as suggested, and submitted in the end to examiners sympathetic to this mode of thinking and writing… It [the epistolary style] is not a kind of decoration. It's there because you believe that in projecting this kind of reflection on your thinking and then

explicit communication with someone else about what you're thinking, is an aspect of the knowledge you are creating…. It is not just a stylistic choice but an epistemological choice. It is saying this is the kind of knowledge I am constructing. It is constructed from reflection so it needs to be there."

Indeed, and so it was there.

In the viva, the examiners remarked that they would have liked to hear from you. For with these letters addressed to you there was no reply. Here now is your chance.

1. How did you keep faith with my desire to write in the epistolary style?
2. With hindsight do you think there was a place in my PhD for you to respond to the letters?
3. The Examiners said that the use of the epistolary style was not an original contribution to knowledge (as I had argued in my final chapter) but rather it was my multi-layered model of the teacher-self (which I also had argued). Do you agree?
4. What advice would you give to a researcher student wanting to incorporate the epistolary style into their writing?

I look forward to reading your reply,

Michael

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Reading Strategy Use, Self-Efficacy and EFL Reading Comprehension

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Bio Data:

Hui-Fang Shang was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. In 1996, she earned her ED.D. at the University of Southern California in USA. Now she is a Professor in the Department of Applied English at I-Shou University in Taiwan. Her expertise and research interests include TEFL and curriculum/instructional design.

Abstract

This study investigated Taiwanese EFL learners' use of three reading strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, compensation strategies), their perceived impact on self-efficacy, and the relationships between reading strategy use and perceived self-efficacy on their English reading comprehension. Fifty-three English-major freshmen from I-Shou University participated in this study. Three principle questions were addressed: (1) What is the most frequent use of reading strategies reported by individual students? (2) Is there any significant relationship between students' self-reported reading strategy uses and self-efficacy beliefs on their English reading performance? (3) What are students' attitudes toward the effect of reading strategy instruction? To examine the effects of strategic instruction on students' reading performance, a qualitative interview technique and quantitative research methods including a paired-sample t-test and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to estimate the relationship between reading strategy use and perceived self-efficacy on students' reading achievement. Results showed that the most frequent use of reading strategy was found to be metacognitive strategy, followed by compensation strategy, and then followed by cognitive strategy. In addition, there was a significant positive relationship between the use of reading strategies and perceptions of self-efficacy. Reading strategies, however, were unrelated to reading achievement. Results of interview findings were analyzed to explore in-depth information about the conditions of strategy use. The implications of these findings for implementing effective reading strategy instruction are discussed.

Keywords: cognitive strategy; metacognitive strategy; compensation strategy; perceived self-efficacy; EFL reading comprehension

Introduction

Recent research on reading has shown that reading is a complex cognitive activity that is indispensable for adequate functioning and for obtaining information in contemporary society (Alfassi, 2004; Zhang, 1993). To enter the present literate society, students must know how to learn from reading. However, when students in Taiwan enter higher education with the reading demands that are placed upon them, they often select ineffective and inefficient strategies with little strategic intent (Ko, 2002). Feng and Mokhtari (1998) and Cheng (2000) find that when reading easy English and Chinese texts, Taiwanese students' use of reading strategies is similar; but when they are presented with difficult Chinese and English texts, their use of strategies in reading the Chinese text is more meaning-focused or global; in contrast, when they read the English text, they employ more low-level or local processing strategies. Many Taiwanese EFL students assume that, when reading English language texts, the author's intended meaning lies within the printed words, leaving the reading process as no more than obtaining meaning from the words on the page. They approach reading passively, relying heavily on the bilingual dictionary and spending long hours laboring over sentence-by-sentence translations. Despite all the efforts they make, their reading comprehension still remains poor.

In addition to the ineffective and inefficient reading strategies, the other factor to influence students' learning outcome is their perceived self-efficacy (Yang, 2004; Wong, 2005). Perceived self-efficacy is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). According to Bandura, students with a high level of self-efficacy perceive tough tasks as challenges. They also have higher motivation to conquer the difficulties and more confidence to accomplish demanding tasks. On the contrary, students with low self-efficacy regard things as harder than they really are; they do not perceive that their efforts can lead to better results, so they have less motivation to devote their time to demanding tasks. In other words, students' learning attitudes, learning behaviors, and even learning performance are affected by their perceived self-efficacy (Yang, 2004). According to the researcher's observation, many students in Taiwan have a low sense of self-efficacy and a lack of learning strategies to help them

gain proficiency in the English language. These factors in turn undermine their motivation to learn and their performance in English-related academic tasks.

Since strategic learning and perceived self-efficacy have become widely accepted as essential factors to influence students' reading performance, Alfassi (2004) suggests that it is very important for teachers to train students to take active control of their own comprehension processes. Irwin and Baker (1989) called this "conscious control of the process metacognition or strategies" (p. 6). Literature suggests that the use of appropriate reading strategies may improve reading comprehension (Olsen & Gee, 1991). Using reading strategies and perceiving high self-efficacy can be of great help to non-native readers because they may serve as effective ways of overcoming language deficiency and obtaining better reading achievement on language proficiency tests (Wong, 2005; Zhang, 1992). However, empirical research indicates that in most reading classrooms, students have received inadequate instruction on reading skills and strategies (Miller & Perkins, 1989). Instructional practices in many EFL language classes in Taiwan are often teacher-centered and focus on direct knowledge transmission (Lau, 2006). The main focus of traditional English language teaching in Taiwan is on prescribed text teaching, and EFL instructors seldom teach any strategy directly in class. In other words, teachers' emphasis is often put on the production of comprehension rather than the processing skills (Anderson, 1999; Numrich, 1989). To solve this problem, the present study attempted to maximize the teachers' assistance by training students how to learn and how to process information by using various reading strategies, in order to enhance students' perceived self-efficacy and reading comprehension in English. In this study, three major reading strategies, namely cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies, were selected, and their relationships between reading strategy use and perceived self-efficacy were examined. Three main research questions for the present study were addressed as follows:

1. What is the most frequent use of reading strategies reported by individual students?

2. Is there a significant relationship between students' self-reported reading strategy uses and self-efficacy beliefs on their English reading performance?

3. What are students' attitudes toward the effect of reading strategy instruction?

Based on the research questions, it was hypothesized that explicit reading strategy

instruction could enhance Taiwanese EFL learners' perceived self-efficacy and their English reading comprehension. In the following section, reading strategy uses, training activities, as well as their effects on self-efficacy and reading achievement are discussed.

Literature Review

Reading Strategy Use

Reading is an interactive process combining top-down and bottom-up processing (Barnett, 1989); as a result, it is very important for students to use appropriate reading strategies to increase their comprehension. According to Barnett (1989), the term "strategy means the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read" (p. 66). In other words, reading comprehension requires the integration and application of multiple strategies or skills. Those strategies involve memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, social, and test-taking strategies (Caverly, 1997; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Zhang, 1993). For the research purpose, cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies were selected and described as below.

Cognitive strategies: According to Chamot and Kupper (1989), cognitive strategies are approaches "in which learners work with and manipulate the task materials themselves, moving towards task completion" (p. 14). Winstead (2004) defined the cognitive strategy as a "learner-centered approach that takes into consideration the environment or situational context in which the leaner learns, the learner's knowledge base, intrinsic motivation, in addition to improving the learner's ability to process information via cognitive and metacognitive approaches" (p. 30). Examples of cognitive strategies include the skills of predicting based on prior knowledge, analyzing text organization by looking for specific patterns, self-questioning, making a summary, taking notes by writing down the main idea or specific points, translating, inferencing, and transferring (Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Numrich, 1989; Oxford, 1990). These strategies are identified as important cognitive strategies related to academic performance in the classroom because they can be applied to simple memory tasks (e.g., recall of information, words, or lists) or to more complex tasks that require comprehension of the information (e.g., understanding a piece of text) (Pintrich, 1999; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991;

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Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) characterized those cognitive learning strategies into three main sets: rehearsal, elaboration, and organizational strategies. Rehearsal strategies involve underlining the text, saying a word or phrase aloud, or using a mnemonic. Though these strategies are passive in nature, they are meant in order to assist students to attend to and then select important textual information and retain this information in working memory. Elaboration strategies include paraphrasing or summarizing the material to be learned, creating analogies, generative note-taking, explaining ideas to others, asking and answering questions about the text. The other type of deeper processing strategy, organizational, includes behaviors such as selecting the main idea from text, outlining the text to be learned, and using a variety of specific techniques for selecting and organizing the ideas in the material. According to Weinstein and Mayer, all of these organizational strategies can be used to test and confirm the accuracy of learner's deeper understanding of the text.

Metacognitive strategies: Students' metacognitive knowledge and use of metacognitive strategies can have an important influence upon their achievement. According to Chamot and Kupper (1989), metacognitve strategies involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning task, and evaluating how well one has learned. Oxford (1990) proposed that metacognitve strategies include three strategy sets: Centering, arranging and planning, as well as evaluating the learning. A similar model of metacognitve strategies proposed by Pintrich (1999) included three general types of strategies: Planning, monitoring, and regulating. Planning activities include setting goals for studying, skimming a text before reading, generating questions before reading a text, etc. According to Pintrich, planning activities seem to "help the learner plan their use of cognitive strategies and also seem to activate or prime relevant aspects of prior knowledge, making the organization and comprehension of the material much easier" (p. 461). Monitoring strategy is an essential aspect of self-regulated learning. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) regard all metacognitive activities as partly the monitoring of comprehension where students check their understanding against some self-set goals. Monitoring activities include tracking of attention while reading a text, self-testing through the use of questions about the text material to check for understanding, etc (Pintrich, 1999). The other type of metacognitive strategies is

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regulatory strategy which is closely tied to monitoring strategies. According to Pintrich, as students monitor their learning and performance against some goal or criterion, "this monitoring process suggests the need for regulation processes to bring behavior back in line with the goal or to come closer to the criterion (p. 461)." Regulatory activities may include asking questions to monitor students' comprehension, slowing the pace of reading with more difficult texts, reviewing examination materials, and postponing questions. Several studies have shown that all these strategies can enhance second/foreign language reading by correcting their studying behavior and repairing deficits in their understanding of the reading text (Carrell, 1989; Pintrich, 1999; Whyte, 1993).

Compensation strategies: According to the literature, another factor resulting in successful reading is the development of vocabulary knowledge (Caverly, 1997; Yang, 2004). However, many EFL readers often encounter the problem of unfamiliar vocabulary and unknown concepts so as to interfere with the comprehension (Zhang, 1993). Several researchers suggest teaching students active compensation strategies to achieve comprehension (Oxford, 1990; Sinatra & Dowd, 1992; Zhang, 1993). Sinatra and Dowd (1992) proposed a comprehension framework for the use of context clues: syntactic clues (related to grammatical structures) and semantic clues (involved intra- and inter sentence meaning relationship). Sinatra and Dowd argued that readers should not only understand how the writer used grammar, but also use semantic clues such as restatement, use of examples and summary clues in order to guess the meaning of a new word. In addition, to guess the meaning of words intelligently, Oxford (1990) clustered 10 compensation strategies into two sets: linguistic clues (guessing meanings from suffixes, prefixes, and word order) and other clues (using text structure such as introductions, summaries, conclusions, titles, transitions, and using general background knowledge). These decoding skills can not only help readers overcome a limited vocabulary, but also help them guess about the theme of an article. Such learning strategies can significantly increase the reading speed and raise efficiency (Winstead, 2004; Zhang, 1992, 1993).

Reading Training Activities

Results of recent studies have been demonstrated that students' comprehension of texts can be enhanced through instructional interventions (King, 1994; Paris & Jacobs, 1984; Pressley, 2000; Winstead, 2004). Findings demonstrate a contribution made to students' strategic awareness and the importance of explicitly teaching students multiple reading comprehension strategies. In other words, informed instruction in the classroom could enhance both awareness and comprehension skills. To train students to use and transfer reading strategies to new tasks, a number of studies have suggested that reading strategy training needs to be conducted in conjunction with the regular course of instruction over an extended period of time, and teachers rather than researchers should be the deliverers of learning strategy instruction to equip readers with necessary reading skills (Chamot, 1998; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Oxford, 1993; Zhang, 1993). Research suggests numerous steps to be followed when conducting reading comprehension strategy instruction (Blanton & Wood, 1984; Chamot, 1998; Huang, 2001; Oxford, 1990, 1993). Yang (1995) summarized these general steps as follows (p. 6):

1. Diagnosis: Developing students' awareness toward different strategies; identifying and assessing students' current language strategies through observations, questionnaires, interviews, diaries, self-report surveys, think-aloud procedures, etc.

2. Preparation: Explaining the concept and importance of learning strategies; providing students with knowledge about language learning strategies and information on motivation and beliefs, etc.

3. Instruction: Providing direct and informed instructions on learning strategies through explanation, modeling, practice, and integration; and providing different practice opportunities with various learning tasks.

4. Evaluation: Helping students evaluate their own strategy use; evaluating the whole strategy training and revising the training component if necessary.

Self-Efficacy, Reading Strategies, and Reading Achievement

As mentioned above, research has shown that students' performance can be facilitated by the enhancement of self-efficacy (Wong, 2005). According to Bandura (1994),

"perceptions of self-efficacy influence motivation; they determine the goals individuals set, the effort they expend to achieve these goals, and their willingness to persist in the face of failure" (p. 72). Individuals who expect success in a particular enterprise anticipate successful outcomes. In other words, students who are confident in their academic skills expect high marks on exams and expect the quality of their work to reap benefits. The opposite is also true of those who lack such confidence. Low self-efficacy hinders learners' participation in learning activities while lack of learning strategies prohibits them from solving problems they encounter in language learning (Schunk, 1991). In the area of English language teaching, Shell and Murphy (1989) examined the relationship between students' perceived competence and their English learning outcomes. Findings in the research indicate that students' perceived self-efficacy is highly related to their reading achievement. Compared with another factor of outcome expectance, self-efficacy could better predict school reading performance. The study conducted by Shell and Colvin (1995) also supported that self-efficacy rather than outcome expectance is the best variable to tell high achievers from average achievers.

In addition, a study conducted by Chamot et al. (1993) examined the effects of metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategy instruction received by learners of Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Students completed learning strategy questionnaires (related to their frequency of strategy use) and self-efficacy questionnaires (related to their perceptions of their ability to complete the tasks). Findings of the study demonstrate that positive relationships between the frequent use of learning strategies and perceptions of self-efficacy are found in most groups.

Purpose of the Study

As mentioned earlier, university students in Taiwan often have poor English reading ability partly due to their level of reading strategy knowledge and a lack of confidence in their academic achievement (Caverly & Orlando, 1991). Besides, instructional practices in many EFL language classes in Taiwan usually focus on direct knowledge transmission (Lau, 2006). To enhance EFL learners' reading comprehension, O'Malley et al. (1985) mentioned that there is a need for teachers to provide more structure in students' reading strategy instruction, so that students can apply the specific strategies for the reading tasks

and be critically reflective about the language learning activities. Though research evidence shows that self-efficacy is related to learning motivation and to a greater use of learning strategies (Wong, 2005; Yang, 2004), few studies conducted in Taiwan provide insights into students' use of reading strategies and how this is related to their self-efficacy beliefs and English reading achievement. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to assess the effect of strategic instruction on the development of reading performance. More specifically, this study aimed to explore the frequency of students' reading strategy use and their perceived self-efficacy, and investigate the relationships between these two constructs on the reading achievement after a whole-semester instruction of reading skills. Three main research questions were addressed: (1) What is the most frequent use of reading strategies? (2) Is there any significant relationship between students' self-reported reading strategy use and self-efficacy beliefs on their English reading performance? (3) What are students' attitudes toward the effect of strategic instruction? It was hypothesized that positive direct relationships among reading strategy use, perceptions of self-efficacy, and reading achievement could be observed. It is expected that the research results of this study can provide English teachers with more insights into EFL learners' reading strategy instruction and language self-efficacy so as to facilitate Taiwanese EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Methodology

Subjects

Fifty-three freshmen (17 males and 36 females) majoring in English from I-Shou University participated in the study. A demographic questionnaire was administered to gather information about the subjects' backgrounds. Results from the questionnaires showed that most students have received at least six years of formal English instruction in high school before they entered the university; their English proficiency level was about high-intermediate. The subjects of this study ranged in ages from 18 to 23 years old, with an average of 18.6 years old. Seventy three percent of the subjects did various kinds of practices to improve their English reading proficiency in their free time, such as reading English newspapers (e.g., Taiwan News) and magazines (e.g., Studio Classroom), etc. However, 27% of them did not do any practice at all.

Learning Contexts

The strategy-instruction program was designed as a reading course during the Fall 2006 semester, with class meeting two hours a week. The course, which was designed in terms of a completely formal instruction class, lasted entire semester. The required textbook for the course was "Interactions 2: Reading" (Kirn & Hartmann, 2002). The objective of the reading course was to help students understand the contents of the reading materials and mostly develop various reading skills needed to succeed in their studies. In the reading class, students were engaged in practicing a variety of reading skills/strategies, such as previewing vocabulary, predicting reading contents, identifying main ideas, skimming for main ideas, scanning for information, making inferences, etc. The course emphasized the reading of various topics of expository texts, such as education, city life, business, jobs, lifestyles around the world, global trade, medicine, language and communication, etc. The course aimed to enhance students' reading comprehension in English through direct teaching on various reading strategies. Based on the interactive model of reading process and the information offered by Weinstein and Mayer (1986), Pintrich (1999), and Oxford (1990), eight sets of reading strategies (see the Appendix) were selected in this study which were essential for EFL students in Taiwan to improve their English reading comprehension, and these reading strategies were categorized into three groups: Cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies (see Table 1).

Table 1 Eight Sets of Reading Strategies

Strategy	Sets of Reading Strategies	Number of Items	Total
Cognitive	● Rehearsal	3 (#1-3)	
	● Elaboration	7 (#4-10)	16
	● Organizational	6 (#11-16)	
Metacognitive	● Planning	8 (#17-24)	
	● Monitoring	4 (#25-28)	17
	● Regulating	5 (#29-33)	
Compensation	● Linguistic	5 (#34-38)	11
	● Semantic	6 (#39-44)	

Instrumentation and Procedure

The present study aimed to investigate the frequency of students' reading strategy use, their perceptions of self-efficacy, and the relationships of these two constructs on their English reading performance. First, reading comprehension was assessed using the Reading Comprehension section of the simulated TOEFL test (Phillips, 1996). Five reading passages were selected, each passage followed by nine to 11 multiple-choice reading comprehension questions, with the total number of 50 questions in a given test. The test lasted for exactly 55 minutes. Time is definitely a factor in the Reading Comprehension section. Many students who took the TOEFL test before noted that they were unable to finish all of the questions in this section. Therefore, they needed to make the most efficient use of their time by using effective reading strategies to get the highest score in a limited amount of time. In addition, greater care went into the choice of passages so that the passage type would match the reading strategies taken. Students were asked to take the same comprehension test in the beginning (pre-test) and at the end of the semester (post-test). All the test papers were scored by the researcher, whereby subjects received one point if they chose the correct answer.

Then, a reading strategy questionnaire by Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, ESL/EFL version 7.0), Carrell's (1989) Metacognitive Questionnaire, Pintrich et al.'s (1991) The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), Baker and Boonkit's (2004) English Reading Strategies Questionnaire, and the researcher's own teaching experiences was integrated and employed for this study to measure the frequency of students' self-reported strategy uses both at the beginning (pre-use) and at the end of the semester (post-use). Subjects completed the pre- and post-strategy questionnaires within 15 minutes of taking the reading comprehension pre- and post-tests. The questionnaire, containing 44 items, consisted of three major categories of reading strategies: cognitive (items 1 to 16), metacognitive (items 17 to 33) and compensation strategies (items 34 to 44). Students were asked to rate certain statements on a 5-point scale from (1) never or almost never true of me to (5) always or almost always true of me. To form a pilot test, three English-major students were asked to comment on the contents of the questionnaire, concerning the meaning and clarity of the statements. Minor adjustments were made to the wording

in some of the learning contexts as a result of these solicited comments. To calculate the score of the reading strategy questionnaire, the answer to each of the items, 1 to 5, was added up for each subject. The overall average indicated how often the subject tended to use reading strategies in general, while averages for each category indicated which strategy categories the student tended to use most frequently. The cronbach internal consistency coefficients for categories of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies were .87, .94, and .90 respectively in the pre-use, and .82, .86, and .85 respectively in the post-use.

Next, a self-efficacy questionnaire was developed based on Wong's (2005) *Language Self-efficacy Scale* and Pintrich et al.'s (1991) *The Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* (MSLQ) to assess students' perception of competence in English reading. The self-efficacy questionnaire, altogether 19 items, specifically measured students' confidence in general English reading ability in the beginning (pre-efficacy) and at the end of the semester (post-efficacy). Ten items in the first part of the scale were composed to assess students' perceptions of competence in using general reading strategies, and nine items in the second part of the scale were specially designed to assess students' confidence of academic success in the reading class. Students were asked to rate the statements on a 5-point scale (1 = not confident at all, to 5 = completely confident). A pilot questionnaire was given to eight English-major students who were asked to comment on the contents of the questionnaire itself. To add external validity to the questionnaire, it was also reviewed by two teachers who taught the English reading courses in the university. This led to a number of changes to both the format of the questionnaire and the items it contained. To calculate the score for this section, the answer to each of the items, 1 to 5, was added up for each subject. The overall average indicated how confident the subject felt in using general reading strategies and their academic success in the reading class. The cronbach internal consistency coefficients of these two scales (competence in using reading strategies and confidence of reading success) were .89 and .85 in the pre-efficacy, and .84 and .91 in the post-efficacy.

Finally, student interviews were undertaken to examine the validity of the questionnaires. The structured interview was developed based on the studies of Chamot and Kupper (1989), Paris and Jacobs (1984), and Li and Qin (2006). The first part of the

interview contained six open-ended questions, modified from the reading strategy questionnaire, to measure students' knowledge about reading strategy, and the second part of the interview included six open-ended questions, modified from the self-efficacy questionnaire, to assess students' confidence and perceptions on reading instruction. Seven students were interviewed as a pilot test to know if any questions were confusing to them. Some of the questions were reworded to make the meaning of the sentences more clear, and some were simplified to meet the students' English proficiency level. All interviews took place within a two-week period. Subjects were invited to meet with the researcher individually. The interviews, ranged from 20 to 40 minutes, were all performed in Chinese except the interviewer's questions. The interviewees were informed that the interviews would be highly confidential and used for research only. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed soon afterward.

Data Analysis

During the one-semester English reading instruction, the reading strategy questionnaires, the self-efficacy questionnaires, student interviews, and the reading comprehension tests were collected and analyzed at the end of the semester. To analyze the questionnaire data, this study involved two major statistical procedures: (1) descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated; and (2) paired samples *t*-test procedures were computed to compare the differences between students' responses to the questionnaires on the three major reading strategy uses (categories of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies) and perceptions of self-efficacy in the pre-test at the beginning of the semester and in the post-test at the end of the semester. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

To examine the effects of strategic instruction on students' reading performance, a paired-sample *t*-test was carried out to compare students' performance in the reading comprehension tests taken before and after the strategy instruction. Additionally, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (i.e., zero-order correlation coefficients) was used to estimate the relation between reading strategy use and perceived self-efficacy on students' reading achievement.

Results

Research question 1: What is the most frequent use of reading strategies reported by individual students?

A series of paired-sample *t*-tests were carried out to compare students' mean scores of strategy uses, self-efficacy, and reading comprehension tests taken before and after comprehension instruction. The results are shown in Table 2. According to the means of post-use, the most frequent use of reading strategy was found to be metacognitive strategy, followed by compensation strategy, and then followed by cognitive strategy. As for the self-efficacy questionnaire, the mean for pre-efficacy was 3.49 (SD = .62), and the mean for post-efficacy was 3.56 (SD = .62). The results indicate that the average scores of post-use and post-efficacy for each set were all higher than those in the pre-use and pre-efficacy. Although no significant differences were found among them at the .05 probability level, it is still of notable importance that students generally increased the frequency of their reading strategy use and perceptions of self-efficacy by the end of the semester. As also shown in Table 2, after receiving strategy instruction, students scored significantly ($p < .05$) higher in the post-test than in the pre-test. It is, therefore, assumed that students increased their strategy use and perceptions of competence in using the strategies after reading strategy instruction. Such findings further indicate the importance of strategic instruction on the development of reading comprehension.

Table 2 *T*-test Results for Strategy Use, Self-Efficacy, and Reading Score

	Pre-Use		Post-Use		*F*	df	*p*
	M	SD	M	SD			
Cognitive	3.24	.60	3.34	.48	-1.81	52	.077
Metacognitive	3.43	.51	3.53	.67	1.47	52	.149
Compensation	3.37	.60	3.41	.71	.74	52	.465
Self-Efficacy	3.49	.62	3.56	.62	1.05	52	.297
Reading Score	25.42	6.84	28.36	7.19	-3.92	52	.001*

* $p < .05$.

Research question 2: Is there a significant relationship between reading strategy uses and self-efficacy beliefs on reading achievement?

To examine the relationship among the strategy use, self-efficacy, and reading achievement, a zero-order correlation was conducted for the purpose of this study. To minimize the number of variables to be included, only the post-test scores of reading strategies, self-efficacy, and reading comprehension were used. The results in Table 3 indicate that all the strategies were significantly correlated with self-efficacy (correlation coefficients ranged from .44 to .52, $p < .01$). However, no significant relationship was observed between strategy use and reading score. The other finding shows that students' self-efficacy beliefs had a correlation (correlation coefficient = .53, $p = .01$) with their reading achievement, indicating a significant relation of perceptions of self-efficacy on reading development.

Table 3 Correlations between Reading Strategies for Self-Efficacy and Reading Score

	Cognitive	Metacognitive	Compensation
Self-Efficacy	.44**	.48**	.52**
Reading Score	.01	.12	.01

** $p < .01$.

Research question 3: What are students' attitudes toward the effect of reading strategy instruction?

As indicated earlier (see Tables 3), no significant relationship was observed between strategy use and reading achievement; the results, therefore, present problematic findings when taken with the previous studies (Chamot et al., 1993; Olsen & Gee, 1991). Consequently, a decision was made to analyze results from students' interviews based on the qualitative data in order to explore the in-depth information available about strategy use conditions (see Table 4). One-half of the students responded that by reading the heading or the first sentence of the passage assisted comprehension. A majority of students indicated that they employed this strategy because they were taught to do so or because it helped them to find the main idea more quickly and effectively. Some of the

students also explained that they developed the strategy of skipping unimportant words if they did not comprehend the meaning of sentences. Most students considered that it is important to learn various reading skills to understand the reading materials more effectively and the use of multiple reading strategies could enhance their reading comprehension. However, some students, and poorer readers in particular, expressed their difficulties in predicting what is to come, what to read carefully, what to read quickly, what not to read; integrating their prior knowledge with materials in the text; determining the meaning of unfamiliar words in the text, as well as dealing with inconsistencies or gaps as needed. Students also reported that the time the teacher spent in explicitly explaining the use of strategies was minimal. Students were given hardly any help in learning to resolve problems adequately while reading by having skills and strategies explained and demonstrated to them.

Table 4 Interview Findings regarding Reading Strategy Use

Category of Strategy	Students' Responses	Frequent Use of Strategy
Cognitive	• Read the heading or the first sentence of the passage to understand the main idea more effectively and quickly • Skim/scan in the appropriate part of the text for the key word or idea	• Organizational strategy
Metacognitive	• Try to find as many ways to comprehend the reading material • Important to learn various reading skills to understand the reading materials more effectively	• Monitoring strategy
Compensation	• Skip unimportant words if not comprehending the meaning of sentences	• Linguistic strategy

Discussions and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships of various cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, and self-efficacy variables on foreign-language reading achievement. Several key findings emerged from this study. First, regarding the effectiveness of strategic instruction on reading achievement, results of the present study demonstrate that students generally increased their frequent use of reading strategies, especially using metacognitive strategies for managing learning and overcoming

deficiency in English reading, and they further obtained more improvement in comprehension after strategy instruction. Such results support findings in the literature (Baker & Brown, 1984; Chang & Huang, 2001; Muñiz-Swicegood, 1994; Shang, 2007), suggesting that it is more effective for students to improve their reading comprehension if they have a higher frequency of employing metacognitive strategy in their reading process. As also maintained by Lehtonen (2000), only having the strategic knowledge is not sufficient if learners are not taught how to put strategic knowledge into its active roles in EFL learning and reading contexts.

Second, regarding the relationship between strategic learning and self-efficacy, results of the correlation provide empirical support for a significant relationship between these two constructs proposed in the literature (Chamot et al., 1993; Chan, 1994; Pintrich, 1999). In general, this relationship was consistently observed in all three strategy uses and perceived self-efficacy. Specifically, students report that the more frequently they use strategies in their English reading, the more confidence and personal control they will have over their reading skills. Students express that they are not inclined to feel helpless in their learning, and they have high self-perceptions of learning outcomes. These findings are consistent with the view that self-efficacy and strategy attribution have facilitating effects on strategy learning (Lau & Chan, 2003). The importance of the motivational issue on reading development suggests that while strategy instruction should be an effective and direct way to enhance Taiwanese students' reading ability, our reading curriculum should also be reconstructed to help EFL learners build up their own interest and confidence in reading and strategy learning.

Even though the finding demonstrates that students' use of reading strategies did not indicate a great change after strategy instruction, such a result is not surprising, particularly because strategy training has not been given much emphasis in Taiwan (Ko, 2002; Lau, 2006). To further explore the finding that reading strategies were unrelated to reading achievement in this context, students' comments after administration of a reading test may also provide insights for EFL educators. Many students report that they experienced difficulty in using background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge to comprehend given reading passages. Therefore, it is important for teachers to combine basic decoding skills training and background knowledge enhancement during direct

strategy instruction for students with serious reading problems. EFL teachers should train students to guess unfamiliar English words based on suffixes, prefixes, or context clues. It is also important that the teacher prepares students for their reading of the text in a focused way, by predicting the content based on the title, subheadings, summary, layout, etc. After students have formed an impression of the content of the text, they can predict what its content will be and what they can expect (Houtveen & van de Grift, 2007).

To help students become strategic readers, teachers should also raise students' strategic awareness, allowing them to become more aware of strategy use while reading (Ko, 2002). It is essential for teachers to help EFL learners build a repertoire of reading strategies and then provide various reading materials for students to try out different reading strategies through explicit explanation and modeling (Wong, 2005). Demonstration (modeling) is seen as one of the most useful techniques for explaining strategies for reading achievement (Houtveen & van de Grift, 2007). Making it explicit in this way helps poor readers by making clear what they should be doing and what they were not doing before, or what they were doing wrong (Rosenshine & Meister, 1997). Furthermore, teachers should encourage (motivate) students in applying the strategies to an expanded range of learning activities and materials so that the strategies transfer to new activities and are used by students independently of the teachers' support (O'Malley et al., 1985). Finally, it is also important that the teacher checks what students have understood and gives them feedback on their use of the strategies. Students must be given the opportunity and skills to discuss the text and the use of strategies with their fellow students in small groups so as to check individual students' reading comprehension and strategy use (Kindsvatter et al., 1988).

Limitations of the Study

Although the study has preliminarily explored the necessity of employing strategy instruction in EFL reading classes, there are several limitations in the research design. First, the subjects of this study were 53 undergraduate EFL students in Taiwan. Thus, the generation of the results to other populations with different native languages or educational backgrounds may be limited due in part to the small sampling size. In interpreting the results, we should also bear in mind that the subjects' previous academic

backgrounds and ages were varied, which might have affected their reading performance. Second, since this study only focused on investigating students' reading comprehension on the TOEFL test, more studies with different types of tests and tasks should be conducted in the future to examine major barriers to implementing strategy instruction in reading texts. Third, as the strategy instruction was incorporated into the school's regular curriculum, no control group was available for purposes of this study. Comparisons were made only on students' pre- and post-strategy measures. To obtain a more complete picture of the effect of strategy instruction on Taiwanese EFL reading achievement, a control group (traditional instruction without strategy instruction) and an experimental group (strategy instruction) should be designed properly to analyze their performance differences. In future research, it is suggested that the experiment with two groups should be carried out involving more than one type of comprehension test in use. Consideration of individual learner differences such as attitude, gender, previous academic background, and how such variables may promote the use of a reading strategy could lead to future research in other foreign language reading classes.

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Appendix: Reading Strategy Questionnaire

The following statements are about the strategies you use in reading the text. Using the questionnaire below, please indicate the frequency of reading strategies you use by circling the following appropriate number.

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

Strategy	Sets	No	Statements	Frequency scale
Cognitive	Rehearsal	1	I try to remember key words to understand the main idea of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		2	I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		3	When I read the text, I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class.	1 2 3 4 5
	Elaboration	4	I underline key words to remind me of important concepts of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		5	I go back to read the details of the passage for the answers of some questions.	1 2 3 4 5
		6	When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate.	1 2 3 4 5
		7	When I read the text, I take notes by writing down the key words.	1 2 3 4 5
		8	When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.	1 2 3 4 5
		9	I go back to read the details of the passage for the answers of some questions.	1 2 3 4 5
		10	I draw a conclusion about the author's purpose for writing the text.	1 2 3 4 5
	Organizational	11	I do not need to understand every detail in each text to get the main idea correctly.	1 2 3 4 5
		12	When I study the readings for this course, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts.	1 2 3 4 5
		13	Before I study new material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.	1 2 3 4 5
		14	When I read the text, I try to relate the material to what I already know.	1 2 3 4 5
		15	I try not to translate word-for-word.	1 2 3 4 5
		16	I skim/scan in the appropriate part of the text for the key word or idea.	1 2 3 4 5
Meta-cognitive	Planning	17	I read the topic or heading of the passage.	1 2 3 4 5
		18	I look at the pictures of the passage.	1 2 3 4 5
		19	I read the first sentence of the passage.	1 2 3 4 5
		20	I read the questions before I read the passage.	1 2 3 4 5
		21	I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	1 2 3 4 5

		22	I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.	1 2 3 4 5
		23	I have clear goals for improving my English reading skills.	1 2 3 4 5
		24	When reading the text, I am able to question the significance or truthfulness of what the author says.	1 2 3 4 5
	Monitoring	25	I try to find as many ways as I can to comprehend the reading material.	1 2 3 4 5
		26	I notice my reading difficulties and try to use other methods to help me understand the text better.	1 2 3 4 5
		27	When I become confused about something I'm reading, I go back and try to figure it out.	1 2 3 4 5
		28	When the reading text is difficult, I neither give up.	1 2 3 4 5
	Regulating	29	I try to find out how to be a better reader of English.	1 2 3 4 5
		30	I look for opportunities to read as much as possible such as magazines or newspaper articles in order to improve my reading ability in English.	1 2 3 4 5
		31	I ask the instructor or my friend questions in order to improve my reading ability in English.	1 2 3 4 5
		32	I slow the pace of reading when confronting with more difficult texts.	1 2 3 4 5
		33	I review the material while studying for an examination.	1 2 3 4 5
Compen-sation	Linguistic	34	I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	1 2 3 4 5
		35	I skip the words if I don't know the meaning.	1 2 3 4 5
		36	I read English without looking up every new word.	1 2 3 4 5
		37	To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses from suffixes and prefixes.	1 2 3 4 5
		38	I look for context clues to help me understand the meanings of vocabulary words.	1 2 3 4 5
	Semantic	39	The thing I do to read effectively is to focus on getting the overall meaning of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		40	I predict what is going to happen next while reading.	1 2 3 4 5
		41	I try to predict what the author will say next.	1 2 3 4 5
		42	I use my background knowledge to guess the overall meaning of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		43	I use examples and summary clues to guess the meaning of the text.	1 2 3 4 5
		44	I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and my prior knowledge.	1 2 3 4 5

Preservice EFL Teachers' Attitudes, Needs, and Experiences about Teaching Writing and Learning to Teach Writing before their Practicum: A Case Study in Vietnam

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Abstract
The standard of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has prompted calls for reform to preservice EFL teacher education. Field experiences are central to their professional development and for implementing reform measures. This study aims to examine preservice EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences about learning to teach writing in English before their practicum in Vietnamese high schools. An open-ended questionnaire collected data from 97 preservice EFL teachers at the beginning of their final practicum. The data suggested that these preservice EFL teachers were motivated to learn to teach English in general and teaching writing in particular but required mentors to model effective teaching practices and share their teaching experiences. They also needed their mentors to be enthusiastic and supportive, and provide constructive feedback. Identifying mentoring practices that are linked to mentees' needs can assist teacher educators and school mentors to motivate and develop preservice EFL teachers' practice.

Introduction

There is growing recognition of English as a global language because it is viewed as a prerequisite to access quality education and job opportunities in Asia. Most Asian governments have introduced English as a compulsory subject at young ages. In Vietnam, English is now taught from grade three on. This demand for English offers opportunities for Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) in Vietnam but at the same time it creates many challenges, such as a lack of sound teacher training (Nunan, 2003). Furthermore, there continues to be a mismatch between the expected and actual levels of competence, and educators claim EFL preservice teacher education is largely inadequate (Nunan, 2003; Pham, 2001). These issues suggest a need for more studies on EFL preservice teacher education. Among many attempts to enhance EFL preservice teacher education, efforts have focused on developing their teaching practices during practicum. There are studies investigating the different aspects of preservice teachers' learning to teach, nonetheless, little has been documented concerning how preservice EFL teachers prepare for their learning to teach (Gomez, 1990; Grossman et al., 2000; Kelley, 2005; Napoli, 2001; Street, 2003). In particular to this study is the need for reform on EFL preservice teacher education in Vietnam. Indeed, there seems to be few studies for EFL preservice teachers to learn to teach within any of the four key elements (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening; Harmer, 2001); hence EFL writing was selected as a specific area of EFL teaching in order to narrow the topic of investigation for this study. This study aims to investigate preservice EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences on teaching writing and their learning to teach writing before the practicum.

Literature Review

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has been of concern throughout the world and has prompted calls for reform to preservice EFL teachers' practices in order to raise the standard of teaching and learning (Aiken & Day, 1999; Cook, 1996; Larsen-

Freeman, 2000; Luo, 2003). This requires preservice teachers in countries where English is a foreign language to be prepared to meet the challenges and standards for EFL teaching (Lu, 2002; Vibulphol, 2004; Wertheimer & Honigsfeld, 2000). However, preservice EFL teachers have the additional challenge of teaching English while using this language as the mode of instruction (Nguyen & Luong, 2008). Field experiences or practicum have long been a central part of preservice EFL teacher development in many countries and is crucial for implementing EFL education reform (Anderson, 2004; Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Ewell, 2004; Schulz, 2005; Stewart, 2004). These field experiences allow preservice teachers to make the connection between current theoretical knowledge and school practices; yet understanding how to learn to teach EFL effectively requires further investigation (Clift, Meng, & Eggerding, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Liu, 2005).

Learning to teach is a complex process that involves social interactions within a school context (e.g., Farrell, 2003; Gimbert, 2001; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1999; Liou, 2001; Liu, 2005; Vélez-Rendón, 2006). Research on learning to teach has sought to mainly focus on teachers' beliefs and perceptions (Chiang, 2003; Fives, 2003; Johnson, 1996; Raths & McAninch, 2003), previous learning experiences (Vélez-Rendón, 2006), attitudes toward teaching and learning (Bae, 2003; Reber, 2001; Street, 2003), understanding of the subject matter, needs and challenges (Nelson & Harper, 2006), perceptions of initial teaching practice, mentoring processes (Street, 2004), and motivation to teach (Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998). For example, Johnson (1996) explores the inter-relationship between preservice EFL teachers' beliefs about second language teachers and teaching, and their perceptions of their instructional practice during the practicum. It appears that prior classroom experiences have an influence on developing preservice EFL teachers' images of themselves as teachers and their perceptions of their own instructional practices. This finding is consistent with several related studies (e.g., Pajares, 1992; Gerges, 2001; Vélez-Rendón, 2006) highlighting the impact of prior experiences and beliefs for developing teaching practices.

Another example is Wang and Odell's (2003) investigation on "how preservice teachers learn to teach writing in reform-minded ways" (p.167). Although the study is based on the data from only two preservice teachers and two mentors, it reveals that these preservice teachers' movement toward the reform-minded ways of teaching that mentors

model did not occur because of the conflict between preservice teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching and that of their mentors. They advocate further advancements in preservice teacher education to capitalise on learning within specific school contexts. In addition, Velez-Rendon's (2006) interpretive, single-case study examines a German preservice teacher's prior learning experiences, beliefs, contextual and cognitive factors that affect teaching development. Results indicated that previous learning experiences, the knowledge of subject matter, level of commitment, and an effective mentoring relationship contribute to successful, meaningful, and productive experiences of learning to teach a foreign language. Wang and Odell (2003) also claim that "preservice teachers' initial beliefs, mentors' teaching and mentoring practices, and school contexts influenced preservice teachers' conceptual development"(p. 147). Thus, there is a need to explore how preservice teachers think about this issue before they enter their profession.

The school context plays a pivotal role in developing EFL teaching practices. More specifically, the development and implementation of a school-wide curriculum can lead to more effective teaching practices and may be employed by mentors to enhance preservice teacher education (Hudson, 2005). To illustrate, Heenan (2004) suggests that:

> the organization surrounding the implementation of teacher training opportunities plays a key role in the efficacy of professional development. Schools will experience the greatest success with professional development initiatives when seminars, discussions and schedules are carefully planned with teachers' preferences in mind (p. ix).

Preservice EFL teachers should be exposed to expertise within schools that consider their needs for learning how to teach. Indeed, preservice teachers require scaffolding on teaching the key strands of English (e.g., EFL writing) through well-constructed school-based programs.

Research on learning to teach has also sought to uncover the problems preservice teachers face during their field experiences. Wang and Odell (2002) identify three types of problems that can confront novices when learning to teach within school settings, that is: (1) emotional and psychological stress, (2) lack of support, and (3) conceptual struggles about teaching and learning. Emotional and psychological stress is "widely assumed to be the result of the relatively low professional status of teaching, the

uncertainty of classroom life, and difficult working conditions" (p. 514). Preservice teachers can feel high levels of stress during their field experience because they face the challenges of carrying out two important tasks at the same time: teaching, and learning to teach. Many preservice teachers enter field experiences with hopes and inflated expectations that are often "shattered by exposure to certain realities of schools, classroom, and teaching" (Knowles, Coles, & Presswood, 1994, p. 109). A lack of support can include a "lack of instruction routines, procedures, skills, and techniques that are related to the contexts of teaching" (Wang & Odell, 2002, p. 515). Preservice teachers may be unprepared for the demands of upper secondary English teaching and more effective models for preservice EFL teacher development are required (Butcher, 2003). Preservice teachers may have:

> inadequate knowledge of pupils and classroom procedures. They come instead with idealized views of pupils and an optimistic, oversimplified picture of classroom practice. They are usually unprepared to deal with problems of class control and discipline. As a result, most novices become obsessed with class control, designing instruction, not to promote pupil learning, but to discourage disruptive behavior. (Kagan, 1992, pp.154-155)

Preservice teachers are challenged by the "conceptual struggle about teaching and learning" (Wang & Odell, 2002, p. 515). What they believe about effective teaching and learning may conflict with the reality of teaching in the school context. Liu's (2005) research indicates that preservice EFL teachers tend to follow their school-based mentors' examination-oriented English teaching methods, which focuses on vocabulary and grammar. It appears that learning to teach within the school context does not match the preservice teachers' university education and current advocated practices. The connection between theory and practice (i.e., praxis) needs to be more explicit in the school settings, which requires well-constructed mentoring programs.

Mentoring programs should be devised for mentors to assist their mentees (preservice teachers) develop pedagogical knowledge and overcome context-specific difficulties. Researchers (Chow, Tang, & So, 2004; Forbes, 2004; Garnes, 2004; Hawkey, 1997; Street, 2004; Woullard & Coats, 2004) have shown that mentoring relationships in school-based programs can shape preservice teachers' professional practice. Undoubtedly,

preservice teachers in their formative stages of development require assistance from more experienced colleagues. More specifically, effective mentoring programs provide structure and support to promote the attainment of effective teaching skills and sound pedagogical knowledge (Arnold, 2006; Chow, Tang, & So, 2004; Woullard & Coats, 2004).

It is established that school mentors play important roles in effectively mentoring preservice teachers during their teaching practice (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Ewell, 2004). A mentor may be defined as "one who is more knowledgeable on teaching practices and through explicit mentoring processes develops pedagogical self-efficacy in the mentee towards autonomous teaching practices" (Hudson, 2004, pp. 216-217). Five factors for mentors' facilitation of the mentoring process have been theoretically and empirically identified. These five factors are: personal attributes, system requirements, pedagogical knowledge, modelling, and feedback (Hudson et al., 2005). Mentors need to display personal attributes that facilitate a collaborative working relationship (Ganser, 1991; Rippon & Martin, 2006; Sinclair, 2003). System requirements must be made explicit to preservice teachers in order to understand departmental directives for teaching (Lenton & Turner, 1999). A mentor's articulation of pedagogical knowledge aims to enhance preservice teacher development (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). Mentors need to display their expertise by modeling effective teaching practices (Klausmeier, 1994; Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999). Finally, feedback in both oral and written form can guide preservice teacher development with clear expectations for improving practices (Malderez & Bodoczky, 1999; Zachary, 2002).

The literature has highlighted aspects of preservice teachers' development to shape their professional practice. However, in the context of Vietnam, there is a dearth of studies on preservice EFL teachers' learning to teaching during their practicum. Most studies focus on EFL in-service teacher education. Teachers play a key role for improving English language education in Vietnam (Le, 2007;Pham, 2007;Nunan, 2003). Teacher beliefs play a pivotal part in determining what teaching methods they use and justifying how they want to teach a foreign language. However, the quality of in-service teachers is still a concern in Vietnam (Nunan, 2003; Le, 2007). This champions the need for reforms in preservice EFL teacher education which has not been adequately studied

(Nguyen & Luong, 2008). There have been few studies investigating EFL preservice teacher's learning to teach English in terms of their problems (Hudson, Nguyen, & Hudson, 2008a; Nguyen & Luong, 2008), their mentoring process (Hudson, Nguyen, Hudson, 2008b) and their peer interaction during the practicum (Nguyen, 2007).

In summary, there are studies investigating the different aspects of preservice teachers' learning to teach, nonetheless, little has been documented concerning how preservice EFL teachers prepare for their learning to teach (Gomez, 1990; Grossman et al., 2000; Kelley, 2005; Napoli, 2001; Street, 2003). Moreover, little of the inquiry into preservice EFL teacher education has been documented in the context of Vietnam. This study fills this gap by investigating preservice EFL teachers' perceptions on some aspects of their learning to teach writing in English before their field experience. How do preservice teachers perceive their preparation for their initial teaching experiences? More specifically, the purpose of this study is to examine preservice EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences about learning to teach writing in English before their field experience.

Research Context

This study was conducted before a six-week practicum for preservice EFL teachers at one Vietnamese university preservice. After studying EFL teaching methodology courses which equipped them with current trends in English language teaching, preservice EFL teachers entered their practicum at one of the assigned secondary schools in Hanoi. The practicum is a one-off period where they experience first-hand teaching practice in classrooms. The practicum in most foreign language training programs in Vietnam aims to provide real-world teaching experiences. These preservice EFL teachers are expected to find out about the subject they teach (syllabus, requirements and so on) and the school they are placed in with regard to its organisation and educational activities. They are also expected to take part in all the teaching and extra-curricular activities, develop positive community relations, observe their mentor's lesson demonstrations, write lesson plans, teach EFL lessons, which are followed by teaching without supervision. Responsibility for mentoring rests with the more experienced classroom teacher during school practicum experiences. The Vietnamese mentor is expected to observe and give feedback on four to

six periods per preservice teacher, assist them in lesson preparation, and assess their teaching.

There are approximately 200 students in the fourth year, and 10-12 participating schools, with varying numbers of preservice teachers assigned to each school. This study focuses on preservice EFL teachers in Vietnam. Volunteer research participants are completing their final year including a six-week practicum at a secondary school. Participant selection was based on their availability, capacity and desire to commit their time to the research.

Methodology

Ninety-seven Vietnamese preservice teachers, completing a four-year undergraduate course, would finalise their education with a six-week field experience in upper secondary schools in Hanoi. An open-ended questionnaire was designed to gather data from these preservice EFL teachers at the beginning of their last field experience (i.e., practicum, professional experience). The ten open-ended questions (see appendix) aimed to investigate preservice EFL teachers' thoughts and expectations before entering their practicum, and as a means of understanding respondents' views about their teaching, expectations for teaching, and preparation for learning to teach EFL writing. These questions covered the following issues: perceptions and motivations for learning to teach EFL writing, expectations of their mentors and mentoring support for teaching EFL writing, and perceptions of potential difficulties related to learning about teaching EFL writing in their practicum.

The completed responses (93 female; 4 male) provided descriptors of the participants (preservice EFL teachers). Most of these mentees (67%) were 22 years of age, 16% were at the age of 21 and the rest were between 22 and 24 years of age. In the data analysis, themes and categories were coded for each of the questions, and descriptive statistics were used to quantify the data (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). This coding allowed for analysis of the data. For instance, words with similar meanings were grouped (e.g., talk, express, communicate became expression/communication; employment, work and job became job).

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are presented within the following sections on preservice EFL teachers': motivation for learning to teach writing and learning the English language; perceptions of their learning to teach writing before practicum; expectations of their ideal mentors and mentoring processes; needs and challenges in learning to teach writing; and preparation for EFL teaching.

Motivation for learning to teach writing and learning the English language

Table 1 summarises preservice EFL teachers' main reasons for learning to teach writing and teach English as a foreign language (Appendix 1). Most preservice EFL teachers stated at least one reason for their learning to teach writing. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents claimed their reasons for learning to teach EFL writing was that writing skill is "a means of expression and communication". Some of them further wrote that teaching writing helped their "students to improve their ability to use English". This finding has shown their view of writing as a means of expression and communication, which is also consistent with assumptions of writing instruction (Gordon, 1996; Wang & Odell, 2003). Twenty-two percent declared the reason for teaching writing was to help their students "think logically and critically" by organizing their ideas in English-thinking ways. Ten percent of these preservice EFL teachers thought that teaching writing was important because it involved supporting students to learn other skills.

Other reasons such as obtaining job prospects, compulsory requirement for the course, and English writing as a popular skill were listed by a small number of respondents (6%; Table 1). Interestingly, one preservice teacher said she wanted to learn how to teach writing in English because it was "difficult", implying she wanted a challenge in this area. Their reasons for teaching writing have shown their perception of the subject as they begin to see themselves as teachers for the first time. This could influence what and how they will develop their teaching practices. Their perceptions of the role of teaching writing ranged from traditional to more current assumptions of writing instruction.

A preservice EFL teacher's motivation for teaching English may influence how he or she learns to teach. Noticeably, about 34% claimed their "love of English" and

"interest" as a reason for teaching English (Table 1). Twenty-six percent were motivated by English as the growing international language while only 4% regarded understanding English culture as a motivation. Another 17% preservice EFL teachers wrote they wanted to teach English because it was easy for them to find a job as English is an "important and demanding language" in society. It seems intrinsic reasons outweighed extrinsic reasons in their responses, which is supported by other studies (e.g., Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998).

Table1: *Preservice EFL Teachers' Motivation for Learning to Teach EFL Writing*

Motivation for learning to teach EFL writing	%*	Motivation for teaching English	%*
Expression/communication	59	Interesting/enjoy	34
Critical thinking/logical	22	Popular/important	26
Studying/knowledge	10	Job	17
A supporting skill	10	No response	14
Productive/popular	6	Expression for communicating	10
Job	6	Understand English culture	4
Compulsory requirement	6	Have to do it/it is fate	4
It is difficult	1	Personal language development	4
No response	1	Globalization	1
		Vietnamese country goal	1

*Various preservice teachers recorded more than one response; hence the percentages indicated how many preservice teachers considered that item a reason.

Perceptions of their learning to teach writing before practicum

The preservice teachers were asked about factors that may produce "successful" feelings about their learning to teach EFL writing. These preservice teachers reported that students' progress in writing (35%), students' active engagement and interest in learning writing (27%), students' writing products (25%), and students' understanding (4%) would make them feel successful as teachers (Table 2). About 11% of the preservice EFL teachers claimed that positive mentors' comments about their teaching of writing would make them feel successful.

Table 2: *Preservice EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Factors Leading to their Successful and Unsuccessful Feelings of a Writing Lesson*

Factors leading to successful feelings	%*	Factors leading to unsuccessful feelings	%*
Student progress/ ability	35	Lack of quality/no progress/ can't express ideas/ don't understand	48
Student engagement/involvement/ motivation	27	Boredom/disruptive/not concentrating	32
Product	25	Teacher/mentor centred comments	10
Teacher/mentor centred comments	11	Inadequate teaching strategies	8
No response	6	No response	7
Understand the lesson	4	Students are afraid to learn	4

*Percentages indicated how many preservice teachers considered that item a reason.

Forty-eight percent of these preservice EFL teachers indicated that they would feel unsuccessful if their students did not show progress in their writing (Table 2). For example, various preservice teachers wrote that they would feel unsuccessful if their students "could not express their ideas" or they "did not understand the lesson" or "their writing was not good quality". In addition, these preservice EFL teachers reported that students' boredom and lack of concentration (32%), inadequate teaching strategies (8%), and students' fear of learning English writing (4%) would contribute to them feeling unsuccessful about teaching (Table 2). Ten percent of these preservice teachers mentioned their mentors' negative feedback would make them feel unsuccessful while 7% recorded no response. It seems that the level of student progress, the extent of student engagement in EFL writing lessons, and their mentors' comments may lead to feeling unsuccessful or successful about their teaching.

Expectations of their ideal mentors and mentoring processes

Many ideal mentor attributes were identified and grouped into several categories from the responses of the open-ended questionnaire. Not surprisingly, 54% of the preservice EFL teachers considered modeling of practice as an ideal mentor attribute (Table 3). Some of them further added that their mentor should "model effective teaching writing methodology", particularly as the mentor should have "a wide knowledge of writing

skills", "a good command of English", and significant "experience in teaching writing". This is also supported by other studies advocating that mentors need to model effective teaching practices (Hans & Vonk, 1995; Hudson, 2005; Roberts, 2000).

Thirty-five percent of respondents regarded the mentor's enthusiasm as another ideal quality with 34% indicating their ideal mentor should be "supportive, friendly, and helpful". Providing constructive feedback was further added as an ideal mentor quality by 22% of respondents (Table 3). Three of them believed that their mentor's feedback should be "constructively critical" in order to "improve their teaching practices". Indeed, the mentor's constructive feedback is an important factor in the mentoring process (Beattie, 2000; Hudson, 2005). About 15% of these preservice EFL teachers wrote that their ideal mentors needed experience in teaching writing and experiences in co-teaching, particularly in working with university students. When asked about the ideal mentor, three preservice EFL teachers said that they expected their mentors to be strict while 4% did not claim any attribute for their ideal mentor (Table 3). As these preservice teachers are also learning the English language, clarification of such outliers would be required. Modeling how to teach writing and learning how to be an effective teacher of English is what preservice EFL teachers expected most from their mentor.

Preservice EFL teachers were asked about their expectations of how mentors can support their process of learning to teach writing in English during their field experiences. About 48% of preservice EFL teachers believed their mentor's feedback would help them learn to teach writing in English. Three of them further added that they expected their mentors would "correct their teaching mistakes" and "give advice to improve their teaching practices". Only two respondents expected their mentors to provide feedback on their writing lesson plan. About 38% considered their mentors' modeling as a way to support their process of learning to teach writing. Other ways such as "giving helpful guidelines" and "sharing experiences" were equally mentioned by about 24% preservice EFL teachers. A small percentage of respondents (13%) claimed the mentor could support their learning-to-teach processes by providing them with materials and observing their lesson (Table 3).

Table 3: *Preservice EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Ideal Mentors and Mentoring*
Processes

Ideal mentor	%*	Mentoring processes	%*
Modelling practices	54	Mentor's feedback	48
Enthusiasm	35	Model practice	38
Supportive/friendly/ helpful	34	Giving helpful guidelines	24
Constructive feedback	22	Sharing experiences	24
Experience and experience sharing	15	Providing them with materials,	13
No response	4	Observing their lesson	13
Allows mentee to teach	3	No response	5
Be strict	3	Listening to them	1

* Percentages indicated how many preservice teachers considered that item a reason

Needs and challenges in learning to teach EFL writing

Table 4 highlights these preservice EFL teachers' needs for commencing a six-week practicum and the possible challenges they thought they would face during their practicum. When asked about their needs for learning to teach writing, 43% of these preservice EFL teachers could not identify their needs for their field experiences. About 22% claimed they wanted the school mentors to teach them how to teach writing. A very small number of respondents added that they needed to be provided with knowledge about different genres, writing materials, classroom management, and writing feedback and correction in their practicum. However, only 12% claimed they needed the school mentors to model their writing teaching (Table 4), yet 54% claimed this to be an ideal mentor attribute (Table 3).

The preservice teachers were asked about the difficulties they perceived for learning how to teach writing during their practicum. They listed a wide range of difficulties as shown in the Table 4. Expectedly, 41% of these preservice EFL teachers indicated they lacked confidence and knowledge for teaching writing at secondary schools, which affirms their newness to the learning process. About 22% of respondents thought they would have difficulties in learning to teach writing due to the mixed-ability levels of students and boring writing topics at secondary schools (Table 4). Differences in writing styles were listed as one of the challenges by 13% of respondents.

Table 4: *Preservice Teachers' Needs and Challenges for Learning to Teach EFL Writing*

Needs for six-week practicum	%*	Difficulties for learning how to teach EFL writing	%*
No response	43	Not understand/lack of knowledge/confidence	41
Teaching writing	22	Students' level and writing topics	22
Share with teachers/mentor help/model	12	Difference between English and Vietnamese style	13
Preparation	8	Making it meaningful	13
Range of writing skills (grammar)	6	Lack of practice	9
Student engagement	4	No response	7
Psychology/classroom management	2	Theory/practice connection	6
Materials	2	Lack of materials/ being up-to-date	5
Correcting mistakes	1	Feedback	4
Story telling	1	Unable to express English	2
Real life experiences	1	Time	2

*Percentages indicated how many preservice teachers considered that item a reason.

Only 2% believed they would not have enough opportunities or time to practice the teaching of writing. One stated that writing was "not a targeted skill at secondary schools", which is due to the grammar-oriented English education at secondary schools in Vietnam. Thirteen percent indicated they would have difficulty in making the EFL writing lesson "interesting and meaningful". One preservice teacher believed EFL writing was "a difficult skill for secondary students" and writing lessons seemed "very boring" to them. Most of these difficulties fell into either one of the three major problems identified by Wang and Odell (2002). These can intrigue teacher educators in the process of improving the quality of preservice teacher education.

Preparation for teaching

These preservice teachers' (*n*=97) commented on how they could best prepare themselves for learning to teach EFL writing and what they had done so far to prepare themselves for teaching EFL writing. Thirty-four percent indicated they could try to practice writing in order to improve their writing skills (Table 5). One stated that "a good teacher of writing should be a good writer", which she claims motivates her to study writing at university. A quarter of the respondents claimed that they read books and study writing materials in

order to prepare for teaching with a similar number believed that their preparation could be enhanced by learning to teach writing from their mentors. Only 13% preservice EFL teachers indicated they could study teaching theory and approaches to writing instructions and 10% claimed that they could best prepare for their learning to teach writing by teaching it. Writing teaching practice and exploring the current situation of teaching writing at their school contexts were mentioned by preservice EFL teachers. A low 4% thought that investigating their students' ability levels and characteristics at the secondary school could prepare them to teach writing (Table 5). In general, preservice EFL teachers wrote they should improve their writing skills themselves in order to be effective teachers.

When asked to record what they have done to prepare themselves for their writing teaching, 38% claimed they studied different writing teaching techniques for improving their writing skills. Twenty-five percent indicated they practiced their writing skills frequently. About 23% believed they had collected and studied writing materials, and 18% prepared lesson plans for teaching writing. Only 12% of preservice EFL teachers wrote that they practiced the teaching of EFL writing. Interestingly, 19% of these preservice EFL teachers claimed they did nothing to prepare for their teaching of writing.

Table 5: *Preservice EFL Teachers' Preparation*

How could you best prepare yourself for learning how to teach writing in English?	%*	What have you done so far to prepare yourself for teaching writing in English?	%*
Knowledge/personal practice	34	Study different writing	
Learn from teachers/mentors	24	techniques/knowledge	38
Read books/get materials	24	Practice writing skills	25
Practice expression/explanation	18	Read/collect writing materials (e.g.,	
Study theory/approaches	13	other's lesson plans/Internet)	23
By teaching it/teaching methodology	10	No response	19
No response	9	Prepare lesson plan	18
Prepare lessons	8	Practice teaching writing	12
Observation	6	Critical analysis of writing by friends	11
Vocabulary	5	Join an English Club	1
Level of students/characteristics of students	4		

*Percentages indicated how many preservice teachers considered that item a reason.

This may be due to English language proficiency, not knowing how to prepare or apathy. Preservice EFL teachers' preparation for learning to teach writing varied considerably, which included practicing writing skills, teaching writing in schools, and preparing teaching resources.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined preservice EFL teachers' attitudes, needs, and experiences about learning to teach writing in English before their practicum. The data suggested that preservice EFL teachers are motivated to learn to teach English as it is enjoyable, popular around the world, a supportive skill for employment, and a means for critical thinking, expression and communication. These preservice teachers also claimed that they would feel successful or unsuccessful in their teaching practices according to the level of student progress, student engagement in writing activities, and writing products. Employing effective teaching strategies and the mentor's comments may also have an impact on a preservice teacher's development.

Several factors such as students' writing progress, students' motivation to learn writing, students' writing products, and their mentors' comments were mainly considered to lead to successful or unsuccessful feelings for their development as EFL teachers. Although the study does not show the common consensus on ideal mentor qualities, it seems that their perceptions about ideal mentor roles do not conflict with other studies related to effective mentoring (Hudson, 2005). Not only do preservice EFL teachers require mentors to model effective teaching practices and share their teaching experiences, they also need their mentors to be enthusiastic, supportive, and constructive in their feedback. These findings can assist teacher educators and school mentors for providing feedback on preservice teachers' writing lessons, particularly as mentors' comments can motivate preservice EFL teachers learning to teach writing. This also emphasizes the need for educating mentors on effective mentoring skills, such as constructive and motivating feedback. Generally, these preservice teachers desired to be taught how to teach EFL writing with knowledge of different genres, classroom management techniques, and providing feedback to their students. A better theoretical framework needs to be developed based on preservice EFL teachers' needs, as well as school and classroom

context variables that influence learning to teach writing in English before their practicum.

These preservice EFL teachers may have underestimated the practicum challenges. Teaching materials and classroom issues related to teaching writing such as writing genres, writing topics, how to motivate students to learn writing, and how to deal with mixed-level of students at secondary schools need to be incorporated in preservice teacher coursework. Moreover, they need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to adapt to new teaching contexts with teacher educators creating opportunities for developing such practices before entering field experiences. A needs analysis conducted well before practicum may aid in addressing issues raised by preservice EFL teachers. Reform in preservice EFL teacher education must also focus on facilitating practical university coursework and providing mentoring experiences that enhance the developmental processes on learning to teach English as a foreign language.

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Appendix
Questionnaire for Preservice Teachers
Learning to Teach Writing in English

This questionnaire relates to your next practicum, which includes learning how to teach writing in English.

Your age: _____   Male/Female: _____

1. Why do you think teaching writing in English is important?

_____

_____

2. What would be your ideal mentor (supervising classroom teacher) for developing your teaching of writing in English?

_____

_____

3. List ways your mentor could support you for learning how to teach writing in English.

_____

_____

_____

4. What involvement in learning how to teach writing would you like to have during your six-week practicum?

_____

_____

_____

5. What do you think may be difficulties for your learning on how to teach writing in English?

_____

_____

_____

6. How could you best prepare yourself for learning how to teach writing in English?

_____

_____

7. What would make you feel *successful* in teaching writing in English?

_____

8. What would make you feel *unsuccessful* in teaching writing in English?

_____

9. What have you done so far to prepare yourself for teaching writing in English?

_____

_____

10. Why did you decide to teach English as a language?

_____

_____

_____

Vocational College Students' Perceptions on Standardized English Proficiency Tests

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Abstract
This study investigated vocational college students' perspectives on the effectiveness of university measures designed to enhance performance on English proficiency tests—including a minimum proficiency in English to graduate and how English tests influenced student learning. A survey and semi-structured interviews were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The study revealed that the participants were about equally divided on their opinion regarding the effectiveness of an English graduation requirement. Those in favor of the requirement thought the policy enhanced their English proficiency and increased competitiveness in future career and advanced studies. However, it provided little or no motivation for the participants to prepare for the tests. They were more motivated by scholarships and waving freshmen English.

Introduction

Today, English is the most global language (Crystal, 1997). It is the language of choice with which one communicates to all areas of the global community–economy, politics, technology, business and academia. With Taiwan's entry into the Word Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002, globalization is making its impact. English is vital to Taiwan's international competitiveness, and its teaching has changed with this growing importance. Thus, English has been taught as a compulsory subject from the third grade since 2005 (Taiwanese Ministry of Education, 2005b).

There is, however, reason for concern regarding the current English proficiency of the people of Taiwan. According to the statistics reported by Educational Testing Service (2007), Taiwan's average TOEIC score of 529 in 2005-2006 ranked seventh among 10 Asian countries. In 2002, the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) administered the elementary level of General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) to 9,527 students at 86 colleges and universities of technology. The result revealed that only 1,416 vocational college students (14.9%) passed the elementary level of GEPT, which is roughly equivalent to the English ability of a junior high school graduate in Taiwan (LTTC, 2002). Most academic university students also have problems passing the intermediate level of GEPT, and the percentage of university graduates per capita in Taiwan is large (60.3%; Department of Manpower Planning Council for Economic Planning and Development, 2007). Thus, there is a need for university students' English proficiency to improve. Because of this need, 36 colleges and universities determined that, as of 2002, English proficiency would become a requirement for graduation (Mingsheng Daily Newspaper, 2005, February 18). In the governmental four-year plan for 2005—2008, the Ministry of Education is attempting to reach a two-tiered pass-rate goal on the GEPT—50% of academic students passing at the intermediate level and 50% of the vocational students passing at the elementary level. Motivation for reaching these goals is coming from university evaluations tied to monetary rewards (Taiwanese Ministry of Education, 2005a).

Since the first GEPT was available in 2000, to date over 2,000,000 people have registered for different levels of GEPT. In 2005, approximately 90,000 people registered for TOEIC (Educational Testing Service, 2005). Increasingly, more universities have

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decided that students must pass at a specific level on the English proficiency tests to graduate.

Many empirical studies examining different tests have been conducted internationally (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Cheng, 1997, 1999, 2004; Wall & Alderson, 1993; Watanabe, 1996). Findings from these studies are mostly related to the teacher and how the use of these tests influence curriculum, instruction, and learning. This phenomenon is known as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Su (2005) investigated college students' attitudes toward graduation threshold of English competency requirements in Taiwan. The findings indicated that a majority of the students tended to favor the implementation of a graduation threshold, but there existed no significant differences between their attitudes toward this graduation requirement and demographic variables. However, vocational students' perspectives on English proficiency tests and how washback operates for them were not investigated in this study.

According to LTTC (December, 2002), vocational students' general English proficiency tended to be lower than that of academic students and even senior high school students. This is because most students who attend vocational universities mainly come from vocational high schools, and English education in the vocational system is not emphasized (Lin, 1995). Vocational senior high school students receive only two periods of English instruction per week, three hours less than their academic counterparts. Specialized subjects are emphasized more than academic subjects, such as English and math. This results in low English proficiency of vocational high school students.

This study investigated vocational students' experiences in taking standardized English proficiency tests and perceptions of the effectiveness of university measures (e.g., policies, requirements, and programs) designed to help students prepare for these tests. Towards this end, three research questions were posed:

1. How do students perceive standardized English proficiency tests and their own test preparation?
2. What are students' opinions about the effectiveness of university measures designed to promote English proficiency?
3. To what extent do the demographic variables of gender, major field of study, test-taking experience, interests in English, and English ability influence

students' perspectives on English proficiency graduation requirements?

Literature Review

Washback Effect

In general, washback is defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Alderson and Wall's Washback Hypotheses posits that important tests may influence qualities of curriculum, teaching, learning, as well as the attitudes of both teachers and students. Tests can be powerful determiners, both positively and negatively, of what happens in classrooms. Bailey (1996) suggested that beneficial washback is more likely to occur when the test is aligned with curriculum objectives; and the tasks are clearly related to real-world language tasks. It also occurs when test takers, teachers, and administrators understand the purpose of the test and find the results valid and informative.

Alderson & Wall (1993) also indicated that tests may have a restraining or distorting influence on the curriculum. Teachers tend to ignore fundamental subjects and activities, which do not contribute directly to passing exams. Sadker & Zittleman (2004) said that teachers may emphasize content that is tested and de-emphasize content that is not tested. Moreover, tests may lower students' intrinsic motivation, hamper their confidence and increase their dropout rate (Nathan, 2002; Rapp, 2002). Many students undergo serious stress when they were asked to take part in high-stakes tests (Jones et al, 1999). Tests may force students to leave school after they have failing performances.

Standardized English Proficiency Tests in Taiwan

Many standardized English proficiency tests are administered in Taiwan. Some of the major tests include the locally developed criterion-referenced English proficiency test GEPT, which was developed by the LTTC, the TOEIC and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS), and International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The GEPT is a nation-wide standardized test for all English learners at all levels of proficiency in Taiwan. It is currently administered at four levels—elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced. Each level contains sections that measure listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Each level is

administered in two stages. Examinees must pass the first stage of listening and reading comprehension before they are eligible to proceed to the second stage of speaking and writing.

The listening comprehension section consists of three different types of multiple-choice questions, (a) picture description, (b) question and response, and (c) short conversation. The reading test also includes three different types of multiple-choice questions, (a) vocabulary and structure, (b) cloze, and (c) reading comprehension. Examinees are asked to select the correct answers to fill in the blank in the passage and answer questions based on a short passage. In the writing section, examinees are asked to compose a sentence or translate a passage from Chinese into English. They also write a short paragraph according to picture prompts. In the speaking test, examinees are required to read aloud a sentence or a passage, answer pre-recorded oral questions, and describe a given picture when prompted by questions (LTTC, 2007).

The Intermediate level of the GEPT was launched in 2000. After that, the LTTC phased in the elementary, high-intermediate, advanced, and superior levels in 2001, 2002, and 2004 respectively. Scores from the GEPT are used by hundreds of public and private schools as matriculation, placement, and graduation criteria. The GEPT is also used as criteria for the promotion of civil servants (LTTC, 2007).

English Education at the Tertiary Level in Taiwan

Because of respect for academic freedom, there are no unified English curriculum guidelines at the tertiary level in Taiwan. English teachers have the freedom to choose their own instructional materials, develop their own course syllabi, and set the standards for evaluating student achievement. According to the Ministry of Education's report (Cheung, 2004), 71% of the vocational universities and 85% of the academic universities require four-to-six credit-hours of English language for non-English undergraduates. University freshmen are required to take Freshman English, focusing on reading and writing, as well as English Listening and Speaking Practice, focusing on listening and speaking (Lin, 2005).

Affect of Testing on Teaching and Learning

Findings vary on how teachers and students respond to changes in English testing. Testing traditionally has been used to make decisions about the future of individuals and to improve curriculum and instruction (Shohamy, 1992). However, after examining the effect of a new English speaking test battery in Israel, Shohamy (1989, as cited in Shohamy, 1992) concluded that teachers were merely striving to improve test results. This had the affect of narrowing the scope of the curriculum. Furthermore, Caine (2006) found that tests influenced some curriculum, but not the instructional approaches at a senior high school in Southern Japan.

Student attitudes and responses to tests were also mixed. Watanabe (2001) found student attitudes about test preparation on university entrance examinations varied due to their perceptions of test difficulty, while Cheng (1998) found no change in student motivation or preparation strategies during the first two years following a change in one of Hong Kong's public examinations.

A possible solution to these ambivalent responses is to align course and test objectives (Bailey, 1996; Gates, 1995). Communicative objectives are compatible with most students' reasons for learning languages. If teachers choose course and test objectives because they share the same orientation, there should be no tension between exam work and learning needs. When students realize that class work gives both effective preparation for the test and practice for using English in real life situations, both their attitude and motivation will improve.

Method

Participants

The principle researcher invited all freshmen enrolled in a freshman English course from one vocational university in Central Taiwan to participate in the study. The questionnaires with an accompany cover letter were delivered in person to the English as Foreign Language (EFL) teacher of each class. There was a return rate of 81%, with 870 students returning their questionnaires. Of these, 857 questionnaires were valid and used in the final analysis. The majority of participants (68%) were female.

High proficiency English learners in this study are those who ranked in the top 30%

on the English placement test administered by the university at the beginning of 2006 fall semester. Low proficiency English learners are those who ranked in the bottom 30% on the placement test. All of the participants were students in the following undergraduate programs: Medicine and Nursing, Management, Engineering, Human Ecology, and Social Sciences. See Table 1 for the participants' demographic information.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Information

Category	Variable	n	Percentage
Program	Medicine & Nursing	121	14.1
	Human Ecology	195	22.8
	Management	169	19.7
	Engineering	175	20.4
	Hunmanities & Social Sciences	197	23.0
Gender	Male	275	32.1
	Female	582	67.9
Age	19—20	423	49.3
	21—22	338	39.4
	23	96	11.3
English	High	134	15.6
Proficiency Level	Intermediate	469	54.7
	Low	254	29.6

Research Design

This study investigated vocational students' perceptions of both taking standardized English proficiency tests and the effectiveness of university measures (e.g., policies, requirements, and programs) designed to support and motivate student test preparation and performance. A survey was used to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews were used to gather qualitative data to help explain the quantitative data.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 12.0 for Windows was utilized for data analysis. Descriptive statistics for frequencies of student perceptions of university measures were summarized. Chi-square tests were conducted to investigate the relationships between the students' perspectives on the English graduation requirement and the demographic variables of gender, undergraduate majors, English ability, test-taking experience, and interests in English. An alpha level of .05 was used for all tests of statistical significance.

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of 28 items, some of which were adapted from an established questionnaire (Su, 2005), and some were developed by the researcher based on the review of literature on English proficiency tests in foreign and second language education (Brown, 2005; Gates, 1995).

The questionnaire developed by Su (2005) consisted of 28 items in three categories: (a) students' background information, (b) students' English proficiency test taking experiences, and (c) students' opinions regarding English graduation requirements. Like the Su instrument, the questionnaire, used in this study, included student background information, but varied in two other ways. It included sections on students' perceptions of standardized English proficiency tests, and students' opinions regarding the effectiveness of university measures for enhancing English proficiency (See Appendix).

In order to establish content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) professors. A pilot test was administered to 50 students at a university of technology for ensuring the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Over all, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) in the pilot study was .78. The researcher then clarified the wording and grammar.

Following the collection of the survey data, the principle researcher conducted the interviews. Ten participants from the Medicine and Nursing, Management, Engineering, Human Ecology, and Social Sciences undergraduate programs were interviewed to further understand their perspectives on the English graduation requirement and on English proficiency tests. The interview was conducted in Chinese, audio taped, and transcribed for further analysis. See Table 2 for the interviewees' demographic

information.

The interview posed 3 questions:

1. Have you ever taken any English proficiency tests before? If yes, please describe your experience of, and preparation for, taking English proficiency tests.

2. Do you agree with the English graduation requirement? Please explain the reasons that support your opinions.

3. Do you think that English proficiency tests have influence on your English learning? Please explain the reasons that support your opinions.

Table 2

Interviewees' Background Information

No.	Gender	Major	English ability
1	F	Humanities & Social Sciences	High
2	F	Management	Intermediate
3	M	Engineering	Intermediate
4	M	Engineering	Low
5	M	Human Ecology	Intermediate
6	F	Medicine & Nursing	Intermediate
7	F	Medicine & Nursing	Intermediate
8	F	Humanities & Social Sciences	High
9	F	Management	Intermediate
10	M	Human Ecology	Low

Results

Vocational College Students' Perceptions of Standardized English Proficiency Tests

When asked about their English proficiency test taking experiences, approximately half (47%) of the participants reported that they had experienced this type of test, and half (53%) reported that they had not. Approximately half (53%) of those not experiencing English proficiency testing planned to test in the future. Most of the participants (85%) who reported taking an English proficiency test had taken the elementary level of the

GEPT, less (26%) had taken the intermediate level of the GEPT, and few (18%) had taken the TOEIC, and only a very few (6%) had taken the TOEFL and the IELTS. However, less than half (31%) of the participants passed the elementary GEPT and very few (4%) passed the intermediate GEPT. Moreover, most of the participants (79%) took standardized English proficiency tests during senior or vocational high school.

In preparing for standardized English proficiency tests, 63% of the participants read books or listened to radio programs, 38% took courses at school, and 19% went to a language school. Only 12 % of the participants used the resources at the university-provided self-access language-learning center to prepare for standardized English proficiency tests.

Vocational Students' Opinions regarding the Effectiveness of University Measures for Enhancing English Proficiency

When asked about their opinions regarding the effectiveness of university measures consisting of requirements, policies, and resources designed to increase student English proficiency, participants rated the measures on a 5-point Likert Scale—(1) very ineffective, (2) ineffective, (3) no opinion, (4) effective, or (5) very effective. Table 3 shows the percentage of the participants' opinions toward the effectiveness of the English enhancing measures. Among 15 measures, the two items thought effective by the largest number of participants were providing scholarships (75% effective or very effective) and waving the freshmen English course (72% effective or very effective). On the other hand, the two items thought effective by the smallest number of participants were increasing the required credit hours of English coursework (21% effective or very effective) and delivering content-area course lectures in English (34% effective or very effective). Participants were evenly divided in their opinion regarding the English graduation requirement. Four hundred and eleven participants (43%) perceived that the English graduation requirement was effective or very effective, while 312 participants (41%) perceived that it was ineffective or very ineffective. Few participants (16%) had no opinion (see Table 3).

Table 3

Percentage of Participants' Opinions Toward the Effectiveness of English Enhancing Measures

Measure	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	No Opinion	Effective	Very Effective
English graduation requirement	11.1	29.8	16.1	38.2	4.3
Preparation courses for English proficiency tests	2.1	5.6	33.7	43.3	15.3
Scholarships for those who pass English proficiency tests	1.1	1.5	22.2	42.1	33.0
Waiving the freshmen's English course by passing the standardized English proficiency Tests	2.0	4.9	20.8	41.4	30.9
Remedial English courses for low achievers	1.5	4.9	37.9	38.7	16.9
Access to language resources	1.4	1.8	41.5	41.9	13.4
English learning counseling	1.2	2.8	45.9	39.9	10.3
English extracurricular activities	1.4	4.6	46.4	36.1	11.4
Ability grouping by English proficiency	4.0	8.3	38.7	36.6	12.4
Unified instructional materials with online self-learning system	2.1	3.7	37.8	43.9	12.4
Mock English proficiency tests	2.7	7.5	41.4	35.1	13.3
All-English summer camps	2.1	4.6	49.4	30.2	13.8
Overseas English learning tour	1.8	2.1	37.7	36.2	22.3
English lectures in content-area courses	10.5	18.8	36.6	24.2	9.9
Increase in English course requirements	12.7	22.3	44.1	14.7	6.2

Correlations Between Participants' Perspectives on the Graduation Requirement in English and Demographic Variables

Tables 4 and 5 provide an explanation for the participants' opinions. The two most frequent reasons given for its effectiveness is that it can enhance English proficiency (92%) and increase competitiveness in the graduates' careers and in advanced studies (89%). The least frequent reason given for an English graduation requirement is that other colleges have the same requirement (22%).

Table 4
Explanation of Positive Opinions

Explanation	n	Percentage	Rank
Can enhance English proficiency	381	92.0	1
Can increase competitiveness in career and advanced studies	366	88.4	2
Can increase the opportunity to study abroad	198	47.8	3
Can enhance motivation to learn English	242	58.5	4
Can enhance the country's competitiveness	179	43.2	5
Other schools also set the same policy	89	21.5	6

The two most frequent reasons given for the ineffectiveness of the English graduation requirement were the high examination fee (92%) and the participants' lack of confidence that they would be able to pass the English proficiency tests. Only 22% of the participants thought the requirement was ineffective because learning English will not be helpful to their career or in advanced studies (see Table 5).

Table 5

Explanation of Negative Opinions

Explanation	n	Percentage	Rank
High examination fee	381	92.0	1
Not confident enough to pass the exam	366	88.4	2
Decrease study time on content knowledge	198	47.8	3
Not interested in learning English	242	58.5	4
English learning will become test-oriented	179	43.2	5
Learning English is not helpful for career and advanced studies	89	21.5	6

A chi-square test indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between the participants' perspectives on the English graduation requirement and variables of gender, majors, English ability, test-taking experience, and interests in English. Of the participants who believed the English graduation requirement was effective, 72% were female and 28% were male. Of those who believed that the English graduation requirement was ineffective, 64% were female and 36% were male. Table 5 shows that about half of the females believed the requirement was effective, while less than half of the males believed it was effective.

Table 5 also shows that of all the participants who believe the English graduation requirement is effective the greatest number came from the programs of Management (25%) and Humanities and Social Sciences (30%). Most of the participants who thought the requirement was ineffective came from the programs of Human Ecology (27%) and Engineering (26%). Of the participants in the programs of Humanities and Social Sciences and Management, 62% thought the requirement was effective compared to 36% of participants in the programs of Human Ecology and Engineering. The program of Medicine and Nursing were closely divided on their opinions.

Further, more participants with highly proficient English (25%) and high interests (73%) thought the requirement was effective than those who thought it was ineffective

(7% and 29%). Conversely, more participants with intermediate and low proficiency and interest in English thought the requirement was ineffective than those who thought it was effective (see Table 6).

Table 6

Comparison of Demographic Variables with Opinions on English Graduation

Requirement (N = 857)

Variable	Effective		Ineffective	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
Total	312	43.2	411	56.8
Gender	χ^2 (df = 1) = 7.077 p-value = 0.008			
Male	115	27.7	160	36.2
Female	300	72.3	282	63.8
Majors	χ^2 (df = 4) + 48.9 p-value = 0.0001			
Medicine and Nursing	54	13.0	67	15.2
Human Ecology	76	18.3	119	26.9
Management	103	24.8	66	14.9
Engineering	59	14.2	116	26.2
Humanities and Social Sciences	123	29.6	74	16.7
English ability	χ^2 (df = 2) + 55.31 p-value = 0.0001			
High proficiency	103	24.8	31	7.0
Intermediate proficiency	215	51.8	354	57.5
Low proficiency	97	23.4	157	35.5

Table 6 (Continued)

Variable	Effective		Ineffective	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
Test-taking experience	χ^2 (df = 1) = 40.272 P-value = 0.0001			
Yes	241	58.1	161	36.4
No	174	41.9	281	63.6
Interest in English	χ^2 (df = 2) = 164.34 p-value = 0.0001			
Low	10	2.4	45	10.2
Intermediate	104	25.1	269	60.9
High	301	72.5	128	29.0

Interview Results

Ten students, two from each of the five colleges, were interviewed to complement the findings from the quantitative data. Eight participants thought the English graduation requirement was effective in promoting English proficiency and increasing their competitiveness in career and advanced studies. Two participants with low English proficiency did not agree with the English graduation requirement:

> "I agreed with the graduation requirement in English. I know English is very important, but sometimes I'm just too busy or lazy to study. The policy can push me to study English and thus increase my competitiveness in my future career" (Interviewee 6).

> "I agreed with the English graduation requirement. I'm very interested in English and I plan to study abroad. I think it's important to enhance my English ability during 4 years in university" (Interviewee 1).

I didn't agree with the English graduation requirement. I major in cosmetology and I don't think English proficiency tests will be helpful for my future career. Instead of spending a lot of time and money on preparing for English proficiency tests, I'd rather spend my time and energy on improving skills on makeup and hair styling. (Interview 10)

"I didn't agree with the English graduation requirement. My English is poor and I don't think I can pass English proficiency tests" (Interviewee 4).

When asked about their experience of and preparation for taking English proficiency tests, two interviewees reported that they had taken the elementary GEPT during high school and one reported taking the intermediate GEPT during her college sophomore year. Furthermore, six interviewees indicated that they had not prepared for the tests.

"The class mentor and departmental administrators often called the students' attention to the English proficiency tests in the meetings. I know English proficiency tests are very important to my future career and what I was doing was not enough. But I'm not interested in English at all and my English was poor. I didn't spend time on the test preparation and practice. And I don't want to waste money on the high exam registration fee." (Interviewee 4)

"I took the elementary GEPT during high school and took the intermediate GEPT this year. The first time my parents asked me to take it. And the second time I wanted to assess my English proficiency. I had no specific preparation for the test, but I listened to the English programs on the radio every day." (Interviewee 8)

Seven interviewees reported that English proficiency tests had no influence on their total time spent on English study. Nor was their total time on English study affected by the school policy. Three interviewees reported that they spent more time on English study

or used online resources at self-access learning center in order to pass English proficiency tests.

"I'm interested in English. I usually spent three to four hours on English study every day. Even though the school had no policy to ask students to pass English proficiency tests, I would spend more time on English study. After all, English is very important for my employment competitiveness and future study." (Interviewee 1)

"I know English proficiency is important for my future career. But I don't think I spend more time on English study after class in order to pass English proficiency tests" (Interviewee 7).

"I'm not interested in English. Even though the school asked us to pass English proficiency tests, I don't think I will spend more time preparing for that" (Interviewee 3).

"I'm worried that I can't pass English tests before graduation, so I went to language school to take preparation classes for GEPT" (Interviewee 6).

"In order to pass English proficiency tests, I went to self-access learning center to practice on-line mock tests" (Interviewee 3).

The interviewees appeared to view graduation requirements and proficiency tests as less effective for motivating English language learning, than did the larger survey sample. Those students who did not perceive the importance of English language proficiency found the English language requirements and the proficiency tests a source of irritation. However, Interviewees 1 and 6 expressed alternative opinions. Interviewee 1 prepared for the English proficiency tests in the absence of any school English proficiency requirements, and Interviewee 6 was not proficient English, but took a proactive stance (attended language school), because of English proficiency requirements.

Conclusion and Implications

This study investigated vocational students' perspectives on the effectiveness of university measures designed to enhance performance on English proficiency tests—including perceptions on the effectiveness of requiring a minimum proficiency in English to graduate. The study also explored how English proficiency tests influenced their learning.

The study revealed that more participants (42.5%) thought the English graduation requirement was effective than those who thought it was ineffective (30.9%). Most of the participants agreed that the policy can enhance their English proficiency and increase competitiveness in future career and advanced studies. However, the English graduation requirement provided little or no motivation for the participants to prepare for the tests. This might be due to the participants' low interest (reported by 59% of the participants) and low proficiency in English (88% not confident they could pass a test) and the high exam registration fee (reported by 92% of the participants). Ninety-two percent of the participants reported that the high exam registration fees were obstacles for them. This is consistent with Brown's (2005) assumptions that economical constraints on language testing, including institutional testing costs, costs passed on to students and parents and hidden test preparation costs all constrain student testing. It is suggested that universities can use classroom-based assessments such as performance assessment and portfolio assessment instead of public standardized English tests to force students to enhance their English proficiency. Eighty-eight percent of the participants did not feel confident to pass the English proficiency tests. Therefore, it is essential for the school and English teachers to work together to offer students more help with general test preparation strategies and technologies to enhance their confidence in passing the English proficiency tests.

Standardized English proficiency tests had little influence on English study strategies or on the amount of time studying. If the university policy makers required students to pass a specific level in standardized English proficiency tests before graduation, and they did not, there would be an extra course for students to take. According to a pertinent law of the Ministry of Education (MOE), a university should not adopt any test beyond the curriculum that would interfere with students' graduation. Degrees should be conferred upon all students who complete their required content area

coursework (Taiwanese Ministry of Education, 2004).

Two measures perceived to be effective by the most participants were scholarships and waving the freshmen's English course. These measures motivated students to prepare for the tests. Only one third of the participants thought that increasing the number of English courses and credits, along with conducting content-area classes in English were effective. That is, more participants thought the encouraging measures were more effective than were the punitive measures. This suggests that it would be effective for colleges to adopt the encouraging measures as extrinsic motivation to pass English proficiency tests. In addition, the university might provide preparation and remedial courses, a variety of English contests and extracurricular activities, and self-access English learning materials to re-enforce students' intrinsic motivation towards learning English.

More participants in the colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences (30%) and Management (25%) thought that the English graduation requirement was effective than did participants in the programs of Engineering (14%) and Medicine and Nursing (13%). The reason for this might be that English is less important when earning certificates in Engineering, Medicine and Nursing. It is, therefore, important to understand that one policy is not effective for all students. This point is also supported by the interview data. Students whose career and future academic study depend on English language proficiency seem to hold more favorable views toward English graduation requirements and English proficiency tests than students who are not impacted by English proficiency.

Shohamy (1992) posits that external tests are currently used to force students to study and teachers to teach. However, standardized English proficiency tests are not a silver bullet for encouraging students to study English. They are just one of many factors that have an impact on students' learning. English graduation requirement seems to have an overemphasis on proficiency, while paying less attention to the means by which the students achieve it, such as the instructional activities, teaching methods, curricula, and textbooks, which are all part of learning context.

English graduation requirement in Taiwan asks the students to pass standardized English proficiency tests to prove their English proficiency. However, in most of English classes at tertiary level in Taiwan, teachers don't teach the content tested in these

standardized English proficiency tests. To promote a positive washback from standardized English proficiency tests, as Bailey (1996) and Gates (1995) suggested, teachers need to align what they teach to what is being tested.

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Appendix
Questionnaire

Direction: Please check and respond to the following questions. All information will be used for the research and will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel comfortable to provide your opinions. Thanks for your cooperation.

1. College: □ Medicine & Nursing □ Human Ecology □ Management □Engineering
    □ Humanities & Social Sciences

2. Age: _____

3. Gender: □ male □ female

4. Have you taken standardized English proficiency tests before?
   □ Yes □ No   (If you answer yes, continue the questions 5-7)

5. What kind of standardized English proficiency tests did you take?
   □ elementary level of GEPT □ intermediate level of GEPT □ high-intermediate
   level of GEPT □ TOEIC □ TOEFL □IELTS □ Cambridge Main Suite
   □ others_____

6. When did you take standardized English proficiency tests?
   □ elementary school □ junior high school □ senior high school □ junior college
   □ university

7. What kind of standardized English proficiency tests did you pass?
   □ elementary level of GEPT   □ intermediate level of GEPT □ high-intermediate
   level of GEPT □ TOEIC _Score: _____ □ TOEFL Score: __ □ IELTS Band: __
   □ Cambridge Main Suite _____ □ others _____

8. The ways you prepared for standardized English proficiency tests are: (multiple choice)
   □ read books or listen to radio programs □ go to language school □ take courses at school
   □ use the resources at self-access language learning center □ others _____

9. Do you agree with the graduation requirement in English?
   □ Yes   □ No
   (If you answer yes, continue the question 10; If you answer no, continue the question11)

10. What are the explanations of your agree with the graduation requirement in English? (multiple choice)
   □ Can enhance English proficiency
   □ Can increase competitiveness in career and advanced studies
   □ Can increase the opportunity to study abroad
   □ Can enhance motivation to learn English

□ Can enhance the country's competitiveness
□ Other schools also set the same policy

11. What are the explanations of your against the graduation requirement in English? (multiple choice)

□ High examination fee

□ Not confident enough to pass the exam

□ Decrease study time on content knowledge

□ Not interested in learning English

□ English learning will become test-oriented

□ Learning English is not helpful for career and advanced studies

12. Are you confident to pass standardized English proficiency tests?
□ Yes, I can pass   □ I'm not sure   □ No, I can't pass

13. Are you interested in learning English?
□ very □ sort of □ not very □ not at all

14. What are your opinions regarding the effectiveness of university measures for enhancing English proficiency?

	Very ineffective	Ineffective	No opinion	Effective	Very effective
A. English graduation requirement	□	□	□	□	□
B. Preparation courses for English proficiency tests	□	□	□	□	□
C. Scholarships for those who pass English proficiency tests	□	□	□	□	□
D. Waiving the freshmen's English course by passing the standardized English proficiency tests	□	□	□	□	□
E. Remedial English courses for low achievers	□	□	□	□	□
F. Access to language resources	□	□	□	□	□
G. English learning counseling	□	□	□	□	□
H. English extracurricular activities	□	□	□	□	□
I. Ability grouping by English proficiency	□	□	□	□	□
J. Unified instructional materials with online self-learning system	□	□	□	□	□
K. Mock English proficiency tests	□	□	□	□	□
L. All English summer camps	□	□	□	□	□
M. Overseas English learning tour	□	□	□	□	□
N. English lectures in content-area courses	□	□	□	□	□
O. Increase in English course requirements	□	□	□	□	□

Washback Effects of a High-Stakes University Entrance Exam: Effects of the English Section of the University Entrance Exam on Future English Language Teachers in Turkey

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Abstract

English Component of the Foreign Language University Entrance Exam (ECFLUEE) is taken by tens of thousands of high school seniors each year in Turkey. It is a very high-stakes exam as it determines the future of most of its takers. This is the only English exam used for student admissions to EFL teacher training programs in Turkish universities. The purpose of the study reported in this paper was to investigate the effects of the exam on Turkey's future EFL teachers' language proficiencies, and on their performances in their first year classes at university. Participants of the study were seventy pre-service English teachers and six instructors in the EFL teacher education department of a public university in Turkey. Results indicated that the exam has some negative effects on students' language proficiency and on their performance in their first year classes at university. Some changes to the exam that might be useful are discussed in the last section of the paper.

Keywords: washback effect, university entrance exam, high-stakes language tests, EFL teacher training

1. Introduction

Testing has always been a crucial aspect of language education. Shohamy (2001) approaches the concept of testing from two perspectives: traditional testing and use-oriented testing. In traditional testing, the main focus is on designing quality tests to accurately measure the knowledge of testers. Traditional view takes testing only as a professional field with its strict rules and applications. It relies mostly on objective type of items, it focuses primarily on the test, and it is not interested in test use; that is, once the test is designed appropriately, the role of the tester is complete. In summary, traditional testing views tests as isolated events from test takers, education, and society. On the other hand, "use-oriented testing views testing as embedded in educational, social and political contexts. It addresses issues related to the rationale for giving tests and the effects that tests have on test takers, education and society" (Shohamy, 2001, p. 4). Issues such as what happens to the test takers who take the test and the teachers who teach for the test, and methods and materials designed for the test are all taken into consideration in use-oriented testing; the effects of the test results on parents and society are also important.

The purpose of this study was to examine the English Component of the Foreign Language University Entrance Exam (ECFLUEE) in Turkey from a use-oriented testing perspective. The ECFLUEE is a high-stakes exam in Turkey, which affects thousands of language learners, their teachers and families every year. It is administered once a year by the Student Selection and Placement Center, a governmental institution in Turkey. Most of the students who are eligible for taking this test are language major high school graduates who are planning to enroll in English language teacher education programs of the universities in Turkey. The ECFLUEE is the only English test that is used for admissions to these programs. There are 100 multiple choice questions in several sections in the exam. The sections mainly consist of fill-in-the-blanks type of grammar and vocabulary questions, sentence completion questions, translation questions, reading comprehension questions, and dialogue completion questions. Reading is the only explicitly tested skill in the exam, whereas the skills of writing, listening and speaking are not tested explicitly.

Major criticism made to the ECFLUEE is that students who prepare for the exam

overwhelmingly focus on grammar, vocabulary and reading, and they tend to disregard other language skills. On the other hand, students who got admitted to the EFL teacher education programs find themselves in an intensive English course emphasizing all language skills and areas equally in their first year at college. By investigating the student and instructor perceptions related to the ECFLUEE, this study aimed at shedding light on (a) students' study practices for the exam during the preparation process, and (b) the effects of the ECFLUEE on the general English abilities and first year performance of the students studying in EFL teacher education programs in Turkey.

The study addressed the following research questions in particular:

1. What are the learning and teaching practices employed by students and their teachers during the ECFLUEE preparation process?

2. What are the perceptions of the students of EFL teacher education programs related to the effects of the ECFLUEE

    a. on their general English language abilities,

    b. on their performance in their first year classes at college?

3. What are the perceptions of the instructors working at English teacher education programs related to the effects of the exam?

4. What do instructors think about the changes to the exam that might be useful?

2. Research on High-Stakes University Entrance Exams

There are not many studies conducted on the university entrance exam in Turkey. However, the studies that were conducted in the past focused on the general university entrance exam and not the foreign language section of the exam. In one of those studies Berberoglu (1996) described the general structure of the exam beginning from the early practices in 1950s. According to Berberoglu (1996), the main objective of the exam is to select and place the students with a high academic potential. He states that "the existing selection and placement processes will continue with the increasing demand for higher education in Turkey. From this perspective it could be concluded that the SST [student selection test] works as intended but there is a need to carry out more extensive studies…" (p. 371). Following Berberoglu's suggestion, it can be said that focusing on the English component of the exam in a study like this can provide some insights for

improving that component.

Researchers from Japan, China and Israel reported studies focusing on the English components of the university entrance exams in those countries. Qi (2004) reported a study of the intended washback effects of the English National Matriculation Test in China. The purpose of this study was to inform policymakers and test contractors of how successful the exam had been in achieving the goal of producing changes in the English teaching and learning environments in China. The participants of the study were eight test constructors, ten secondary school teachers, and three English inspectors. The data for the study were collected by in-depth interviews and follow-up contacts. The results of the study indicated that the intended positive washback of the test was to bring about a shift from formal language knowledge to practice and use of language. However, the results obtained from the teachers and inspectors suggested that there still was a great emphasis on formal linguistic knowledge in the classrooms. The author concluded that the exam had produced only limited intended washback effects in the language teaching and learning environments in China.

Guozheng (1993) and Xuewei (1993) provided a broader perspective by discussing the implications the college and university entrance test system has due to economic changes in China, and the need to implement an exam that fits Chinese specifications and characteristics.

In Japan, again from a broader perspective, Bossy (2000) reported a study which aimed to explore the impact of the pressure of university entrance exam on Japanese students. He focused on the different sources of pressure such as pressure from parents, pressure from teachers, and pressure from peers. He concluded that many Japanese students experience tremendous hardship due to university entrance exams.

Similarly, Watanabe (2004) reported the results of a study which investigated the washback effects of the English language component of the Japanese university entrance examination on instruction. Specifically, Watanabe (2004) examined the validity of the predictions about the exam such as "frequent reference to the examinations; overreliance on grammar-translation methods; detailed explanations of formal structures of English rather than its use in actual communicative situations; little use of English aurally/orally; and a limited variety of classroom organization patterns" (p. 133). In three different

schools, five teachers' language classes were observed for a total of 964 minutes for the data collection purposes of the study. Interviews were also conducted with the teachers prior to the observations. The results suggested that there were very few cases where the predicted types of negative washback were observed, and in some cases there were even reverse tendencies to the predictions. Watanabe (2004) concluded that "the presence of the entrance examination caused only some types of negative washback to only some aspects of some teachers' lessons. It may also be possible to add that there was some indication of the presence of positive washback in the way in which the teachers could make use of the exam preparation as a chance to improve their students' proficiency in English for authentic or actual language use situations" (p. 138).

Ito (2005) conducted two validation studies on the English language test of the Japanese nationwide university entrance test. The first study examined the reliability and concurrent validity of the test. The reliability was found to be acceptable, and the criterion validity was found to be satisfactory. The second study reported on the construct validity of the test through the examination of internal correlation. Results indicated that the paper-pencil pronunciation test had low validity with almost no significant contribution to the total test score. Ito (2005) concluded that although the test can work as a reliable and somewhat valid measure of English language ability, the paper-pencil pronunciation test should be eliminated and a listening comprehension test might be included as one of the subtests.

Ferman (2004), from Israel, reported a study which examined the washback effects of a new national EFL oral matriculation test. The sample of the study included 120 students, 18 teachers and four inspectors. Ferman (2004) used four types of instruments in the study: structured questionnaires, structured interviews, open interviews, and document analysis. The results of the study indicated that the new test had a strong washback on the educational processes, both positively and negatively.

Picking up on the overall aims of the aforementioned studies, this study examined Turkish EFL teacher candidates' and their instructors' perceptions related to the ECFLUEE in order to better understand the effects of the exam on those students' general English language abilities, and their performance in their first year classes at college. However, it is important to note that being different from the ECFLUEE in Turkey, the

English components of the exams mentioned in the studies above were compulsory to all students who are taking the exam. On the other hand, in Turkey, the ECFLUEE is not compulsory to all students who are taking the university entrance exam. It is taken by the students who are planning to enroll in the EFL teacher education programs of the universities (and some other programs such as English Literature, translation, etc.). Therefore, this paper does not discuss the effects of the exam on all the students taking the university entrance exam in Turkey. It only focuses on the effects of the exam on (a) English language major high school students, who prepare for the exam; and (b) students of EFL teacher education programs in Turkish universities, who have passed the exam and enrolled in a university program.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 70 (45 females, 25 males) students and 6 (3 females, 3 males) instructors from the English Language Teaching Department of a public university in Turkey. The English language teacher education program offered in this department provides learners with a one-plus-four-year curriculum. Before starting the regular four year program, students take an English exam which tests all four language skills equally. Students who cannot pass this exam study an extra year sharpening their English skills (known as the prep class). Other students continue with the regular program. In the prep class, learners take reading, writing, listening-speaking, and grammar courses. Participants of this study were selected from the students who studied the prep class. Therefore, the expression of 'first year classes' used throughout this paper refers to the English language classes taken by the students in the prep class.

Instructor participants of the study were working at the same university as EFL instructors teaching grammar, reading, writing, and speaking-listening courses.

3.2. Instruments & Data Collection

The data of this study came from two sources: a structured questionnaire and a set of semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire used in the study was developed by the researcher. In the development process of the questionnaire, in order to ensure validity

and reliability, first of all, the author reviewed the relevant literature and examined the questionnaires designed for similar purposes. The first draft of the questionnaire was written considering the issues pointed in the literature (Ferman, 2004; Watanabe, 2004; Cheng, 1998; Cheng, 1997; Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996; Andrews, 1995; Alderson & Wall, 1993). Then, the first draft was sent to two experts to be reviewed in order to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire (Huck, 2004). One of the experts was a professor at a state university in the U.S.A. who specializes in washback effect in language testing, the other expert was a professor at a public university in Turkey who was also interested in washback effect in language testing, and who was familiar with the Turkish educational context, Turkish university entrance exam, and its English component.

Following the suggestions from the experts, the first draft of the questionnaire was revised and the necessary changes were made in the second draft. The second draft of the questionnaire was piloted on 30 students. Those 30 students who were administered the second draft of the questionnaire were not included in the group of 70 students who were given the final version of the questionnaire. The main purpose of piloting the second draft of the questionnaire was twofold: (a) to test the internal reliability of the instrument, (b) to foresee the possible problems that can be encountered in the administration process due to the wording of the items (Mackey & Gass, 2005). For the first purpose, *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient was calculated to see the internal reliability of the questionnaire (Huck, 2004). The coefficient was found to be .77, which indicates a good internal reliability for the questionnaire. For the second purpose, in order to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire items, some minor changes in the wording of the items were made considering the problems encountered during the pilot study.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of two main parts. Part One had five demographic questions. Part Two had 69 Likert-scale questions in three sections. Section 1 and Section 2 aimed at discovering students' and their teachers' study and teaching practices during the ECFLUEE preparation process. Participants answered the questions in these sections on a five-point scale of frequency, from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Section 3 focused on the participants' opinions related to the effects of the ECFLUEE on their general language knowledge and abilities. The questions in this section were

answered on a five-point scale of agreement, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The final version of the questionnaire was given to 70 participants.

The interview questions used in this study were developed by using a similar procedure with the development of questionnaire items. First the relevant literature (Roberts, 2000; Cheng, 1997; Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996) was reviewed to write a set of interview questions for the purposes of the study, then the first draft was sent to the experts for validity purposes, and the questions were finalized after making necessary changes in the light of experts' suggestions. Student interview questions were designed and used as a supplement to the questionnaire to develop a further and in-depth understanding of students' study practices during the ECFLUEE preparation process, and their opinions about the effects of the ECFLUEE on their general language knowledge and abilities. Interview questions for the teachers were designed to discover the teachers' perceptions of the effects of the ECFLUEE on students, and to scrutinize the teachers' views related to necessary changes to the ECFLUEE. A total number of ten students were interviewed after the questionnaire session was completed. The teacher participants of the study were not given a questionnaire, they were only interviewed. As both the researcher and the participants of this study were native speakers of Turkish, all the interview sessions were conducted in Turkish in order to eliminate the effects of a possible language barrier.

3.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the analysis of the data coming from the questionnaires. Namely, participants' answers to each question were calculated in terms of frequency and percentages. To aid analysis of the data and interpretation of the results, points 1 and 2, and points 4 and 5 of the five-point Likert-scale were combined during the data analysis procedure. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 13.0, was used for computing all the descriptive statistics and *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient.

Regarding the data from the interviews, all the interview sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were analyzed and categorized in the light of the research questions of the study. Firstly, the main categories were defined in the transcribed data, and then, the data were read and re-read for the purposes of further

analysis and categorization (Seidman, 1998). The main categories defined from the data coming from student interviews were (a) skills and language areas emphasized during preparation, (b) practicing for the exam, (c) effects of the exam on language skills, (d) effects of the exam on first year college performance. Main categories of the data coming from the teacher interviews were (a) effects of the exam on students, (b) suggested changes for the exam.

4. Results

Following the order of research questions given at the end of the first section, this section of the paper presents the results of the study. Results from the questionnaire are reported in terms of frequencies and percentages. All the interview extracts used in this section were translated into English by the researcher.

4.1. Learning Practices during the ECFLUEE Preparation Process

The first research question of the study asked about the teaching and learning practices employed by the students and their teachers during the ECFLUEE preparation process. The data collected for the study provided four types of specific information related to the first research question: medium of instruction in the preparation process, language skills and areas emphasized in the preparation process, explicit practices employed towards the exam, and the other learning practices.

It might be useful to mention how much time students spent for preparing for the exam before looking at these four specific types of information in greater detail. Preparing for a high-stakes exam such as the ECFLUEE was a long and tiresome process for the students. The majority of the participants (62.9 %) reported that they spent two years preparing for the exam (31.4 % spent one year; 5.7 % spent three or more years). Also, 64.2 % of the participants said that they spent more than five hours a day for the ECFLUEE preparation (25.8 % spent three to five hours a day; 10 % spent one to three hours a day).

The following extract from the student interviews demonstrates how long and busy a process it was to prepare for the exam:

I spent three years of my life for this exam. For three years, I always

answered mock exam questions from preparation books... never stopping... I memorized vocabulary continuously... I used to write the new words I learn everywhere... I always had some small vocabulary cards in my pockets.

These results show that the ECFLUEE was a very important exam for these students and they put a lot of time and effort into the task of preparing for it. The following four sections take a closer look at the learning practices of the students during this long process.

4.1.1. Medium of instruction in the preparation process

Although foreign language major students spent as many as 20 hours a week in the 'language classroom' (at school and at private courses) in their senior year at high school, the medium of instruction in those classrooms was generally Turkish. When the participants were asked about the medium of instruction in the classroom, 50 out of 70 participants (71.4 %) said that it was m*ostly Turkish*, and 20 out of 70 participants (28.6 %) said that it was an *even mixture of Turkish and English*. It is important to note that none of 70 participants said that the medium of instruction was *mostly English*, which would be the ideal situation for English language major high school seniors. Table 1 shows the detailed results related to the medium of instruction in the preparation process.

As the table indicates, for all the questions regarding using Turkish as the medium of instruction, majority of the participants said that it was *Often* or *Always* the case. Answers to the questions regarding using English as the medium of instruction corroborates the results regarding Turkish as the medium of instruction. The majority of the participants indicated that it was *Never* or *Seldom* the case to use English as the medium of instruction in classroom practices ranging from making whole class explanations to making individual explanations.

Table 1. Medium of instruction used in the preparation process

How often did your English teacher(s) do the following in your English classes last year at high school and at private courses?	Never / Seldom		Sometimes		Often / Always	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
2. Make explanations in Turkish to whole class.	6	8.6	13	18.6	51	72.9
4. Make explanations in Turkish to small groups.	24	34.3	7	10	39	55.7
6. Make explanations in Turkish individually to you.	20	28.6	13	18.6	37	52.9
9. Explain specific language items such as words or sentence structures in Turkish.	6	8.6	19	27.1	45	64.3
11. Explain the meaning of an English text in Turkish.	8	11.4	17	24.3	45	64.3
13. Explain instructions of textbook exercises in Turkish.	17	24.3	13	18.6	40	57.1
1. Make explanations in English to whole class.	45	64.3	17	24.3	8	11.4
3. Make explanations in English to small groups.	45	64.3	21	30	4	5.7
5. Make explanations in English individually to you.	48	68.6	19	27.1	3	4.3
8. Explain specific language items such as words or sentence structures in English.	50	71.4	15	21.4	5	7.1
12. Explain the meaning of an English text in English.	37	52.9	17	24.3	16	22.9
14. Explain instructions of textbook exercises in English.	34	48.6	21	30	15	21.4

N = 70; shaded cells indicate the highest frequency and percentage values

4.1.2. Language skills and areas focused in the preparation process

Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages related to questions regarding language skills and areas in the questionnaire. As the table indicates, a great majority of the participants reported that they devoted a great amount of time to study reading, grammar and vocabulary whereas they *Never* or *Seldom* studied writing, speaking, and listening in their last year at high school.

Table 2. Language skills and areas emphasized in the preparation process

How often did you do the following in your English classes last year at high school and at private courses?	Never / Seldom		Sometimes		Often / Always	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. Reading activities.	1	1.4	4	5.7	65	92.9
17. Asking questions to your teacher about reading strategies	2	2.9	21	30	47	67.1
18. Asking questions to your friends about reading strategies	10	14.3	28	40	32	45.7
2. Listening activities.	66	94.3	2	2.9	2	2.9
19. Asking questions to your teacher about listening strategies.	66	94.3	3	4.3	1	1.4
20. Asking questions to your friends about listening strategies	69	98.6	1	1.4	---	---
3. Writing activities.	55	78.6	13	18.6	2	2.9
21. Asking questions to your teacher about writing strategies	55	78.6	12	17.1	3	4.3
22. Asking questions to your friends about writing strategies.	63	90	6	8.6	1	1.4
4. Speaking activities.	63	90	4	5.7	3	4.3
23. Asking questions to your teacher about speaking strategies.	66	94.3	3	4.3	1	1.4
24. Asking questions to your friends about speaking strategies.	70	100	---	---	---	---
5. Practicing grammar items.	---	---	---	---	70	100
13. Asking questions to your teacher about grammar structures.	3	4.3	17	24.3	50	71.4
14. Asking questions to your friends about grammar structures.	3	4.3	16	22.9	51	72.9
6. Memorizing vocabulary items.	---	---	6	8.6	64	91.4
15. Asking questions to your teacher about vocabulary items.	6	8.6	22	31.4	42	60
16. Asking questions to your friends about vocabulary items.	12	17.1	29	41.4	29	41.4

N = 70; shaded cells indicate the highest frequency and percentage values

Interviews with the students corroborated the questionnaire results that there was a great emphasis on reading, grammar and vocabulary whereas speaking, listening and writing were disregarded. The following is an extract from the interviews:

> *We always focused on grammar, learned a lot about grammar… same with the vocabulary… we have already forgotten most of the words we learned though… also we learned a lot about reading, about paragraphs… on the other hand, we never did speaking or listening activities… never… or writing... we learn those skills here* [at the university]... *it was foolish to study those skills due to the format of the exam because it would only have been a waste of time if we had studied them, we would have been better in communication but maybe we couldn't have passed the exam.*

To summarize, participants of the study reported that, for at least one year, they focused on reading, grammar and vocabulary, tending to ignore other language skills.

4.1.3. Explicit practices for the exam

As the ECFLUEE is a very high-stakes test, foreign-language-major high school seniors and their teachers spent a lot of time on specific test taking strategies and mock exams. Table 3 shows the frequencies and percentages of answers given by the participants to the questions regarding explicit practices for the exam.

The following table indicates that for almost all the questions a great majority of the participants reported that they very frequently (*Often* or *Always*) practiced explicitly for the ECFLUEE in their last year at high school. The only question that more than 70 percent of the participants did not say *Often* or *Always* is question 26 (Asking questions to your friends about test taking strategies). However, even for this question 44.3 % of the participants said that they *Often* or *Always* asked their friends about test taking strategies.

Table 3. Explicit practices for the exam

How often did you do the following in your English classes last year at high school and at private courses?	Never / Seldom		Sometimes		Often / Always	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
9. Answering mock exam questions from different sections of the exam.	1	1.4	15	21.4	54	77.1
10. Doing complete exams similar to ECFLUEE (mock exam).	---	---	1	1.4	69	98.6
11. Arguing over an answer to a mock exam question.	---	---	10	14.3	60	85.7
12. Asking for clarification to mock exam questions.	1	1.4	17	24.3	52	74.3
25. Asking questions to your teacher about test taking strategies.	1	1.4	7	10	62	88.6
26. Asking questions to your friends about test taking strategies.	8	11.4	31	44.3	31	44.3
How often did your English teacher(s) do the following in your English classes last year at high school and at private courses?						
10. Make explanations about test taking strategies.	---	---	---	---	70	100
15. Explain questions similar to ECFLUEE questions.	---	---	12	17.1	58	82.9
16. Make you practice questions similar to ECFLUEE test items.	---	---	6	8.6	64	91.4

N = 70; shaded cells indicate the highest frequency and percentage values

Interviews revealed that although students spent so much time and energy for explicit studies for the exam such as answering mock exam questions or learning about test taking strategies, those strategies were not helpful to them in their first year classes at college. The following two extracts from two student interviews exemplify what they think about test taking strategies:

Learning about test taking strategies did not help me develop my language abilities… I mean, strategies did not focus on meaning since all of them were tricks like what to put after you see a period or comma, or a particular structure… I could not use those strategies here at college because all I did was to memorize them as chunks but here there are open-ended questions, you cannot use those strategies here.

> *I answered a lot of multiple-choice mock exam questions. In fact it was one of the reasons why I struggled here in the first year. I am used to answering multiple-choice questions, five options… therefore it was difficult for me here.*

As a result, although students and their teachers were forced to put a lot of emphasis on mock exam questions and test taking strategies due to the format of the exam, those strategies were not very useful to students once the exam has passed.

4.1.4. Other learning practices

Some of the questions in the questionnaire asked about students' engagement in self-directed language learning activities in their last year at high school. Most of these activities can be considered out-of-class activities which are not generally included in the in-class studies by the teachers, but suggested to be carried out in students' own times.

Table 4. Other learning practices

How often did you do the following in your last year at high school?	Never / Seldom		Sometimes		Often / Always	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
7. Playing language games.	61	87.1	9	12.9	---	---
8. Doing group discussions and pair work in English.	55	78.6	13	18.6	2	2.9
27. Reading grammar books on your own.	3	4.3	24	34.3	43	61.4
28. Reading newspapers in English.	53	75.7	16	22.9	1	1.4
30. Reading books or magazines in English.	31	44.3	30	42.9	9	12.9
31. Watching English TV programs.	43	61.4	21	30	6	8.6
32. Listening to English radio.	50	71.4	18	25.7	2	2.9
34. Practicing using English with friends.	43	61.4	23	32.9	4	5.7
35. Watching movies in English.	31	44.3	27	38.6	12	17.1

N = 70; shaded cells indicate the highest frequency and percentage values

Results in Table 4 indicate that of all the nine activities included in the questionnaire, the only activity that the majority of the students *Often* or *Always* carried out by themselves in their last year at high school was to *read grammar books on their own*, which can be tied to the ECFLUEE. On the other hand, for all other activities such as reading newspapers in English, playing language games, practicing using English with friends, etc., most of the participants said that they *Never* or *Seldom* engaged in those activities.

These results corroborate the thought that language-major high school seniors spent most of their time for the activities related to the ECFLUEE while they tended to ignore other activities that might help them augment their overall language abilities.

4.2. Students' Perceptions Related to the Effects of the Exam on Them

The second research question of this study asked students' perceptions about the effects of the ECFLUEE preparation process on their general language abilities, and their performance in the language skills courses they took in their first year at college. Table 5 presents the frequencies and percentages of the answers given to the questionnaire items regarding the second research question. Being consistent with the answers given in the section on language skills and areas emphasized in the preparation process, results in Table 5 appear to indicate that the majority of the students think that their studies in their last year at high school sharpened their reading, grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Also, again, the majority of the students *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* with the idea that the preparation process helped them a lot with their reading and grammar courses in the first year at college. On the other hand, most of the participants *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* with the idea that the preparation process sharpened their writing, or speaking and listening skills, and with the idea that the preparation process helped them a lot with their writing, or speaking-listening courses in the first year at college.

Table 5. Effects of the ECFLUEE on students

How do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree / Disagree		Undecided		Agree / Strongly Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1. The ECFLUEE preparation sharpened my reading skills.	5	7.1	12	17.1	53	75.7
13. My knowledge from the ECFLUEE preparation process helped me a lot in the reading courses in my first year at college.	5	7.1	20	28.6	45	64.3
2. The ECFLUEE preparation sharpened my writing skills.	46	65.7	15	21.4	9	12.9
14. My knowledge from the ECFLUEE preparation process helped me a lot in the writing courses in my first year at college.	58	82.9	10	14.3	2	2.9
3. The ECFLUEE preparation sharpened my listening and speaking skills.	62	88.6	6	8.6	2	2.9
15. My knowledge from the ECFLUEE preparation process helped me a lot in the speaking-listening courses in my first year at college.	67	95.7	3	4.3	---	---
5. The ECFLUEE preparation helped me improve my grammar knowledge.	---	---	3	4.3	67	95.7
12. My knowledge from the ECFLUEE preparation process helped me a lot in the grammar courses in my first year at college.	5	7.1	8	11.4	57	81.4
4. The ECFLUEE preparation helped me improve my vocabulary.	4	5.7	8	11.4	58	82.9
6. Preparing for the ECFLUEE was a valuable language learning experience.	36	51.4	21	30	13	18.6
9. A student's score from the ECFLUEE is a good indicator of how well s/he can communicate in English.	62	88.6	7	10	1	1.4
10. The ECFLUEE preparation has affected my overall language proficiency positively.	35	50	21	30	14	20
11. Thanks to the ECFLUEE, now I can communicate better in English.	55	78.6	14	20	1	1.4
16. The ECFLUEE preparation process affected my social life negatively.	10	14.3	8	11.4	52	74.3

N = 70; shaded cells indicate the highest frequency and percentage values

Interviews with the students revealed similar results. Students generally think that the exam might have had some positive effects on their reading skills and grammar and

vocabulary knowledge, but it has affected their overall language abilities negatively, and they struggled a lot in writing and speaking-listening courses in their first year at college. The following extracts from two different interviews demonstrate how they see the effects of the exam on their English:

> *I think I can say that it* [the ECFLUEE] *had some good effects in terms of grammar and vocabulary... however, we never studied speaking or writing while preparing for this exam... the exam has had some bad effects in terms of the development of these skills... everything was memorization, you just memorize and go.*
>
> *The way I prepared for the exam had a lot to do with the difficulties I had in my first year here* (at college)... *while preparing I did nothing for writing ... if there had been a writing section in the exam, we would have studied for it, and it would have helped us here... but we always focused on reading, grammar, and vocabulary... my writing worsened day after day... therefore, it has been very difficult during the first year in writing classes.*

Table 5 also shows that most of the students do not think that preparing for the ECFLUEE was a valuable learning experience for them and that it affected their overall language proficiency positively. In addition, a great majority of the students (88.6 %) *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* with the idea that a student's score from the exam is a good indicator of how well that person can communicate in English, and again a great majority of them (78.6 %) *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* with the idea that they can communicate better in English thanks to their efforts in the ECFLUEE preparation process. Furthermore, 74.3 % of the students reported that the ECFLUEE preparation process affected their social lives negatively.

4.3. Instructors' Perceptions Related to the Effects of the Exam on Students

The third research question of the study asked EFL teacher education students' instructors' perceptions related to the effects of the ECFLUEE on students. The data to answer this question collected through interviews with six instructors teaching grammar, reading, writing, and speaking-listening courses at the same university.

Regarding the effects of the ECFLUEE on students' general English language knowledge, the instructors stated that the exam has a negative impact on students' overall language abilities. In general, they said that since the exam places a great emphasis on reading, grammar and vocabulary, and it tends to disregard other skills, students end up being very good at structural knowledge but they cannot put that knowledge into practice in communicational situations. Following is an extract from the interviews with the instructors:

> *Generally speaking, the exam affects students' English negatively… it especially affects it negatively in terms of language production because when they prepare for the exam, they focus on grammar, reading comprehension, and word meaning… productive skills such as speaking and writing are not in their area of interests.*

One of the teachers went beyond language skills when she was talking about the negative effects of the exam on students' language abilities. She said that the exam not only causes students to disregard productive skills, but it also hinders their abilities to think critically, due to the multiple choice format of the exam. Following is an extract from the interview with that teacher:

> *As the students come from a system which overemphasizes multiple choice test format, they generally are not good at thinking critically about situations they encounter… they look for options to answer everything they encounter in life, they are not used to come up with their own, unique ideas, and this includes the communicational situations in the language they are learning.*

Another instructor looks at the issue from the competence-performance perspective. According to this instructor, as the exam does not require students to produce anything, they are stuck at the recognition level and they cannot go one step further. She says:

> *As the students totally focus on recognizing correct or incorrect structures, they do not develop the ability to use what they recognize in production. I see it as the lack of competence-performance relation. They might have competence but they are not able to use it in performance.*

Interestingly, result of the interviews also indicated that the instructors think that the

exam also has some negative effects on reading, grammar and vocabulary knowledge of students, despite the fact that students spend a great amount of time and energy for studying those three aspects of language. Regarding reading, instructors think that the texts used in the exam are very short (usually one or two paragraphs) and limited in genres; therefore, they say, the texts do not reflect the real life length and variety of reading texts. As students are exposed to a single type of text for a long time intensively, they generally fail comprehending different text genres in different lengths. Regarding grammar, due to the multiple choice format of the exam, instructors think, students develop structural knowledge but they do not have the knowledge of function and use of particular structures. They make a similar criticism regarding vocabulary knowledge, too. They say that, again due to the multiple choice format of the exam, students construct their vocabulary knowledge on word meaning by memorizing a great number of words but they generally disregard connotational or contextual aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

To summarize, in general, instructors think that the format of the ECFLUEE exam and the preparation process to it have some negative effects on students' English language abilities, especially on productive skills.

4.4. Changes to the Exam That Might Be Useful

The last research question of this study asked "What do instructors think about changes to the exam that might be useful?". Instructors who were interviewed for this study suggested some changes for the exam. Firstly, they said, the grammar and vocabulary sections of the exam should be reviewed and made less structure oriented. In other words, both grammar questions and vocabulary questions should emphasize function and use as well as structure. Both grammar and vocabulary questions should be contextual, and they should be integrated in the test items of other skills where possible. Secondly, although it is not ideal to test writing and speaking skills with indirect multiple-choice test items, there should be more items in the test which indirectly measure students' writing and speaking abilities, as the test needs to be administered in the multiple-choice format due to standardization concerns. Thirdly, reading texts used in the test should reflect the real-life texts, having variety in length and genres. Fourthly, in all the sections of the test, there should be fewer explicit-answer questions and more implied-meaning questions as

these implied-meaning questions require the use of critical thinking.

Most importantly, the instructors who were interviewed for this study think that the ECFLUEE should not be the only English exam used for admissions to EFL teacher education programs in Turkish universities. First of all, they all think that it would not be possible to eliminate the exam and it would be impractical to suggest any form of testing other than multiple-choice format such as interviewing or composition writing as it would be almost impossible to ensure validity and standardization of such a high-stakes exam due to the huge number of test takers. However, they suggest that following a two-step procedure in student admissions would be better in terms of both reducing the negative effects of the ECFLUEE and getting better students into the programs. They say that in this two-step procedure first an easier and less-demanding version of the ECFLUEE (with the suggested changes) should be administered, and students who get a score below a certain level should be eliminated. Then, they suggest that each university should prepare and administer its own exam for English language teacher training programs. Such a system might be more helpful when compared to current one because professionals at ELT departments of universities can design better exams with open-ended questions, and they can set better criteria for admissions according to the demands of their own programs and according to the needs of language teaching environments in Turkey.

Consequently, suggestions made by the instructor participants of this study are twofold: first, make some changes to the ECFLUEE to make it less structure oriented; second, for admissions to universities, use together the improved version of the ECFLUEE and an open-ended integrated-skills-and-areas exam offered by individual ELT departments.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that, firstly, perhaps one of the biggest effects of the ECFLUEE on teaching and learning practices is seen on the language skills and areas emphasized in foreign language major high school seniors' English classrooms. Although those students spent most of their senior high school years in English classes, they very rarely or never studied the skills of writing, listening and speaking. On the other hand, reading, grammar and vocabulary were overemphasized in their English classes due to

the fact that the ECFLUEE emphasizes these three aspects of language. It might be acceptable for some language teachers to prefer emphasizing some language skills over others in particular language environments considering the needs of the students, but disregarding three of four language skills seems to be much far from the ideal for high school students whose major is English.

Since the exam is considered to be a passport for a brighter future, students and their teachers see the senior year not as a year for developing English skills but as a year for practicing for the exam as much as possible. In other words, during their high school senior year, these students spend a great amount of time and energy on practicing test taking strategies, most of which will not be useful for them starting from the day after the exam. Furthermore, during the preparation process for the exam, students almost never employ outside class English-related activities such as reading newspapers in English, playing language games, practicing using English with friends, etc. Employing these activities might help them sharpen their overall language knowledge and proficiency in a balanced way.

Most of the students do not see the preparation process as a valuable learning experience for them and they do not think that it affects their overall language proficiency positively. They also do not believe that a student's score from the exam is a good indicator of how well that person can communicate in English, or that they can communicate better in English thanks to their efforts in the ECFLUEE preparation process. Furthermore, most of the students think that the preparation process for the exam affected their social lives negatively. This indicates that the negative effects of the exam is not only limited to language knowledge and communication skills, it might also have some negative effects on students' social skills and psychological well-being as the students feel themselves under a big pressure at least for one year.

After investing a lot of time and energy in preparing for the exam in their senior year at high school, only the reading skills, and grammar and vocabulary knowledge of these students seem to develop, and these three are the only aspects of language that help them in their first year at college in spite of the fact that they have to take courses of other skills. Most of the students struggle with writing, speaking and listening courses during their first year at college. The main reason for this is the fact that EFL teacher education

programs in Turkish universities emphasize all language skills equally in their curricula but the ECFLUEE puts a great emphasis on reading, grammar and vocabulary while it tends to disregard other skills. Students who spend their last one or two years of high school studying for this exam, naturally, focus on the skills and areas emphasized in the exam and they disregard the uncovered skills. Such a practice, obviously, leads to difficulties for students in their first year at college.

Upon corroborating the results obtained from the data collected from the students, instructors of first year college students in EFL teacher education programs think that the exam has a negative impact on students' overall language abilities. They say that students come to college with a good structural knowledge but they cannot put that knowledge into practice in communicative situations. Regarding the useful changes for the exam, instructors suggest that the ECFLUEE should be less structure oriented, and it should not be the only English test for the university admissions. They state that an improved version of the ECFLUEE and an open-ended integrated-skills-and-areas exam offered by each ELT department should be used together for admissions.

In light of what has been discussed above, the results of this study indicate that the ECFLUEE has some negative effects on future English teachers of Turkey. Given the fact that the demand for the EFL teacher education programs of Turkish universities is well beyond their capacity, it would not be practical to suggest the elimination of this exam. Therefore, there is a serious need to think about some changes to the exam that might be useful in terms of helping students develop their language skills in a better way and experience fewer struggles in their first year at college.

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Summary Production: A Topographical Analysis of the Strategies Used by University ESL First Year Science Students

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Abstract

In our institutions of higher learning, there is a general outcry about students' lack of academic literacy skills, especially their ability to understand the texts they read. Although there have been a number of studies on the summarizing protocols of secondary school pupils and undergraduate students (e.g. Johns & Mayes 1990; Campbell 1990; Currie 1998), little has been done to document the ways in which ESL students who learn in a multi-lingual environment, in which the language of education is not their primary language, select the main ideas of a text. This study examines the summary production strategies of ESL first year science students at the University of Botswana and how they combine the ideas to form a coherent text. Using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher obtained data from a sample of 120 students. The findings suggest that 'high-proficiency' students are able to select the main points and to combine them to form a coherent summary; but the vast majority of 'average' and 'low-proficiency' students find it difficult to produce the required information and to avoid distortions. The findings also suggest that there are no significant differences between high and low-proficiency students in the manner in which they combine ideas from different paragraphs. To improve the students' ability to identify the required information, it may help to give them discipline-specific tasks that require the selection and paraphrasing of the main points.

Keywords: ESL/EFL, summarizing, generalizing, paraphrasing, distortion, combination, proficiency, autonomous, discourse community, academic literacy

1. Introduction

The ability to summarize the main ideas of a text is an essential skill that enables college and university students to navigate their learning more successfully, especially as many assignments, writing activities, experiments, reading tasks and research work requires the students to synthesize the content of what they read (Braine, 1995; Kirkland & Saunders, 1991). The concept of summarization is drawn from psycholinguistic views of reading which regard summarizing as a multivariate skill involving a complex integration of cognitive, meta-cognitive and linguistic skills. These views are linked with 'schema theory' which suggests that the readers' understanding of a text is determined by their background knowledge of the subject (Kintsch, 1998; Widdowson, 1998; York, 2003). The fundamental issue about summarizing is that it enhances academic literacy and fosters enculturation into the discourse community of the discipline the students wish to enter (Bhatia, 2002; Paltridge, 1995).

Yet, there is little information about how students actually select and recast the main ideas from a tangled maze of textual material. So far, as the literature review below shows, most studies have focused on the reading and summarizing protocols of first language (L1) and second language (L2) speakers of English but few studies have been conducted on ESL/EFL university students in Africa who learn in a multi-cultural environment in which English is used as the language for instruction while their heritage language is reserved for social and interpersonal communication.

To extend the frontiers of our knowledge in the area of summarization, the present study examines the 'production' strategies used by first year ESL/EFL science students at the University of Botswana. The aim of the study is to understand how first year science students distil out the main ideas of a given text in their subject discipline, and to suggest ways of improving their production skills. First year science students were chosen because this researcher has observed over many years of teaching them that they tend to panic when they are faced with masses of textual material to read, and the problem appears to arise from the fact that they seem to think that everything that is written is important. They miss the point that some information can be ignored if one is trying, for example, to dig out the main ideas. The purpose, therefore, is to understand how they sift the main ideas, how they recast them, the degree to which they distort or distinguish

between main and minor points, and how they combine the ideas to form a coherent text.

2. Literature Review

Over the last thirty years, research interest on summarization has mainly focused on L1 speakers, especially trying to identify the underlying differences between poor and good readers in elementary and secondary schools (e.g. Brown & Day, 1983; Johns, 1985; Sherrard, 1986; Winograd, 1984). These studies have indicated that poor readers have difficulty in understanding a summary task and have problems in selecting the main points. One of the most notable studies at this stage is that of Johns (1985), which investigated the summary protocols of "under-prepared" and "adept" graduate and freshmen students. The study reported that under-prepared students neither included all the main points of the original text nor did they combine them effectively. Similarly, Garner (1982), Kennedy (1985) and Taylor (1984) reported that good readers used strategies that enabled them to get the gist of a text. Overall, these studies on L1 speakers suggest that adept readers use more effective strategies than their less experienced counterparts.

Research in the 1990s shifted its focus from native English speakers (NES) to speakers of English as a second or foreign language. The focus on the latter was as a result of the realization that ESL students are not only linguistically limited, but are also faced with the daunting task of decoding the meaning of texts written in specialized registers, such as those found in scientific texts. One such milestone study is Johns and Mayes (1990), which reported that students with low levels of English proficiency copied verbatim from the original text more than those with high proficiency. Campbell (1990) and Currie (1998) also reported that undergraduate ESL students received significantly lower scores than 'native' English speakers in a university composition course, mainly because they were unable to paraphrase the original ideas. Moore (1997) further found that ESL students with an Asian background at an Australian university plagiarized extensively when writing summaries, which was attributed to cultural practices in summarization. What should be underlined about these earlier studies is that the ESL subjects lived in communities where English is the native language for the vast majority of the citizens, and the ESL speakers had, therefore, a greater exposure to the target

language through immersion. This study, on the other hand, has ESL students who have very little or no contact at all with native speakers of English.

A coterminous issue regarding summarization is the role of literacy in the students' primary language, which has been reported to have an effect on the quality of summary writing in the second language. Cumming (1989) observed that ESL students with greater writing expertise in their first language performed better than those with less expertise in their first language, which suggests that writing expertise is transferable across languages. However, there is also the converse observation that students who do not understand materials in the second language are unlikely to translate them correctly into their first language, which casts doubt about the inter-relationship between writing in the first and the second language (Ellis, 1987).

Of late, research on summarizing has highlighted the importance of critical literacy, that is, students should not just summarize what they read, but should enter into dialogue with the text (Flower, 1990; Belcher, 1995). The need for a close conversation with the text is underscored by the German philosopher, Gadamer (1989), who suggests that readers should always aim at understanding the 'fusion of horizons' between the author and the reader by being open to the possibilities of meaning that the text generates. Gadamer (ibid) says that a true dialogical relationship between the text and the reader can be accomplished by forming an authentic 'I – Thou' relationship, in which a text is treated as a subject for which the reader must find some mutuality and communion.

Arguing along the same vein, Allison, Berry, and Lewkowicz (1994) suggest that summarization should not only cover the main points, but should also involve selective and critical analysis. The importance of critical engagement is taken further by Raymond and Parks (2002) and Yang and Shi (2003) who reported that their MBA research subjects were involved in analyzing business cases critically. Cannon (2000, pp 10 -11) in Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa advocates the use of reflective and critical learning which he sees as "possibly the most significant educational trend operating today", which "questions the assumption that simply knowing or understanding disciplinary content enables a person to apply knowledge".

The idea of critical academic literacy has been taken a step further by Gee (2000, 2001) and Street (2003), who argue that the discourse of "New Literacy Studies" (NLS)

is not only about students becoming "autonomous" learners but also being able to pay attention to the "ideological" aspect of literacy. They maintain that the concept of literacy is embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles; that is, it is underpinned by cultural and ideological assumptions, which vary according to time, space and the meanings different people ascribe to it (Lillis 2003, p. 195). In considering the summary production strategies used by ESL first year science students at the University of Botswana, this researcher was mindful of the role that these factors play in influencing the students' summary production practices.

3. Research Questions

In trying to understand the summary production strategies used by ESL first year science students at the University of Botswana, the following questions were posited: Given a scientific text with complex ideas,

1. How do ESL first year science students, with different language proficiency levels, produce the main ideas?

2. To what extent do the students generalize and paraphrase the original ideas?

3. How prevalent is distortion of the original ideas among the different proficiency levels?

4. Is there any significant difference in the way the students combine the ideas to form a coherent summary?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Altogether one hundred and twenty students out of about six hundred first year science students were selected using a combination of random and purposive sampling techniques, with 40 female and 80 male students representing the study population. The students had completed the first semester of their university studies, during which time they had been taught, besides their core science subjects, communication and study skills covering, among other skills, basic study skills such as note making, scanning and skimming, paraphrasing, summarizing, etc. On average the students were 18 - 20 years old and had been learning in English for about 9 years.

The vast majority of the students (94) spoke Setswana, a Bantu language that is spoken from the western part of South Africa to Botswana and some parts of eastern Namibia and western Zimbabwe. The rest of the students, (16 of them) spoke Kalanga, a language similar to Shona spoken in Zimbabwe, 7 spoke other African languages and only 3 used English as their 'first' language. On average the students had obtained a C or D grade in English Language in their high school examinations, such as the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), which are modeled on the University of Cambridge School Certificate. What this biographical information indicates is that many students studying science at this university have an impoverished background in the language they use for their university studies, a problem which perhaps needs a separate investigation altogether.

4.2 Data Collection

For the data reported in this study, a scientific text (see Appendix 1) entitled: "Far out ideas may be the last hope for curbing global warming" was administered to 120 students. The text, which is about 640 words, was pre-tested in a pilot study of ten randomly selected science students, who were later excluded from this study to avoid contaminating the results. The text talks about the technologies that are likely to control climatic changes and meet the world's energy needs. It argues that none of the current power-generating technologies will be able to control greenhouse gas emissions and meet the world's energy requirements. It advocates the use of new technologies to harvest energy from the atmosphere. The students were required to summarize the technologies as well as pointing out their limitations. The text was chosen because of its relevance, familiarity to the science students and its universal appeal.

4.3 Procedure of scoring the summaries

The procedure of scoring the students' summaries followed the Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) approach, which treats texts as discourse situated in a particular context. The approach suggests a careful analysis of the written discourse, focusing on various aspects. In this study the focus was on the students' selection of the main ideas, generalization,

paraphrasing, distortion, and how they combine different ideas to form a coherent text. Each of the 120 students' summaries was analyzed following the grounded approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which uses a step-by-step analysis in order to sort out the emerging themes. The students who scored 15 - 20 marks out of 20 were classified as 'high-proficiency', those who scored 10 - 14 were considered 'average' while those who scored 1 - 9 marks were rated 'low-proficiency'. To ensure inter-rater reliability, two lecturers who teach the same course (Communication & Study Skills) and are specialized in ESP and Applied Linguistics, independently marked the summaries in order to verify the allocation of marks and the students' English proficiency levels. The students' English Language high school grades as well as their first semester results in Communication and Study Skills were used to corroborate each student's classification of 'high', 'average' or 'low' proficiency.

4.4 Data Analysis

The findings are presented using descriptive statistics, i.e. tables and histograms that show how the data are broadly spread and how they are related in terms of one aspect to the other. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 13.0 was used to calculate these measures. As the data are textual, the following six main ideas were generated from the summaries of the high-proficiency students and were used as the benchmark for marking each student's summary:

1. Solar power could be collected in orbit and then beamed back to earth using lenses called parasols. Limitation: it is expensive and current technology is inadequate to accomplish the task.

2. Breeder reactors could be used to produce more nuclear fuel; but the fuel has low efficiency, is unsafe and there is a possibility of developing it into weapons of mass destruction.

3. Vast satellites could harvest solar power, with microwaves or laser beams being used to get power to any point on earth, but the technology is expensive.

4. Relay satellites could beam energy from massive solar arrays carpeting the moon, but they are equally expensive.

5. The global thermostat could be turned down by reducing solar heating, <u>but</u> would require great caution.

6. <u>Additional idea units</u>: Ground based <u>biomass</u> could be used to generate power, but would require a very large part of the earth to be filled with crops that can be turned into energy. Also, <u>wind</u> and <u>solar power</u> could be considered, but these are part-time sources and would require energy-consuming super-conducting cables linked to a computer-controlled global net-work.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Quantitative Results

Tables 1, 3 & 5 show that 20 students scored marks in the 'high' proficiency category, 48 and 52 in the 'average' and 'low' proficiency levels, respectively. The data (see Table 1) show that of the 20 students rated as high proficiency, 10 scored 15 out of 20 marks, while the other 10 scored between 16 - 19 marks. The marks indicate that the frequent score is 15 marks. In terms of gender-related performance, there were no significant differences between male and female students, except that the four female students who were classified as high-proficiency were outstanding in their performance, which is consistent with SILL-based research (e.g. Oxford, 1999; Young & Oxford, 1997) which showed that females tended to use more effective strategies than males. Table 2 and figure 1 show a normal standard deviation of 1.41 for the high-proficiency students, with the histogram showing a mean of 16.1 marks.

Table 1: High proficiency students' performance

Out of 20	Male	Female	Total
20	0	0	0
19	1	1	2
18	0	2	2
17	1	1	2
16	4	0	4
15	10	0	10

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of high-proficiency students

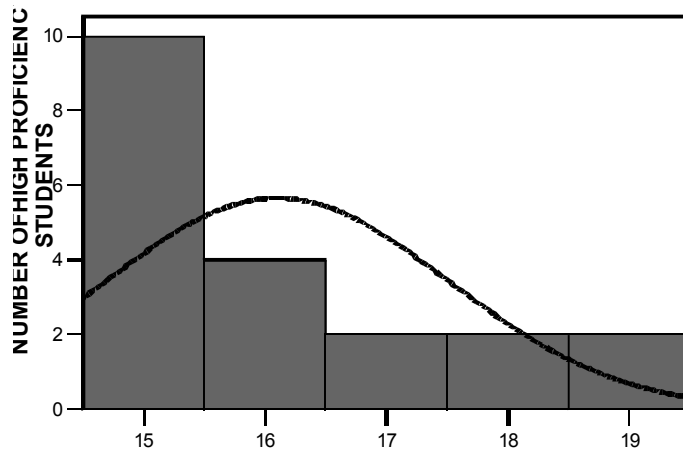|	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
HIGH PROFICIENCY	20	15	19	16.10	1.410
High Proficiency Male	16	15.00	19.00	15.6250	1.08781
High Proficiency Fem	4	17.00	19.00	18.0000	.81650

Figure 1: Histogram for the distribution of marks for high-proficiency students

Regarding 'average' proficiency students, table 3 below shows that out of the 48 students classified average, 23 scored 10 marks out 20, while 25 scored 11 - 14 marks. Table 4 shows a normal standard deviation of 1.39, while the histogram shows a mean of 11.2 marks. These marks show that average students were able to select barely more than half of the required idea units, which suggests that they probably miss out a lot of information when they read their course materials. The inability to select all the required ideas can be attributed to the students' limited use of self-monitoring skills, which Scraw (1994) sees as the main cause for the poor performance of many unskilled college students who are unable to evaluate their learning outcomes.

Table3: Average-proficiency students' performance

Out of 20	Male	Female	Total
14	3	1	4
13	2	5	7
12	4	3	7
11	5	2	7
10	19	4	23

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of average-proficiency students

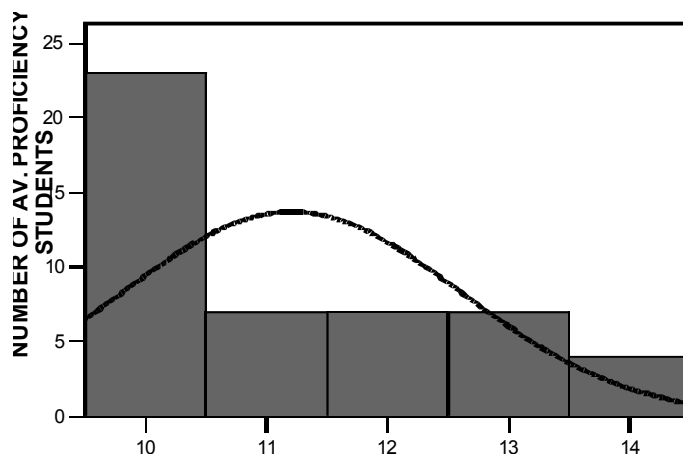|	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AVERAGE-PROFICIENCY	48	10	14	11.21	1.398
APM	33	10.00	14.00	10.9394	1.34488
APF	13	10.00	14.00	11.9231	1.44115

Figure 2: Histogram for the distribution of marks for average-proficiency students

The performance of the low-proficiency students (see table 5 below) shows that 38 students out 52 scored between 3 – 5 marks out of 20, which means that they were only able to select an average of a third of the required main ideas. The standard deviation of 1.76 (see table 6 and figure 3) is considerably higher than that of the other two proficiency levels, due to the group's wider range of marks which are 2 – 9. The histogram shows 4.58 marks as the mean, which is far below the performance of average students (11.21 marks) and 16.1 of the high-proficiency students. This information

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suggests that many low-proficiency students are unable to locate the required main points in a text, which impacts negatively on their academic achievement at university.

Table 5: Low-proficiency students' performance

Out of 20	Male	Female	Total
9	1	2	3
8	2	0	2
7	1	1	2
6	1	3	4
5	8	3	11
4	6	9	15
3	9	3	12
2	3	0	3
1	0	0	0

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of low-proficiency students

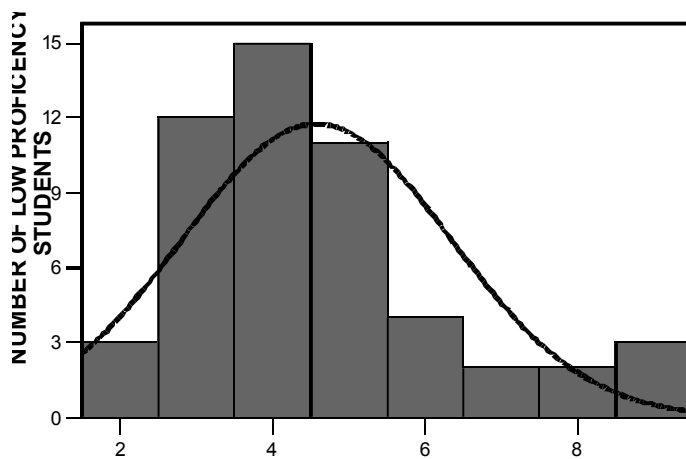|	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LOW PROFICIENCY	52	2	9	4.58	1.764
LPM	31	2.00	9.00	4.3548	1.78042
LPF	20	3.00	9.00	5.0000	1.71679

Figure 3: Histogram for the distribution of marks for low-proficiency students

5.2 Qualitative Analysis

5.2.1 Production of main ideas

The data above show how students of different proficiency levels selected the required main ideas; but they do not shed light on the quality of the summaries and the extent to which each group fully or partially produced the main ideas. To get to the bottom of the matter, representative samples are analyzed, and the first is Mmapula's following summary (pseudonym and so are all names mentioned in the study), who is classified a high- proficiency student:

> *One of the technologies dreamed up in recent years is the collection of (1) power in orbit and beaming it back to earth using space-based lenses (parasols) to deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere. Critics, though, argue that this is unnecessary and (2) expensive. Similarly, current technology wouldn't allow this to be accomplished. To stabilize climate, emission power generation will have to be pumped from today's 2 trillion to 30 trillion by 2050. However, nuclear power won't be sufficient. (3) Breeder reactors would give more fuel but they have been abandoned owing to their low (4) efficiency, safety concerns and the possibility of the fuel being used for making nuclear weapons.*
>
> *Vast (5) satellites can harvest power and microwaves and laser beams can distribute it over the earth. Energy can also be beamed down by (6) relay satellites from massive solar arrays carpeting the moon. Ground-based (7) biomass, solar cells and wind power would help, but 10% of the earth's surface would have to be filled with biomass crops to get to trillion watts. Even so, (8) wind and solar energy are only part-time sources and would require (9) energy-consuming super conducting cables linked to computer-controlled global power network. Turning down the (10) global thermostat by reducing solar heating would probably work, but would require great caution.* (Total mark = 18/20)

If the ideas in Mmapula's summary (the ideas are numbered to show the range of the ideas she included) are compared with those of the marking guide which are numbered 1 – 6 under the 'data analysis' section, it will be seen that Mmapula produced virtually all

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the required main points. Not only did she produce the required idea units, she also gave the "gist" of the argument regarding the technologies that are likely to control climatic changes and their limitations. If, on the other hand, Mmapula's summary is compared with Tebogo's following summary (the latter is classified a low-proficiency student), the difference in the range and accuracy of the ideas will become apparent:

> *Bizarre technologies of generating energy are likely to control climate changes and meet the world's energy because if power-generating are developed its going to be possible to control gas emissions. Solar power in the (1) orbit can be beamed back to the earth using (2) space-based lenses can also reflect solar energy away from the atmosphere. Also sunlight can generate enough energy and massive solar arrays. Wind energy can also be used to generate much more energy that can meet the world's energy. The limitations of this type of energies included some unnecessary and exorbitantly (3) expensive, furthermore energies like (4) Wind and Solar power are only part-time energy sources.* (Total mark = 8/20)

Tebogo's ideas in the above summary are limited, i.e. he neither raises many points nor does he express them accurately. His statements: "also sunlight can generate enough energy and massive solar arrays" and "wind energy can be used to generate much more energy that can meet the world's energy" are inaccurate; and his penultimate statement "the limitations of this type of energies included some unnecessary and exorbitantly expensive" is incomplete and does not fully bring out the limitations of the new technologies. Taken as a representative sample, Tebogo's summary (vide supra) confirms the idea that low-proficiency students produce more inaccurate or partially correct ideas than high-proficiency students (Johns, 1985).

Similarly, if Noni's summary below (an average summary) is compared with Mmapula's and Tebogo's summaries, we will be able to see underlying differences.

> *The energy needs of the world is inexhaustible moving from 12 trillion watts to 30 trillion watts in year 2030, thus 18 scientist have devised new ways of obtaining energy. One way of obtaining energy is using space (1) based lenses called parasols to deflect solar energy to earth would be clean solution. Also using (2) Biomass as*

an alternative solution would work. However biomass crops would have to cover 10 % of earth's surface thus only producing 10 trillion watts. Another alternative is to (3) lower the temperature of the atmosphere to curb global warming caused by CO_2 emmisions. (4) Wind and solar power on earth could be viable however it is only temporary and thus an (5) expensive computer power network would have to be created in order to monitor the energy flows. So, although all these solutions seem viable all of them are (6) expensive and use technologies which the earth has not yet seen but in the long run people should wait for more proposals to solve the mystery of our energy needs with another solution. (Total mark= 12/20)

Noni's strength, unlike Tebogo (low-proficiency), is that she manages to produce most of the main ideas but her main weakness is inaccurate expression, repetition and distortion. Take for instance the first sentence, "the energy needs of the world is inexhaustible..." and the last statement, "people should wait for more proposals to solve the mystery of our energy needs with another solution". These are misrepresentations of the ideas in the original text, which state that current energy resources are inadequate and that we need to find alternative sources by exploring unusual technologies. Besides, the ideas generally lack clarity, such as: "one way of obtaining energy…would be clean solution". Similarly, ideas such as "lower the temperature of the atmosphere to curb global warming" and "wind and solar power…is only temporary" misrepresent the meaning of the original text. These weaknesses suggest that many average and low-proficiency students find it difficult to select accurately the main points of a text.

5.2.2 Generalization

Regarding the extent to which first year science students recast their ideas in a more generalized form, there are marked differences between high and low-proficiency students. The following low-proficiency student's extract illustrates the point:

Bizzare technologies for generating energy that were previously ruled as pipe dreams should be developed by nations. The 18

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influential energy analysts in the US, believes that power-generation technologies if developed now will not control the effect of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The extract shows that the student copied verbatim from the original text (see first and second paragraph of Appendix 1). In some cases, the student is unable to copy some words correctly, e.g. 'bizarre' and the ideas simply run-on with little regard to their cohesion. If we contrast the above extract with the following extract of a high-proficiency student, we will be able to see the illocutionary differences between them:

Some stranger technologies, such as collecting solar power in orbit and beaming it back to earth, and using space-based lenses called parasols to deflect solar energy away from the atmosphere need to be explored. Emission-free generation technologies like nuclear and wind power can also be tried, but the problem is that the world's energy needs are rising faster than solutions can be found.

The main difference is that while the low-proficiency student has mostly plagiarized the original ideas, the high-proficiency student has recast the main ideas in a more generative way. What these differences suggest is that 'low-proficiency' students employ the strategy of simply 'lifting' the ideas, whereas high-proficiency students attempt to 'reconstruct' them to suit their communicative intent. These differences impact on the way the students internalize the information they learn.

5.2.3 Paraphrasing

Regarding the extent to which ESL first year science students paraphrase information, the researcher wanted to know how far the students use their own words, instead of simply reproducing the main ideas verbatim. To determine the extent to which the students paraphrase the ideas, the students' summary products were categorized as either fully paraphrased (here the students largely used their own words to express the main ideas), partially paraphrased (the students moderately used their own words) or plagiarized (the students simply copied the ideas).

A simple count of the students who fully paraphrased the main ideas shows that eighteen high- and only four average-proficiency students did so; whereas the rest of the average and low-proficiency students either copied verbatim or simply 'cut and pasted' the ideas. To illustrate the extent to which students paraphrased, two typical extracts are given below containing the first idea that solar power could be collected from orbit and then beamed back to earth using parasols. The first is by Khama (high-proficiency) and the second by Letsile (low-proficiency).

(1) *The technologies that are likely to control climate change are collecting solar power in orbit and beaming it back to earth using space-based lenses called parasols to deflect solar energy away from the atmosphere. However, this kind of technology is very expensive and unachievable.*

(2) *Technologies for generating energy that were previously ruled out as useless will have to be developed if nations are to tackle climate change. Governments have to undertake broad energy researches, explore technologies from recent years like collecting solar power and beaming it to earth and using 'parasols' to deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere. The world's energy needs rise faster than bringing emission-free generation like nuclear and wind power. Global power use for electricity is about 12 trillion watts, mostly from fossil fuels.*

If we compare the way the two extracts are written, we will see that Khama has paraphrased the idea and its limitation. On the other hand, Letsile has resorted to circumlocution before mentioning the idea of solar power in orbit. Letsile's first and second sentences are directly copied from the first and third paragraph of the original text. The section that reads, "The world's energy needs rise faster…wind power", has been cut and pasted from paragraph 6 of the original text. The rest of Litsile's summary indicates that he simply lifted whole sections without recasting the ideas, a strategy which was adopted by many average and low-proficiency students.

5.2.4 Distortion

The third research question is about the extent to which distortions are prevalent among the different proficiency levels. In this study distortion was considered as giving inaccurate information, making personal or irrelevant comments. At the lexical level, it was considered as twisting the meanings of key words. The findings show that low-proficiency students were the main culprits, although many average and some high-proficiency students considerably distorted the main ideas and meanings of key words. To illustrate the level of distortion by low-proficiency students, Thabo's following excerpt is typical:

> *The world's energy demands overshadows the current technologies*
> *that are far from reaching…. However climate stabilization is very*
> *crucial within reach of contemporary technology…. To curb this*
> *disastrous scenario, nuclear and wind power are on stream,*
> *conversely can't meet the stipulated consumption rate…. Satellites of*
> *solar energy harvestors may be employed as they are environmental*
> *friendly.*

The extract does not only misrepresent the ideas and key words of the original (e.g. 'energy demands overshadows', 'far from reaching', 'climate…is very crucial within reach'), it is also extravagant, with words such as "overshadows", "crucial", "disastrous scenario", "conversely", "stipulated" and "harvestors" being superfluous. The loose control of vocabulary supports the view that there is a reciprocal relationship between textual production and word use (Hulstjn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996). The prevalence of distortions in the students' summaries suggests that many of them vaguely comprehend what they read, which has a ripple effect on their learning, with many of them possibly ending up learning incorrect or partially correct information.

5. Combinations of Ideas

The last research question asks whether there are any significant differences between the different proficiency levels in the manner in which they combine the main ideas to form a coherent text. To understand how the students combined the main ideas, two elements were considered: "transformation", i.e. whether the

student used coordination and subordination to form a cohesive summary or whether the student resorted to "cutting and pasting", in which the student simply appropriated portions of the text and "pieced" them together to create an incoherent summary.

An analysis of the students' summaries shows that 12 high-proficiency and 5 average-proficiency students fully combined ideas in their summaries through coordination and subordination, while 37 low-proficiency students produced run-on summaries. The rest of the students -including average ones- produced half-baked and funny summaries with inappropriate language for academic writing, which relied mostly on the use of words and sentences directly taken from the original text. To show how students differed in the way they combined ideas at the sentence level, three typical extracts of high, average and low-proficiency students, respectively, are cited:

(High) *Technologies for generating energy are being explored <u>like</u> collecting solar power in orbit <u>and</u> beaming it back to earth <u>using</u> space-based lenses called 'parasols' <u>to</u> deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere.*

(Av.) *Technologies that are likely to control the climate changes are collecting solar power in orbit <u>and</u> beaming it back to earth <u>and</u> using space-based lenses called "parasols" <u>to</u> deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere.*

(Low) *Technology for generating energy have to be developed. Collecting solar power in orbit <u>and</u> using space-based lenses called Parasols <u>to</u> deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere.*

The extract of the high-proficiency student shows how some of the competent students coordinated their ideas at the sentence level. In the sentence of the high-proficiency student above, it can be seen that the student has condensed the idea unit from the original text through embedding (like collecting solar power), adjunction (and beaming it back), participle phrase (using space-based lenses) and the infinitive marker (to deflect solar energy). If we compare the extract of the high-proficiency student with that of the low-proficiency student, we will see their

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organizational difference. The low- proficiency student has not coordinated the first and second sentences, resulting in the production of truncated sentences that lack cohesion, e.g. the second sentence which starts with a participle phrase "collecting" has no finite verb to make it complete. Similarly, the extract of the average-proficiency student has been coordinated mostly through adjunction, such as "and" without exploiting other forms of coordination.

In terms of how the students used subordination, there were also some differences, especially between high and low-proficiency students. All the proficiency levels generally found it difficult to combine ideas from different paragraphs expressing the same theme, which supports Harris's (1990) observation that students doing science generally find it difficult to coordinate sentences cohesively from different paragraphs. Therefore, in answer to the last research question on whether there is any significant difference between the different proficiency levels in the manner in which they combine ideas, there is evidence suggesting that at the sentence level, especially in terms of coordination and subordination, there are differences but there appears to be no significant differences when it comes to the ability to combine ideas from different paragraphs.

6. Implications

The findings of this study have considerable implications for science learning and teaching. The study shows that ESL first year science students who are able to distil out the required ideas from a given text are fewer than those who miss out or distort the main ideas. The instructional implication which logically follows is that there is need to help the vast majority of ESL learners, in order for them to be able to select the required information. This can be done in a number of ways, such as making analogies and comparisons with materials they have previously read and figuring out the meaning of the text through the title and other textual clues.

An equally important implication is the part played by summarization in fostering academic literacy. From this study, it is evident that the students' ability to select the required information is closely linked with their English competence.

The dialectical process of 'synthesis', in which the students were engaged during summarization, indicates their struggle to acquire the discipline-specific discourses. On this issue, there is a growing body of literature, which suggests that explanations for students' learning problems can be seen as gaps between the expectations of the lecturers and those of the students (Lea & Stierer, 2000). This means that there is need to understand the power fulcrum between the "judges and gate-keepers" of our institutions of higher learning and those who seek to enter them (Lather, 1991, p. 59), so that the expectations of both can be met.

In terms of the actual summarizing process, the results show that the vast majority of the students have problems in selecting the main ideas. To tackle this problem, it may be a good idea to provide practice first at the sentence and paragraph level, so that students can learn to pick out the main ideas in their specific areas of study and be able to paraphrase them. Doing this will enable them to see the heuristic value of summarization.

7. Limitations

In a study of this nature which attempts to understand the way students select the main ideas from a written text, there will always be differences in the interpretation of the data. For instance, we will never be completely sure about how another person's mind works when selecting what someone else considers to be an important point. Also, when making inferences from someone else's written product, there is always room for different interpretations.

What needs to be monitored more closely is the motivation of the students in participating in a research task. In this study, the summary task was not an official test to make high-stakes decisions regarding the students' ability to summarize. Given the low-stakes nature of the task, were the students highly motivated to do the task? My suspicion is that, although the students worked on the summary task diligently, their summary products probably did not provide the most ideal condition about the ways in which they produce their summaries because there was little at stake. Perhaps future research in a similar area needs to pay attention to the status of the task so that students can be judged when they are at the peak of their motivation.

8. Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the findings on the summary production strategies preferred by ESL first-year science students at the University of Botswana indicate that the vast majority of the students have problems in abstracting the main ideas. The results show that only high-proficiency students produce accurate ideas of the original text and are capable of recasting them. Low-proficiency students, on the other hand, prefer either to "cut and paste" or to reproduce chunks of information that bear little relevance to the task. There are also marked differences between low and high-proficiency students in the manner in which they understand the text: low-proficiency students in this study produced more distortions in their final summaries than high-proficiency students. The same trend is observed with paraphrasing and combinations: high-proficiency students were generally able to produce well-coordinated ideas, while low-proficiency students produced run-on ideas.

However, a few high-proficiency and many average and low-proficiency students misrepresented the main ideas, had problems with using their own words and could not distinguish between main and minor points. This resulted in the production of circuitous summaries that often failed to capture the essence of the argument. The data on combinations reveal an inherent weakness, that is, many students with different proficiency levels were unable to combine ideas from two or more paragraphs to form one coherent unit. Not surprisingly, then, there were too many long summaries produced by both high- and low-proficiency students.

To tackle some of these problems, it may be necessary to give ESL/EFL first year science students, or any other students with a similar problem, more guidance and support through subject specific learning materials that are simplified in which the students are asked to select important ideas from different paragraphs and to summarize them in a sentence or two by using coordinated and subordinated sentences. This can be followed by a discussion of whether the summaries reflect the gist of the original text. As a starting point, it may also help if the students are trained to paraphrase single sentences and to write theses and topic statements that state clearly the substance of their texts.

To improve the students' comprehension abilities, lecturers and teachers can use pre-reading activities, such as relating the text and its key words to the students' experiences, or to similar texts they have read before. To facilitate greater understanding, an analysis of the text can be done involving scanning and skimming as well as 'concept mapping' in order to identify the main ideas and the key words, and to show their relationship by creating a hierarchical order of the main ideas and to evaluate their completeness. A particularly useful strategy is using reciprocal or peer-mediated teaching (McKeachie, 1994; Biggs, 1999) in which the students articulate to each other their understanding of the main ideas of the text. For this method to work effectively, it means teaching and learning ought to be decentralized, that is, students need to work in pairs or in groups so that they can help each other to internalize what they read.

Above all, the ability to summarize information by science students at university needs to be situated within the broader context of ESP/EAP syllabus design. Van Dyk and Weideman (2004) suggest that syllabuses that promote academic literacy (including summarizing) are those that focus on the interpretation of information, making inferences, hierarchical ordering, classifying, contextualizing, paraphrasing, comparing and contrasting, making a logical conclusion and so forth instead of focusing on 'study skills'. Scott (2005, p. 4) maintains that reading materials that foster academic literacy are those that build on the students' "resident schemata", i.e. learning materials that build on what the students already know; but the ones which take them to the unfamiliar terrain. In a nutshell, the data in this study suggest that although 'high-proficiency' students were generally able to use effective summarizing strategies, the vast majority of 'average' and 'low-proficiency' students had problems in selecting the main ideas. This suggests that many first year science students need help in understanding the concrete meaning of scientific texts so that they can discover the dialogical power that texts generate.

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Appendix 1
Far-out ideas may be last hope for curbing global warming

Jeff Hecht, Boston

Bizarre technologies for generating energy that were previously ruled out as pipe dreams will have to be developed if nations are serious about tackling climate change.

That's the view of 18 influential energy analysts in the US, who argue their case this week in the journal *Science* (vol. 298, p 981). They say none of the power-generation technologies being developed now will be able to control greenhouse gas emissions and meet the world's energy needs-which may rocket by 200 per cent by 2050.

They urge governments to undertake broad energy research programmes, exploring some of the stranger technologies dreamed up in recent years, like collecting solar power in orbit and beaming it back to earth, and using space-based lenses called "parasols" to deflect solar energy away from our atmosphere.

The 18 scientists hope to open up the bitterly polarized debate on global warming: while advocates of the Kyoto Protocol say climate stabilization is vital and within reach of today's technology, critics argue that it is unnecessary and exorbitantly expensive.

"We stake out a third position," says atmospheric scientist Ken Caldeira of the US government's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. "Climate stabilization is important, but we can't really do it with current technology, even if we wanted to."

The world's energy needs are rising far faster than we can bring emission-free generation such as nuclear and wind power on stream. Global power consumption for electricity is now about 12 trillion watts, 85 percent of which comes from fossil fuels. To stabilize the climate, the energy analysts estimate that the world will have to pump up emission-free power generation from today's 2 trillion watts to as much as 30 trillion watts by 2050.

But nuclear power can't fill the gap. Uranium supplies are limited and known reserves could supply 10 trillion watts for only 6 to 30 years. "That's hardly a basis for energy policy," the scientists write.

Breeder reactors create more fissile material than they consume, so you'd get more nuclear fuel, but developers have abandoned them because of low efficiency, safety issues, and the possibility of fuel being turned into weapons. And fuel reactors are still a distant prospect, despite decades of research.

Vast satellites that harvest solar power are an attractive emission-free idea, says Martin Hoffert of New York University, one of the team. Sunlight is eight to ten times more intense in space, so arrays could generate more power than on the ground. Microwaves or laser beams could get power to any point on earth, including areas without power grids. Energy might also be beamed down from massive solar arrays carpeting the Moon, via relay satellites.

The prospects for ground base biomass, solar cells and wind power are limited, the team believes. You'd need to cover more than 10 percent of the Earth's land surface with biomass crops to generate 10 trillion watts, Caldeira says. Wind and solar power are only part-time energy sources, so generators would have to be linked to computer-controlled global power network based on super conducting cables, which also eat energy to keep cool.

Another outlandish option might be to turn down the global thermostat by reducing solar heating. To do this, you'd place a 2000-kilometre wide Fresnel lens in orbit 1.5 million kilometers from Earth. Refraction would deflect about 2 percent of Earth's sunlight, enough to offset warming caused by further carbon dioxide emissions. Caldeira has calculated that the process should work.

But Alan Nogee urges caution. As head of the Union of Concerned Scientists' clean energy programme, he says today's energy-efficient and renewable energy technologies can meet climate change goals. "It's critical that we do not defer immediate action in the hope that more research and development can produce some exotic technologies that may not be needed – and which may have other harmful effects."

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An Empirical Study of Reading Self-efficacy and the Use of Reading Strategies in the Chinese EFL Context

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Abstract
This empirical study was based on the background of reading instruction and research in the Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The study integrated reading self-efficacy from a motivational perspective with reading strategies from a cognitive perspective and explored the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. One hundred and eighty two sophomore English majors in a university in China participated in this study. The results showed that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively related to the use of reading strategies in general and the use of three subcategories of reading strategies: metacognitive strategies; cognitive strategies; and social/affective strategies, in particular. Highly self-efficacious readers reported significantly more use of reading strategies than those with low self-efficacy. This study suggests the importance of nurturing English language learners' reading self-efficacy beliefs and the use of reading strategies and incorporating the cultivation of learners' reading self-efficacy into reading strategy instruction.

Keywords: reading self-efficacy; reading strategies; reading instruction

Introduction

Reading is an indispensable skill for learners in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, and foreign language reading comprehension is an interactive and complex process influenced by linguistic and cognitive factors, social and cultural factors, and affective and motivational factors (Lu, 1989; Xu, 1997, 1998, 1999). Strengthened reading skills enable EFL learners to make more progress and obtain greater development in all academic domains (Anderson, 1999). Although much importance has been attached to reading by teachers and learners in China, the effects of reading instruction and learners' reading abilities are far from satisfactory in the Chinese EFL context (Chen, 2006; Gu, 2003; Wan & Li, 2005).

EFL reading teachers and researchers from both China and other countries have paid considerable attention to linguistic and cognitive factors (such as word-level issues, grammatical knowledge, discourse organization, background knowledge, reading models, reading strategies, metacognitive awareness) as well as social and cultural factors (Grabe & Stoller, 2005). Research concerning the influences of affective and motivational factors on the development of reading processes and learners' reading abilities, however, is limited (Grabe & Stoller, 2005; Zou, 2002). Findings in the first language (L1) reading research indicate that motivational processes lay solid foundations for coordinating cognitive goals and strategies in reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Therefore, it is worthwhile to apply the related L1 research findings in the EFL reading instruction and research context by integrating motivational processes with cognitive processes.

Self-efficacy from a Motivational Perspective

One of the three dimensions of L1 reading motivation was self-efficacy (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Self-efficacy was defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1997, p. 391). Pajares (1997) noted that self-efficacy could influence choices made, efforts expended, and perseverance executed when confronted with obstacles, stress, and anxiety. Specifically, students who had high self-efficacy beliefs were persistent when faced with challenges and were more successful in academic achievement (Schunk, 1990; Wang & Pape, 2007). Multon,

Brown, and Lent's (1991) meta-analysis of decades of research studies showed a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievements.

Reading self-efficacy was defined in this study as learners' perceptions of their reading abilities to perform various reading tasks, such as grasping the main idea, guessing the meaning of an unknown word, and inferring the authors' attitudes from the article. Reading self-efficacy may produce much impact upon readers' overall orientation toward the reading comprehension process and achievements (Henk & Melnick, 1995). Many L1 reading studies showed that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with reading achievements (Barkley, 2006; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989; Song & Song, 2000). In contrast to the amount of research on self-efficacy in the L1 reading, there has been little research on reading self-efficacy in the Chinese EFL context.

Reading Strategies from a Cognitive Perspective

Unlike self-efficacy, reading strategies in second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) acquisition have been studied extensively. Reading strategies were defined as "deliberate, conscious procedures used by readers to enhance text comprehension" (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001, p. 433). Studies on reading strategies fall into the following categories: identification of different reading strategies employed by successful and unsuccessful language learners; reading strategies instruction; and factors influencing the use of reading strategies (Brantmeier, 2002). These studies were consistent in that successful readers tended to use a wider range of strategies and to use them more frequently and appropriately than unsuccessful readers (Singhal, 2001). Mixed findings of reading strategies instruction research, however, were also noted. Some studies support the effectiveness of reading strategies instruction (e.g., Carrell, 1998; Dreyer & Nel, 2003; Kern, 1989; Meng, 2004) whereas others indicate the ineffectiveness of reading strategies instruction (e.g., Barnett, 1988; White, 2006). The contradictory findings of these studies suggest a need to further investigate these issues in the field.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies and to find out how the former influenced the latter. The following research questions were pursued:

1. What is the current level of college students' reading self-efficacy beliefs and

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their use of reading strategies?

2. Are there significant relationships between college students' reading self-efficacy beliefs and their use of reading strategies?

3. Are there significant differences of the use of reading strategies between college high self-efficacious readers and low self-efficacious counterparts?

Methodology

Participants

The participants were from a university in southwest China. Participants were sophomore English majors in the Department of Foreign Languages. Convenience sampling was used because the first author was a graduate student of the department. A total of 139 students participated in this study. The participants were predominantly female (87.1%) with only 18 (12.9%) male students. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 22, with a mean of 20.34 and a standard deviation of 0.77. They were from five independent cohorts and had studied English for at least 6 years in secondary schools and nearly 2 years in the university.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study include two questionnaires: (a) reading self-efficacy questionnaire; and (b) the use of reading strategies questionnaire.

Reading self-efficacy questionnaire. The reading self-efficacy questionnaire (Appendix A) was adapted from the English Self-efficacy Questionnaire designed by Wang (2007). There were originally 32 items in this questionnaire, 8 of which were to measure self-efficacy in reading. In Wang's (2007) study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .96, test-retest reliability was .82, the concurrent validity was .55, and the predictive validity was .41. According to Pajares (1997), in order to be both explanatory and predictive, self-efficacy measures should reflect various specific tasks within that domain. The reading self-efficacy questionnaire used in this study included the 8 items (Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 12, 15, 16, and 17) from Wang's (2007) survey and 12 items specifically designed to reflect the current Chinese EFL context. For example, Item 7 included the Test for

English Majors – Grade Four and Item 11 included communication with an American pen pal introducing his or her college life. Participants provided confidence judgments to complete English-language related tasks described in each of the 20 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("I can't do it at all") to 7 ("I can do it well").

In order to avoid misunderstandings, the questionnaire was written and administered in Chinese. Face validity was established through the review of the instrument by two professors from the first author's department who taught reading to English majors and one professor in the United States in the field of self-efficacy research. Their suggestions were taken into consideration in improving the questionnaire. The scale was found to have high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

The use of reading strategies questionnaire. Based upon the classification of O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) language learning strategies, other researchers' classification of reading strategies, domestic studies in China (Du, 2004; Liu, 2002; Lv & Xu, 1998), and consideration of the reading practice of English majors in the university, the authors classified the reading strategies into three categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. There were 48 items randomly arranged in the questionnaire (Appendix B). It was also written and administered in Chinese to avoid misunderstandings. Participants were required to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("This statement is never or almost never true of me") to 5 ("This statement is always or almost always true of me"). Oxford's (1990) criterion about strategy frequency was also adopted to report the frequency of the use of reading strategies. Face validity was also established through the examination of the instrument by the same two professors who checked the face validity of the English reading self-efficacy questionnaire. The scale was found to have high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha =.89) for the whole questionnaire, and .76, .80, .72, respectively, for the three subcategories of reading strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies.

Data Collection and Analytic Procedure

The two questionnaires including participants' demographic information were

administered to 182 sophomore English majors during their regular English lessons. After the removal of incomplete questionnaires, 139 questionnaires were coded for statistical analysis with SPSS14.0. The following statistical procedures were followed: 1) descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the students' responses to reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies items; 2) Pearson correlations coefficients were computed to explore the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies; 3) independent sample t-tests and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to examine the differences in the use of reading strategies between highly self-efficacious readers and readers with low self-efficacy.

Results and Discussion

The Current Level of English Majors' Reading Self-Efficacy

On average, the participants felt rather confident of their abilities to perform English reading tasks measured by the English reading self-efficacy questionnaire. This is because the average level of participants' reading self-efficacy was 4.71 based upon a scale of 1-7 (See Table 1). On the scale, a value of 5 indicated "I basically can do it." Therefore, on average, the participants believed that they could basically complete the reading tasks.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Reading Self-Efficacy and Reading Strategy Use (n = 139)

	Self-efficacy	Overall strategy use	Metacognitive strategy Use	Cognitive strategy use	Social/affective strategy use
M	4.71	3.04	3.28	3.18	2.65
SD	0.50	0.36	0.41	0.38	0.50

This finding did not support previous research studies in the Chinese EFL context. Shi and Liu (2006) posit that Chinese English learners suffered high levels of reading anxiety and stress due to traditional reading instruction models and numerous English tests in schools as well as students' lack of familiarity with the target language culture.

According to Zhang (2005), Chinese teachers seldom assign their students appropriate reading tasks or organize reading activities to activate their curiosity and to enhance their experience in reading. In order to explore possible reasons of the participants' reading self-efficacy, the four sources of self-efficacy identified by Bandura (1997) need to be considered in combination with the context of English reading instruction in China.

Self-efficacy beliefs are formed by the collective interpretation of four principal sources of information: mastery experience; vicarious experience; verbal persuasion; and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Although behaviorism theory, which emphasizes the linear transmission model from teacher to student, still plays a dominant role in EFL reading classes in China (Wan & Li, 2005), this particular way of language instruction was not popular in the English major program. Students' self-efficacy beliefs may be enhanced if teachers could engage the students in meaningful reading activities and provide them with positive and constant feedback about their performance during these activities (Keyser & Barling, 1981; Schunk, 1981). Participants in this study were all English majors and must have gained much mastery and vicarious experience through English reading activities to develop such a level of reading self-efficacy. In addition, participants in this study might not have experienced high levels of reading anxiety and stress in English reading because physiological and affective states is also one source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

The Current Level of English Majors' Use of Reading Strategies

Table 1 also showed that students used overall strategies (M = 3.04) and the three subcategories: metacognitive strategies (M = 3.28), cognitive strategies (M = 3.18), and social/affective strategies (M = 2.65) at the medium level of frequency according to Oxford's (1990) criterion. With regard to the three subcategories of reading strategies, the most frequently used category was metacognitive strategies (M = 3.28), and the least frequently used one is social/affective strategies (M = 2.65). Participants' metacognitive strategies use was slightly higher than their cognitive strategies use.

This result suggests that these participants sometimes employed various reading strategies and the frequency of use varied across the three subcategories. First, the traditional reading instruction model, which is still dominant in the Chinese EFL context

(Wan & Li, 2005), emphasizes the impartment of isolated knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence pattern. It ignores the nature of reading comprehension, the importance of reading strategies, and the cultivation of learners' reading autonomy. Although some researchers have conducted research on reading strategies and informed teachers of the importance of reading strategies, Chinese teachers seldom put the research findings into practice (Li & Qin, 2005). As a result, Chinese students have not yet realized the important role of reading strategies in reading.

Influenced by traditional Chinese culture, students tend to be conservative and seldom actively answer questions elicited by teachers in classes or seek help from teachers or peers when encountering obstacles, or cooperate with others on some tasks (Wang & Zhang, 2008). The traditional Chinese view of reading comprehension holds that reading is a relatively independent task, not performed by collaboration but by individuals themselves (Du, 2004). These factors might account for why social/affective reading strategy was used the least by the participants.

Relationship between Reading Self-Efficacy and the Use of Reading Strategies (n = 139)

Reading self-efficacy was found to be significantly positively correlated with overall reading strategy use ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and the three subcategories of reading strategies: metacognitive strategy use ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), cognitive strategy use ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), and social/affective strategy use ($r = .26$, $p < .01$). This reveals that learners with a higher level of reading self-efficacy tend to use reading strategies more frequently.

The positive correlation between reading self-efficacy beliefs and reading strategy use echoes findings from previous research not only in other subject areas (Hu & Xu, 2003; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990) but also in the area of language acquisition (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Wong, 2005; Zhang, 2004). This result highlights the necessity to combine cognitive processes with motivational processes in reading instruction and to emphasize the motivational role of self-efficacy in reading comprehension.

Differences of the Use of Reading Strategies between High Self-efficacious Readers and Low Self-efficacious Counterparts

The median (4.70) was used as the cut-off criterion to set aside low self-efficacy students from high self-efficacy students. Independent sample t-tests revealed that highly self-efficacious students ($n = 73$) reported higher overall strategy use ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.34$) than low self-efficacy students ($n = 66$, $M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.34$). This difference was found to be statistically significant, t (137) = 4.16, $p < .001$.

MANOVA was used to examine differences between low self-efficacy and high self-efficacy students in terms of metacognitive strategy use, cognitive strategy use, and social/affective strategy use. The means and standard deviations of these variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of Strategy Use of High and Low Self-Efficacious Students

	n	Overall strategy use	Metacognitive strategy use	Cognitive strategy use	Social/affective strategy use
Low Self-efficacious	66	2.91 (0.34)	3.13 (0.39)	3.05 (0.33)	2.54 (0.53)
High Self-efficacious	73	3.15 (0.34)	3.40 (0.39)	3.30 (0.38)	2.75 (0.45)

Note. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

Wilk's Lambda was used in MANOVA, F(3, 135) = 6.44, $p < .001$. Highly self-efficacious students used significantly more strategies than students with low self-efficacy in all three subcategories of reading strategies: F(1, 137) = 15.58, $p < .001$ for metacognitive strategies; F(1, 137) = 16.39, $p < .001$ for cognitive strategies; and F(1, 137) = 6.77, $p < .05$ for social/affective strategies.

These results are consistent with the previous result from Pearson correlation, which

stated that reading self-efficacy was positively related to the use of reading strategies. That is to say, highly self-efficacious readers tend to use overall reading strategies and the subcategories of reading strategies (metacognitive, cognitive, social/affective strategies) more frequently and effectively than readers with low self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences how people select their environment and activities. Individuals willingly undertake challenging tasks and activities which they believe they can handle and avoid those which they believe they cannot handle.

It was also noted that, in the process of reading, highly self-efficacious readers may make feasible reading plans including goal setting, time arrangement, and materials selection and adopt some cognitive strategies that are appropriate for themselves such as making inferences, note-taking, elaboration, grouping, deduction, and transferring. In addition, they may adjust some reading strategies when these strategies do not work, and regulate their negative feelings such as stress and anxiety when encountering reading failures. Finally, they may evaluate their reading performance accurately and discuss some topics with their teachers and peers. Conversely, low self-efficacy readers seldom make reading plans, cannot employ cognitive strategies effectively and appropriately, tend to become anxious and frustrated when confronting difficulties, and seldom evaluate their reading performance or discuss with others about difficulties. This result implies that it is indispensable for English teachers to emphasize the important role of reading self-efficacy in reading strategy instruction.

Conclusion

The average level of the participants' reading self-efficacy was close to "I basically can do it," suggesting that the participants felt confident of their abilities to complete the reading tasks listed in the questionnaire. It is not surprising that the participants used reading strategies at the medium level of frequency based upon an understanding the Chinese EFL context. With regard to the three subcategories of reading strategies, the most frequently used category was metacognitive strategies, and the least frequently used one was social/affective strategies. This finding was discussed with consideration of the Chinese culture. In addition, a significant positive relationship was found between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. Finally, highly self-efficacious

learners reported more use of reading strategies than ones with low self-efficacy.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study showed that English major college students generally felt rather confident about their abilities to complete English reading tasks. These English major students were exposed to an English instructional method that facilitated the development of self-efficacy. Salili and Lai's (2003) study of Chinese students' learning and motivation noted that the implementation of a variety of instructional strategies was correlated with higher levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, it is recommended that EFL teachers should realize the important role of reading self-efficacy in reading instruction and take into consideration of the four principal sources of self-efficacy to help students develop high levels of reading self-efficacy.

The frequency of the use of reading strategies of the participants was not high. These results indicate that it is of much urgency for English teachers to transform their traditional teaching methods and to help students develop their own reading strategies while cultivating reader autonomy. In addition, a positive relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies was noticed, and that highly self-efficacious students used significantly more reading strategies than their low self-efficacy counterparts. These results indicate that reading self-efficacy exerts some influences on the use of reading strategies and that fostering reading self-efficacy could improve the effectiveness of reading strategies instruction.

In conclusion, the present research implies that the cultivation of learners' reading self-efficacy and the development of their reading strategies should be emphasized simultaneously in reading instruction in the Chinese EFL context and their integration will contribute to successful reading comprehension and reader autonomy.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is limited in certain aspects. First, these questionnaires as self-report instruments alone may not capture the participants' perceptions or reflect their actual conditions. It is advisable to combine quantitative methods with qualitative methods in the future research. Qualitative approaches with prolonged engagement, persistent

observations, and multiple interviews might help the researchers develop a full understanding of students' self-efficacy beliefs and strategy use in reading.

Second, the sample size is relatively small, which may lead to relatively small correlation coefficients. In addition, convenience sampling is "difficult to describe the population from which the sample was drawn and to whom results can be generalized" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 136). As a result, the possibility of generalizing the results to different educational contexts and English levels may be limited. Further research may include a wider range of samples from different educational contexts.

Finally, this research mainly explores the relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies. It indicates the important role of reading self-efficacy in reading instruction and puts forward some suggestions from a theoretical perspective. Experimental studies are needed to probe into the causal relationship between reading self-efficacy and the use of reading strategies and to verify the effectiveness of the cultivation of reading self-efficacy and reading strategies. Meanwhile, further research may be conducted on other English skills such as listening, speaking, and writing.

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Appendix A: Reading Self-efficacy Questionnaire

Notes: Please read the following questions carefully and make an accurate evaluation of your reading abilities no matter whether you are doing it or not. These questions are designed to measure your judgment of your capabilities, so there are no right or wrong answers. Please do not write your name, but you should answer all of the questions and write down your student number.

Please use the following scales to answer these questions accordingly. Please choose the number accurately representing your capabilities.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I cannot do it at all	I cannot do it.	Maybe I cannot do it.	Maybe I can do it.	I basically can do it.	I can do it.	I can do it well.

1	Can you finish your homework of English reading all by yourself?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	Can you read and understand English news reports?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	Can you read and understand the English information on the Internet?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	Can you read and understand English speeches delivered by celebrities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	Can you read and understand English newspapers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Can you read and understand new lessons in your *Comprehensive English* coursebook?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Can you read and understand passages of reading comprehension section in TEM-4?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Can you read and understand English magazines?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Can you read and understand English advertisements of commodities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Can you read and understand English poems?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Can you read and understand a letter from an American pen pal introducing his or her college life?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	Can you read and understand English short novels?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	Can you read and understand an English tourist brochure introducing western countries?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Can you read and understand English popular science books?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B: The Use of Reading Strategies Questionnaire

Please choose one number below to represent your actual learning conditions most.								
1		2	3	4	5			
This statement is never or almost never true of me		This statement is usually not true of me	This statement is sometimes true of me	This statement is usually true of me	This statement is always or almost always true of me			
1	Reclassifying and reordering information of texts while reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
2	Combining new information with what you have read in the passage.	1	2	3	4	5		
3	Applying what you have read to writing.	1	2	3	4	5		
4	Relaxing yourself when you become anxious and nervous in reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
5	Skimming the whole passage quickly and then reading selectively according to your reading purposes.	1	2	3	4	5		
6	Reading between lines.	1	2	3	4	5		
7	Knowing how to divide sense groups and reading by the sense groups.	1	2	3	4	5		
8	Using what you have read to facilitate listening comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5		
9	Summarizing the content, main idea, structure of the passages similar in genre.	1	2	3	4	5		
10	Browsing titles, sub-titles, illustrations, and diagrams to predict the main idea before reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
11	Reading obscure words, phrases, and sentences repeatedly to ponder their meanings while reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
12	Making detailed plans for reading to improve your reading abilities.	1	2	3	4	5		
13	Adopting different reading skills (critical reading, careful reading, skimming, scanning) contingent on different passages and reading purposes.	1	2	3	4	5		
14	Using what you have read in English daily conversation.	1	2	3	4	5		
15	Reading selectively, choosing to read what you think is necessary, and skipping unnecessary parts.	1	2	3	4	5		
16	Using background information and common sense to predict the main idea of passages.	1	2	3	4	5		
17	Adjusting reading speed flexibly and arranging reading time appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5		
18	Imagining some scenes described in the passage to facilitate reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5		
19	Concentrating all your attention on the passage while reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
20	Writing down main ideas, key words, and your ideas about passages on the blank space of articles while reading.	1	2	3	4	5		
21	Communicating with teachers and peers about passages and reading skills.	1	2	3	4	5		
22	Checking continuously whether your comprehension is right and correcting in time.	1	2	3	4	5		
23	Evaluating what you have gained from reading and finding out your shortcomings and thinking about countermeasures.	1	2	3	4	5		
24	Guessing unknown words and sentences from the context.	1	2	3	4	5		

25	Analyzing their grammatical structures to enhance reading comprehension when encountering complex sentences in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
26	Noticing words in boldface or italics, etc., and annotations of passages while reading.	1	2	3	4	5
27	Noticing the topic sentence, the first sentence of each paragraph, the first and last paragraphs, and connectives.	1	2	3	4	5
28	Adopting different methods to handle unknown words according to different reading purposes.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Making predictions about the passages continuously and adjusting them as reading goes on.	1	2	3	4	5
30	Summarizing and reflecting your reading skills and strategies after reading and judge whether they foster reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
31	Encouraging yourself to carry your reading plans through to the end.	1	2	3	4	5
32	Encouraging yourself to continue reading when you get tired in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
33	Evaluating whether what you have read achieves your reading purposes and meets your requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
34	Translating English sentences into Chinese to help comprehend passages.	1	2	3	4	5
35	Making definite plans and setting certain time to finish reading.	1	2	3	4	5
36	Relating new information to the background knowledge in your mind.	1	2	3	4	5
37	Connecting related information from different parts in the passage.	1	2	3	4	5
38	Using word formation (prefix, suffix) and semantic knowledge (synonym, antonym) to guess unknown words.	1	2	3	4	5
39	Asking your teachers or peers for help and explanation when you have difficulties in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
40	Choosing actively some English magazines and newspapers that you are interested in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
41	Using such non-verbal signs as illustrations, diagrams, etc. to enhance reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
42	Summarizing the topic, structure and the content of passages after reading.	1	2	3	4	5
43	Ignoring unknown words and continuing reading if they don't hinder comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
44	Using dictionaries, encyclopedias, and grammar books to help comprehend passages.	1	2	3	4	5
45	Questioning the ideas of passages and not accepting them blindly.	1	2	3	4	5
46	Using diagrams or outlines to summarize the topic, structure and the content of passages after reading.	1	2	3	4	5
47	Using the textual knowledge to analyze passage structures to enhance reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5
48	Using underlines and signs to highlight some key information while reading.	1	2	3	4	5

The Impact of the Retelling Technique on Chinese Students' English Reading Comprehension

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Abstract
Little research has been done on whether the retelling technique can enhance English comprehension among L2 readers. This study examined the impact of the retelling technique on English reading comprehension for 126 Chinese students from a Taiwanese university. Sixty five students were assigned to the experimental group and 61 to the control group. Both groups received the same learning content, but the technique differed; the experimental group had the retelling technique, while the control group had conventional techniques. All participants took reading comprehension pre- and post-tests, as well as a reading comprehension strategy questionnaire. The experimental group also wrote self-reports to describe their perceptions of using the retelling technique. The results show that retelling significantly improved the participants' text comprehension at the level of overall meaning. It also helped them to learn general concepts during reading and to retain a synopsis of the story in their memory after reading. The participants using retelling could distinguish better than control participants between overall and specific ideas. They also performed better in drawing connections between pieces of information introduced at different parts of the text. However, retelling did not improve the ability of participants to remember details of expository texts. Based on these results, the study makes recommendations to integrate retelling in L2 reading comprehension instruction.

Keywords: comprehension instruction; contextual information; general concepts; reading comprehension; retelling technique

Introduction

A large body of reading research has recently targeted strategy instruction, which presumes that learners who are empowered with knowledge of a particular reading strategy, and specifically how it is used, can better increase their reading comprehension (Anderson, 2005; Beers, 2000). Moreover, Pressley (2002) emphasized that reading education should focus on comprehension instruction: readers should be taught comprehension strategies. Comprehension instruction entails "teaching people how to construct meaning from text rather than simply finding the meaning put there by the author" (Pressley, 2002, p. 390). In order to comprehend the text well, the student has to be engaged in utilizing strategies "to construct meaning from text, using text information to build conceptual understanding, [and] effectively communicating ideas orally and in writing" (Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007, p. 13). Students who engage in such meaningful literacy activities can become motivated and achieve reading success.

In the context of second language (L2) learning, the teacher can implement best practices in relevant and meaningful ways when teaching students to read English as a foreign language (EFL). Reading comprehension strategies for EFL learners should not only promote memorizing linguistic symbols, but also understanding ideas in the text. In an EFL classroom, the following responses are quite common. When teaching students to read an English article, a language instructor may ask them to describe what they have read once they have finished reading. In many situations, the instructor repeatedly encounters students' silent responses or replies such as, "Sorry, I have nothing to tell you," "I don't remember," or "I have no idea about that." These responses reveal the problem: EFL learners cannot remember anything after they read a piece of English text. To overcome this problem, an instructor should offer students a strategy to reconstruct meaning in order to help them remember and understand the information in the text. One strategy that engages students in reconstruction is retelling. The retelling technique is a verbal rehearsal skill in which readers restate what they have read. Through retelling the text, learners can engage in meaning reconstruction by generalizing text information, connecting details, and referring to personal prior knowledge.

In English-speaking contexts, retelling has been used as an instructional tool for quite a long time. Some research on the effects of retelling-based reading programs

shows that retelling is an effective tool used to improve students' text comprehension in a holistic fashion and to enhance students' ability to recall entire texts (Cullinan, Harwood, & Galad, 1983; French, 1988; Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1991; Morrow, 1985, 1986, 1993; Moss, 1997, 2003, 2004). However, in the context of learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), no studies in the literature on retelling examine it as an instructional tool for increasing reading comprehension. Thus, the present study instructed Chinese adult learners in the retelling technique and examined the effects of retelling on their reading comprehension performance. The results of the present study can contribute to the current body of knowledge about how to improve comprehension in ESL/EFL reading education.

Literature Review

Fundamental Premise of Retelling

As noted by many cognitive researchers, memory is a cognition process and is important for language use. Kintsch (2004) assumed that the reader can grasp new textual information by accessing prior texts and interpreting written texts by retrieving knowledge existing in his or her memory. One instructional implication derived from Kintsch's comprehension model is that teachers can facilitate reading comprehension in a target language by providing learning experiences that induce the student to interpret and reconstruct the text during and after his or her reading process. Through the reconstruction of the text, the student may keep some text-based information in his or her mind and make further connections among concepts. Comprehension of a text can be practically impossible when the reader has no preexisting conceptual information in his or her mind (Block & Pressley, 2003).

The engagement of active memory strategies, such as verbal rehearsal, can increase a person's memory span (Taylor, 1990). Retelling is one kind of verbal rehearsal strategy. By retelling, learners are involved in "constructing relationships with text information" (Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1991, p. 356) and are encouraged to restate the essential part of the original text, relate what they already knew about the textual content, and reconstruct the information they have just read without looking at the passage again (McCormick & Cooper, 1991). The retelling technique can be viewed as "oral or written

post-reading recalls during which children relate what they remember from reading or listening to a particular text" (Moss 2003, p. 711). During the process of retelling, the reader is confronted with a series of reconstructions that rely on rehearsing the contents described in the text and on retrieving personal experience. Through such a meaning-making process, retelling may strengthen the reader's retention of incoming information. As a result, readers develop a general concept of what they have read.

Research in Using the Retelling Technique as an Instructional Tool

The retelling technique has been used as an instructional tool to improve students' reading comprehension. Some researchers examined the effects of programs that applied retelling and found that there were significant differences in the effects of the retelling technique on kindergarten and elementary school students. For example, when retelling followed listening to stories, kindergarten children significantly improved their ability to recall more story elements, enhanced their sense of story structure, and increased the complexity of their oral language (Morrow, 1985, 1986, 1993; Pellegrini & Galad, 1982). French (1988) used story retelling as an instructional procedure in the language arts program for approximately eight years and found that elementary school students retained important information after retelling. In addition, retelling significantly increased elementary school students' comprehension of text-based propositions (Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1991; Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985; Rose, Cundick, & Higbee, 1984). Montague, Maddux, and Dereshiwsky (1990) found that the ability to retell a story improved with age and that the amount and type of information retold varied from elementary school through high school. In a comparative study, Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus (1991) pointed out that both skilled and less skilled readers who engaged in retelling did better on comprehension tasks after four rounds of retelling practice. More recently, retelling has been used in the United States in the field of content reading. The overall results indicate that retelling increases elementary students' reading comprehension in terms of both the quantity and quality of what is understood (Richardson & Morgan, 2003; Tennessee Department of Education, 2007). Taken together, these earlier studies suggest that engaging students in retelling what they have read improve reading comprehension of narrative texts.

The retelling technique is not confined to the instruction of narrative comprehension. Retelling can also be applied to the improvement of expository comprehension. Some researchers have first defined specific criteria that should be applied to the retelling of expository texts (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, & Preece, 1991). Other researchers have used the retelling technique to teach elementary-aged students to comprehend expository texts (Moss et al., 1997-2004). Moss and his colleagues concluded that retelling is useful in increasing readers' understanding of expository texts, helping them develop a better sense of text genre and helping them take an active role in reconstructing texts (Moss, 2003). Examining differences between third and fifth graders' written retelling, Moss, Leone, and Dipillo (1997) found that fifth graders clearly understood expository text structures and sequences and were able to recall the main ideas and details. Moss concluded that, as a rule, young language learners may best understand forms and functions of expository texts through oral and written retelling (Moss, 1997, 2003, 2004).

In the field of ESL/EFL, retelling is recommended as an instructional tool to increase student's composition ability (Stewig, 1985), improve learners' oral proficiency (Hurley, 1986), and enhance ESL students' writing skills (Hu, 1995). However, the retelling technique has not been used in reading comprehension instruction.

More recently, a series of cognitive research studies has evaluated the impact of oral retelling on students' later memories of a story (Dudukovic, Marsh & Tversky, 2004; Marsh & Tversky, 2004; Marsh, Tversky & Huston, 2005; Tversky & Marsh, 2000). Results indicate that retelling has both positive and negative consequences for recall. Different kinds of rehearsal — involving different purposes, audiences, and social contexts — may differentially affect memory. Marsh (2007) stated that the different purposes of the re-tellers could result in different consequences for their recall. This is because concepts formulated during retelling affect later recall of the entire event (Marsh, Tversky & Huston, 2005; Tversky & Marsh, 2000).

Gaps in Previous Research on Retelling

Despite the wide use of the retelling technique in education and the amount of research examining its effects on comprehension in a native English-speaking context, the above literature review exposed several gaps. First, there are few studies on the effects of the

retelling technique on ESL/EFL learning. Using recall as a reading comprehension assessment tool, Bernhardt (1991) recommended that the analysis of students' retelling protocol be an instructional device to improve FL learners' reading comprehension. More recently, Moss (2004) indicated that English-language learners benefited from text retelling. A second gap in the literature is that, despite the documented robust effect of retelling on improving native speakers' comprehension, the linguistic aspect of reading comprehension that is best improved by retelling has not yet been deeply investigated. Through the questionnaire employed in the present study, I examined the impact of retelling with regard to the participants' understanding at the word-level, sentence-level, and text-level. Third, the text type utilized in previous research has been either expository or narrative. But these two text types have different structures that may spark readers to activate diverse strategies for comprehension. In fact, a reader may be involved in both types of article reading in daily life. Therefore, to provide a complete analysis of reading comprehension performance, I used both narrative and expository texts. Fourth, the participants in previous research have been kindergarten, elementary, and high school students. I assumed that the retelling technique that worked with kindergarten, elementary, and secondary students would also serve other students, namely post-secondary students. Thus, the present study examined university students.

Most importantly, the during-reading phase has been ignored in the previous research using retelling as an instructional tool to activate the learners' reading comprehension. Previous research has used the retelling technique only as a follow-up strategy. As a result, these studies on the effects of retelling only examined reading comprehension following reading or listening. However, what students comprehend and how they understand the text during reading may influence what they retell after reading. Therefore, the present study asked participants to use retelling and examined how they understood the text during reading.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the retelling technique on Chinese learners' reading comprehension of expository and narrative texts. The study addressed the following three research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between retelling-based instruction and non-retelling based instruction on participants' reading comprehension pre- and post-

tests?

2. Are there any significant differences between retelling-based instruction and non-retelling based instruction on participants' reading comprehension strategy during reading and that after reading?

3. What are the participants' perceptions of retelling as a technique used to improve their reading comprehension?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 126 students taking intermediate-level English classes at a public university in Taiwan took part in the study. The native language of all participants was Chinese. The age of the students ranged from 18 to 21 years, with an average age of 18 years and seven months. The university administers the General English Proficiency (GEP) test at the beginning of each new academic year. The test measures the students' listening and reading proficiency. The students were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The GEP test results of the *t*-test revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the reading section, with results of $F = 0.27$, $p = .06 > 0.05$. In the listening section, there were also no statistically significant differences between the two groups ($F = 2.04$, $p = .64 > 0.05$). Table 1 provides statistical results.

Table 1

General English Proficiency Test in the Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Experimental		Control			
	$n = 65$		$n = 61$			
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	t	p
Reading	62.26	16.29	56.66	16.66	1.91	0.06
Listening	64.14	15.92	62.67	18.61	0.48	0.64

* $p < .05$

Research Design

The intervention study had a pre-test/post-test control group design. Before the treatment program, all participants were given a pre-test to measure their reading comprehension abilities. The experimental and control groups received the same learning content, but the experimental group had the retelling technique, while the control group had conventional techniques. The post-test was administered to all participants after the intervention program.

Procedure

The study was conducted in an English class, which met for a two-hour class meeting each week. Eight class meetings were used for the study (see Table 2 for the study schedule). In the first meeting, we conducted a brief background questionnaire to collect information on the participants' backgrounds, including their native language, age, and experience with the retelling technique. The results of the background questionnaire showed that no participant had experience using the retelling technique. The participants then took a reading comprehension pre-test. In the second and third meetings, the researcher administered the retelling practice with the experimental group, in which the participants were instructed on how to retell expository and narrative passages.

The general format of the retelling technique in this study was the written-to-written procedure: students were first asked to silently read a passage and then to use English to write down what they had read (Benson & Cummins, 2000). In this practice session, the researcher modeled text retelling by following the modeling procedure and directions described by Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus, and Heathington (1988, pp. 893-894). Koskinen et al. (1988) stated that when demonstrating the written retelling protocol, the instructor informed students that the retelling task involved organizing all of the important ideas and details and retelling them in a logical manner with the correct chronological sequence according to the passage. In the present study, several other concepts were also stressed to participants, including the following:

> When you retell in English, please do not recite the passage word by word.
> You may use your own words to retell it as if you are telling it to your
> friend, who has no idea about the passage.

Following the steps of the immediate recall procedure recommended by Bernhardt (1991), I reminded the participants that there was no time limit and that they could read the passage repeatedly until they completely understood it before using the retelling technique. After I modeled retelling two passages, the participants practiced reading two other passages and writing retellings in English.

After the participants finished the retelling practice, the retelling intervention began in earnest at the fourth class meeting. In this intervention session, I asked the participants to use the retelling technique. Each participant read the passage silently and wrote the passage retelling following the directions demonstrated in the practice session. The participants read and retold one passage per week. They read and retold four passages in total.

From the second to the seventh class meeting, the control group received non-retelling based instruction but was taught using traditional reading instruction, which included teacher-directed guidance in providing Chinese definitions of certain vocabulary, Chinese paragraph translation, and instruction in grammar. The participants of the control group were assigned to read the same passages as the participants in the retelling group. After the intervention, both the experimental and control groups took a reading comprehension post-test. At the eighth class meeting, both groups completed a reading comprehension strategy questionnaire and the experimental group was additionally asked to write self-reports on their attitudes toward the retelling technique.

Table 2
The Study Schedule

Class Meeting	Schedule
1	Background questionnaire + Reading Comprehension Pre-Test
2	Retelling Practice (Expository passages)
3	Retelling Practice (Narrative passages)
4	Retelling Intervention (one passage)
5	Retelling Intervention (one passage)
6	Retelling Intervention (one passage)
7	Retelling Intervention (one passage) + Reading Comprehension Post-Test
8	Reading Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire + Self-reports

Instruments

The general English proficiency test. This test designed by Taiwan Testing Center (n.d.) was administered to determine the students' English proficiency. The test consists of two sections. The reading section involves answering multiple-choice questions on grammatical structures and vocabulary. The listening section involves answering multiple-choice questions after listening to a conversation or a monologue. This test is a widely-recognized English test in Taiwan and has stable reliability and validity. This test is used by various government institutions and a great number of schools for entry and graduation requirement. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate was at $\alpha = .86$.

Reading comprehension pre- and post-tests. The pre- and post-tests were group tests featuring the same text, which measured the participant's ability to comprehend writing in English. The participants read six passages and answered 30 multiple-choice questions. These passages and questions were directly adopted from Pauk (2000). In the original format, each passage was followed by six types of questions: main idea, subject matter, supporting details, conclusions, clarifying devices, and vocabulary in context. The main idea question was taken away because it is not the multiple-choice variety from which participants select one correct option. See Appendix A for one sample passage with five questions.

The rationale for using the same test for both pre- and post-measurement was to assure objectively comparable tests, thus avoiding the problem of equating different formats of pre- and post-tests. The six-week interval between administrations was considered long enough to control for any short-term memory effects. This is because the participants were not provided with the correct answers after the pre-test, so they had no way of knowing whether their answer was correct; moreover, they were unlikely to remember how they had answered a question the first time. Thus, the interval was deemed long enough to control for any significant learning except for that due to the training.

The reading comprehension strategy questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 14 items with a 1-5 Likert Scale for each item (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The questionnaire included: (1) seven statements pertaining to the impact of retelling during reading, and (2) seven statements pertaining to the impact of retelling after reading (see Appendix B for the structure of the questionnaire).

Individual items dealing with the periods during and after reading were further divided into word-level, sentence-level, content details, and the overall meaning of the text. In addition, two items covering the period during reading focus on the participants' affective factors, exploring how participants conceived retelling as a strategy that helped them pay attention to the reading material. Questionnaires were written in English and translated into Chinese. Participants completed the Chinese version (see Appendix C for the questionnaire with the English items). The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate was fairly high at $\alpha = .92$.

Self-report. The self-report focused on the participant's experience with retelling. It contained one semi-open question asking whether the participants wanted to continue to use the retelling technique after the program was over, and why or why not.

Preparation of Retelling Passages

With the focus on comprehending the entire text, learning the retelling technique did not require any supportive training in vocabulary or sentence structure. Articles were selected to come from a reading difficulty level suited to the reading proficiency of the participants. To find the lowest reading instructional level of this group, 20 participants — 10 from the experimental group, and 10 from the control group — were randomly chosen from among those with the lowest total GEP test scores and given a diagnostic test called the Qualitative Reading Inventory-3 (QRI-3; Leslie & Caldwell, 2001). The results showed that 15 participants were at a grade 2 instructional level, four participants were at a grade 3 instructional level, and one student was at a grade 4 instructional level. To generate sufficient retelling data and avoid frustration for the participants, the selected reading materials were below a grade two instructional level.

In total, eight articles were selected. Four of them were used in the retelling practice session, and the other four passages served as intervention materials (see Table 3 for more information on the passages). To ensure consistency in readability and writing style,

all the passages were taken from the QRI-3. The QRI-3 consists of a series of graded expository and narrative passages and has been described as one of the better informal reading inventories with well-written reading passages. The topic, genre, difficulty level, and length of the passages are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
The Passages for the Experimental and Control Groups

Sequence	Topic	Difficulty level	Length (words)	Text Genre
1	* What you eat	Level 1	123	Expository
2	* Air	Level 1	92	Expository
3	* Mouse in a house	Level 1	254	Narrative
4	* A trip	Primer	119	Narrative
5	Who lives near lakes?	Primer	64	Expository
6	Fox and mouse	Primer	122	Narrative
7	Living and not living	Primer	62	Expository
8	The pig who learned to read	Primer	176	Narrative

Note: * indicates that the articles were used in the retelling practice session.

Data Analysis

After data collection, I used Statistic Package for Social Science for Windows (SPSS) version 15.0 to compute the data collected from reading comprehension pre- and post-tests, the participants' reading performance questionnaire. I conducted the independent-samples *t*-tests and paired *t*-tests to investigate whether there are differences between the experimental and control groups on reading comprehension tests and during- and after-reading performance. Furthermore, self-reports were translated and analyzed qualitatively. The analysis focused on why the students who were trained with the retelling technique perceived retelling as a useful tool to improve their reading comprehension or why not. The qualitative analysis was used as supplementary data to help interpret the results of the statistical analysis.

Results

Reading Comprehension Pre- and Post-tests

RQ1: Are there any significant differences between retelling-based instruction and non-retelling based instruction on participants' reading comprehension pre- and post-tests?

This question was answered by comparing the results of reading comprehension pre- and post-tests from the experimental and control groups. Table 4 presents mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SDs) for the experimental and control groups' reading comprehension pre- and post-tests. In the pre-test, the experimental group and the control group, respectively, answered 57.43% and 59.59% correctly. In the post-test, the experimental group and the control group, respectively, answered 66.95% and 60.36% correctly. Thus, the experimental group improved by 9.52%, from 57.43% in the pre-test to 66.95% in the post-test; in contrast, the control group improved by 0.86%, from 59.5% to 60.36%. The results in Table 4 further indicated that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pre-test ($t =$ -.84, df = 124, $p = .41 > 0.05$). The reading comprehension ability of the experimental group is similar to that of the control group before the retelling intervention started. However, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test ($t = 2.54$, df = 124, $p = .01 < 0.05$). The experimental group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group in the post-test. This means that after the retelling intervention, the retelling instruction group outperformed the control group on the reading comprehension post-test.

Table 4
The Independent Samples *T*-test for the Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Experimental n = 65		Control n = 61			
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	*t*	*p*
Pre-test	57.44	14.96	59.59	13.93	-0.84	0.41
Post-test	66.95	15.58	60.36	13.42	2.54	0.01

* $p < .05$

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The results of paired *t*-tests in Table 5 showed that there was a significant difference between the experimental group's pre- and post-tests (t = -5.34, df = 64, p = .00 < 0.05). That is, the participants who received retelling-based instruction significantly improved their reading comprehension. As shown in Table 5, there is no significant difference between the control group's pre- and post-tests (t = -.59, df = 60, p = .56 > 0.05). That is, the participants who did not receive retelling-based instruction did not significantly improve their reading comprehension.

Table 5
Paired *T*-test for Pre- and Post-tests of the Experimental and Control Groups

| | Paired Differences | | | t | df | p |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Experimental group Pre-test -- Post-test	-9.51	14.36	1.78	-5.34	64	0.00
Control group Pre-test -- Post-test	-0.77	10.10	1.29	-0.59	60	0.56

* p < .05

Responses to the Reading Performance Questionnaire

RQ2. Are there any significant differences between retelling-based instruction and non-retelling based instruction on participants' reading comprehension strategy during reading and that after reading?

Table 6 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the *t*-tests for the reading performance questionnaire. As an overall examination of the differences between the experimental and control groups, Table 6 reveals that seven of 14 items differ significantly, while the remaining items do not. Among these seven items, the highest mean score for the experimental group (4.06) was for Item 1 and the lowest mean score (2.95) for Item 9. In contrast, the highest mean score for the control group (3.57) was for Item 7 and the lowest (2.36) for Item 1. In other words, participants in the retelling group strongly agreed that they understood the overall concepts of the article. In contrast, the participants who did not use the retelling technique did not understand the overall concepts of the article.

Table 6
Differences between the Experimental and Control Groups on the Reading Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire

Variable		Experimental n = 65		Control n = 61				
		M	S.D.	M	S.D.	t	p	
1	When reading an article, I understand the general concepts in the article.	4.06	0.66	2.36	0.75	13.51	0.00	*
2	When reading an article, I distinguish between main and detailed ideas.	3.43	0.77	3.07	0.83	2.56	0.01	*
3	When reading an article, I am able to guess the meaning of vocabulary from the context.	3.80	0.69	2.41	0.69	11.29	0.00	*
4	When reading an article, I deduce the structure of sentences.	3.62	0.84	3.41	0.90	1.32	0.19	
5	When reading an article, I am able to relate the information that comes next in the passage to previous information in the passage.	3.58	0.75	3.18	0.89	2.78	0.00	*
6	When reading an article, I keep reading, even when there are misunderstood parts in the text.	3.75	0.88	3.51	0.96	1.50	0.14	
7	When reading an article, I focus my mind on reading English.	3.77	0.84	3.57	0.94	1.23	0.22	
8	After reading an article, I remember main ideas in expository.	3.58	0.86	3.26	0.84	2.13	0.03	*
9	After reading an article, I remember details in expository.	2.95	0.76	2.82	0.76	0.99	0.33	
10	After reading an article, I remember the synopsis of the story.	4.00	0.59	2.48	0.70	13.31	0.00	*
11	After reading an article, I obtain a general impression of text.	3.71	0.68	2.49	0.67	10.09	0.00	*
12	After reading an article, I recognize words.	3.12	0.89	3.15	0.98	0.15	0.88	
13	After reading an article, I spell unfamiliar words correctly.	3.12	0.91	3.03	0.91	0.56	0.58	
14	After reading an article, I am able to recite the words in the sentence.	3.12	0.84	2.97	0.93	0.99	0.33	

$* p < .05.$

The during reading phase. Items 1-7 deal with reading performance during the reading phase. The experimental group achieved significantly higher mean scores on Items 1, 2, 3 and 5 than did students in the control group. These results indicate that the retelling technique helped students in the experimental group to form a general notion of a reading passage ($t = 13.51$, $p = .00$). In addition, the retelling technique helped the students in the experimental group perform better than the control group at distinguishing between the overall and specific ideas of the reading passages ($t = 2.56$, $p = .01$). The technique also

helped the experimental students perform better at surmising the meaning of words from their context ($t = 11.29$, $p = .00$). Furthermore, the experimental group performed better than the control group in drawing connections between pieces of information introduced at different parts of the text ($t = 2.78$, $p = .00$).

Among seven items pertaining to the during reading phase, the experimental group had the highest mean scores in Item 1. This result is consistent with the results obtained by comparing reading comprehension pre- and post- tests, which showed a significant increase in the scores of the experimental group. The comparison of pre- and post-program performance suggests that the retelling technique helps Chinese L1 readers gain a comprehensive understanding of the article during the reading phase.

The after reading phase. Items 8-14 assess reading performance during the "after reading" phase. The statistical results indicate significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in Items 8, 10, and 11. This means that the experimental group performed better than the control group at memorizing the main ideas of the expository texts ($t = 2.13$, $p = .03$) and making a synopsis of the story ($t = 13.31$, $p = .00$). In addition, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in formulating an overview of the text ($t = 10.09$, $p = .00$).

It can be noted that among seven items regarding the "after reading" phase, the experimental and control groups showed extremely different responses for the same item. For example, the experimental group had their high mean score in Item 10 (4.00), but the control group had their rather low mean score for this item (2.48). This means that after reading an article, the experimental group could remember the synopsis of the story but the control group could not. This finding suggests that through retelling training, the experimental group learned to memorize the plot very well; in contrast, in the absence of retelling training, the control group did not improve its ability to remember narrative text after reading. Moreover, the lowest mean score of the experimental group was in Item 9 (2.95). In other words, the participants in the experimental group did not think retelling could help them remember details in expository texts after they finished reading them.

Participants' Self-Reports

RQ3. What are the participants' perceptions of retelling as a technique to improve their reading comprehension performance?

The self-report results were used as supplementary data to help interpret the participants' perceptions of the retelling technique. Among the 65 participants who joined the retelling intervention program, three participants did not provide any response; 35 participants (53.85%) expressed that they would like to continue to use retelling, whereas 27 participants (41.53%) did not want to continue to use it. Further information on participants' intentions and reasons for using or not using the retelling technique were gleaned from their self-reports.

Eight participants who reported that they would continue to use retelling mentioned that they used retelling to read articles in Chinese after the researcher taught them the technique and found it a good strategy to prepare for tests in other subjects they took at university. They stated that when retelling, they could review what they had read, connect the key points, and remember the key points well. Six students indicated that after they read expository passages in Chinese, they found retelling to be a useful strategy for reorganizing the content of the article and figuring out the main ideas in the article. Three participants indicated that they never used this strategy before but thought retelling was an interesting method once they had practiced it. They further reported that retelling helped them read an English article and build concepts related to the topic they read about, rather than simply translate the meaning of the article word-by-word.

In contrast, 27 participants said that they would not continue using retelling. Twenty of them indicated that their limited knowledge of vocabulary turned them off using retelling. For example, they reported that unfamiliar words prevented them from using retelling. When confronting unfamiliar words, all they wanted to do was look for the word in the dictionary and figure out the meaning of each word rather than guess the meaning. After they had found the definitions of words, they were too exhausted to retell anything. They even suggested that figuring out the meanings of the words was the best comprehension strategy. In other words, once a reader knows the meaning of every word, he or she can grasp the meaning of the text. Thus, most of these participants expressed their intention to focus on studying English words when they read an article. Other three

students doubted whether retelling could be effectively applied for a longer passage. Another student objected that there was too little time available to retell after reading a passage, and this student said he was not in the habit of reviewing the content of the article or thinking critically about textual concepts. In order to cultivate a habit of retelling, one student suggested that the teacher should lead students to use this technique in class.

Discussion

In English classes, native readers of Chinese are expected to be able to understand and remember concepts in English texts. The present study used the retelling technique as a comprehension strategy to aid this process, and it further examined whether this strategy improves Chinese learners' reading comprehension of English texts. This study also explored participants' experience in using the retelling technique. In this study, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the following areas: the reading comprehension post-test, some reading comprehension strategies approached in the during reading phase and some in the after reading phase. In the during reading phase the students who used the retelling technique were more capable of having a general understanding of an article, identifying main ideas, guessing the meanings of words in the context, and drawing connections between pieces of information in the article. In the after reading phase, they were more capable of remembering key concepts both in expository and narrative text. In general, the retelling technique involved the students in global processing of text comprehension rather than word sentence level of translation.

The results for the retelling group showed a significantly higher score in the reading comprehension post-test providing compelling evidence that the retelling technique effectively increases participants' comprehension ability. The effects of the technique can be explained through a cognitive process. As Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus (1991) mentioned, the retelling technique is a verbal rehearsal strategy. In the present study, the retelling group was asked to verbalize the concepts they read in the text. During verbalization, many of the participants paid attention to some incoming information, reorganized it, and related it to their prior knowledge. Hence, information in the text was maintained in the students' minds and reinforced in their memories. Through this verbal

rehearsal reading process the participants extended their memory and therefore improved their comprehension ability. The participants' retelling performance also provided evidence for the essential role of reconstruction in reading comprehension in line with studies by Moss (2003, 2004). The participants who used their own words to retell the passage underwent a process of relating what they read to what they already knew. This verbal reconstruction that corresponded to readers' personal experiences significantly aided readers' comprehension of the text.

Moreover, the present study shows that retelling helps participants consolidate a large repertoire of textual information and comprehend passages at a global level. For example, extremely different from the control group, the experimental group demonstrated extraordinarily high mean score to Item 1, "When reading an article, I understand the general concepts in the article" and to Item 11, "After reading an article, I obtain a general impression of text." These results revealed that the participant who used retelling produced a "gist-level" or "macrostructure access - processes" (Kintsch, 2004, p. 1284). As one participant reported in the self report: "I could form an overview of an article and memorize key points through retelling." The results indicate the retelling technique works best for helping Chinese readers grasp and remember the overall conceptual information in the text in the during and after reading phases. A theoretical explanation for the results is that "understanding a text requires formulating a mental representation of its macrostructure" (Kintch, 2004, p. 1280).

The results in the present study also indicate that the experimental group performed much better than the control group at differentiating between the main ideas and details. This result supports the findings concluded from earlier research that through retelling, readers not only notice main ideas (French, 1988) but also distinguish main ideas from details (Moss, Leone, & Dipillo, 1997) at the post-reading phase. The findings further revealed that the experimental group could differentiate between main and detailed ideas while reading and could remember main ideas after they had finished reading. Another major finding from the reading comprehension strategy questionnaire was that the participants who applied the retelling technique could use the contextual information to surmise the meanings of words and link together pieces of information introduced at different points in the text. It is possible that the task of retelling mandates repeated

verbal rehearsal during reading. By applying such a repeated action, learners can have a temporary impression of clusters of words, which occupy a temporary verbal working place (short-term memory). As one participant wrote in the self report that when she used retelling, she could remember the earlier portion of the text while reading later sections and she could thus connect key points in earlier and later sections.

Thus, the retelling process can support the construction of meaning and prolong the retention of a text message. By repeatedly performing verbal rehearsal of clusters of words, a re-teller can interconnect different parts of textual information and thereby attain a contextual understanding of unfamiliar words. This finding conforms to Kintsch's (2004) conception that unfamiliar words without context would not connect new lexical form and meaning with previous linguistic knowledge in the reader's memory and further suggests that the retelling technique involves the reader in reconstructing the meaning of the text at hand using contextual cues. Contextual cues may provide extra-linguistic knowledge in order to integrate new linguistic information into a reader's developing language system. In addition, the results of the reading comprehension post-test showed that the retelling technique significantly improved Chinese readers' abilities to comprehend both narrative and expository passages in English. Moreover, the results of the questionnaire also showed significant differences in the strategies used by the experimental and control groups. The students who used retelling memorized main ideas in expository and the synopsis of the story better than those who did not use this technique in the after reading phase. The present analysis extends the results of earlier studies on English L1 students who used the retelling technique to comprehend either short stories (Gambrell et al, 1985, 1991; Morrow, 1985, 1986, 1993) or expository texts (Moss et al, 1997; Moss, 2003, 2004). As discussed earlier, the retelling technique may enhance the students' comprehension at a gist level and grasp an overall view of the passage. This enhanced ability could have helped them to catch key concepts in both expository and narrative texts.

Although retelling is effective in improving Chinese readers' ability to comprehend English texts, there are some limitations to the retelling technique. The results of the present study did not show that the retelling technique helped participants remember details in expository after reading. It is possible that retelling involves only the rehearsal

of some, rather than all, of the details in a text (Marsh, 2007). In this study, retelling was viewed as a personal constructive process. This is evident in the way in which the instructor taught the students how to retell: the instructor told participants to retell as if they were talking with a friend about what they had read. This task did not involve memorizing details and it was not similar to a test in which participants had to study details in order to achieve a high score. Instead, the retelling technique that was administered in this study emphasized peer communication, and as a result, participants' retellings tended to be emotional. This result is in agreement with what Marsh and Tversky (2004) have stated: emotional retellings tend to be "less verbatim, less tied to original events" (p. 491) and "almost all retellings were tied to actual memory retrieval . . . but the stories told were reportedly not the same as the retrieved events" (p. 500). Thus, the participants did not retell the exact details from the text, instead, they re-described more generalized statements.

The retelling technique did not help participants learn sentences or unfamiliar words. Participants were asked to paraphrase or restate what they read in their own words. By following such instructions, the participants avoided repeating the words in the text. This result reveals that retelling by paraphrasing is not effective if the goal is to recite every word in the sentence. In addition, the present study does not support the view that the retelling technique is advantageous to word spelling. This is because the present study focused on retelling as a comprehension strategy used to construct meaning at a text level throughout the reading process (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007; Pressley, 2002). Readers consequently spent less attention on syntactic structures and the correct order of the letters in a word.

Conclusion

In general, the retelling technique was a valuable addition to L2 reading comprehension instruction. The retelling technique can enhance language learners' ability to comprehend a text at its discourse level, focus the readers' attention on the key content of the text, train readers to use known contextual cues to infer new lexical meanings and help readers distinguish between main ideas and details in the text. Specifically, the retelling technique can best enhance learners' understanding of general concepts in the text both

during and after reading. In order to improve comprehension instruction in English reading classes, teachers should consider adding retelling to their reading curriculum. Based on these results, the current study makes the following instructional recommendations to integrate retelling in L2 comprehension instruction.

Adding Conceptual Comprehension Instruction to Reading Curriculum

Retelling is an excellent tool for the development of students' reading performance at the "main idea" level. Comprehension instruction, combined with the retelling technique, should promote concept-level comprehension. From self-reports, the participants in the present study stated that they had studied English for several years but that they still had to read an English text by looking up unfamiliar words in the dictionary with great conscious effort. In order to help the students avoid the word-by-word reading process, the teacher should focus on helping students gain "main idea" comprehension rather than word-level comprehension. In this study, the results of the reading comprehension strategy questionnaire revealed that the students who used retelling agreed that they could understand the basic idea during reading, and that they could obtain a general impression of what they had read after reading it. These findings suggest that retelling be pertinent to students' conceptual comprehension; students can use retelling to comprehend the text concept-by-concept rather than word-by-word. The instructor can teach the students to use retelling to foster the students' conceptual comprehension and thus read text more effectively.

Providing Plenty of Time for Learners to Think about the Text

Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) asserted that teachers should "give students plenty of time to read in class" (p. 19). The comprehension process takes time. To understand the text comprehensively, learners need time to think about and reflect on what they have read (Gambrell, Koskinen, & Kapinus, 1991). From the psycholinguistic point of view, the process of reading engages the reader in comprehending the information in the text and then further reconstructing the information. It takes time to go through this process, and it is better for the reader to reflect immediately after reading. In this study, some students wrote in their self-report that when they finished reading an

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article, they stopped and did nothing more. Using retelling as a follow-up strategy can be an ideal method to help such students reflect upon the article they have read.

Providing Learners with the Opportunity to Actively Express their Ideas

Gambrell, Malloy, and Mazzoni (2007) also stated that it is necessary to "balance teacher-and student-led discussion of texts" (p. 19). The task involved in retelling is partly learner-centered: learners are asked to read and retell the text by themselves. During the process of reading, learners are not supposed to focus on teachers' overtly explaining the definitions of words and analyzing the grammatical structure of sentences. With the retelling technique, student-directed learning takes place through reading: learners can actively participate in interpreting what the author means in the text.

In general, the results of the current study confirm the positive effects of the retelling technique on Chinese learners' reading comprehension of English passages. However, two limitations need to be noted. First, the number of passages used here was low. There were only four narrative texts and four expository texts. To prevent other variables from interfering with the objectivity of the results, the period of practice and intervention lasted for six weeks; consequently, the participants could not read more articles. Second, owing to the participants' lack of experience with retelling and some participants' low reading proficiency, passages were chosen at primary and Level 1 in the QRI-3. For native English speakers, these levels are for young readers. For adult EFL participants in this study, narrative topics may have appeared slightly juvenile. With these limitations in mind, future research should use more passages and choose more age-suitable topics.

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Appendix A
One Sample Passage Used in Reading Comprehension Pre- and Post-tests

The Faithful Dog

Which animal is "man's best friend"? We all know it's the dog. Dogs have earned the love and respect of humans. Many have given their own lives to save people. Dogs are faithful and devoted. For example Bobby, a Skye terrier, went to market with his Scottish master every day. After the man died, Bobby would not move from his grave. He stayed there for about 20 years. He stayed until he died.

Dogs serve many useful functions. They are good at watching and herding sheep. Wherever sheep are raised, a sheep-herding dog is developed. For instance, there is the German Shepherd dog. In Scotland, there is the Shetland sheep dog. Both are recognized breeds.

Specially trained dogs led the blinds. Such dogs are carefully selected. It takes about three to five months to train them. Guide dogs will refuse to cross a busy street unless the traffic has stopped.

One interesting dog is the St. Bernard. How did it get its name? it was developed by the monks of the St. Bernard Monastery. This is located in the Alps of Switzerland. He dog weighs from 140 to 220 pounds. It's one of the heaviest of all dogs.

St. Bernards are famous for rescuing travelers lost in the snow. They have a wonderful sense of smell. They find people buried under several feet of snow. A St. Bernard named Barry rescued 40 persons. This was over a period of years.

There is a popular misconception about these dogs. They do not carry flasks around their necks. Sr. Edwin Landseer misrepresented them this way in a painting.

1. This passage is mainly about
   A. friendly dogs. B. breeds of dogs. C. useful dogs. D. small dogs.
2. Dogs trained to lead the blind are
   A. Saint Bernards.   B. chosen very carefully. C. trained for seven to 10 months.
   D. raised around blind people.
3. The dog named Bobby can best be described as
   A. lost.   B. tired. C. loyal. D. friendly.
4. To tell this story the author depends mainly on
   A. stories from dog trainers.   B. Lists of different kinds of dogs.
   C. stories about specific dog breeds. D. detailed descriptions of various dogs.
5. The word misconception means something that is
   A. well stated. B. not correctly understood. C. a personal belief. D. confusing.

(Pauk, 2002, pp. 154-155)

Appendix B
Structure of the Reading Comprehension Strategy Questionnaire

Phase	Categories of Items
During reading	Aspects of the impact of retelling: text gist (Item 1); word meaning (Item 3); sentence meaning (Item 4); content (Items 2, 5); aspects of a reader's feeling toward English reading (Items 6-7).
After reading	Aspects of the impact of retelling: text gist (Items 10, 11); word (Items 12, 13); sentence (Item 14); content (Items 8, 9).

Appendix C
Reading Performance Questionnaire

This is an investigation about your text comprehension. The following statements are related to your experience with English reading. Please indicate your (dis)agreement with each statement by circling the appropriate number: 5 indicates strong agreement, 1 strong disagreement.

	Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	When reading an article, I understand the general concepts in the article.	1	2	3	4	5
2	When reading an article, I distinguish between main and detailed ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When reading an article, I am able to guess the meaning of vocabulary from the context.	1	2	3	4	5
4	When reading an article, I deduce the structure of sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
5	When reading an article, I am able to relate the information that comes next in the passage to previous information in the passage.	1	2	3	4	5
6	When reading an article, I keep reading, even when there are misunderstood parts in the text.	1	2	3	4	5
7	When reading an article, I focus my mind on reading English.	1	2	3	4	5
8	After reading an article, I remember main ideas in expository.	1	2	3	4	5
9	After reading an article, I remember details in expository.	1	2	3	4	5
10	After reading an article, I remember the synopsis of the story.	1	2	3	4	5
11	After reading an article, I obtain a general impression of text.	1	2	3	4	5
12	After reading an article, I recognize words.	1	2	3	4	5
13	After reading an article, I spell unfamiliar words correctly.	1	2	3	4	5
14	After reading an article, I am able to recite the words in the sentence.	1	2	3	4	5

Effects of Electronic Portfolios on EFL Oral Performance

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Abstract
Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) refer to the online virtual spaces where students upload artifacts to document and showcase their learning processes. In the literature, some studies have examined the practice of this novel learning tool in L1 and L2 writing classrooms. However, few attempts have hitherto been invested to put to empirical test its impact on speaking skills. The current study, for that reason, set out to address the issue as to whether the incorporation of e-portfolios in EFL conversation classes would give rise to better oral performance. Thirty EFL college students were selected into either the control group or the e-portfolio group. During the course of a semester, the e-portfolio group constructed individual speaking e-portfolios where they uploaded recordings of their opinions on assigned topics on a bi-weekly basis, paid regular visits to their peers' e-portfolios, and dispatched feedback on their peers' work. By contrast, the control group simply recorded their opinions onto compact disks to be turned in to the instructor. Students' oral performance garnered through pre- and post-study recordings were calculated in terms of total words, lexical richness, and syntactic complexity, and then submitted to several ANCOVAs for statistical examination. The results revealed that the e-portfolio group outperformed its control counterpart in a statistically significant manner in terms of total words and lexical richness but not in regard to syntactic complexity, suggesting that e-portfolios functioned to benefit learners' oral performance lexically but not syntactically. In addition, this digital version of portfolios was found to be met with immense acceptability by the students. Drawing on the findings, two pedagogical

implications are then proposed.

Portfolios

Portfolios refer to "a purposeful, interrelated collection of student work that shows the student's efforts, progress or achievements in one or more areas" (Paulson & Paulson, 1991:2). They usually feature such artifacts as writing samples, reading logs, pictures, diaries, reflection on learning, peer and teacher feedback, and so forth. Traditionally, portfolios have been employed as a way to develop and assess the professionalism of pre-service teachers (van Olphen, 2007). Gradually, they also take on the role as the assessment device in myriad educational settings (Yang, 2003). In the literature, many empirical studies have been undertaken to investigate the benefits of employing portfolios as the major or ancillary assessment tool in second/foreign language classrooms. Song and August (2002) found that a carefully structured portfolio assessment could serve as a better tool to identify ESL students that would succeed in subsequent courses than could standardized tests. Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) and Nunes (2004) reported that portfolios encouraged EFL students to take ownership over their own learning and to engage in active reflection on the learning process, thus creating an environment favorable for the development of learner autonomy. Furthermore, this alternative assessment tool was also greeted with overwhelmingly positive responses from both ESL and EFL students alike (Banfi, 2003; Chen, 2006; Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005; Wang & Liao, 2008; Yang, 2003).

Electronic Portfolios (E-portfolios)

Recently, advances in technology and personal computers have made possible the digitalization of portfolios and as such move them from manila folders to electronic media. As MacDonald, Liu, Lowell, Tsai, and Lohr (2004) put it, these electronically-mediated portfolios, or alternatively electronic portfolios, are multimedia environments where students can showcase the artifacts and reflections that represent their growth and

competencies. As compared to their paper-based counterparts, electronic portfolios enable students to collect, store, and manage their artifacts in a relatively easy and efficient manner, so long as Internet access is available (Heath, 2002). Further, they also allow the artifacts to take such forms as images, sound files, video clips, and so forth (Knight, Hakel, & Gromko, 2006). Additionally, dispensed with time- and location-constraints, electronic portfolios simplify and vivify the feedback-giving process for teachers and peers in a dramatic way. Moreover, their characteristic trait of being widely accessible to the public can also result in students fostering a heightened sense of audience and as such taking more careful account of what they write and how they write (Wall & Peltier, 1996).

In the past decade, a few empirical attempts have been carried out to examine the implementation of electronic portfolios in both L1 and L2 classroom contexts. In the L1 context, Tsai, Lowell, Liu, MacDonald, and Lohr (2004), investigating American graduate students' experiences in constructing electronic portfolios, reported that "sharing" and "peer review" activities where students exchanged successes, failures, and strategies in tackling technical problems gave rise to the most learning. Also, Knight, Hakel, and Gromko (2006) invested efforts to scrutinize the relationship between participation in creating electronic portfolios and student success, discovering that despite the absence of effects on student academic engagement, electronic portfolios compilation helped the participating undergraduate students garner significantly higher grade point averages, credit hours earned, and retention rates.

In the L2 context, Chang, Wu, and Ku (2005) conducted an action research where a group of EFL junior high school students were invited to compile and personalize their electronic portfolios to mirror their learning processes. The results showed that a majority of students embraced immensely positive reactions towards electronic portfolios, while only 2 reported being confronted with such technical problems as unfamiliarity with the system and typing speed. Another research attempt in this context was put forth by Hung (2006). Implementing electronic portfolios as a learning and assessment tool in an EFL writing classroom, he unveiled that college students also responded to the electronic portfolios in a strongly positive fashion, echoing the results reported by Chang, Wu, and Ku (2005). Moreover, the process of establishing electronic portfolios was also found to

pique students' awareness of the nature of academic writing and help cultivate pertinent writing strategies.

The Present Study

Thus far, most of the previous electronic portfolio studies have centered their attention on the development or assessment of students' writing skills or general language proficiency. Few systematic attempts have hitherto been made to investigate the relationship between electronic portfolios and oral speaking skills. In light of this paucity of relevant literature, coupled with the aforementioned advantages the use of electronic portfolios possesses, this study thus set out to address the issue as to whether electronic portfolios might constitute a viable venue for students to demonstrate and document their speaking performance and as such function to benefit their oral proficiency development. Specifically, this study examined the effects of electronic portfolios on the 3 indices of English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) college students' oral performance in English conversation classes, that is, language quantity, lexical richness, and syntactic complexity. Furthermore, it explored students' attitude towards the employment of this digital devise as the medium for oral artifact sharing, vis-à-vis the use of the more traditional compact disks (CDs). In so doing, this study intended to bridge the gap in the emerging literature on electronic portfolio research and bring to light an alternative tool that affords language learners additional opportunities to practice and strengthen their speaking skills by virtue of uploading and parading their oral artifacts in the virtual world. Proceeding from the foregoing purposes, this study addressed the following questions.

1) Do electronic portfolios enhance the language quantity, lexical richness, and syntactic complexity of EFL students' speaking performance?
2) What are students' attitudes towards the employment of electronic portfolios in promoting their speaking skills?

Methods

Participants

Thirty English-major juniors from two intact English conversation classes at a Taiwanese university participated in the current study. Aged between 20 and 25, they have garnered

an average of 10 years of formal education in English prior to their participation in this study. Before ascending the educational ladder to university, a vast majority of them had specialized in foreign languages in either a 5-year or a 2-year junior college. To be exact, for these 30 participants, 29 majored in foreign languages back in junior colleges (25 in English, 2 in German, 1 in Spanish, and 1 in French), while only one of them used to be a non-language major (Business Administration). When it comes to computer use, these students spend, on average, 17 hours engaging in computer-mediated activities on a weekly basis. Furthermore, the activities they favor the most involve, in order, information searching, email exchanging, word processing, blogging, and instant messaging.

Materials

The materials/instruments employed in this study included the oral pretest and posttest, electronic portfolios/blogs, and an attitude questionnaire. First, the oral pretest and posttest gauged students' speaking performance at two different points in time, that is, prior to and at the conclusion of the study, to allow for the subsequent quantitative analyses. Taking the form of oral recording tasks, they both began with an aural prompt that invited students to voice their opinions on a topic bearing similarity to those found in everyday conversations. To be specific, the pretest probed students' first impression of the university in which they were enrolled, whereas the posttest inquired about their bad habits and associated coping strategies. Next, upon hearing the prompt, students needed to formulate their oral responses, record these responses, and electronically submit the resulting audio recordings to the instructor in 10 minutes.

Second, the personal information sheet consisted of 5 items gathering information regarding participants' background, language learning experience, as well as reasons and frequency of computer use. To complete this form, students either ticked the box that best described them or produced open responses in the written form (see Appendix A). With the intent to eschew potential language-induced misunderstandings, this sheet was presented to the participants in their native language, that is, Mandarin Chinese.

Third, *Wretch*, a free blog publishing system, constituted the virtual milieu where the students developed and maintained their electronic portfolios/blogs. The choice of

this particular system stemmed from the immense popularity it enjoys in Taiwan; that is, it emerges as the second most-visited website in Taiwan (Alexa, n.d). Also, this decision arose from its characteristic feature that allows users to edit and customize their personal blogs without possessing any prior knowledge in regard to web designing. Figure 1 depicts a sample *Wretch* blog.

Fourth, the attitude questionnaire, adapted from the one developed and validated by in Yang's (2003) study, explored the extent to which participants perceived the practice of electronic portfolios in a positive fashion. To complete this 11-item questionnaire, participants first indicated their attitude by rating the first 9 items on a Likert scale with 5 possible responses, ranging from 1 to 5 representing the degree to which the participants believed the statement was characteristic of them. Next, they responded to the other 2 items by enumerating the advantages and disadvantages they detected in the employment of electronic portfolios in a conversation class (see Appendix B). As with the personal information sheet, this questionnaire was also presented to the participants in Mandarin Chinese.
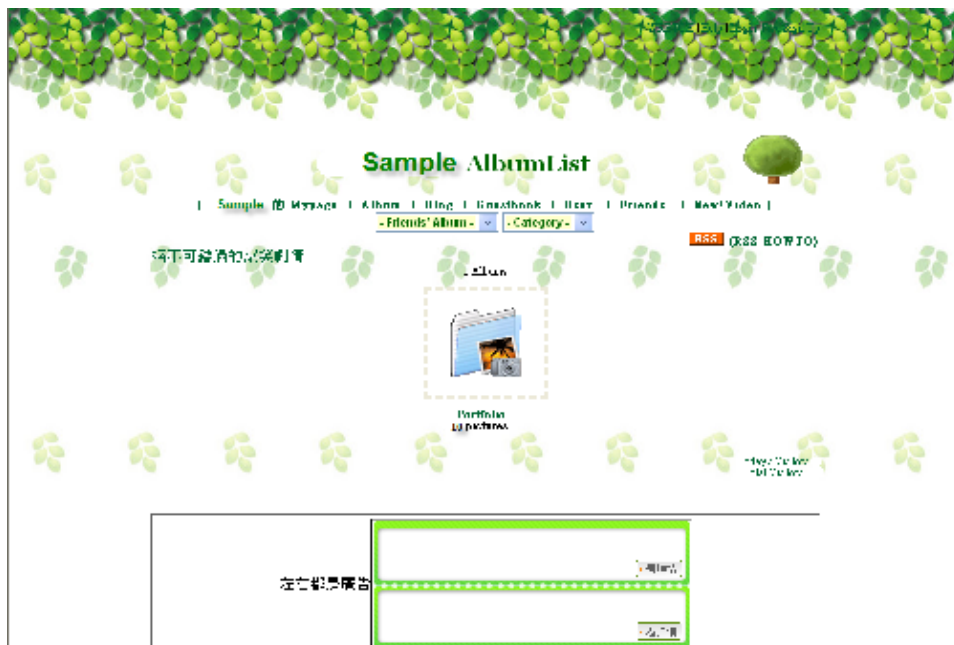
Figure 1 A Sample *Wretch* Blog

Procedure

Since it fell outside the realm of possibility to randomly select the participants into the 2 treatment conditions, that is, the electronic portfolio group (e-portfolio group) and the control group, the researchers assigned the treatment conditions to these two intact classes in a random manner instead. During the course of the semester, these 2 groups shared parallels in that they received exactly the same instruction from the same instructor, differing only in the way they stored and handled their audio recordings; that is, the e-portfolio group uploaded and maintained their recordings on their individual electronic portfolios whereas the control group fell back on the compact disks for recording maintenance.

As depicted by Table 1, in the first week of the semester, all students from the 2 groups were given the oral pretest in the form of an oral recording task that aimed to assess their pre-study speaking performance. Immediately after, the electronic portfolio group participated in a tutorial session acquainting them with the operation of the free blogging system, *Wretch*, and constructed their individual electronic portfolios (blogs) by means of this system. Starting from the second week and on a bi-weekly basis, both groups were then required to record an audio file in which they verbalized their thoughts on a topic derived from the in-class discussion occurring in the same week. However, having done that, the e-portfolio group had to post their audio file onto their respective electronic portfolio for public viewing whereas the control simply burned them onto compact disks to be handed in to the instructor in the ensuing week. Furthermore, for the e-portfolio group, in each week sandwiched by 2 recording weeks, they were instructed to pay visits to three of their fellow classmates' electronic portfolios and offer their text feedback delineating the strong and weak points they observed from their peers' audio recordings. Additionally, both in the middle and at the end of the semester, they needed to dispatch an audio file reflecting on the blogging issues as they related to their experience and progress of honing their English speaking skills by virtue of the electronic portfolios. Last but not least, apart from the aforementioned artifacts, the e-portfolio group was also encouraged to enrich and personalize their electronic portfolios with artifacts of their choice, such as oral diaries, English songs, speeches, video clips, just to name a few. Yet, due to the practical and technical constraints, the instructor relaxed

these requirements for the control group who relied principally on the more traditional CDs for data maintenance.

At the conclusion of the semester, all students then performed the oral recording task again, this time as the posttest gauging their post-study speaking performance so as to enable statistical comparisons. Finally, in tandem with this oral posttest, the attitude questionnaire was then administered to the e-portfolio group.

Table 1 The Schedule of the Recording Task

Week	E-portfolio Group	Control Group
1	Pretest	
2	*Wretch* tutorial	
3	Uploading personal opinions I	Recording personal opinions I
4	Peer feedback	
5	Uploading personal opinions II	Recording personal opinions II
6	Peer feedback	
7	Uploading personal opinions III	Recording personal opinions III
8	Peer feedback	
9	Mid-term exam	
10	Uploading reflection I	
11	Peer feedback	
12	Uploading personal opinions IV	Recording personal opinions IV
13	Peer feedback	
14	Uploading personal opinions V	Recording personal opinions V
15	Peer feedback	
16	Uploading reflection II	
17	Post-test and questionnaire administration	
18	Final exam	

Data Analysis

The data gleaned in this study were reported or analyzed in the following manners. First, students' experiences of language learning and computer use garnered from the personal information sheets were simply reported. Secondly, participants' oral responses on the pretest and the posttest were transcribed and then examined in terms of the 3 oral

performance indices, viz., language quantity, lexical richness, and syntactic complexity. Concerning language quantity, the word count for each transcript was obtained. In regard to lexical richness, type/token ratio (TTR) was called into action to provide relevant information. TTR represents the ratio between the total number of different words in the text and the total number of running words and demonstrates the extent to which "a learner can express himself with the vocabulary he knows" (Laufer & Nation, 1995:310). However, since this ratio fluctuates depending on the length of the text used (Warschauer, 1996), the researchers took a uniform number of words from each transcript to serve as the denominator of the calculation formula in order to put all of the participants on an equal footing. When it comes to syntactic complexity, the researchers relied on the Coordination Index (CI) to reveal the degree to which participants achieve syntactic complexity through coordination rather than via subordination (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). As held by Warschauer (1996), "CI is considered to be inversely proportional to complexity, since more advanced writers or speakers of a language generally use proportionally more subordination than do beginners"(p. 14). To calculate this index, the number of independent-clause coordinations was first counted and then divided by the total number of clauses combined by either independent coordination or dependent subordination (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). To obtain participants' numeric scores on the foregoing oral performance indices, two raters took care to tally and analyze the relevant elements in the transcripts either by means of the Computerized Language Analysis program (CLAN) of the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) or by way of manual calculations. The inter-rater reliability in the form of a correlation coefficient reached the value of 0.92, suggesting a highly consistent tallying and analyzing practices between the two raters. Finally, the obtained scores were then submitted to several analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine if there existed any statistically significant differences between the two groups' recordings with respect to 3 oral performance indices.

Lastly, in terms of the attitude questionnaire, e-portfolio students' attitudes towards the incorporation of electronic portfolios into the conversation class were measured both quantitatively, by means of 9 scaled items, and qualitatively, by way of 2 open-ended items. For the 9 scaled items, students' responses were tallied and converted into

percentages to numerically represent their attitudes towards electronic portfolios. As for the 2 open-ended items, students' responses were simply reported in the narrative fashion.

Results and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the results of the statistical and qualitative analyses performed on students' post-study oral performance as well as the experimental group's attitudes towards electronic portfolios. For the statistical analyses, the minimal level of significance was set at .05. Furthermore, prior to each ANCOVA procedure, the researchers tested the homogeneity of group regressions assumptions for each oral performance index which revealed that none of the interactions between the pretest scores (covariate) and the group affiliation achieved the statistical significance level of .05, thus satisfying the prerequisite to proceed with the ANCOVA operations.

Language Quantity

Table 2 lays out the results of ANCOVA that compared the difference in language quantity scores between the e-portfolio group and the control group. As illustrated by this table, the e-portfolio group (M=257, SD=36) on average achieved a higher language quantity than the control group (M=227, SD=51). Moreover, this difference emerged to be significant at the .05 level (F(1,27)= 5.62, p<.05), thus corroborating the assumption that electronic portfolio practices lead to a substantial increase in language production. However, as Table 1 makes clear, the pretest scores between the two groups significantly differed from each other, implying that the e-portfolio group came to this study with a speaking ability that is significantly better than that of the control group to start with. To grapple with this issue, students' post-study oral performance scores in both groups have thus been adjusted by ANCOVA to reflect and to take into account this inherent difference and to remove the confounding effect of the pretest scores.

To speculate, this significant increase in language output might have stemmed from the additional oral practices afforded by the construction of electronic portfolios. By virtue of uploading opinions onto their electronic portfolios on a regular basis, students thus enjoyed additional opportunities to practice framing and orally present their thoughts on different topics, which then allowed them to foster a more adroit manipulation of the

target language in communicating their messages. This enhanced adroitness, in turn, enabled them to organize and verbalize their opinions in a relatively quicker manner as they performed the recording task and, as a consequence, gave rise to the demonstrably higher amount of language production shown in their post-test oral responses.

Table 2 Gain Scores: Total Words – Results of ANCOVA

Groups	N	Mean	SD		
E-portfolio group	15	257	36		
Control group	15	227	51		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Covariate (Pretest)	11975	1	11975	7.67	.010**
Adjusted means (A)	8789	1	8789	5.62	.025*
Adjusted error	42156	27	1561		

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Lexical Richness

As noted earlier, the current study harnesses the Type/Token ratio (TTR) as the means to determine lexical richness associated with participants' transcripts. As evinced in Table 3 outlining the results of ANCOVA on the TTR, vis-à-vis the control group (M = .58, SD = .06), the e-portfolio group enjoyed a slightly higher average of TTR (M=.63, SD = .06) on the posttest. Additionally, this difference reached a high level of statistical significance (F(1,27)= 7.948, p<.01), as such confirming the utility of electronic portfolios in preparing learners to make use of a more diverse vocabulary to verbalize themselves.

To make a conjecture, the heightened sense of audience might be responsible for the increased range of lexicon associated with the e-portfolio group. While all participants in both groups audio-taped their oral responses as an additional practice of the target vocabulary items they picked up from the discussions occurring earlier in the classroom, only the e-portfolio group needed to take a step further and made their recordings accessible to the general public on the Internet rather than only to the instructor. Therefore, the e-portfolio group, spurred by this acute awareness of audience, might have

invested more effort into the making and uploading of their recordings in attempts to present themselves in a better light online. Following these additional efforts, they might have gained increased exposure to the newly-acquired vocabulary, which in turn made possible the internalization of the vocabulary items as well as paved the way for the mobilization of these items in students' oral vocabulary that they capitalized on to generate utterances. Put another way, the repetitive contact with the vocabulary as a result of the heightened sense of audience somehow greased the path for e-portfolio students to subsume these items into their active oral lexicon, effectively leading to the adroit manipulation of a wider array of vocabulary in their post-study recording.

Table 3 Gain Scores: TTR - Results of ANCOVA

Groups	N	Mean	SD		
E-portfolio group	15	.63	.06		
Control group	15	.58	.06		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Covariate (Pretest)	.004	1	.004	1.170	.289
Adjusted means (A)	.028	1	.028	7.948	.009**
Adjusted error	.096	27	.004		

* p < .05, ** p < .01

Syntactic Complexity

In this study, the Coordination Index (CI), which reflects the ratio of coordination clauses to the total clauses, was recruited to quantitatively represent the syntactic complexity of the transcribed speech samples. As sketched out in Table 4, the e-portfolio group (M=.32, SD=.16), on average, demonstrated a higher CI value than the control group (M=. 26, SD=.15), but the difference between them did not reach the minimal level of statistical significance (F(1,27)= 0.943, p=0.34). Given that CI functions as an inverse indicator of syntactic complexity, this finding thus suggests that the utterances generated by the control group, who resorted to the traditional CDs for recording maintenance, actually featured a higher syntactic complexity as compared to those produced by the e-portfolio counterpart, though not significantly so.

To provide an account for this finding, the insufficient importance attached to the linguistic forms might have given rise to this insignificant between-group difference. Referring to the conversational nature of the classes from which the participants were drawn, the instructor accordingly conducted the class by laying stress almost exclusively on the content of students' messages with little attention devoted to the discussions of the sentence structures that carried the messages. As a corollary to this de-emphasis on forms, students from the e-portfolio group, while attempting to get across their thoughts, might as a result make little effort to experiment with the more sophisticated sentence patterns with which they came into contact in class, and revert mainly to the ones that they found familiarity with. As a result, such a heavy reliance on the existing sentence patterns led to the stagnation in the syntactic complexity and in turn rendered the post-study oral performance of the 2 groups statistically comparable on this index.

Table 4 Gain Scores: CI– Results of ANCOVA

Groups	N	Mean	SD		
E-portfolio group	15	.32	.16		
Control group	15	.26	.15		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Covariate (Pretest)	.003	1	.003	.105	.748
Adjusted means (A)	.024	1	.024	.943	.340
Adjusted error	.681	27	.025		

Attitude Questionnaire

As stated earlier, the researchers administered an 11-item attitude questionnaire to the e-portfolio group at the conclusion of the study, with 9 scaled items tapping the extent to which they embraced positive attitudes toward the practice of electronic portfolios in a conversation class and 2 open-ended items gleaning their perceived advantages and disadvantages associated with this alternative to traditional paper-based portfolios. With respect to the 9 scaled items, the student's responses were first tallied and then presented in percentages, as shown in Table 5. As illustrated in this table, overall, students

responded to the e-portfolio treatment in a rather favorable manner. To be specific, more than half of them believed that the electronic portfolio became a good tool to help them organize and represent their learning in this class as well as to benefit their learning in future classes; concurrently, they considered the employment of e-portfolios to document their learning progress in this class as a successful experience. Furthermore, 73% of them endorsed the statement that the e-portfolio treatment somehow motivated them to better engage in the reflective practice of their own learning. Additionally, 80% and above indicated that the electronic portfolio, apart from serving as a good tool to help them demonstrate their learning progress, provided a multi-dimensional perspective about learning and helps with their future independent study.

In regard to the 2 open-ended items that prompted students to voice their perceived advantages and disadvantages of electronic portfolios in light of their experiences in constructing their personal ones, students first catalogued a multitude of strengths that they believe contributed to the electronic portfolios emerging as an adequate tool to boost speaking performance. First, electronic portfolios afforded them the possibility of revising and resubmitting their recordings as many times as they pleased, which in turn created pertinent opportunities for out-of-class oral practices. Second, the asynchronous nature of the audio file postings accorded them additional time to formulate and organize their thoughts and as such reduced oral communication anxiety in a considerable manner. Third, the on-line maintenance of recordings allowed for an easier review and monitor of their own oral learning progress; that is, it facilitated the comparison and contrast of their audio recordings created and uploaded at different points in time. Lastly, the computer interface on which electronic portfolios operate created a protective barrier that somehow resulted in their enhanced willingness to verbalize peer feedback, negative ones in particular.

Immediately afterwards, the students continued to spell out the 2 major disadvantages that they found somehow compromised the usefulness and practicality of practicing electronic portfolios in a conversation class. First of all, the absence of real-time interactions rendered the audio uploading less than an ideal activity for oral skill development, given that it entailed only unidirectional communication, that is, from students to the audio recorder. Secondly, technical problems sometimes came to present

themselves in students' act of uploading, be it a connection failure or the website breakdown, thus calling forth multiple attempts and leading to a sense of frustration.

Table 5 Results of the 9 Scaled Items on the Attitude Questionnaire

Please indicate your responses by ticking in the appropriate box on the right according to your experiences of constructing electronic portfolio.	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*
1. The electronic portfolio helped me organize learning in this class……………………………..	7%	53%	40%	0%	0%
2. The electronic portfolio is a good tool to show my learning progress………………………………….	7%	73%	13%	7%	0%
3. The electronic portfolio represents my learning results in this class……………………….…..	0%	60%	20%	13%	7%
4. The electronic portfolio helped me reflect on my learning in this class…………..………………..…	0%	73%	27%	0%	0%
5. The electronic portfolio is a good tool to help students learn……….………………………………	7%	60%	27%	7%	0%
6. The electronic portfolio provides a multi- dimensional perspective about learning……	27%	60%	13%	0%	0%
7. The electronic portfolio will help my learning in future classes……………..…………….............	13%	53%	33%	0%	0%
8. The electronic portfolio helps my future independent learning………………….……….	20%	67%	13%	0%	0%
9. Learning through an electronic portfolio in this class has been successful………………………..	13%	53%	33%	0%	0%

 * Degree to which the statement is characteristic of you (1: the least characteristic of you; 5: the most characteristic of you).

The results derived in the current study replicated the previous research revealing that electronic portfolios were greeted with immensely positive attitude from the participants (Chang, Wu, & Ku, 2005; Hung, 2006). To interpret, this favorable attitude might have stemmed from students' actual encounters with the benefits that electronic portfolios have to offer. That is, by way of partaking in this study, students personally witnessed how

electronic portfolios would function to make available additional opportunities for language practice, allow for constant documenting and monitoring of language learning progress, create an interface that ameliorates speaking anxiety, and facilitate the feedback process for both the instructor and fellow learners. With this experience under their belt, it seems only reasonable that students would end up embracing this digital version of portfolios with open arms.

Conclusion

The current study served as an attempt to investigate the effects of electronic portfolios on EFL students' speaking performance as well as to explore the extent to which they possessed positive attitudes towards this alternative to the more traditional paper-based portfolios. Following the statistical analyses and qualitative examinations, 3 major results emerged. First and foremost, the e-portfolio students demonstrated significantly better oral performance in terms of language quantity. Second, the electronic portfolio treatment impacted the lexical richness of students' oral production in a substantial manner, but failed to uphold such effects for the syntactic complexity. Thirdly, electronic portfolios were met with immense acceptability and a strong preference on the part of the language learners.

On grounds of these results in juxtaposition with previous research findings, 2 pedagogical implications are thus proposed for EFL instruction and learning. First of all, it is advised that EFL teachers allow electronic portfolios to take precedence over the traditional paper-based counterparts insofar as oral artifact management is concerned. Drawing on the overwhelmingly positive attitudes students entertain for electronic portfolios unveiled in the current study, to have students maintain their learning artifacts via this electronic modality might, in all likelihood, reinforce their motivation to take initiatives and in turn strengthen their learning outcome. Second, EFL students should be encouraged to take advantage of electronic portfolios in their efforts to sharpen oral speaking skills in the target language. In contrast to second language learning, endeavors taking place in the foreign language milieu typically suffer from insufficient language practices beyond the classroom context. Electronic portfolios, as evidenced by the findings derived in the present study, may lend themselves to spanning this gap by

supporting additional out-of-class oral practices for students to put to use the language/vocabulary they are exposed to in class. By way of harnessing these digital devices, students may be put in a better position to instantiate their passive vocabulary into active oral lexicon as well as to increase their oral language quantity, as such gradually moving towards an enhanced oral speaking skill.

Future Research

Granted that the present study emerged as but one research attempt, it follows that more empirical endeavors are warranted if the efficacy of electronic portfolios on foreign language speaking performance is to be asserted with greater confidence. Five viable research avenues for future exploration are delineated as follows. First and foremost, in lieu of oral performance indices, some form of oral assessment rubrics could be harnessed to arrive at a more holistic evaluation of students' oral production and to capture a clearer picture of their speaking skills. Secondly, a larger number of participants could be included to maximize the generalizability of the findings to the targeted population. Third, the electronic portfolio treatment sustained for a longer period of time, i.e. one year, could be implemented to allow for summative examinations of the long-term effects of electronic portfolios and formative documentation of students' ongoing growth in speaking ability. Fourth, mixed-gendered groups of participants as opposed to the single-gendered ones could be recruited to steer clear of the potential gender-induced distortion. Last but not least, in-depth interviews could be employed to bring to light participants' experiences of and perceptions towards the administration of electronic portfolios and provide further insight into the effects of electronic portfolios on oral performance from a more qualitative perspective.

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Appendix A – Personal Information Sheet

Please answer the following questions based on your background and English learning experiences.

Age: _____

What was your major in junior college?

_____

How long have you been studying English?   _____ years

Frequency of using a computer (hours/per week):   _____ hours

Reasons for using a computer (select all that apply):
☐ Word Processing ☐ Data searching
☐ Checking and Writing Emails
☐ Chatrooms ☐ Instant Messaging
☐ Webloging ☐ Others, please specify_____

Appendix B – Attitude Questionnaire

Please indicate your responses by ticking in the appropriate box on the right according to your experiences of constructing electronic portfolio.	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*
1. The electronic portfolio helped me organize learning in this class…………………………..	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. The electronic portfolio is a good tool to show my learning progress………………………………….	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. The electronic portfolio represents my learning results in this class…………………….……..	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. The electronic portfolio helped me reflect on my learning in this class…………..……………..…	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. The electronic portfolio is a good tool to help students learn……….…………………………	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please indicate your responses by ticking in the appropriate box on the right according to your experiences of constructing electronic portfolio.	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*
6. The electronic portfolio provides a multi- dimensional perspective about learning……					
7. The electronic portfolio will help my learning in future classes…………….…………….............					
8. The electronic portfolio helps my future independent learning……………………..……….					
9. Learning through an electronic portfolio in this class has been successful………………………..					

10. According to your experience, what are the advantages of using electronic speaking portfolios?

11. According to your experience, what are the disadvantages of using electronic speaking portfolios?

* Degree to which the statement is characteristic of you (1: the least characteristic of you; 5: the most characteristic of you).

Parameters of Language Teaching in the Context
of High Schools of Iran: A Data-First Approach

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Abstract
Theory-first approaches to language teaching research assume that teaching is directed by factors internal to the teachers, i.e., teacher cognition. Along these lines, second language teacher education programs immerse language teachers in general concepts and principles of language teaching to remove their cognitive constraints. Contextual constraints, however, are weeded out as irrelevant since it is assumed that once developed, these general principles can be applied universally. As such, teachers enter the profession with little or no knowledge of the culturally valued modes of thought and action. To uncover contextual constraints or context-sensitive parameters, the study collected and analysed interview data through grounded theory procedures. The results show that rather than being directed by generally accepted principles of language teaching, teachers' action is directed by teachers' awareness of parameters, "a set of culturally permissible, though theoretically unjustified acts specified through local exams and teacher evaluation and promotion schemes". To improve practice, teacher education programs should not only develop teachers' conceptual knowledge but also equip them with a critical awareness of contextual constraints, i.e., the parameters of teaching which account for the situated nature of teaching knowledge.

Keywords: conceptual constraints; contextual constraints; teachers' action; grounded theory; deskilling

1. Introduction

Many studies show that teachers' conceptions about teaching or language derive their practice (see Johnson, 1992; Richards, Tung, & Ng, 1992; Smith, 1996; Woods, 1996). These conceptions can be of either two types: explicit or implicit. A review of previous literature shows different contrastive terminology to describe teachers' cognition: conceptual vs. experiential (Hawkins & Irujo, 2004); technical vs. practical (Ellis, 1997); received vs. experiential (Wallace, 1991); and academic vs. experiential (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Traditionally it is explicit, declarative knowledge which teacher educators have focused on in teacher education (Borg, 2003; Wallace, 1991). For example, Fillmore and Snow claim that "teachers need to know that spoken language is composed of units of different sizes: sounds…morphemes…words…phrases…sentences, and discourses" (Fillmore & Snow, 2002, p. 20). Emphasis on the superiority of explicit ideas regardless of the situation is hardly surprising as one of academics' main jobs is the production of explicit knowledge (Bartels, 2003; Becher & Trowler, 2001). By producing context-free knowledge, they inculcate that this type of knowledge is important for teachers (Bartels, 2004). Rather than being guided by knowledge of the learning needs and developmental profiles of novices (Nathan & Petrosino, 2003, p. 906), educators tend to use knowledge of academic disciplines to change their students' beliefs about learning, language and teaching since they believe that "beliefs are reliable predictors of teacher practices" (Savova, 2003, p. 27). If they could change teachers' conceptions, teachers would teach differently (Peacock, 2001).

The centrality of academic disciplines in second language teacher education has been criticized on several grounds. First, it has been argued that "some linguists have been more interested in finding application for their science than in solving the problems of language teaching" (Mackey, 1966, p. 200). As such applied linguistics lacks a coherent and well-rounded research program on the practical aspects of language teaching, so it cannot provide answers central to teachers' practices (Brumfit, 1995; Larsen-Freeman, 1990). Still others have shown that "SLA, as an academic discipline, is concerned with the production of technical knowledge, whereas language pedagogy, as a profession, is primarily directed at practical knowledge" (Ellis, 1997, p. 237).

Explicit theory-driven knowledge has been attacked on many other grounds. "The cumulative effect of studying what language is and how it is learned, especially when language is defined structurally, does not necessarily translate cogently into knowing how to teach" (Freeman & Johnson, 2004, p. 122) and that "what novice teachers learn in our teacher education programs tends to be absent from and alien to the authentic activity of real teaching" (Johnson, 1996, p. 24). Therefore they suggest that "professional learning…needs to rely less on the transmission of codified knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching and more on the experiences that teachers engage in as learners of L2s and as learners of language teaching" (Freeman & Johnson, 2004, p. 123).

Nonetheless many teacher education programs imply that novice L2 teachers can use explicit knowledge from academic fields to develop implicit, practice-oriented knowledge (see Hedgcock, 2002; Wallace, 1991). The problem with this argument is that L2 teachers do not use the explicit knowledge they learned in language teacher education programs to develop practice-specific implicit knowledge. Furthermore, in many cases implicit knowledge precedes explicit knowledge; in other words, people learn something first (implicit) and only later learn to explain what they know (explicit). Thus, explicit knowledge may be an offshoot of implicit knowledge, not the other way around (Dulany, Carlson, & Dewey, 1984; Graff, Squire & Mandler, 1984).

Teacher education programs may wrongly assume that once developed, conceptual knowledge can be used in practice. Many studies, however, show that knowledge transfer is not as simple or unproblematic as assumed by educators. The following studies all show that teachers' conceptual knowledge has very little effect on their practice.

1. Despite a solid knowledge base of passive structure, the explanations and examples were unclear or misleading (Myhill, 2003).
2. Despite knowledge of task-based teaching, they did not implement it because of contextual factors (Carless, 2003, 2004).
3. Despite solid knowledge of communicative language teaching (CLT) teachers could only talk about it rather than implement it (Sakui, 2004).
4. Despite alternative conceptions of teaching, they unconsciously acted upon their own gestalt of teaching (Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996).

5. Despite knowledge of constructivist approaches to teaching, they still had little idea of what constructivist concepts meant in terms of everyday teaching activities such as planning, instruction and assessment (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002).

6. Despite a vast explicit knowledge, they did not use it because of "cognitive bottleneck", or the limited amount of information that can be explicitly processed at any one time in working memory (Bruer, 1993).

The foregoing studies show that explicit knowledge is not readily accessible in practice. According to Tomlinson, implicit knowledge can be processed much quicker than explicit knowledge as it does not require working memory capacity (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 415). Moreover many claim that implicit knowledge is what teachers use when engaged in their practice (Eraut, 2000; Furlong, 2000). Thus a primary goal of preservice programs should be providing procedural knowledge to novices… (Kagan, 1992). Unfortunately, the acquisition of implicit knowledge is rarely a central focus in language teacher education programs. The lack of procedural knowledge gained in language teacher education programs may be a significant factor in teachers' difficulty in transferring knowledge gained in these programs to their practice of teachers.

Regardless of knowledge type, however, problems of practice are taken to be cognitive in origin. That is, teachers do not teach efficiently because of constraints internal to themselves, i.e., lack of knowledge, either explicit or implicit. The problem with the foregoing studies is that they have weeded out social factors as irrelevant. Within the social context of teaching there are a large number of external factors which potentially need to be taken into account. Teachers can take them as 'resources' or as 'constraints'…They can take them as 'resources' if social factors increase the number of possibilities or options open to them…On the other hand, teachers take them as 'constraints' if these factors narrow, limit or decrease the number of possibilities or options open to them (Woods, 1996). Similarly, social teaching norms, conventions and culture may take teachers' knowledge as a resource that strengthens them or as constraints that fly in their face. Thus teachers' implementing their knowledge depends on whether the society recognises it rather than whether it is explicit or implicit.

Thus in addition to principles of teaching which are universal in nature, teachers

need an awareness of the specifics of teaching contexts, i.e., the parameters of teaching which are context-specific. While principles present a universe of possible acts for teachers, parameters specify a set of permissible acts within a given locality. Several studies have reported that EFL teachers who learn general conceptions about language learning and teaching in academic contexts are not able to use this knowledge in local, non-western contexts because they lack knowledge of the constraints of specific contexts (Lo, 2005). For example, Xiao (2005) found that teachers of Chinese could provide clear feedback on learners' character writing if given plenty of time, but they were not able to provide adequate feedback in the time available during actual classroom teaching. Since social conditions determine teaching, the knowledge-base of language teacher education is in urgent need of context-specific studies which aim at uncovering these parameters.

2. Research Context

This study was conducted in high schools of Mashhad, one of the five major cities of Iran. This city is located in the eastern part of Iran. The study is limited to experienced male teachers teaching in urban areas. Since the syllabus and the testing scheme are uniform throughout the country, there seems to be very little variation in teachers' practice. There seems to be a culturally accepted teaching scenario as follows:

> Nearly thirty students sit in rows facing the blackboard. A ninety-minute class is mainly teacher-fronted, and teacher centred. Lecturing is the rule, though there may be occasional variation on the part of novice teachers. Learning activities are text-centred. Teachers' main concern is coverage rather than responsive teaching. Similarly, students' main concern is passing the final exams and scoring high rather than learning English. Thus responses to the questions about the text tend to consist of relevant passages quoted from the text. A limited version of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) is the best guarantee for teachers to cover the material in the pre-specified time-line, and an efficient method of helping students score high in the finals since oral skills are totally ignored in the finals. Since final exams cover reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar, teachers' main tasks are:

providing Persian equivalents for new words, translating the text, making the students translate, explaining grammar, and making students do written exercises at home, and finally giving feedback on the accuracy of their answers. But there remains a question: why is teaching so simplistic and detached from principles of language teaching?

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

Eight experienced male teachers were selected from the urban areas of Mashhad, one of the five major cities of Iran. All the participants majored in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). One of them had earned his PhD, three had earned their master's degrees, and the others had earned bachelor's degrees. They were selected on the basis of their teaching experience and willingness to share their views and experience with the researcher because "understanding requires an openness to experience, a willingness to engage in a dialogue with one that challenges our self-understandings" (Schewandt, 1999, p. 458). To add diversity and richness to the collected data, however, participants were selected from structurally-different high school types. The researcher stopped sampling when theoretical saturation was achieved.

3.2 Data Collection

Glaser (1998) proposed that both tape recording and note taking may cause participants to be more careful about what they say. To solve this problem, each data collection session included two phases: an initial casual conversation which was not recorded and a subsequent unstructured interview which was tape-recorded. This procedure offered several advantages. First, informants tended to be more open during casual conversations, more likely to spill the most deeply felt, important and sensitive details. Second, using hints from the conversation, the researcher was able to make the participants clarify initial ambiguous ideas. Third, the researcher did not worry that he may forget some of the precious information. In short, theoretical sampling and simultaneous analysis covered:

1. initial data about teachers' work;

2. data related to the determining conditions or parameters of teachers' work;

3. data related to teachers' action in the face of local conditions; and

4. data related to the consequences of teachers' action.

3.3 Data Analysis

The rigorous techniques and coding schemes of grounded theory (Straus and Corbin, 1998) enabled the researcher not only to generate the concepts and categories but also to unify them into a coherent whole. Filed notes and interview transcripts amounted to piles of data. Open coding generated dozens of concepts and four higher order categories indicating external constraints and their effect on teachers' action and subsequently on teachers' professional life: "evaluation criteria", "promotion criteria", "stakeholders' pressure", and "time pressure". Axial coding led to the development of a conditional matrix that elaborated, expanded, contextualised and related categories by answering questions such as why, where, when, how, and with what results. Selective coding led to the development of the core category "parameters of teaching" which pulled the other categories to form an analytic explanatory whole.

To establish trustworthiness, the emerged concepts and categories were verified through "member-checking" (Riley, 1996). Following Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher tried to develop a sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the phenomenon or setting under study. He also tried to allow important concepts and categories emerge from the data without presupposing in advance what the important propositions will be. Despite methodological rigor, however, findings such as these that follow are not a guarantee of truth; for truths are always partial (Clifford, 1986) and knowledge "situated" (Haraway, 1988).

4. Results

The results clearly show that rather than being directed by principles of teaching learned through teacher education programs or through reflection, teachers' practice is directed by parameters of teaching or an awareness of school culture, i.e., culturally accepted though theoretically unjustified modes of thought and action in a given context. In contrast with principles of language teaching, parameters of teaching are patterns of action and

interpretation that are considered right in a given context. They are warranted by their taken-for-granted effectiveness. According to Schutz (1971), these cultural patterns offer ready-made direction for use to eliminate troublesome inquiries, or reflection.

Though teacher-fronted, teacher-cantered approach is rejected by both grand theories learned in pre-service teacher education programs and personal theories developed through reflection, it is an efficient way of meeting social demands of teaching in high schools of Iran. School culture usually resists informed proposals initiated by grand theories because they are not functional. Though professionally defensible, they prove less effective than the culturally approved ready-made solutions or parameters of teaching. Replacements for teaching as usual must be down to earth and guarantee the efficiency inherent to parameters. *Parameters will remain teachers' operating knowledge until principles prove their functionality and efficiency in meeting social demands of teaching.* The rest of the result section aims at elucidating the parameters that shape teachers' action and their effect on language teachers' professional life.

4.1 Evaluation Criteria

Language teachers are really dissatisfied with teacher evaluation scheme. They believe that evaluation criteria bear little resemblance to the now fashionable rhetoric of teacher autonomy. They believe that evaluation subjects their professional life to the administrative logic that seeks to tighten the rein of control over the processes of teaching and testing. Among other things, language teachers noted that the evaluation scheme:

1. assesses teachers' degree of compliance with administrative rules and regulations;
2. does not discriminate competent skilful teachers from incompetent one; and
3. covers general, non-professional items.

But teachers' main concern is that their performance is evaluated by a non-professional, i.e., the school principal. They complain that he does not have the professional knowledge to assess language teachers' skill and knowledge. Instead of reflecting what a language teachers do in the classroom, evaluation reflects principal's subjective judgment. Reza complains:

>Teachers' evaluation score depends solely on the principal's idea. He
>
>never observes any classes. He does not know language teachers' level of

skill and knowledge. If he favours a teacher, no matter what, the teacher receives the highest score, i.e., 30. Everything depends on the principal's judgment. To keep my position in this high school, I should do as he wishes.

Instead of comparing language teachers' performance with each other, he compares teachers of different school subjects with each other. Keyvan complains:

There are nearly 30 teachers in this high school. Although they teach different subjects they are evaluated by the same evaluation form. There is no consistency in principal's judgement because it is totally subjective. When the school principal is replaced, the new principal favours another teacher. There are some principals who really want to be objective but they cannot because the evaluation form covers vague items about general aspects of teaching.

One of the most tormenting aspects of teacher evaluation is that teachers' evaluation scores depend on students' pass rates in the final exams. This is the most objective yardstick of success which is commonly accepted among principals. Karim comments:

Experienced teachers know that they are judged by their students' pass rates rather than by their professional knowledge and skills of language teaching. Thus instead of improving their teaching expertise, they try to *inflate* students' pass rate because they know that important stakeholders favour scores rather than learning.

In short, evaluation covers general aspects of teaching; it does not cover the techniques and skills specific to teaching a special schools subject. Moreover, professionals are evaluated by non-professionals via non-professional criteria. But the main problem is that the scheme takes pass rate as the only objective yardstick of success. Knowing that they are not judged by their knowledge and skills of language teaching, teachers forget them and try to develop things which are culturally approved and valued: conformity with the dictates of the principal and students to achieve a high pass rate in the final exam. While we may find no relationship between evaluation and teachers' knowledge and skill, there is a positive correlation between students' pass rate and teachers' evaluation score.

4.2 Promotion Criteria

The results show that there are two types of teachers in high schools: those who follow the professional norms and standards and those who follow cultural norms. The interesting finding is that cultural orientation is the rule while professional orientation is an exception. Those who comply with the cultural norms and practices do what the education system wants and the education system does what they want: the education system favours conformity and teachers favour promotion. On the other hand, those who comply with professional norms automatically diverge from accepted norms and practices and are, as a natural consequent, marginalized. Thus promotion is directly proportional to conformity and inversely proportional to divergence. Reza complains:

> CLT is culturally rejected because it is not efficient in terms of final exams. I can't change my teaching practice to accommodate the final exam. I believe that examiners should alter testing which is limited and limiting. Unfortunately promotion is only for those who conform to the testing scheme and sacrifice their knowledge of the principles of language teaching. I prefer to sacrifice my promotion for my professional knowledge and skills.

Hassan has similar concerns:

> Those who focus on communication are not popular among stakeholders. The reason is that oral skills are not tested in the final exam. If you ignore communication, you will have more time to prepare students for the final exams and your students have a better chance of scoring higher. This makes you popular among students and the principal. If you receive the highest evaluation score for three successive years, you will be promoted to the next grade.

Mahmood, however, complains that success even in terms of pass rate in the final exams is secondary in one's promotion. He believes that promotion depends on teachers' cultural activities rather than his professional activities. He says:

> Promotion scheme specifies a set of cultural activities which are irrelevant to teachers' professional knowledge and skills. Those who engage in these culturally valued activities have a better chance for

promotion than those who engage in professional activities. The reason is that in the promotion scheme non-professional activities carry more weight than teachers' level of knowledge and skill.

Thus instead of being directed by teachers' professional knowledge and skills, teachers' action is directed by an awareness of the specifics of the promotion scheme. Promotion can be the best motivation for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills. In its present form, however, the promotion scheme reinforces conformity with top-down, non-professional criteria. Since it ignores professional aspects of teaching, teachers similarly ignore them and develop those aspects that lead to their promotion. Those who conform to non-professional promotion criteria are promoted while those who focus on developing their knowledge and skills of language teaching are not because of their incongruity with pre-specified norms.

4.3 Time Pressure

Time pressure severely constrains teachers' practice. Teachers complain that the time allocated to teaching English is not sufficient. With two hours a week, teachers can only present the content. Thus even in its traditional sense, i.e., presentation, practice and production, the teaching cycle is not complete because teaching mainly involves the presentation phase. There is no time for practice and production. Teachers' only solution to shortage of time is coverage at the cost of responsive teaching. Reza comments:

> In my first year of teaching, I devoted all the class time to teaching. Yet I could not finish the book. When I complained, the principal advised me to focus on those parts which are important in the final exam. I tried to solve this problem by consulting experienced teachers; they suggested that under time pressure you should cover the book rather than teach the book.

Hassan, on the other hand, believed that he does not feel any time pressure. When the researchers told him that other teaches complain about time pressure, he explained:

> I do agree with my colleagues. If you want to teach the book from A to z, there is not time. However, since the contents of the final exam are

predictable, I know which parts carry more weight in the final exam. Thus I teach selectively by leaving out the parts which carry no weigh or little weight. Over time teachers come to the realization that if they teach to the test, they will have no problem at all. Moreover, students are more satisfied because they know what to study and what not to study.

Similarly Ahmad does not worry about time pressure. He explains:

Those who feel the time pressure have not understood the purpose of the English course in high schools. They mistakenly believe that they should teach English and students should learn to use English. This is a wrong supposition. We are here to prepare students for the test. Thus there is no need to teach English. What is needed is four or five sample tests from the previous years. Teach the book and most of your students fail in the final exam. On the other hand, prepare them for the test and they pass.

Teachers' comments clearly show how time pressure shapes practice. Instead of using their knowledge and skills to enable students to use language, they find ready-made cultural solutions such as covering the book, teaching to the test, and teaching the test. These approaches are functional. They have lasted a long time for the simple reason that they are efficient techniques of meeting social demands under contextual constrains such as time pressure and stakeholders' demands. Experienced teachers are clearly aware of the stakeholders' demand: scoring high rather than learning well.

4.4 Stakeholders' Pressure

Students in high schools of Iran do not study to learn English. Their short-term goal is to get a high school diploma and their long-term goal is to go to university. The university entrance exam and the final exams ignore oral skills. They only focus on grammar, reading comprehension and vocabulary. Stakeholders such as students, parents, school principals and higher order officials favour teachers who help students achieve culturally defined objectives.

Entering the profession, teachers try to teach English in line with the principles of communicative approach and task-based language teaching although they see Grammar Translation as the culturally valued and normal approach. Teaching against the grain,

they lose their popularity. Knowing that oral skills are not measured in the local exams, students start complaining. Because of students' low achievement in the final exams these teachers receive negative feedback from all stakeholders including students, parents, principals and other education officials. Over time stakeholders' pressure makes teachers forget their professional knowledge and follow a convergent approach which is in line with local norms and traditions. Hassan's comments better clarifies the situation:

> Most of my colleagues and I follow GTM because students favour it, and students favour this method because it is efficient in preparing students for local exam. Knowing that oral skills carry no weight in the final exams, students reject oral activities.

Similarly parents reject communicative activities because they see teachers' role as that of preparing their children for the university entrance exam. Mahmood says:

> Parents prefer an approach that prepares students for the university entrance exam. If you respect their preferences, they favour you and you become very popular. I am favoured by students, parents and school principal because I teach in Persian, explain grammar, and translate reading comprehension texts. I myself prefer these techniques because they are efficient in terms of achievement gains in the local exams.

Rather than supporting teachers' professional practices, principals support the dictates of children and their parents. Since the principal is in charge of teacher evaluation, teachers do as he tells them. Hamid explains:

> Principals prefer teachers who focus on test taking techniques since passing local tests is the only yardstick of success. If he is not content with students' pass rate in the final exams, teachers lose their position in this school next year. Moreover, since the school principal does not know innovative methods of language teaching, he bases teacher evaluation on students' ideas. Thus teachers are favoured and promoted if they do as they are told.

4.5 Teachers' Action

Teachers know that parameters fly in the face of their knowledge and experience. Feeling the incongruity between local norms (the parameters of language teaching) and their professional knowledge (principles of language teaching), teachers take a stand. A great majority of teachers accept the local norms of teaching at the cost of their professional knowledge because they have come to the realization that their professional knowledge is not locally recognized. Thus parameters homogenize their practice. This scenario is more clearly visible in Firooz's comments:

> CLT is not locally recognised because it does not produce achievement gains in local exams. If you want to teach here, you should teach like others. You should follow GTM. Teachers, students, parents and principals like it. Teach as usual, you are in demand. Teach differently, nobody wants you. I don't simply teach. I teach the students. I have to teach the way they want. Students' main concern is to pass the final exams. Years of experience show that GTM is the most effective method to this end.

Thus teachers follow GTM because it has passed the test of time in terms of efficiency. That is to say, teachers follow this approach not because they like it but because it is efficient. Hassan better explain the importance of GTM:

> Despite different attacks against GTM, time proved powerless to lessen the efficiency of this approach in public high schools in Iran. I follow this approach because it is efficient not because I like it. The methods course can't prescribe CLT and other alternative approaches. Local board of education defines language teacher success in terms of student pass rate in the final exams. I personally leave out communicative activities because they are not measured in the finals.

Teaching is a matter of supply and demand. Teachers cannot supply something the stakeholders do not demand. When local exams and stakeholders do not demand communication skills, how can teachers focus on communicative activities? Thus instead of being directed by principles of language teaching, teaching is directed by the local conditions. Under these conditions, teaching becomes the management of standardized

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ends and means, learning becomes the consumption of pre-packaged bits of knowledge, and success becomes passing and scoring well.

Despite local constraints, however, there are a few teachers who follow a divergent approach because they follow their professional knowledge and beliefs. Instead of preparing students for the test, they prepare them for communication by focusing on communicative tasks. Mehrdad believes:

> Students can't communicate by memorising some rules. I involve my students in real communication so that they can use what they have learned. In contrast with my colleagues in this high school, I do not let my students use reading passages for language learning. I focus on the information and try to involve them in exchanging and criticising the information presented in the text. Thus instead of focusing on learning, I focus on processing information.

Mansoor similarly believes that teaching should enable students to communicate not to pass a test about language. He further believes that it is possible to communicate without having an explicit knowledge of language forms. He rejects the cultural approach by claiming that students know a lot of rules about language. The problem is that they cannot use it for communication. He explains his approach which diverges from normal teaching as follows:

> I focus on dialogues and conversation because I know that memorising bilingual lists of words and grammatical structures will not develop their communicative ability. Although I know that my approach will be used against me, I use it because I believe that what students actually need is the ability to communicate rather than a high school diploma.

To summarise, following the cultural norms is the rule while following professional norms is an exception. That is, nearly all teachers follow an approach which is convergent with cultural norms and values. There are quite a few, however, that take cultural norms as problematic. Since they follow their professional knowledge and beliefs, their approach diverges from accepted norms of language teaching.

4.6 Consequences of Teachers' Approach

There are two approaches to language teaching in high schools of Iran: convergent approach as a rule and divergent approach as an exception. These two approaches yield different results and deserve different consequences. Taking a professional stand means violating culturally accepted norms of teaching, and the natural consequence is loss of support, loss of voice, loss of credibility and marginalisation. Mehrdad's comments better explains the consequence of divergence:

> Since I have a lower pass rate in the final exams, the principal does not favour my approach. He used my approach against me by depriving me from the summer courses in which teachers are paid well. Teaching in this high school entails loss of opportunities. Two years ago I was assigned to develop the final exam. Since test type and format was not in line with their expectations, I was reproached by my students, colleagues and the principle since the test negatively affected students' pass rate.

Firooz complains that students' pass rate in the finals do not reflect their performance in the test. Teachers inflate students' scores because this is the only criterion of success. He complains:

> I have lost many opportunities because my student's scores reflect their performance in the final exam and mid-term. They want me to inflate students' scores and teach to the test. This is something which is against my professional beliefs. I have lost my popularity among students and principals because my students' scores are lower than that of students in other classes. I am not rewarded simply because my approach is different not because it is wrong. My colleagues receive very high evaluation scores because of their students' pass rate in the final exams. I am negatively evaluated because of my teaching approach and students' pass rate.

The natural consequence of divergence from culturally accepted practices is marginalization. Divergent practitioners are negatively perceived, evaluated and marginalised because they are committed to their professional beliefs. On the other hand, the natural consequence of convergence is promotion. More specifically, convergent

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practitioners are promoted rapidly since they are committed to social demands of teaching and conventional practices of teaching. Ahmad explains the consequence of convergence as follows:

> I received the award of advanced skills because I had the highest pass rate in the last three years. I find no reason in focusing on communicative skills when they are not measured in the final exams. Students want to pass, I help them pass. Thus I am very popular among my students.

But convergence entails forgetting your professional definition of success and defining success in terms of cultural norm, i.e., pass rate. It also entails doing as you are told. Mohsen defines convergence as following the dictates of the principal.

> Evaluation is subjectively determined by the principal. There are parallel processes for getting one grade: through teacher evaluation and through study. The former involves doing as the principal says and thus getting a high evaluation score for three consecutive years and the other is taking the university entrance exam, passing it and then studying to get the masters' degree. If you choose the former, you can get an extra grade by taking part in cultural activities. One of my colleagues continued his studies at Shiraz University and got his MA to get one grade. Within the same time span I got two grades through evaluation and cultural activities.

Thus promotion and marginalisation are control mechanisms that aim at homogenising teachers' work in public high schools in Iran. Professionally, promotion should be directly proportional to teachers' level of skill and knowledge, and marginalization should be inversely proportional to teachers' level of skill and knowledge. Culturally, however, promotion is directly proportional to teachers' degree of convergence with social norms and practices, and marginalization is directly proportional to teachers' divergence from cultural norms and practices.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

There are two sets of constraints to the act of teaching English in actual situations: constraints internal to the teacher such as lack of knowledge and skills, and constraints

external to the teacher such as the social conditions of teaching. To improve teaching, teacher education programs should equip teachers with a solid knowledge-base and a set of techniques and skills to overcome both sets of constrains. Language teacher education programs mistakenly suppose that problems of practice are cognitive in origin. Once teachers acquired the knowledge and skills of language teaching, they can apply it freely and universally without any constraints. More specifically, educators suppose that teachers' action is directed by his knowledge and skills of language teaching. But in actual teaching there are some culturally accepted and respected teaching practices which are not theoretically justified. Similarly, there are some theoretically justified practices which are not permissible at all culturally.

In contrast with the cognitive orientation taken in teacher education programs, iterative collection and analysis of data from the public high schools of Iran revealed that a set of nationally givens, which are taken for granted because of their functionality and efficiency in meeting the national goals of language teaching, i.e., passing local tests, direct language teachers' action. When faced with these parameters of teaching which fly in the face of principals of teaching, teachers should decide to follow a convergent approach which is shaped by the parameters or a divergent approach which is directed by principals of language teaching. Since the parameters of teaching are imperative, convergent practice is the rule while divergent practice is an exception. The centrality of convergent approach and the rarity of the divergent approach can be related to the consequences of teachers' approach. Divergence from culturally accepted practice and norms entails lack of approval which entails marginalization. On the other hand, convergence entails administrative support and approval, and approval entails positive evaluation and promotion.

Parameters of teaching or a knowledge-base of culturally accepted norms and practices are presently missing in the syllabus for language teachers. Educators should know that teachers do not teach in vacuum: they teach for a society. Thus before entering the society they should know about culturally approved, accepted and respected objectives, norms and practices. As such pre-service language teacher education programs should account for the situated nature of teaching knowledge by developing language teachers' critical awareness of parameters of teaching which are context-bound

and at times imperative. To conclude, teaching is improved if both the internal and external constraints of teaching are eliminated. Despite language teachers' breadth and depth of knowledge and skills of teaching, their action is not improved unless the social conditions recognise teachers' expertise. The convergent and homogenised nature of language teaching in the context of this study is not related to teachers' knowledge and skills; it is related to the fact that teachers' use of their personal and professional beliefs leads to their marginalization, loss of voice, support and popularity.

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One Teacher's Development as a Reflective Practitioner

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Abstract

Using qualitative case study methodology, this article explores a language teacher's development as a reflective practitioner, while she was engaged on a three-year in-service BA (TESOL) programme in the Middle East. Data gained from observations and interviews reveal evidence of growth in her reflective qualities, skills and capacity to reflect critically, as she learned to solve teaching problems, drawing on public as well as personal theories. The constructivist nature of the BA (TESOL) programme concerned was integral to her development, as was a warm, supportive environment in the school she taught in. Interview data that uncovered early career experiences emphasises the need for pre-service courses to prepare teachers thoroughly for the challenges they face.

Keywords: reflective practice, constructivist teacher education, qualitative case study

Introduction

There is a widespread understanding in the EFL literature that the capacity to reflect deeply, deliberatively and critically on teaching is crucial to teacher development; "Reflection is the first and most important basis for professional progress", according to Ur (1996, p. 319), and, indeed, the encouragement of reflective practice has become 'a dominant paradigm' in the design of language teacher education programmes (Ho & Richards, 1993). However, notwithstanding research studies comparing novice and expert teachers, which reveal differences in the way these groups think and talk about their work

(Borg, 2006), very little empirical research has been conducted into how teachers actually develop as reflective practitioners over time, and into how teacher education influences such development. I focus on these areas in the research I report on in this paper.

Using qualitative case study methodology, I have traced the longitudinal growth in developing as a reflective practitioner of a senior teacher of English on a three-year in-service BA (TESOL) programme. This programme, which I also taught on, was run by a British university, in conjunction with the local Ministry of Education in a Middle-Eastern country, for non-native speaker teachers of English from the same country.

In this article, I report on the research, first discussing central concepts in greater depth, next outlining the research methodology used in the particular teacher education context, and then reporting on the teacher's growth. I later discuss this growth in relation to the literature, which is my immediate focus.

Literature Review

The concept most central to this article is reflection, in particular 'critical reflection', which I define now. When teachers reflect after a lesson, they think back on their work, relating events that took place in the classroom to the cognitions, including different forms of knowledge and beliefs, that influenced their plans for the lesson and their expectations. These reflections might lead to further actions, including theorizing and seeking further resources, that influence their planning of follow-up lessons. This process of critical reflection has been depicted in learning cycles, e.g.; Ur's (1996) cycle of enriched reflection. Indeed, while I believe that the development of teachers can also be explained by their reflections 'in-action' (Schön, 1983), operating at levels more instinctive and tacit, it is my contention that if they reflect critically on their teaching this may support teachers' fuller and more rapid growth.

How successfully a teacher does in fact reflect, though, in terms of the extent to which this reflection supports personal development and changes in practice, is likely to depend on a complex inter-play of attitudes, skills and knowledge. The importance of attitude was highlighted by Dewey (1933) in his argument that reflective practitioners require for their development qualities of open-mindedness, wholeheartedness and a sense of responsibility. Skills that support reflection are needed too, and these include

noticing, listening, analysing, problem-solving, hypothesizing, articulating arguments based on evidence and evaluating outcomes against objectives (Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999, Galvez-Martin, Bowman & Morrison, 1998). With attitudes and skills that support reflection, teachers are able to draw upon their practical knowledge in areas including those identified by Elbaz (1981): the self, milieu, subject matter, curriculum and instruction, as well as on their formal knowledge of various kinds (Shulman, 1987). Teachers' formal knowledge informs their practical knowledge, which can also be characterized as personal, tacit, systematic and dynamic (Borg, 2006).

There is evidence that teachers' practical knowledge grows throughout their careers, as they move through stages of development that have been variously described, e.g. fantasy, survival, mastery, impact (Ryan, 1986), novice, advanced beginner, competent teacher, proficient teacher and expert teacher (Berliner, 1988). Though the developmental process is unlikely to occur in a smooth linear manner, it is thought that the focus of teachers tends to change, as they develop, away from the self and the coursebook being taught to the learners and learning outcomes. Thus, while Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon (1998, p. 143) report consensus findings that beginning teachers tend to see teaching itself "as the simple and rather mechanical transfer of information", Berliner (2001) describes expert teachers very differently. He argues that, having developed automaticity for the various repetitive operations required for the achievement of goals, they are more sensitive to task demands within the social contexts they operate in, are more opportunistic and flexible, perceive more meaningful patterns and draw upon richer and more personal sources of information in problem-solving, but excel mainly within their own domain and in particular contexts.

After surveying literature on novice and expert teachers within the field of language teacher cognition, Borg (2006) reports that, having automatized routines, experienced teachers focus more on content as opposed to classroom management (Nunan, 1992), improvise more often through making greater use of interactive decision-making (Richards, 1998), think more about the subject matter, which they have a deeper understanding of, from the learners' perspective, and know how to present this content in more appropriate ways (Richards, Li & Tang, 1998). The emphasis of experienced teachers is more on developing a language focus, building on student difficulties and

maintaining active involvement, and less on covering the lesson plan within the time available, a preoccupation of their less experienced colleagues (Richards, 1998). An expert teacher described by Tsui (2003, p. 223) possessed knowledge that was "richer, more elaborate and more coherent" than that possessed by less expert peers. She could articulate her principles clearly and explain her decisions on the basis not just of practical experience, but also on the basis of formal knowledge she had assimilated into her practice.

As teachers develop towards expertise, it is clear that their practical knowledge changes in terms of content and quality (Borg, 2006). However, as to the extent as to which the capacity to reflect critically on teaching influences such growth, there is limited research evidence. This is notwithstanding Van Manen's (1991) work on levels of reflection, which suggests that as teachers develop they reflect at deeper levels, moving along a cline from the technical, when reflections concerned with the self are similar to those exhibited by beginning teachers, to the critical, when concerns are with the learners and learning.

Nevertheless, although empirical research evidence is limited, several studies (Ho & Richards, 1993, Farrell, 1999, Liou, 2001, set in a variety of East Asian contexts), have explored developments in the ability to reflect critically in groups of language teachers. Ho & Richards (1993) examined the journal entries, over a ten-week period, of 10 teachers enrolled on a part-time MA TESOL course in Hong Kong. This was during the first semester of the two-year programme, when they were studying 'reflective teaching', a module which introduced them to the 'reflective philosophy' of the course as a whole. Issues examined included teachers' beliefs, roles and decision-making, learning strategies and classroom interaction. In examining the extent to which the teachers developed in the ability to reflect critically, the authors (ibid) generated the following research questions: Did reflection become more varied, make more use of personal and public theory, draw more fully on teaching experiences and relate increasingly to the broader context beyond the classroom? Did the ability to evaluate from a more critical perspective, considering negative as well as positive points, develop, and what of the ability to solve problems? Did the number of 'why?' questions increase? Findings were inconclusive, as the teachers who were more reflective at the outset tended to demonstrate the same approach to

journal writing throughout the research period, while there was little noted change in the others. However, one of the teachers who had initially appeared to be relatively non-reflective did seem to improve in three of the seven areas, becoming better able to understand theories, solve problems and reflect across time and on experience. Yet, while there was discernible growth in these areas, overall the teacher did not become much more critically reflective, the authors report.

Farrell (1999) and Liou (2001) both used the research questions generated by Ho & Richards (1993) in their own studies. Farrell (1999) analysed the reflective discussions of a group of three experienced teachers (including two Korean teachers with MAs and a native speaker about to complete one) as they came together once a week over a 16-week period to talk about their work. Findings were similar to those of Ho & Richards (1993), in that one of the three teachers seemed critically reflective from the beginning and then maintained the same approach throughout the research period, while the second also changed little. The third, however, did begin both to relate his work more to theory and to evaluate it differently, but yet did not seem to develop in other ways, e.g., in problem-solving.

Liou (2001), after asking similar questions, likewise found limited and uneven development in the capacity to reflect critically. This was after analysing the observation and teaching practice reports of 20 pre-service teachers in Taiwan, which were produced over a six-week period, during a semester when the teachers observed once and taught 3 or 4 times in local schools. Although some of the group appeared to face serious difficulties in communicating in English in interviews, Liou reports, they all expressed satisfaction with their own performances in the classroom as English teachers.

What might explain the findings of these three studies? Firstly, it should be pointed out that one feature they shared is that the research periods were short (6-16 weeks), perhaps too short for significant change to become evident. Developing the capacity to reflect critically involves complex patterns of growth over extended periods of time, and is thus often discussed in relation to lifelong careers rather than weeks. Secondly, considering the studies individually, it is likely that the pre-service teachers in Liou's (2001) were focused on classroom management issues, as tends to be the case with beginning teachers (page 237, above). Accordingly, yet to automatize routines (Nunan,

1992), they were perhaps unable to devote much attention to critical reflection. Liou (2001) suggests that training in thinking reflectively, as part of their teacher education, may have helped.

Similarly, Farrell (1999) felt the teachers in his study may have developed more from participating in the research if they had been exposed to external input (Ur, 1996), in the form of readings from professional journals and others' observations. If the group discussions had centred on classroom events, using data from the participating teachers' classrooms, he concludes these discussions may have been more focused and conducive to the development of reflective skills.

Likewise, after seeking to encourage critical reflection through journal writing, Ho & Richards (1993) concluded that initial training in reflective writing may have helped. Journal writing did, however, draw upon informal classroom data, useful in contexts where instructors had limited opportunities to observe.

There is an implication here for teacher education. For, while the methods of collecting data employed by the three studies (involving the teachers in journal writing, discussing ideas in a group, reporting on their practices and the observations they conducted) were all conducive to stimulating critical reflection, the teachers were not observed and then given feedback on their teaching practice (as part of these specific studies). Such feedback may have prompted more searching critical reflection and may have provided scaffolding that supported them in articulating their ideas.

If teacher education is to stimulate the capacity to reflect, various strategies might be employed. These include the provision of mentoring, which requires quality time in schools, with the mentor 'holding up the mirror', listening, prompting (Malderez & Bodóczky, 1999). Off-site courses, that can be designed to integrate "experiential learning, theoretical input, reading, discussion, reflection, formal writing and experimentation" (Roberts, 1998, p. 274), can also help, as can getting teachers involved in curriculum development projects, which offer them the opportunity to experiment creatively in engineering a syllabus suitable for their own context (ibid). These strategies are all consistent with a constructivist approach to language teacher education (Williams & Burden, 1997), i.e., one tailored to the needs of the participating teachers.

Constructivism in language teacher education is rare (Dangel & Guyton, 2004). In

this research, though, I report on how one language teacher education programme, that made use of the strategies referred to above in a constructivist way, seemed to help a TESOL professional develop as a reflective practitioner. I will analyse her growth, with a view to shedding light on how the capacity to reflect critically develops over time, supported by constructivist language teacher education. To facilitate this analysis, I now explore the research context in more detail.

Research Context

In this section I will focus on the constructivist language teacher education programme concerned. This was an in-service BA (TESOL) run by the University of Leeds for the local Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. The three-year course, which took place at a time of curriculum renewal, was designed for Diploma-holding teachers of English. They studied intensively during summer and winter schools and then attended day release throughout the rest of the year, when they had an opportunity to put ideas picked up on the course into practice, as they were teaching on the other days. Once a semester, they were observed in their schools by a regional tutor, who used feedback sessions to help them relate theory to practice. This teaching practice was not assessed.

I would describe the programme as constructivist for the following reasons, using criteria supplied by Dangel & Guyton (2004), who identify eight key features of a constructivist approach to teacher education. Firstly, instruction was learner-centred (including loop input and discussion) and, secondly, collaborative learning was encouraged, through the use of groupwork in taught sessions and the formation of study groups, while the teachers moved through the programme in mutually-supportive regional cohorts (a third feature). The teachers also engaged, in relation to input on theory, in extensive and frequent analysis of the kinds of course materials they used in schools, which involved problem solving; a fourth feature. Not only did they analyse these materials, but the teachers were also encouraged to adapt them in various ways, e.g., to create communicative tasks. Such adaptations were at the core of practical assignments produced for methodology modules, which thus involved the teachers in 'authentic' activities, a fifth feature: The lessons were created for a real purpose, to actually use in the classroom and reflect upon, before being written about. Moreover, the programme

embodied other features of a constructivist approach. Field placements were 'extensive', as the teachers were part-time students with reduced 4-day a week timetables, and, in addition to being invited to reflect on their own classroom experiences through the provision of observed teaching practice and mentoring, the teachers also conducted research. Indeed, many chose to use action research to investigate the learning taking place in their own classrooms, with a view to writing this up in dissertations produced at the end of the course. Though not every element of the course was constructivist, for example, it included exams that tested knowledge of theory, constructivist elements, with a focus on reflection, did seem to predominate.

Having described the programme briefly (see Atkins, Lamb & Wedell, 2009; Wyatt, 2009, for further details), I now turn to the research methodology used. I explain how I explored a senior teacher's growth in reflective practice.

Research Methodology

In this section, I introduce research questions, summarize the research design, and then explain and justify my analytic procedures. While so engaged, I will aim to establish 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by demonstrating that the study was conducted rigorously.

Research Questions

My research questions stem from the following hypotheses: a constructivist in-service language teacher education programme, including a component of observed teaching practice with feedback, may support growth in critical reflection. Furthermore, I believe that such growth may be discernible if traced longitudinally over several years. My study differs from those of Ho & Richards (1993), Farrell (1999) and Liou (2001), as the interventions these writers reported on did not include an observed teaching practice element, and moreover traced development over much shorter periods; 6-16 weeks.

My overall research question is as follows: In the context of a three-year in-service BA (TESOL) Programme in the Middle East: How did a senior English teacher develop as a reflective practitioner?

My sub-questions are as follows:

1. Does she possess reflective qualities?
2. Does she possess reflective skills?
3. Does she possess a well-developed understanding of reflection?
4. Does she reflect critically?
5. Is there evidence of development in her qualities, skills and capacity to reflect critically?
6. What evidence is there of the course supporting this development?

The senior English teacher in question, Mariyam (pseudonym used), had eight years' teaching experience prior to the course, including three years as a senior teacher supervising a team of four primary school English teachers. Mariyam, who was enthusiastic about the BA course from the outset (December 2002), volunteered to take part in the research when I set it up in September 2003 with an 'open phase' to catch the dynamics of an unfolding situation, as recommended by Nisbet & Watt (1984), before I later established a specific focus. She set as a target reflecting more deeply on her work (November 2003) and later (September 2004) planned to focus in her dissertation on helping teachers develop as reflective practitioners. So the topic of reflective practice was of considerable interest to her.

Research Design

Certain features of the research design will be immediately apparent. In conducting the research, I need to acknowledge firstly that I was an ideologically committed insider, intimately involved in developing the qualities I was investigating. This links my research to critical theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), and to Holliday's (2002) progressive qualitative paradigm. However, this work can also be seen as interpretive case study research, as I was evaluating the influence on an individual's growth of a major project, in which my own role, as an 'agent of change' (Kennedy, 1996), was relatively minor: As a regional tutor, I played a supportive role, working with a group of thirty-five teachers intensively throughout their three-year course. The research was conducted according to strict ethical guidelines. The teacher signed an informed consent form and it was made clear to her that she could withdraw at any time.

Other features of the research design that I need to draw attention to are its longitudinal, qualitative nature. In the language teacher education literature, longitudinal research of the panel study variety, which involves tracking the same participant(s) over time (Cohen et al., 2000), is rare as it can be difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, such research can be valuable. Through making use of prolonged engagement and persistent observation, qualities which may lead to more credible research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), panel studies can identify patterns of development (Cohen et al., 2000). I was fortunate in that the context I was working in invited me to track Mariyam's development over three years, while she was on the course.

The outcome was a qualitative case study, which aimed to be strong on reality (Stake, 2000), offering a rich, vivid description of events blended with analysis, focusing on the individual and seeking to understand her perspectives (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). I hoped to facilitate vicarious experience and provide a sufficiently clear picture of the phenomenon being studied to allow the reader to function as a coanalyst (Borg, 1997). If qualitative research is able to do this, 'credibility' and 'confirmability', criteria for trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), can be enhanced.

Research Methods

My primary means of collecting data was through the qualitative semi-structured interview, which, as Kvale (1996, p. 42), outlining the postmodernist view, puts it: "is a construction site of knowledge". When viewing the interview from this perspective, the interviewer is an active participant seeking to achieve "negotiated accomplishments … that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 663). Quality criteria for the interview, dependent on how well the interviewer establishes a good rapport, listens carefully and comments thoughtfully (Borg, 2006), might include "the extent of spontaneous, rich, specific and relevant answers from the interviewee", and their relative expansiveness after focused follow up questions (Kvale, 1996, p. 145). Ideally, what the interviewee says will have been interpreted and verified as far as possible during the interview process itself (ibid).

To complement and contrast the data gathered through interviews, I drew upon direct observational data, gained chiefly in the natural settings of classrooms, in which

my role was as a 'non-participant observer' (Cohen et al, 2000). A major advantage of observations, as Robson (2002) argues, is that they provide direct access to real life, although there is a danger of reactivity in certain circumstances, if, for example, the teacher, trying to please the researcher, exhibits behaviour that she thinks he wants to see (Borg, 2006). This is a reason for explaining the purpose of the observation carefully, as I tried to do.

Observations are often used together with interviews to collect descriptions of teaching to compare to cognitions elicited beforehand or subsequently when the rationale behind the observed practices can be explored (Borg, 2006). In practice, I combined these methods through 'unstructured lesson observations' (Cohen et al., 2000), followed by interviews that started with a post-lesson discussion. In this phase of the interview, I used a version of the 'stimulated recall' technique discussed by Bailey & Nunan (1996), with my notes however, rather than video, used to prompt Mariyam's interpretations of events. The interview then continued into a semi-structured phase, with topics identified prior to the interview explored at this time through the technique of top-down hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989). So, topics were covered through general and then more detailed questions, but not in any set order to allow the interview to flow. Besides my main strategy of combining observations with interviews, two of the interviews I conducted with Mariyam were not preceded by an observation (once when I was eliciting background information, once when discussing research plans). I observed her five times.

My analytical procedures were 'interactive' and 'iterative' (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997), with the data reviewed many times. After each round of data collection, I re-read observation notes and notes made while listening to audio-recordings of interviews in the light of prior objectives. I also transcribed increasingly larger segments of interviews to help me use the data to 'think with' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and to allow the data in due course "in all its richness, breadth and depth" to be the star (Chenail, 1995, para. 10). Relating these segments to research questions, I adopted the 'template approach' (Robson, 2002) to data analysis, creating a matrix to facilitate the move from coding to interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

I now present this analysis, characterized by 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) to allow readers to "extend their memories of happenings" (Stake, 2000, p. 442), derive

expectations from tacit knowledge (Kvale, 1996) and draw their own conclusions (Stake, 2000). While writing I triangulate, with reported thoughts (elicited through interviews) juxtaposed across time and with observed actions, to add depth to the picture being painted, provide the 'possibility of additional interpretations' (Stake, 1995), and so enhance the study's 'credibility' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The analysis is organized around research questions. Data referred to are coded as follows (after Borg, 1998):

Teacher's pseudonym	Source of data	Number
Mariyam - M	Interview – I Observation – O	1-7

Analysis

Does she possess reflective qualities?

To address this question, I turn to interview data from early in the research period, which indicate that Mariyam was a teacher who cared. She cared about the feelings of "the weak, shy and quiet children", and wanted them all to "love English… without putting them under pressure or under frightening feelings." "I try to relax them," she continued,

> to let them to learn positive attitudes in indirect ways. I try to use games, activities. I try to give them freedom in the classroom to talk, write, read, speak, even use Arabic if they don't know the meaning. I try to help them in other ways like encouraging and praising them individually and in groups. Of course I use controlling ways but without frightening them. I don't like to use a stick and I don't like teachers to use sticks or other punishments because these leave our children feeling badly, suffering, and also they will lose their confidence (MI.2).

Later in the same interview, she reported she was now helping parents use different strategies with their children "to revise things in English with them" at home. Her advice varied according to the needs of the child and the 'results' of techniques already tried. Parents were given freedom to choose from amongst her ideas (MI.2).

In articulating these cognitions, Mariyam seemed not only whole-hearted and responsible in trying to share ideas, but also, in offering advice that included alternative suggestions, open-minded, the third pre-requisite of a reflective practitioner identified by Dewey (1933). These qualities were evident in her teaching behaviour, observed five times in three years.

Does she possess reflective skills?

To address this question, I turn to observational and interview data from early in the second year of the course. Mariyam had used flashcards of strange looking clowns as the first activity in a lesson, eliciting adjectives that described them; fat, short, thin, happy, tall, sad, and then corresponding homemade word cards (MO.3). This was recycled vocabulary, to increase learners' familiarity, to help them "read and recognize" the words. "How did you respond", I asked her afterwards, "when a child said 'small'?"

I.   You held up 'short', I think, [yes] and the child said 'small'. How did you respond to that?

M.   I said 'yes' because I know that she means that the size of this clown is small, but she don't know that there is another adjective for it. When I said 'yes, yes' I encourage her to think more and produce another word, which was short, and that girl in the end she produced it… I don't want to discourage them because they say the first thing that they think of, because they are spontaneous, they have spontaneous thinking, so we have to accept all their answers and then we can use another way to change them without affecting them badly.

I.   Yes, and as you say, she understood the meaning generally, she'd also recognized the shape of the word, more or less, it's got the same number of letters and the same first letter, so there was a grapho-phonemic fit there as well.

M.   Yes, they are beginning with 's', 'short' and 'small'.

I.   And as you say, in terms of motivation, certainly that approach doesn't frighten children, it encourages them.

M.   And maybe because the pupils, also in Grade 1, they learn these adjectives,

'small' and other adjectives, 'tiny' and 'little', so they know for this size, the small size, more than one word. That's why they will produce these words that they know (MI.3).

The rest of the lesson was focused on a song, 'Sing a song of baskets'. Mariyam elicited key vocabulary in a warm and friendly way, varying her techniques, accepting easy answers quickly from individuals, letting learners share ideas to produce more challenging answers together. She then used realia, whiteboard and big book to contextualize the song, encouraging children to notice that characters in the picture were carrying baskets, showing the difference between 'full' and 'empty' with the help of a jug. She listened carefully to the learners, responding with interest to what they had to say. "Honey? Oh, you like it, do you?" "Oh yes, money!", in response to a boy who told her that he had some ("Look, teacher!"), holding up a banknote. "You're a rich man" (MO.3, MI.3).

The learners engaged in listening activities; 'listen and look', 'listen and say which basket', 'listen and sing' (MO.3). However, identifying the correct baskets was "difficult" for "most of them". The word 'money' "wasn't clear on the tape", and there were difficulties with 'a basket full of tasty dates', because of the word 'tasty', although they knew "'I can taste', taste the verb". They also got "confused between carrots and parrots". However, having words with the same rhyme was "very useful" for learners, which one girl had recognized, saying she would "keep" (remember) parrots, a new word, because of its similarity to carrots. "They use these strategies sometimes without (having been taught) them", Mariyam added (MI.3).

She "noticed" that the next activity, the singing, was also "difficult", as "it was the first time to sing the phrases" and the rhythm of the music made it harder "to break" them down. However, Mariyam was optimistic it would get easier through the unit, so that by the end some learners would produce phrases like "'a basket full of honey', 'a basket full of chocolate cake'" (MI.3).

Mariyam kept them interested throughout these activities, her voice warm and enthusiastic, her intonation varied, control immaculate and eye contact even. There was a recap of vocabulary, with flashcards on the whiteboard, followed by a game of 'What's missing?' The learners closed their eyes, Mariyam removed a flashcard, they opened their

eyes: "What's missing?" They shouted out the answers, enjoying themselves (MO.3). This game, which they 'loved', was "very useful for keeping vocabulary," Mariyam reported (MI.3).

To recap, she possessed skills regarded by Malderez & Bodóczky (1999) and Galvez-Martin et al. (1998) as desirable in a reflective practitioner. During the lesson, she listened carefully, noticed difficulties the learners faced, observed them thoughtfully while they worked. Later she could analyse their responses, supporting her statements with data from the lesson. When asked to explain decisions made, she could justify these against an internally consistent set of principled beliefs about learning underlying her post-lesson discussion discourse; children are spontaneous, learn indirectly, have feelings, draw upon their existing knowledge, need activities of a suitable challenge level, develop their own learning strategies and acquire language gradually with the help of repeated exposure to it. Influences of public theory are discernible in these ideas, relating to the characteristics of young learners, motivation and initial literacy. It seemed she was continuing to integrate this formal knowledge into her practical knowledge (see 237, above), a process the post-lesson discussion may have been helping. This discussion was focused throughout on the learners and learning, as one would expect of an experienced teacher (Richards, 1998). She seemed relaxed about her own contribution to the lesson, and did not really mention it.

Does she possess a well-developed understanding of reflection?

To address this question, I turn to interview data from early in the third year of the course, when I specifically asked Mariyam what she understood by reflection. Reflection, she told me, involves "thinking back critically about what you did … in order to do it well or better next time, for future development." It was part of a three-stage process; planning, teaching "and then later, reflection". During the planning stage of a reflective cycle, the teacher would "use her experience from the previous lessons and the experience of others, her personal theories and theories that she learned in advance", together to make decisions. "After that", Mariyam continued,

> she will, of course, teach the lesson and after teaching or while she is
> teaching the lesson maybe, she will make some change and that change, I

believe, will rely on some pressures or some decisions, some personal

theories, some notice from the teacher, for her teaching style, for her

teaching strategies, methods, for her pupils' level, abilities and skills, and

after teaching the lesson, the teacher again will use all of that experience

to evaluate what she did in that lesson (MI.5).

Every stage of the cycle was important, but the most important was "the final stage, the evaluation", when the teacher would go back through the lesson "in her mind", remembering important things relating to

the learners or her teaching, something that happened, something she

didn't predict in the classroom or during teaching, even if it's a good or

bad thing. She will evaluate … why it was good or bad and she will try to

think about that according to some criteria that she has… after that, she

will have some decisions to go through… for future planning (MI.5).

To be a truly reflective practitioner, she felt a teacher needed to read widely in the EFL literature, search for new teaching methods using the Internet and technology, discuss ideas with supervisor, senior teacher, colleagues, as well as other people with expertise in teaching young children. Before all of this, though, Mariyam argued, a teacher needed to "believe in her work, in the importance of reflection":

She needs to work in her mind, think continually every day about her work

and not have a rest for her mind, only following the teachers' book or

other (guides) without thinking about them. Also she needs to think about

the pupils, her pupils in the classroom, because the teacher is the only

person who knows the pupils, because she lives with them in the

classroom, in the classroom atmosphere every day, so she needs to know

her pupils very well, their abilities, their skills, who are shy, the weak ones,

to help them and to support them... So, reflection is the important thing the

teacher can depend on for many things, for herself and for her pupils

(MI.5).

In passing, I would comment that Mariyam's reflective qualities (Dewey, 1933) are very evident in the words quoted above. By the third year of the course, she clearly had a highly developed understanding of reflection and reflective

cycles. Unfortunately, though, as I did not explicitly elicit her understanding of reflection before she started researching the topic, I cannot chart her growing understanding of the term from early in the course. When she started the research late in the second year of the programme, I suggested various topics she read up on, but, interestingly, one she never mentioned or wrote about (in final assignments) was the idea of different levels of reflection. This concept did not seem to become part of her practical knowledge during the research period, although she valued reflection that was critical. I now evaluate her practices in this regard.

Does she reflect critically?

Mariyam's reflections could be routine. For example, after an observation in the first year, she started to talk about the lesson in a very descriptive way:

> I revised, in a quick way, the times, by using my clock. I also let them listen… and then I asked them to make the time… the rhyme was very quick. They should move the hands, hours hand and the minutes hand, very quickly. I tried to help them by my clock in front of the class. That was step one (MI.1).

However, when I prompted, she recalled, more analytically, that she had supported the learners in various ways, focusing them through her voice and gestures, getting their attention, helping them "go inside the topic quickly", refreshing their minds. When I asked what the benefit of that type of activity was for the children, she replied:

> Because they have their own clock, they made it, they like to use these clocks to know the time in sequence, 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock until 12 o'clock. Also the benefit from these activities is to warm them up, to activate their minds, their thinking, to revise the numbers, and also there is indirect way in learning because they are repeating the phrases of the clock rhyme, 'it's one o'clock, says the clock'. They are saying the time, they can respond to the time if anybody asks them the question 'What time is it?', they can say very easily… so they already pick it from the rhyme but indirectly (MI.1).

So, on this occasion, Mariyam reflected more deeply after she had been

drawn out. On another occasion, though, in the second year of the course, when the lesson had not gone as well as expected (MO.4), Mariyam addressed the problem at the start of the post-lesson discussion without any prompting:

> Overall it's OK, but in the end the pupils make some noises and they were not attentive with me. Maybe next lesson, with another class, I will change the way that I do the repeating after the tape. I will ask two groups to stand together and one to repeat the questions and the other to repeat the answers, and then I will ask another two groups, like that, because maybe the number of the pupils, half of the class, make noises and some of them are not concentrating with the tape or maybe they cannot concentrate with each word (MI.4).

In the ensuing discussion, which focused on the technical, various alternative causes of the problem were identified and six further possible solutions were proposed (four by me, two by Mariyam) (MI.4). When technical issues needed addressing, Mariyam became fully engaged. However, much of her reflection was at a more critical level, as is evident, for example, in the block quote on page 246, above. With reference, then, to Van Manen's (1991) cline, she appeared to reflect critically as well as technically, depending on the situation.

Is there evidence of development in her qualities, skills and capacity to reflect critically?

Referring to data from post-lesson discussions, there is some evidence that there was more spontaneous critical reflection in the second and third year. In the first year, Mariyam's openings (as in the first block quote on page 251, above) were quite descriptive, but they became more analytical, as in the following:

> I want to tell you about my objectives for the lesson. They were revising the twelve months of the year. I said revising and I can also say introducing, because I noticed some of my learners don't know all the names in English while others do from previous years (MI.6).

Her observations of the learners' performance led her to adjust activities later in the lesson, she then explained. In her first turn, she also commented on how

activities in the computer room seemed to have benefited vocabulary learning (MI.6). Since the first year post-lesson discussions, Mariyam had thought and read much more about the topic of reflection, which might explain to some extent the greater fusion of analysis with description here.

For evidence of development in her reflective qualities and skills, I turn to Mariyam's accounts of her own development prior to the course. Mariyam reports she had always tried to be a kind teacher (MI.4), but had not always been as comfortable in the classroom as she was now. She remembered observed teaching practice for her initial teacher training college (TTC) diploma, a decade earlier, as 'terrible'. "My mouth became dry", she told me, "my heart was beating, I was very nervous and confused and sometimes I forgot lots of things." Unaware of children or strategies, she just followed the techniques learned in college (MI.5).

Mariyam graduated from the TTC and then taught "in an old school, with the old syllabus… nothing changed" (MI.3). She followed the teachers' book throughout, concentrating less on the learners, she realized much later (MI.7), than the book or the language. "I spent the 4 years without thinking about change or adapting anything", she told me. She had been unaware how to do this and was also 'afraid'. "Maybe the inspector will not encourage me", she continued,

> and maybe it's wrong, something wrong, my thinking was not changeable. Also, there was no course, no refresher course from the inspector or from the older teachers. There is no senior teacher also to change anything or to advise us to change. The inspectors also come to observe the lesson. If it's OK, they said 'OK', if it's not OK, 'you have just to focus on that thing', without reference to thinking. Even the inspectors, they don't have these new ideas, these modern ideas (MI.3).

Part of the problem was lack of self-confidence. Mariyam had graduated in 1994, she told me, with "my simple language and with my simple information and knowledge", perceiving herself as not quite a 'real' English teacher. For years afterwards, she had felt painfully self-conscious about her English, which "was very simple", so simple, she reported, "it didn't help me to do my work, it didn't help me even to get contact with the real situation because I was always afraid. I was always afraid that I would make

mistakes and errors". "I tried sometimes", she continued, "shyly, with a shy try, when I was outside in the supermarket and always at the doctors", but had had so little confidence in her language that she did not feel encouraged to use it "to go and ask or search" for information that would help her (MI.3).

From Mariyam's account of her early career, it seems lack of self-confidence impeded her development. Being 'always afraid' inhibited the development of reflective qualities such as open-mindedness, whole-heartedness and a sense of responsibility (Dewey, 1933). She was unable to assume much responsibility for her teaching as she lacked the confidence to do so. Furthermore, her account of post-lesson discussions suggests that these did not support her in developing reflective skills, such as noticing. She was simply told what to do. So, contextual factors further limited practical knowledge growth.

I find it hard to recognise the picture Mariyam paints of herself in the first few years of her career, as by 2003, when I got to know her, she had developed considerably. In the intervening years, she had worked in modern state-of-the-art schools with the new curriculum, benefiting from numerous observations and in-service workshops. She seemed self-confident when I first saw her teach in 2003, and from the first interview she was hardly tongue-tied. Reflective qualities and skills were already evident.

What evidence is there of the course supporting this development?

Mariyam later regarded the in-service training she gained between 1997 and 2002, prior to joining the BA Programme, as marking 'a transitional stage'. She attended short methodology and language courses in the late nineties and worked in a school environment conducive to growth and professional development, before being promoted to Senior Teacher of a nearby school.

At the same time, she was not used to being asked to reflect deliberatively on her teaching and found it difficult to do this. As Senior Teacher she observed lessons with her supervisor, Yousef, in 2003, who asked the teachers in her school, she reported,

> the same questions that you asked me, and that we learned on the BA
> course. My teachers, because they don't get the BA course, they only have
> diploma and PRIT course [a short methodology course], they don't know

anything about reflection or about lots of things (MI.4).

Yousef had asked about concepts, such as task demands, that were "strange for them". While trying "to clarify these things", Mariyam could "see the difference" between herself and the teachers, and could see how the BA course had helped develop her understanding of concepts, and think deeply about teaching and language learning. "Before", she continued, she had not known "how to think like that" or talk about work or problems in teaching. There had been "lots of difficulties before the BA" (MI.4).

Towards the end of the first year of the course, Mariyam had reflected that her language, specifically her "speaking, reading and also writing skills", had improved considerably. She reported gains in the complexity as well as accuracy of her vocabulary and grammar. Language modules, in particular, had supported this growth. She had also benefited from input on methodology and from the different types of learning experiences the course provided: opportunities to discuss, brainstorm, read, refer and identify ideas to apply in the classroom. When she tried new ways of "controlling groups, encouraging students, increasing students' motivation, helping weak children," she could observe her learners, reflect on her teaching and evaluate theories (MI.2).

In the third year of the course, I asked Mariyam how she related the various courses she had done to Wallace's (1991) models of teacher education. Her initial TTC diploma had been "mainly craft", she reported, because as they "taught us, we followed them" (MI.5). The PRIT course had involved reflection. What of the BA Programme? "Some people might say", I challenged her, it was more "like an applied science model, theory but not practice. Would you agree with that?" "No", she replied,

> because, OK, it was very difficult for us as teachers to work in the school
> for four days and to go for day release one day, but that one day helps us
> too much, that one day lets us think more about our teaching, think more
> also about the syllabus, strategies, all of the methodologies, all the theories,
> because yes [curriculum changes] gave us as teachers a new syllabus to try,
> but there were some gaps in that syllabus, there were some problems,
> some disadvantages in it, and these disadvantages need teachers to think,
> need also teachers to have knowledge, to have some theories to try to
> depend on, and that happened with the BA course (MI.5).

She was very positive about what she had learned, reporting at the end of the course she was more autonomous. "I can look at any area in the syllabus", she told me, "and see how can I help my learners to learn more and to learn it effectively also". She could focus on problems and identify ways of helping learners "improve their skills and get them to love English." She was more aware of learners' individual differences now, she reported, more "patient", better able to "notice important things" that happened in the classroom and better able to act on them. Now, she asked herself many questions when something was not working in the classroom, which she had not done before. "I can think of quick solutions. I can use different strategies", she reported. "I am a more reflective modern teacher than before. I know now how to reflect on any action" (MI.7).

Her mind was "open", Mariyam told me, because "now we have the awareness to exploit everything around us". "I know now", she continued, "how to improve myself, how to improve my skills; reading, writing, speaking." Before she had felt it was "very difficult" to do this, "but now", she continued, "I think it's very easy to improve myself, even after [I finish] the BA" (MI.7).

Discussion

From the above analysis, it seems evident that Mariyam developed considerably as a reflective practitioner. By the end of the research period, she possessed reflective qualities and skills, a deep understanding of reflection and the capacity to reflect critically as well as technically. Her own recollections suggest that much of this development had occurred prior to the course, between her 4th and 8th years of teaching. However, there is evidence from post-lesson discussions that the course, which she started in her 9th year of teaching, helped her discourse in these settings become more critically reflective. Furthermore, Mariyam was conscious herself of how the BA helped her in reflecting deliberatively, drawing on public as well as personal theories, adapting materials, finding new ideas to experiment with in her classroom and solving problems, as her own words (quoted on page 255, above) reveal. Compared to the teachers discussed (on pages 238-40) above, in the studies produced by Ho & Richards (1993), Farrell (1999) and Liou (2001), Mariyam appeared to develop as a reflective practitioner much more fully. Perhaps, this is unsurprising as the research was longitudinal and there was thus greater

opportunity for change to become evident.

Mariyam's excellent memory and openness as an interviewee provide unique insights into her growth as a teacher. As a novice, she was concerned with automatizing routines (Nunan, 1992) and transferring information (Wideen et al., 1998). Later, she changed, and shining through her words (quoted on pages 246-50) is a concern with learners and learning, reflection at the critical end of Van Manen's (1991) cline, which indicates her development.

The research methodology used helped me access Mariyam's growth, though one limitation I am conscious of is that, after the 'open phase' (Nisbet & Watt, 1984), I could have narrowed down the research, which involved multiple participants and multiple topics (Wyatt, 2008), rather more quickly. This would have allowed me to explore Mariyam's untutored understanding of reflection earlier.

Several implications stem from the research. Firstly, a consideration of Mariyam's early career experiences emphasises the need for pre-service language teacher education that better prepares teachers to cope with the challenges they face. Competence in use of language, the most important aspect of a language teacher's subject matter knowledge (Lafayette, 1993), and self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2007), as well as self-confidence more broadly, need to be developed through such programmes. Otherwise, it is likely that growth will be limited.

Secondly, these findings demonstrate the importance of contextual factors in language teacher development. At the start of her career, Mariyam was working in a context that was unfavourable to personal growth. She lacked mentoring, in-service training and peer support. These factors, combined with a lack of self-confidence, inhibited the growth of reflective qualities and skills. As Borg (2006) argues, contextual factors can constrain what teachers do. In a more favourable context afterwards, characterized by a warm supportive environment, Mariyam blossomed between her 5th and 8th year in school.

For her to develop more fully, though, as a reflective practitioner able to integrate public theory into practical knowledge and solve problems in a critically reflective way, she needed the BA Programme, which she argued was based on a reflective model of teacher education. I would endorse this. I believe Mariyam's development underlines the

importance of focusing in-service language teacher education course design on constructivist principles (Dangel & Guyton, 2004). This involves drawing on and building on teachers' experiences and supporting personal growth. While I would not wish to over-generalize findings on the basis of a single case, the investment made in Mariyam's continuing education seems worthwhile. Constructivist language teacher education courses are required if real changes in teachers' reflective practices are to occur.

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The New Role of English Language Teachers: Developing Students' Critical Thinking in Hong Kong Secondary School Classrooms

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Abstract

In 1999, the critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999) was issued by the Curriculum Development Council to all junior secondary school English language teachers in Hong Kong. Different from the earlier curriculum guidelines, the recommendations highlight the importance of thinking in English language teaching and learning, and a new role of English language teachers, i.e. to develop students' critical thinking through the subject. Through classroom observation, this study aimed to investigate whether the syllabus is translated into the classroom practices of five teacher participants. In these case studies covering more than 1600 minutes of classroom teaching, two brief critical encounters were identified. Only in these two encounters were students given the time and space to think critically and exchange ideas genuinely in a supportive learning atmosphere. The study shows that developing students' critical thinking has never been an object of learning for the five teachers, who felt that the institutional constraints and external pressures they faced made the implementation of the syllabus impossible. That is, they were not playing the new role required. The study, though exploratory, has important implications in developing students' critical thinking and implementation of education innovation.

Keywords: critical thinking; English language teaching; education innovation; classroom observation

Introduction

Developing students' critical thinking has become a significant educational issue in many countries. In the States, the discussion of the role that critical thinking plays in the school curriculum began in the 80's (Marzano et al, 1988). In Asia, critical thinking has been the focus of curriculum reforms in places, such as Singapore (National University of Singapore, 2003) and Hong Kong (EC, 2000) over the last decade. Education psychologists, such as Huitt (1998), have pointed out that critical thinking is fundamental to schooling in the 21st century, stressing that in the information age, thinking plays a significant role in one's success in life. Specifically, in terms of language education, cognitive psychologists emphasize that learners need to 'use their minds to observe, think, categorise and hypothesise' (William and Burdens, 1997, p.13) in order to work out the system of a language and how the language operates. The cognitive complexity involved and operations required in language learning tasks, such as noticing and making sense of the input, processing information and generalizing what is learned (Candlin and Nunan, 1987), further confirms the close link between one's language development and the development of one's thinking.

In Hong Kong, together with many other criticisms of the education system, constant complaints have been made by the business sector about the inability of local students to think critically (The University of Hong Kong, 1999). An education reform was formally launched by the education authorities in 2001 to improve the education system in Hong Kong. The reform, which covered curricula, assessment mechanisms and admission systems, aimed to move from the predominantly lower order learning for exams to developing students' capacity, for example, skills and dispositions, to deal with the rapid changes in the information age. The critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999), which is the focus of the present study, was one of the many innovations introduced in the reform. Background information about the syllabus as well as the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong will be provided in the following sub-sections. Then, a brief review of literature on the space of learning for students' critical thinking development will be presented before the methodology, finding, cross case analysis and conclusion sections.

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The 1999 critical thinking syllabus

In 1999, a new set of guidelines (CDC, 1999) was issued by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) to all secondary school English language teachers in Hong Kong. The new emphases of the guidelines included recognition of the significant role that thinking plays in English language teaching and learning, and the requirement for teachers to develop students' critical thinking through the subject. As Walker, Tong and Mok-Cheung (2000) pointed out, the latest education reform has initiated a huge paradigm shift in the conception and teaching methodology of English in local secondary schools and a change 'from Classical Humanist, transmissive, grammar-translation methodology, to […] progressivist, task-based, communicative methodology' (p.259). The latest curricular methodology, which stresses the importance of involving students in the processes of thinking, and of using and applying the language for genuine communication, calls for nothing less than a new interpretation of both teaching *and* learning in the local educational context.

The critical thinking syllabus was reiterated in the school curriculum guide (CDC, 2002) in 2002, which states that the priority of the Hong Kong school curriculum for 2001 – 2006 should be on developing the critical thinking skills, communication skills and creativity of students (CDC, 2002). Specifically, the new role for teachers to develop students' critical thinking is elaborated under the English language education key learning area. It states in the curriculum guide that teachers should be making greater use of imaginative or literary texts to develop learners' critical thinking, creativity and cultural awareness. As for other key learning areas, Fok (2002) pointed out that as early as 1996, the guidelines on Civic Education have made students' critical thinking development a fundamental aim of the subject. However, she stated that, for different reasons, such as teachers perceiving the curriculum innovation as incompatible to their beliefs, 'the teaching of critical thinking has never been an important element in our school curriculum' (Fok, 2002, p.85).

Morris (1996) was also aware of the gap between the intended and implemented curriculum, considering it a widespread phenomenon both in Hong

Kong and elsewhere.

> Most innovations in Hong Kong have been characterized by a strategy which involved the provision of low cost resources, decision making dominated by superordinate groups, and linkages which are primarily designed to communicate the nature of official policies. There is a substantial evidence to suggest that this strategy is able to create a façade of change but unlikely to have an effect on what goes on in the classroom.
>
> (Morris, 1996, p.121)

To find out if curriculum innovations, such as the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999), are really implemented in schools, it is important to investigate what actually goes on in our everyday ordinary classrooms. The present study, in which classroom observation played a major role, aims to shed light on the extent to which critical thinking comprises part of teaching and learning in English language education in Hong Kong secondary schools.

Teaching and learning of English in secondary school

Fullilove (1992) referred to Hong Kong as 'an examination-mad town' (p.131) with examination-driven education systems. Specifically, English language teaching and learning in Hong Kong was described by Morris et al (1996) as the three Ts' situation: test-centered, teacher-centered, and textbook-centered. Biggs (1995) also pointed out that the teaching and learning approaches in the Hong Kong classroom are predominantly teacher led and quantity driven, encouraging students to adopt a surface approach to learning, for example, rote learning of facts given by teachers or in the textbook, which could have a negative impact on students' meaningful learning. Learning experience in these meaning-reduced language classrooms was reported to be far from pleasant by some students. In an informal interview, a student shared with a researcher the helplessness he perceived regarding the importance of English in the society, and the anger and frustration he experienced regarding English language learning in class.

> You want to know why I don't pay attention in English lessons? You really want to know? Okay, here's the reason: NO INTEREST!! It's so boring and difficult and I can never master it. But the society wants you to

learn English! If you're no good in English, you are no good at finding a

job!   (Lin and Luk, 2005, p.81)

In a large pool of classroom data that they collected from a local school situated in a low socioeconomic area, Lin and Luk (2005) found that the English language teachers created limited space for students to engage in laughter or creative verbal play that usually allows them to 'co-construct their dialogues with the teacher, while populating them [students] with their own preferred social languages and voices' (Lin and Luk, 2005, p.93). With their focal awareness mostly on their own perceived objects of learning and operational needs, these teachers did not seem to be aware that their assumptions about the specific objects of learning might not be shared by some of their students, or that the implication of the verbal play could be of significance to students. While encouraging teachers to recognize the value of verbal play, Lin and Luk (2005) suggest that teachers should raise students' awareness of the existence of different social languages and aim to create the space for developing heteroglossia in their classrooms. According to Bakhtin (1981 as cited in Sperling, 2004, p.233),

> discourse and thought … are… heteroglossic. That is, the word, the utterance and the verbal moment are multivoiced, infused with "shared thoughts, points of view, alien value of judgment and accents" (Bakhtin, 1934-45/1981, p.276) that reflect … "a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup".   (Sperling, 2004, p.233)

Sperling (2004) stressed that despite the contradictory stances that they sometimes face, it is important for teachers to be aware of and to create the space for the range of forces and voices present in their classroom lives.

In a discussion on space of learning, i.e. the dimension of variation opened up for students to discern the critical features of the object of learning, Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004) pointed out that teachers need to have a clear object of learning and to arrange their classroom environment and teaching practices in ways that are conducive to that specific kind of learning. They suggested that teachers design specific characterizations of the interaction in the classroom for a specific object of learning. The discussion and related studies point to the need for investigating teachers' perceived object of learning and the space of leaning that students enjoy in local classrooms.

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Specifically, this study sets out to look at the space of learning for students' critical thinking development in junior secondary (equivalent to grades 7-9 in the US education system with students aged between 12-14 years old) English language classrooms. Are teachers creating the space of learning needed in English classes as required in the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999)? Is helping students to develop critical thinking a perceived object of learning for English language teachers in Hong Kong? Are teachers playing the new role required by the critical thinking syllabus? The present study hopes to contribute to this specific area which has yet to be explored in the local secondary education context.

The space of learning for students' critical thinking development

Critical thinking, as defined in the present study, 'is the process of determining the authenticity, accuracy, or value of something; characterized by the ability to seek reasons and alternatives, perceive the total solution, and change one's views based on evidence' (Alvino, 1990, p.50). In line with the critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999), this definition points to the need for developing students' critical thinking abilities as well as attitudes to handle the rapid changes in the 21st century.

Based on the two conceptions of critical thinking, 'pure skills' and 'skills plus tendencies' (Siegel, 1988, p.6), approaches to developing students' critical thinking can be grouped under two main categories: (1) helping students to develop trainable and assessable reasoning skills and processes, and (2) cultivating in students the dispositions and awareness associated with critical thinking. The literature indicates that engaging students actively in critical thinking processes (D' Angelo, 1971; Solon, 2003; Yuretich, 2004) through the effective use of questions (D' Angelo, 1971; Elder and Paul, 2003) and critical discussion (Mayfield, 2001, Yuretich, 2004) in a context that supports critical thinking and values inquiry (D' Angelo, 1971; Yuretich, 2004), as well as teachers' practising of critical thinking skills and attitudes (Mayfield, 2001) and their provision of explicit explanations of the significance of critical thinking (Mayfield, 2001; Bourdillon and Storey, 2002), could all contribute to students' development of both critical thinking skills and critical attitudes.

In terms of classroom research, considering developing students' critical thinking as

the teaching of a set of generic reasoning skills, Solon (2003) conducted an experimental study that investigated the impact of different treatments of critical thinking instruction on community college students. The findings of the study indicated that the critical thinking course intervention, which provides students with more opportunities to engage in critical thinking, has a greater impact on students than the infusion approach (Solon, 2003). Yuretich (2004), who proposed developing students' critical thinking through the teaching of some higher order reasoning skills, conducted a study to investigate the extent to which active learning strategies promoted students' critical thinking in large American university classes. Through active learning strategies, students were given more opportunities to process and evaluate information via discussion with fellow students. In concluding the study, Yuretich (2004) pointed out that giving students a critical thinking opportunity, for example, allowing them the time to pause, the space to reflect on, analyse and discuss an issue, in a context that truly values critical thinking, is the key to critical thinking education.

Considering critical thinking as both skills and attitudes, D' Angelo (1971) supported the 'skills plus tendencies' (Siegel, 1988, p.6) conception of critical thinking. Apart from reasoning skills, D' Angelo (1971) pointed out some essential qualities of critical thinkers, for example, open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, persistence and a respect for other people's viewpoints. I believe that many of these constitute the critical attitudes highlighted in the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999). In terms of developing students' critical thinking skills, as in Solon (2003) and Yuretich (2004), D' Angelo (1971) also stated the importance of engaging students actively in the critical thinking process. In particular, he suggested that teachers should engage students in critical thinking through effective questioning, for example, asking students questions that encourage critical responses, and encouraging students to ask critical questions in class. Elder and Paul (2003) also pointed out that developing students into active questioners is an important part of critical thinking education, emphasizing that 'to learn well is to question well' (p.36).

Apart from giving students the time and space to think critically, as suggested by Yuretich (2004), D' Angelo (1971) also emphasized the importance of creating a context that supports student inquiry in class, stressing that 'an atmosphere in which inquiry is the

foundation of classroom activities would be most conducive to the development of critical thought' (p.55). He asserted that a context that truly encourages inquiry and values critical thinking facilitates students' development of critical thinking skills and attitudes. Regarding creating a context that supports critical thinking, some educators have stressed the need for students to be aware of what they are learning and why they are learning critical thinking (Bourdillon and Storey, 2002). Mayfield (2001) also pointed out the importance of this awareness, stressing that teachers should make clear to students the critical thinking process they are engaged in and the purposes they hope to achieve through critical thinking. Last but not least, she added that good models from teachers, i.e. teachers practising critical thinking skills and attitudes, could also enhance students' critical thinking development.

As defined in the present study, critical thinking and attitudes consist of two equally important general and specific aspects. In terms of space of learning, it is therefore important for learning to be organized in such a way that students can engage themselves actively in the acts of learning, such as the critical thinking process with also the space for students to discern the critical features of different critical attitudes. In terms of classroom teaching, we have seen that the literature emphasizes how effective use of teacher questions, and involvement of students in genuine discussion and reflection in a context that values inquiry and welcomes diversity could engage students in meaningful critical thinking processes. However, Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004) also cautioned that teachers should create for students the space to explore the object of learning in different ways, stressing that the experiential space of learning is rather a 'potential' (p.24) for learners to experience, understand and make sense of the object of learning. The space of learning for students' critical thinking development can surely be widened if the teacher provides students with the opportunities to explore critical thinking in a variety of ways, such as different forms of reflection and self and peer assessment (Dochy et al, 1999; Hanrahan & Isaac, 2001).

Methodology

The study set out primarily to answer the research question - is the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999) translated into the classroom practices of five English language

teachers of Secondary 1 (equivalent to grade 7 in the US education system with students aged about 12 years old)? Specifically, two related questions to be pursued are: (1) are the five teachers creating the space of learning needed in English classes as required in the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999)? (2) is helping students to develop critical thinking a perceived object of learning for the five teachers?

With a primary focus on the authentic situation of what really happens in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, a case study approach was selected to enable the study to capture what was happening in the five teacher participants' English classes. As Nisber and Watt (1984) and Cohen et al (2000) noted, case studies are strong in reality, being able to catch the unique features that may be lost in larger scale data. The case study approach also allowed me to have a prolonged engagement with the five teachers: Mei Mei and Fun of School A and Lai Lai, John, and Ling of School B, and provide a detailed account of what I observed in the research context, as well as to reflect on the subtle changes in my relationship with the participants. I consider also the thick and rich description in case studies an important procedure for establishing credibility for the study (Creswell and Miller, 2000). Overall, the case study approach enabled me to address the research question, while offering scope for rich data collection and participant interaction that were also part of my goals.

The data collection consisted of a major component, classroom observations, to identify the critical encounter manifested in the teachers' lessons. Critical encounters, as defined in the present study, are opportunities created (1) for students to think critically and purposefully in a teaching and learning context that supports and values critical thinking, and (2) to cultivate important qualities associated with critical thinking in students, such as openness. Pre and post classroom observation interviews were also used to elicit teachers' plans for their lessons and their reflections on their own teaching, as well as their views on developing students' critical thinking. Regarding data analysis, the classroom data collected were analysed using Tsui et al's (2004) framework of space of learning drawing on my insider knowledge and expertise as an experienced English language teacher and teacher trainer in Hong Kong. To counter potential bias in the classroom data, the preliminary results of the analysis were presented to the teachers involved for comments and validation in my last individual interviews with them.

Regarding analysis of interview data, inductive progressive coding (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976, as cited in Cohen et al, 2000) and content analysis of the interview transcripts were conducted, drawing also on the field notes taken and the insider knowledge I possess.

In the next section, the analysis of the two critical encounters identified is presented, with the incidents highlighting the types of teacher-student interaction dominant in all the observed lessons. The cross case analysis and conclusion of the study are presented in the last two sections.

Findings: The two critical encounters and the typical 'un'-critical encounter

This section aims to provide descriptive and interpretative information about the two critical encounters and the typical teacher-student interactions identified in the study. Among the more than 1600-minute recordings of classroom teaching, involving about 130 junior secondary students, only two brief critical encounters were identified. Both encounters took place in the reading lessons of Lai Lai's and John's classes when they were talking about the story, A Perfect Gift. Below are the brief descriptions of the two encounters, as well as the teachers' reflections and responses to them.

Lai Lai's critical encounter

As shown in the transcript below (see Transcript 1), Lai Lai engaged her students in critical thinking in a teaching context that valued critical thinking in her critical encounter. The encounter shows that Lai Lai encouraged her students to think critically about the story and express their views on its ending. She welcomed answers that were different from hers and encouraged her students to justify their answers by allowing them the time to think, the opportunity to discuss with others, and the space to express themselves. Most importantly, she listened patiently to her students and showed genuine interest in, and respect for, their opinions.

Transcript 1: Critical encounter manifested in Lai Lai's lesson

1 2 3	T	They, they, okay, are willing to sell their precious possession okay in order to okay to to buy a present okay for each other okay. So, but at the end, at the end, were the presents useful?
4	Ss	No [Some students answered 'No' but Lai Lai did not respond to them.]
5	T	At the end, were the presents useful for them? Yes or no?
6	S1	Yes.
7 8	T	Yes? Yes? [Lai Lai looked surprised and hesitated. She repeated her answer with a rising tone.] The hair clip, was the hair clip useful again?
9	S1	Yes.
10	T	Yes? Why?
11 12 13	S1	… [The girl said something but it was too soft that the researcher could not hear. Some students did not seem to agree with the girl and shouted 'No'.]
14	T	Let her finish.
15 16	S1	… [The girl tried to explain her answer and Lai Lai listened carefully. The explanation was again too soft to be heard or recorded.]
17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26	T	Ah Oh. good. Maybe, okay, in a short time, the hair the hair clip was not useful. But Della's hair would grow, okay grow fast okay. Maybe in a few months' time okay the hair clip would be useful. Oh good. That's a good point. I didn't think of that. Yes, good, you can make point. Yes, you can. [Lai Lai and the class gave the girl a big hand.] Yes, okay. Thank you. In a short time, the clip's not useful. But a few months later, maybe okay when Della's hair okay grow longer, it would be useful. Good point. [Lai Lai wrote down the scores on the blackboard and counted the points there.] Okay. Yes. Right. And then er yes? What do you want to say, [name of a student (S2)]? Happy ending or sad ending?
27	S2	Sad ending.
28	T	Sad ending. Why?
29	S2	Because the presents are not useful.
30 31	T	Ah the presents okay, were not useful, were no longer useful okay. Right okay. Maybe okay. Yes? What do you want to say?
32	S3	… [The answer of the student (S3) was too soft to be heard.]
33	T	On the one, yes? [More students wanted to answer the question and finally Lai Lai

34		responded to one of them (S4).]
35	S4	Happy ending.
36	T	Happy ending. Okay. Why?
37	S4	Because er their their the boy very very love the girl.
38	T	Ah the boy loved the girl very much okay. So, I would like to know okay your opinion,
39		class. How many of you think that it has a happy ending? Put up your hands. Happy
40		ending. Happy ending. [Lai Lai counted the number of students.] Okay. How many of
41		you think that it has a poor, er, sad ending? Sad ending. Okay. A few of you. Yes, the
42		story can be sad okay or can be happy. It depends, okay, how you look at okay, how
43		you look at the ending alright? On the one hand, you may say, it's rather sad because
44		the, the, the presents okay were no longer useful okay. But on the other hand, you may
45		say it proves that Jim and Della, they loved each other very much okay. Understand
46		what I mean? So it can be happy or it can be sad. Okay it depends okay what angle,
47		how you look at the, the, the story okay. Right. Good. Yes. How many marks here?
48		[Lai Lai gave the group that S4 belonged to some points before moving on to the next
49		question.]
50		
51		

As shown in Transcript 1, Lai Lai welcomed answers that were unexpected in the critical encounter. She seemed to be a bit surprised with the 'yes' answer given by the student, S1, in line 6. The short 'Yes?' questions in line 7 as well as her tone and facial expression showed that the answer given was not the same as the one she had in mind. To confirm the student's answer, she rephrased her question to make it more explicit: 'Was the hair clip useful again?', as shown in line 8. The student's answer remained the same. However, instead of moving on to another student for a different answer, or simply answering the question herself as most teacher participants usually did, she insisted on giving the student the chance to explain her answer, which opened up a dimension of variation for discernment in terms of the in-class teacher-student interaction (Runesson & Mok, 2004).

The brief 'why' question in line 10 and Lai Lai's determination to listen to her student's opinion further widened her students' space of learning. Although the

classroom was full of noise and answers being given by the enthusiastic students, Lai Lai was not distracted. The 'why' question challenged S1 as well as her peers 'to consider a number of possibilities, and to formulate an answer that made sense not only to themselves but also to the rest of the class' (Tsui et al, 2004, p.128). The short utterance, 'Let her finish', showed that Lai Lai was determined to listen to the justification of the student, and was the means through which Lai Lai successfully created a critical thinking context that allowed S1 the time and space to think, to formulate an answer, and to express herself. According to Tsui et al (2004), the formulating-an-answer process helps students to further clarify their thinking as well as their understanding of the object of learning in the lesson.

Lai Lai responded positively to the justification of the student even though she was surprised by her explanation. She admitted in line 19 that she had not thought about the point that the student raised, i.e. the hair pin would be useful when Della's hair grew long again, but she believed that her justification was a good one. She showed her appreciation by giving the group that the girl belonged to some points for her answer in the group competition, which encouraged more students to join the discussion and express their views. As shown in lines 24 and 31, she was determined to listen to the views of her students in the critical encounter. She was aware that her students had something to say and instead of prompting a certain answer from them, which was a common practice in most of the observed lessons, she asked a comparatively neutral question, 'What do you want to say?', to further widen the space of learning for students (Tsui et al, 2004). Unlike the 'grammar-checking' role that most teacher participants mainly played in the classroom, Lai Lai really listened to her students and responded to the content of their answers.

Her respect for diverse opinions was clear in the critical encounter especially when she invited her students to show her by hands how they perceived the ending of the story as shown in lines 38-42. Instead of concluding the discussion with a 'correct' answer, she explained to the students the possibility and importance of looking at an issue from different angles, which is an important feature of critical attitudes. In short, the classroom data show that Lai Lai did not just create the critical thinking opportunity and context for her students; important attitudes, such as openness and a readiness to listen to others,

were reflected in her teaching, which could be a significant space of learning for students to discern the critical features of critical thinking and awareness.

In my last interview with Lai Lai, I described to her the critical encounter identified in her lesson and she was very pleased. She admitted that the incident was not planned and that she would not have been aware of it if it had not been pointed out. Below is her response to the critical encounter:

> *At that time, it was something straightforward, like a reaction. I was not really thinking to myself - yes, I am teaching my students critical thinking, that's critical thinking, that straightforward. It's not like that. I did not plan or think about it. The answer from the girl saying the hair pin would be useful when the hair of Della grew long again was unexpected. You know, originally I thought everyone would say that's a sad ending. So, to me, it's something unexpected. That's my reaction only but now you are talking about the incident, and I reflect on it. I do think that you are right and it seems the incident could help my students to develop critical thinking.*

Lai Lai's critical encounter as well as her response to it, i.e. the inability to recognize the connection between teacher-student interaction and students' critical thinking development, has significant implications regarding teacher professional development for critical thinking education.

John's critical encounter

As shown in Transcript 2, John created a critical encounter for his students in a reading comprehension lesson. The encounter demonstrates how John encouraged his students to think critically about the story's temporal setting and share their opinions. He welcomed answers from different students, helped them to develop their ideas, and created a supportive inquiring atmosphere. Like Lai Lai, he allowed his students the time to think, the opportunity to discuss the issue, and the space to express themselves.

Transcript 2: Critical encounter manifested in John's lesson

1	T	So, what is the answer to the questions?
2	S1	C
3	T	C in?
4	S1	One, what, eighty [S1 mixed up the pronunciation of '18' and '80'.]
5 6	T	No, I know, I know we saw that in September, a long time ago. [Some students laughed.]
7	S2	1899.
8 9 10 11	T	In, yes, 1899, S2, er now, why, why didn't you choose 2050 or 1999? [A boy said something but it was too soft to be heard by the researcher or recorded on tape.] Yes, well, 1999 is obviously in the future, is it? 2050 in the future, what about 1999?
12	S3	The past.
13 14 15 16 17 18	T	The past. [Another boy said something but it was too soft to be heard by the researcher or recorded on tape.] But what, what makes you choose 1899? [Different students gave different answers at this point e.g. a boy near me whispered, 'from the pictures', and another said, 'people'. A boy then said, 'poor' which was then picked up by John.] Poor? Yes, but you still find poor people today.
19	S4	But now, now the shops cannot sell hair.
20 21 22	T	Shops cannot sell hair. Oh, yes, they still can. People still sell their hair. But, look, look at the pictures in your text. Look at the pictures in your text.
23	S5	The fashion.
24 25 26 27	T	Yes. The fashion, the clothes, are very different. It's certainly not futuristic with lots of metal and shiny silver. And it doesn't look like you and me today or 1999. So it's definitely in the past. These clothes look very old indeed.

As shown in Transcript 2, through the 'open questions' (Tsui et al, 2004, p.128) in line 8, 'Why didn't you choose 2050 or 1999?' and lines 14, 'What makes you choose 1899?', John encouraged his students to think critically about the answer selected, i.e. 1899. In the critical encounter, he gave his students room to explore answers and

welcomed responses from different students, creating a space of learning for students' critical thinking development. John was patient with their wrong attempts and incomplete answers, such as 'past' in line 12 and 'people' in line 16. He discussed in a friendly manner with the students the problem arising from the answers suggested. Instead of answering the question himself, he gave the students time and space to think about and answer the question, and his first prompt was only introduced in line 21 when he referred his students to the pictures in the textbook. A student then figured out the answer to the question with the help of the hint. As I observed in the classroom, John had successfully created a critical thinking opportunity and a compatible context to engage his students in the critical thinking process. With the appropriate wait time given and the opportunity to genuinely express their opinions, some students took the initiative in joining the discussion.

When asked to comment on the critical encounter identified in his lesson, John agreed that the open question he asked in that particular context, i.e. 'What makes you choose 1899?' could be considered a critical question that facilitated students' critical thinking development. He stressed that to answer the question, the students needed to read not just the text, but also to consider the resources around it, such as the pictures in the textbook. Below is his response to the critical encounter:

> *I agree indeed because they did not have the information in the text as such. The only reference was a word of pictures. [Not audible utterances] So, I wanted them to use not just the text to find the answer but also what was around the text. Because I think that sometimes what is around the text or what we call 'between the lines' is as important if not more important than the text itself when you try to understand what the text is.*

In fact, John's responses given in different interviews and the data from his classroom indicate a large gap between his professional knowledge and teaching practice. As revealed in the interview data, he was indeed capable of the construction, acquisition and interpretation of what is meant by critical thinking; and yet for various reasons he admitted in our last interview that he felt that such a concept was not appropriate or applicable in his context, and thus students' critical thinking development was not considered a major object of learning in his class. The findings point to the need for

further investigation into teachers' perceptions and their impact on teacher classroom practices.

The typical teacher-students interaction

The following incidents highlight the teacher-student interaction commonly found in all five teachers' lessons. The incidents were found in Fun's lesson in which she was going through with her students a worksheet on Mai Po Marshes. The activity was a lead-in to a related reading comprehension passage in the textbook. Fun began the lesson by going through the worksheet with her students. She then went through the passage with her students. As was seen in the lesson, Fun did most of the talking in the lesson. In the 35-minute lesson, she was found talking for about 28 minutes. She explained the meaning of the vocabulary and asked her students many questions about the text ranging from simple yes/no questions to 'why' and 'why not' questions, but in many cases she answered the questions herself.

As shown in Transcript 3 below, the first incident began with Fun asking her students the question, 'Do you like eating seafood?', when she was going through some information found on the Mai Po Marshes website with them. She seemed to be interested in finding out her students' preferences for seafood, something much loved by many people in Hong Kong. The response of Fun in line 3, 'You don't like eating seafood!?', as well as her tone and facial expression showed that the negative answer given by her students was not expected. On the surface, the 'why not' question that followed as shown in line 5 aimed to elicit from her students justifications for the answer. However, the fact that Fun gave her view on the topic right away, allowing her students no time to think about or answer the question reduced it to a display question.

A similar incident occurred when Fun talked about a migratory bird, a black-faced spoonbill. The incident began with Fun wanting to find out from her students the reason why the black-faced spoonbill moves to Hong Kong every year. She asked them the following question:

Fun: Why do they move to Hong Kong? [Fun answered the question herself right away.]

Transcript 3: A typical teacher-student interaction

1	T	Do you like eating seafood?
2	Ss	No. [Some students said no loudly.]
3	T	You don't like eating seafood!? [Fun looked and sounded surprised.]
4	Ss	No. [Some students said no again.]
5	T	Why not? Hong Kong people like seafood… [Fun continued to give her view on
6		the topic without any pause or wait time given to her students.]

In fact, the 'why' question in this incident could be a good critical thinking opportunity for students since the classroom observation indicated that Fun had not, in any way, talked about the reason for the moving of the bird. However, like the previous incident, no wait time was provided by the teacher before she answered the question herself. In fact, Fun did not seem to show any intention of listening to her students at all, and thus, a potential critical encounter was missed. Although some 'why' questions were asked in both incidents, the students were deprived of the time or opportunity to think about or answer the questions. The way Fun handled the 'why' questions did not facilitate genuine exchange of ideas between the teacher and students or students' critical thinking development.

As shown in all the observed lessons, Fun and the other teacher participants liked to fire a series of questions at their students without allowing them the time to think about or answer the questions. Also, the questions asked did not seem to provide students with much space for thinking, since the questions were mainly yes/no questions or questions requiring students to locate pieces of information in the text provided. The ineffective handling of questions by using strategies such as the funnel effect (Tsui et al, 2004), involving a rapid series of narrowing follow up questions, limited the space of learning. The exchanges between teachers and students were usually short and spontaneous rather than appearing to be the result of careful and considered planning. While some teachers were more than ready to answer their own questions, others seemed to be pre-occupied by the predetermined answer in their mind. As I observed in the lessons, many students seemed to be aware of these tendencies and as a result, were ready to ignore the teachers' questions. Many of them played the role of a spectator in class while others were busy

reading books on their laps or writing secret notes for their friends. On the whole, the teacher-student interactions in the five teachers' classrooms were mundane, monotonous and monological, with the teachers playing a directive rather than a facilitative role.

Discussion: A significant pattern across the five cases

This section aims to discuss the significant pattern that emerged across the five cases, that is, ineffective questioning techniques. The pattern reveals the persistent failure to create an adequate space of learning for the development of students' critical thinking in the lessons observed; moreover, developing students' critical thinking had never been the five teachers' object of learning. Ineffective questioning techniques emerged across the five cases, resulting from a number of factors, including brief waiting time, an inability to recognize the potential of open-ended questions, and a predominance of lower order questions. The ineffective questioning encouraged a surface approach to learning (Biggs, 1995), deprived students of the time and opportunities for critical thinking, and had a negative impact on their critical thinking development.

Thornbury (1996) defined wait time as 'the time teachers allow students to answer questions before, for example, asking another student, rephrasing the question, or even answering their own question themselves' (p.282). Certainly in this study, giving students brief waiting time and firing questions in rapid succession were common features in most of the observed lessons. Wait time is essential in promoting thinking in the classroom and can be considered as 'a strategy… to enable pupils to think, and to link the question to schemata of knowledge they already possess, before having to articulate the answer, also known as "think time"' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2008). Unfortunately, as revealed in most observed lessons, the brief wait time given by the teachers, ranging from zero to a few seconds, was not enough for students to process the language the teacher was using, to understand the question, or even to put up their hands to answer the question before it was answered by the teacher or another student.

A number of incidents were identified in Fun's class with no wait time provided before she answered her own questions. In fact, in many cases Fun did not show any intention to listen to her students, and thus, some opportunities for critical encounters were missed. As I observed in her lessons, Fun seemed to be following a pre-conceived

'recitation-script' (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988, p.14) in her classroom and so was not open to learning and thinking opportunities that arose. The recitation questioning, which Tharp and Gallimore (1988) see as characteristic of many classrooms, best describes Fun's lessons.

> Recitation questioning seeks predictable, correct answers… Only rarely in recitation are teacher questions responsive to student production. Only rarely are they used to assist students to develop more complete and elaborated ideas… This unresponsive, "automotive" teaching seems devoted to creating and maintaining activity and assessing pupil progress.
>
> (Tharp and Gaillimore, 1988, p.14)

Apart from providing their students with no, or a brief, wait time to answer their questions, Lai Lai, Ling and Fun did not seem to see the potential of some of the open-ended questions asked in their lessons. For example, Lai Lai was pleased when the critical encounter identified in her lesson was described to her, admitting that she would not have been aware of the connection between the questions and students' critical thinking development if it had not been pointed out. A possible critical encounter was missed in Ling's lesson in which some of her students genuinely engaged themselves in a critical discussion on the topic of death. As I observed in the lesson, they were trying to co-construct dialogues with Ling and express their views on the issue. However, Ling did not seem to see the potential of the critical discussion or the critical question that was raised, i.e. whether they thought they would become angels after they died, and terminated her students' discussion.

In line with a clear lack of waiting time and critical questions in the lessons observed, lower order questions were found to be dominant in the five teachers' lessons. As Lai Lai admitted, 'less controlled' questions, meaning open-ended questions, were not common in her lessons because she believed that many students were not ready for them. Although some 'why' and 'why not' questions were asked in the five teachers' observed lessons, many of them, as seen in both Mei Mei and John's lessons, only required students to play the role of a code breaker (Freebody and Luke, 1999) to locate pieces of information from the reading or listening text given, as John admitted. The classroom observations reveal a consistent invariant dimension of teacher-student interaction in class. That is, the

teachers were assuming a basically directive role in the pre-dominantly one-way teacher-student interaction creating little space for students to see or experience the key features of critical thinking and attitudes.

Bourdillon and Storey (2002) have also warned that teacher questions have to be handled appropriately to avoid common questioning errors. For instance, students are typically given too little thinking time to respond to challenging questions. They are not given the opportunity to ask questions and to contribute to the classroom discourse. According to Bourdillon and Storey (2002), genuine communication should be targeted in class and students' ideas should be heard, respected and considered carefully. Smith (1990) also cautioned that students should be engaged in the critical thinking process based on respect rather than power or exploitation, for example, with plenty of space created for students to voice and discuss their opinions, stressing the importance of teachers modeling and practising critical thinking and critical attitudes in critical thinking education. In the case of the present study, why weren't the five teachers creating the space of learning needed for their students' critical thinking development? Most importantly, why weren't they playing the new role required? The teachers' perceptions of the critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999) may shed some light on these questions.

Although all teachers, to different extents, supported the idea of developing students' critical thinking through the subject, all of them reported that for various reasons, such as institutional constraints, student factors and external pressures, they had been doing no, or very little, teaching of critical thinking in their classes. This finding confirms the results of the classroom observation analysis in which only two brief critical encounters were identified in all the observed lessons. The teachers indeed have all complained that they had no time to get to know the enormous amount of recommendations and teaching initiatives from the education authority, or to learn how to implement them in their classrooms, believing that the critical thinking syllabus would soon be replaced by something new. They stressed that changes had to be made in different areas, such as the school system and culture, before the critical thinking syllabus could be successfully implemented in local secondary English language classrooms.

I agree with Fullan (2001) that a big problem facing schools, such as Schools A and B in the present study, is 'fragmentation and overload… schools are suffering the

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additional burden of having a torrent of unwanted, uncoordinated policies and innovations raining down on them from hierarchical bureaucracies' (pp.21-22). Hatch (2000) also pointed out that the endless initiatives in education reforms only 'sap the strength and spirit of schools and communities' (p.4), leaving teachers with feelings of frustration and helplessness as reported by the five teachers in the case study. To sum up, the interview findings provide a clear explanation for the findings of the classroom data, i.e. developing students' critical thinking had not been the five teachers' object of learning and thus they had not been committed to creating the space of learning needed for their students or playing the new role they were required to take.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999) was not translated into the five Secondary 1 English language teachers' classrooms. The classroom data show that students were deprived of the opportunities or time to engage in critical thinking processes. Teacher-student interactions were primarily teacher led and dominated, allowing students little space for negotiation. Only two critical encounters were identified, with no other critical thinking activities, such as promoting different forms of reflection and assessment for learning, found in all 1600 minutes of classroom recording. Regarding teachers' perceptions on developing students' critical thinking, all five teachers admitted that developing students' critical thinking had never been their object of learning, stressing that changes had to be made in the school and broader contexts before the syllabus could be successfully implemented. On the whole, the required space of learning, aimed at helping students to see and experience the critical features of critical attitudes, or the opportunity to actually engage them in critical thinking, was rare in all the observed lessons. Thus, the answer to the research question, as to whether the 1999 critical thinking syllabus (CDC, 1999) was translated into the classroom practices of the five English language teachers, is obviously a negative one.

To facilitate critical thinking education, like other curriculum innovations, I believe that we have to start with teachers (Carless, 1997, 1998), for example, to listen to their voice and concern regarding the innovation and its implementation. An important problem raised by all five teachers in the study was that frontline teachers were not

consulted about the critical thinking syllabus before it was issued. Also, I agree with the teacher participants that specific professional development and support are needed to ensure the successful implementation of an innovation. In terms of critical thinking, it is important to help teachers see the central importance of critical thinking and to assist them as they explore and experiment with different learning arrangements that may facilitate students' critical thinking, for example, through collaborative action research. Hopefully, teachers will be able to re-think the meaning of critical thinking in education and decide to make it an object of learning in their own classrooms. However, I agree with Marton, Runesson and Tsui (2004) that the space of learning created would only increase the possibilities – rather than guaranteeing actualities – of students' learning, and that students' previous experience may well have an impact on the realization of these possibilities. Although the students in the present study were deprived of the space or time to think critically about what they were learning in class, very interestingly, as I observed in some lessons, many students were found to be thinking creatively and critically. For example, some engaged themselves in interesting and critical discussion in Cantonese, a language that was not allowed in the English classroom despite the risk of being punished by their teachers, just to avoid conforming to the uninspiring role they were expected to fulfill in the classroom. Surely it is important that we raise students' awareness of more constructive uses of critical thinking, so that they can employ it more gainfully in their learning and future lives.

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Classroom Interaction in Story-Based Lessons
with Young Learners

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Abstract

This study evaluated the innovative introduction of a story-based approach in EFL classrooms with young learners in Taiwan. This article presents the features of classroom interaction in the story-based lessons through detailed analyses of classroom discourse in a teacher-fronted classroom setting. Transcripts of lessons were examined using the conversation analysis approach combined with Cameron's task framework. The results show that in the story-based lessons, compared with the baseline data (the standard lessons), there are more variations of interaction patterns, and overlapping occurs more frequently. A lot more pupil initiations, expressing a wide range of language functions, were also found and these might occur anytime in a lesson. Pupil initiations, however, are mainly in the L1 Chinese. Two teachers' storytelling styles are identified and the different storytelling styles seemed to affect pupils' production. The findings suggest that the story-based approach create an entertaining environment which stimulates a higher level of intrinsic motivation and engagement from pupils. What and how the pupils learn from the story-based lessons is related to how the teacher uses the story in the classroom and what he/she expected his/her pupils to learn from listening to the story.

I Introduction

Over the last decade, a trend towards starting to learn English at primary school has spread across many Asian countries. The best practice of teaching English to children in a foreign language setting is thus receiving more attention. Stories have been widely used in English-speaking countries to develop children's literacy. The use of stories in the classroom is claimed to have many benefits for young learners in their language development (Garvie, 1990; Wright, 1997), such as increasing motivation, stimulating imagination, and developing fluency in language skills. Considerable studies have proved the effectiveness of using stories in the first language acquisition (Wells, 1985; Elley, 1989) and some ESL classroom research also supports its educational value (Elley, 1991; Cary, 1998). However, very little research focuses on the use of stories in the EFL classroom setting especially at primary level, and previous studies do not tell us much about how stories foster pupils' learning in the L2. The purpose of this study is thus to evaluate the innovative application of the story-based approach in primary EFL classrooms in Taiwan by means of an examination of what actually goes on in the classrooms. It is aimed to identify the distinctive features of classroom interaction which facilitate L2 learning in the research context (EFL for young learners setting).

In this paper, we will first define the story-based approach and review literature dealing with the use of stories in the language classroom. After briefly describing the methodology of this study, we will present the results of analyses of lesson transcripts and interview data. Then we will summarize the features of the story-based lessons. Finally, we will draw the conclusions from the findings of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

II Literature review

Many researchers have confirmed the pedagogical value of using stories in first language development. A number of studies have examined the use of stories in the ESL context and relatively few studies focus on the EFL setting. In this section, we will first define the

story-based approach and then review the studies on the use of stories according to their different contexts, so that their effects may be revealed in relation to the findings of this study.

1 Definition of the story-based approach

Although a number of studies have examined the use of stories in the language classroom, no researcher has given a definition of the story-based approach, but actually it is similar to "Shared Reading" approach (Holdaway's 1979, cited in Elley, 2000: 237), and "Book Flood" approach (Elley, 2000). The story-based approach, involving use of storytelling techniques in this study, consists of the following typical features:

- At the pre-story stage, appropriate activities are used to get pupils ready for listening to the story (e.g., key vocabulary can be taught, puppets or pictures used to draw the pupils' attention, and asking questions related to the topic of the story to activate the pupils' background knowledge).

- At the in-story stage, contextualized storytelling techniques are used to help pupils comprehend the story, and add entertainment value, which in turn can lower the learners' anxiety.

- At the post-story stage, a variety of follow-up activities (e.g., story discussion, retelling the story, Total Physical Response, games and creating stories) are used to develop the pupils' thinking skills, reinforce learning, and stimulate their creativity.

- Stories or storybooks are considered as primary teaching tools or materials. Unlike textbooks, whose exposure to the target language is restricted and carefully controlled, stories provide pupils with a variety of language (e.g., narrative, dialogues and rich vocabulary).

- A sufficient number of illustrated storybooks in the target language may be provided in the classroom for the pupils to extend exposure time to the target language. Diagram 1 shows the structure of the story-based lessons based on Cameron's task framework for young learners (2001).

One unit (one story) →

| Preparation Stage | → | Core Activity Stage | → | Follow-up Stage |

Lesson one

- Use visual aids (e.g., puppets, realia and pictures) to attract the pupils' attention or arouse their curiosity.
- Introduce key vocabulary.
- Activate pupils' background knowledge.

- Teacher reads or tells the story and pupils listen to the story.
- Teacher helps pupils to comprehend the story by means of gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, sound effects and mime.
- Teacher gets pupils involved during the process.

- Post-story discussion
- TPR
- Games
- Comprehension-check quiz

Lesson two

- Review vocabulary, sentences and the story
- Act out the story
- Make a storybook
- Draw a picture
- Retell the story

Diagram 1. *The framework of the story-based lessons*

2 Studies on the use of stories in the L1 context

Most literature supporting the use of stories with children focuses on its effects on literacy development in the L1 context. With regard to the use of stories in the L1 classroom context, most studies deal with the storybook reading situation rather than with storytelling. Considerable research suggests that storybook reading facilitates vocabulary growth (Elley, 1989), improves story comprehension (Dennis & Walter, 1995), and narrative ability (Kimer Simon, 2003).

Dissatisfied with the limitations of a quantitative approach to reading storybooks, some researchers have examined what actually happens during storybook readings using a qualitative paradigm. A few studies have indicated variations in the ways the teachers read storybooks in their classrooms, and have found that the storybook reading styles affect kindergarten children's comprehension of books, their response to books and their literacy development (e.g., Martinez and Teale, 1993; Dickinson and Smith, 1994). In Dickinson and Smith's (1994) study, three storybook reading styles were revealed: (1)

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co-constructive, in which little talk occurs before and after the reading, but considerable talk of the analytic nature occurs during the reading; (2) didactic-interactional, in which limited talk occurs before, during and after the reading, and teachers exert a tight control over the talk, to keep the children engaged, by asking recall questions related to the text, and prompt the children to produce the predictable texts in chorus; (3) performance-oriented, in which little talk occurs as the books are read and most talk occurs before and after the readings, and the teachers frequently reconstruct the story or link the story to the children's life experiences following the readings. They further claimed that whether or not the teacher uses a particular approach depends on how s/he interprets the nature of the storybook reading event.

3 Studies on the use of stories in the L2 context

The most convincing evidence for the benefits of using stories in primary schools in the second language context may be the well-known experimental "Book Flood" studies (Elley, 1991; Elley et al. 1996; Elley, 2000) conducted in the South Pacific (Niue, Fiji), Singapore, and numerous other countries, on account of their large scale and coverage of many different nations. These studies consistently show that the "Book Flood" groups outperform the control groups in four skills.

Very few studies have focused on examining the effects of storytelling in the second language context. Among the comparatively few studies, Cary (1998) observed that three bilingual teachers told folk tales to ESL pupils for four weeks. The quantity of the target pupils' L2 production during post-story discussions was tallied according to predetermined categories. The results showed that the pupils were engaged or actively engaged during storytelling. Approximately three-quarters of the target pupils' contributions during the post-story discussions were in English, and most of their contributions were comments. The researcher indicated that the pupils with high English proficiency seemed to be more engaged and appeared to make more English contributions; however, how the teachers conducted the discussions may also have affected the pupils' contributions. This study concluded that storytelling engaged pupils and had a positive effect on their comprehension of L2 oral narrative and the quantity of L2 speaking.

Overall, very little qualitative research dealing with storytelling focuses on the primary level in an EFL context. Knowledge of what happens in the story-based classroom at primary level in an EFL setting is still limited. No research has evaluated the use of storytelling in primary schools by looking into classroom interaction to explore how storytelling benefits pupils learning English in EFL classrooms. The aim of this study is hence to fill this major research gap.

III Methodology

This study employed a multiple case study design. Two teachers from different primary schools in Taiwan participated in this study and implemented the story-based programme in their classrooms for about two months. There are two classes (aged 10) involved. The average class size was around 30 to 35 pupils. Data were gathered by means of classroom observation and interviews with the teachers. A total of 26 lessons were recorded in these two schools. Four full lessons (one standard lesson and one story-based lesson from each teacher) and the fragments of 17 other story-based lessons were transcribed using CA conventions (see Appendix). These four lessons (see Table 1) were selected by considering whether the teachers had covered the same topic (or the same story), and the pupils' and teachers' familiarity with the story-based approach. Two standard lesson transcriptions were used as baseline data for evaluating the innovation in these two sites. The conversation analysis approach and Cameron's task framework were adopted to analyze lesson transcripts in order to describe what happened inside the classroom. In this study classroom transcripts are the primary data whereas data from interviews provide explanation for any phenomena identified in classroom interaction.

Type	Lesson	Teacher	Pupils	Topic/ Story	Activities	No. of Pupils	Time
Standard	SA	A	Class A (aged 10)	Colors	choral drills, task-based activities,	30	40 min.
	SB	B	Class B (aged 10)	Colors	choral drills, playing a game	34	40 min.
Story-based	STA	A	Class A (aged 10)	Bear Hunt	talking about bears, prediction, storytelling, story discussion, TPR	30	40 min.
	STA	B	Class B (aged 10)	Bear Hunt	talking about bears, storytelling, pupil retelling the story	34	40 min.

Table 1. *The four lessons*

IV Data analysis

1 Standard Lessons

In the recorded standard lessons, these two teachers taught vocabulary relating to colours, focusing on pronunciation and phonics, and some sentence patterns. The pupils were expected to produce the target words and sentences accurately.

a Case One: Teacher A

In School A, Teacher A mainly used textbooks to teach English to the pupils. Some teaching materials such as flash cards, posters and tapes or CD-ROMs were provided by the publishers to accompany the textbooks. Teacher A delivered English lessons using a mixture of the L1 Chinese and the L2 English. She tended to use Chinese when trying to explain something complex, such as the rules of games and how to do the tasks. The pupils were allowed to use Chinese if they had difficulty expressing themselves in English.

In the standard lesson (SA), at the preparation stage and core activity stage, the exchange pattern is found to be highly controlled by Teacher A, as exemplified in Extract 2. In this extract, pupils are engaged in reading the dialogue using the textbook. The textbook provides two pairs of questions and answers. Teacher A asks the pupils to finish the rest of the dialogue in the textbook by following the

sentence patterns written on the blackboard. The pupils are required to produce "what colour is your ____?" and "it's___."

Extract 2: (at core activity stage)

	26	T:	What colour is your hen?
→			(T points to the picture in the textbook.)
	27		
→	28	LL:	What colour is your hen? It's blue/a blue
	29	T:	(T goes down to check the pupils.)
→	30	T:	Uh huh, It's blue.
	31	LL:	It's blue/What
→	32	T:	好((tr: okay)), 接下來((tr: next one,))jet.
→	33	LL:	What colour is your jet? It's green.
	34	T:	Mm, Pig. (T points to the picture in the textbook.)
	35	LL:	What colour is your pig? It's red.

In Extract 2, the teacher reads the question and points to the picture (line 26) to prompt the pupils to practise the dialogue. In line 28, some pupils fail to get the answer correct. She then supplies the correct answer in line 30. From lines 32 to 35, Teacher A prompts the pupils to produce the targeted linguistic forms by saying the item and pointing to the item in the picture. All the pupils have to do is to insert the item indicated by the teacher to make the target question, and then continue to read the answer by adding the colour according to the picture. This is "a slot and filler insertion of a vocabulary item with a slight element of choice" (Seedhouse 2004: 105). Choral drills, as shown in Extract 2, are the most frequently used activity by English teachers in EFL classrooms in Taiwan.

However, at the follow-up stage when the pupils are involved in the listen-and-colour task, the turn-taking system differs from the previous one. In Extract 4, the teacher is telling the pupils to colour in the teddy bear. The pupils are found to initiate a turn to give their comments on the picture of the teddy bear (line 18) in Chinese or to request a repetition (lines 16) in order to accomplish the tasks successfully. Pupils are also observed to take response turns to other pupils' remarks (lines 17).

Extract 4: (at the follow-up stage)

→ 1   T: Are you ready?
      2   LL: No.=
      3   T: =number three=
→ 4   LL: No, no.
→ 5   T: No, no. 要講 ((tr: (you) should say)) not yet.
      6   LL: Not yet.
                    (9 lines are omitted)
→ 16   B: 老師,你說((tr: teacher, you say)) number three 是什麼((tr: is what))?
→ 17   T & LL: Purple.
→ 18   LL: (unintelligible)怪物((tr: a monster))
                    (10 lines are omitted)
    29   T: Are you ready (unintelligible) number four?
→ 30   LL: <u>No, no, no</u>.
→ 31   LL: Not yet, not yet.
→ 32   T: Not yet.

The teacher here does not play a dominant role in controlling the allocation of turns. She, as an information supplier, makes confirmation checks to ensure that the pupils complete the task (lines 1, 29), and responds to pupils' requests (line 17). Only in lines 5 and 32 does Teacher A resume her teaching role to take an evaluation action to provide overt correction: "not yet" (line 5), or positive feedback to confirm the pupil's answer (line 32).

b Case Two: Teacher B

As at School A, textbooks were also used at School B for teaching English. For the fourth graders, School B used the same English textbook as School A. Teacher B, however, attempted to establish a whole-English learning environment for her pupils. She tended to use English more often than Teacher A and the pupils were encouraged to speak English in her English lessons. Although Teacher B does not use the textbook to present the targeted sentence pattern in the recorded standard lesson (SB), the exchange at the preparation and core activity stages still follows the teacher-controlled exchange pattern.

In the SB lesson at the follow-up stage, a game is employed to reinforce the pupils' learning of the targeted words and sentence patterns. Each pupil is assigned a number in a group. Each time Teacher B announces a number, the pupil

who has been assigned that number in each group should answer the question. If they answer it correctly, they can choose a code in the grid on the blackboard. Teacher B will check her notes to see which variant is assigned to this code. There are five variants: fairy, sunny day, cloudy day, rainy day, and typhoon. Each variant is given a different number of strokes which are used to draw a house. The worst variant is typhoon.

Extract b4: (At the follow-up stage)

→	1	T:	What colour (.) is (.) it? (T shows the flash card.)
	2		(.) nu:mber three.=
→	3	LL:	=It's blue.
	4		(Many pupils who are not number three answer it.)
	5	T:	(T goes down to check with each pupil individually.)
	6	B7:	It's blue.
			(4 lines are ommited)
	11	B10:	It's blue
	12	T:	Very good.
	13		Alright, choose one (T points to B7.)
	14	LL:	(unintelligible)
	15	B7:	E five.
	16	T:	E five (T checks with her note.)
→	17	L:	Typhoon, typhoon, typhoon.
	18	T:	(T draws a sun on the grid on the blackboard.)
	19	L:	Uh hu (L in the other group is disappointed)
	20	LL:	(unintelligible)
→	21	B1:	D five 在隔壁((tr: is next to it)nei (B1 is in the other group.)
→	22	T:	E five, right? (T looks at B7)
→	23	B7:	(B7 nods his head.)
→	24	T:	E five, not D five. (T looks at B1)

In Extract b4, Teacher B asks the display question with the flash card in line 1. Many pupils answer at the same time, even pupils Teacher B is not addressing. They try to help their group members to get the answer right. Teacher B checks with each individual pupil in lines 6-11 and then she takes an evaluation action in line 12. While Teacher B is checking her notes or drawing the variant for a group on the grid, pupils in the other groups shout "typhoon" repeatedly (lines 17) because "typhoon" is the worst variant. In line 21, B1 initiates repair, but Teacher B asks for a confirmation check with B7 before she responds to B1. After getting

confirmation from B7, Teacher B then gives negative feedback to B1 in line 24. The sequence from lines 1 to 12 follows the teacher-controlled exchange pattern, but from line 13 onwards it is subject to the rules of the game. Pupils are easily excited when playing games. They tend to help their group members answer questions. For instance, in this game, pupils may easily learn the names of the five variants: sunny, cloudy, typhoon, fairy, and windy, because they tend to initiate a turn to shout out a bad variant for another group or report the result of the code. In this case, an adjacency pair consisting of confirmation request and confirmation response is found, as in the SA lesson when the pupils engage in the listen-and-colour task at the follow-up stage.

2 Story-based lessons

In the recorded story-based lessons, these two teachers taught key vocabulary, prepositions and told the story of Bear Hunt. The pupils were expected to produce the target words, use prepositions accurately, comprehend the story and retell the story.

a Case One: Teacher A

Throughout the story-based programme, Teacher A had utilized puppets to encourage the pupils to initiate a conversation in English, and real objects or pictures to establish the context related to the story in order to attract their attention and arouse their interest before telling or reading the story. Little talk occurred during storytelling or storybook reading but Teacher A spent more time on story discussion at the follow-up stage.

In the recorded story-based lesson (STA), Teacher A still controls the turn-taking system to a certain extent but there are more variations in the turn-taking system found in this STA lesson than in the SA lesson. A variation in the turn-taking system in fact occurs at the very beginning of this lesson, as evidenced in the following extract:

Extract 6: (At the preparation stage)

	1	T:	Now, today we are going to tell you another story,=
→	2	B1:	=What (.) [another] story?
	3	T:	____ [Okay?]
	4	T:	You will see (.) in (.)in a minute.
	5		(T is busy with preparing for the pictures.)
→	6	G:	What is the name of the story?
	7	T:	The story is called (.) a bear hunt, a bear hunt, okay?

At the beginning of this STA lesson, we witness two pupils initiating turns to ask the title of the story in lines 2 and 6 in Extract 6. Immediately after the teacher announces what she is going to do today, B1 initiates a turn to ask her what the story is about. Teacher A responds to B1 in line 4 while she is still busy arranging the pictures. Because Teacher A does not provide an answer to B1's question, the delay in producing the second part of a question-answer adjacency pair provides an opportunity for G to get involved. In line 6, we see G repeating B1's question using a different form. The teacher finally repeats the title of the story twice in line 7. This evidence implies that the pupils are curious about what the story is about so they initiate turns to request information.

Extract 8: (At the core activity stage)

	1	T:	we a:re (.) going to catch a (.)
	2		[bear] (.)
→	3	LL:	[Bear]
	4	T:	we are brave (.) (T gestures.)
			(9 lines omitted; T tells the story.)
	14		okay, we are on the top of the hill, (T mimes.) (1.5) mm
→	15	B:	滾下來了= ((tr: falling down))
	16	T:	=where is the bear? (T gestures.) (.)
			(3 lines omitted; T tells the story.)
	20		okay, so [we go] down the hill (T points to the pictures and
	21		mimes)(4.0)
→	22	LL:	[(make sound)]
			(18 lines omitted; T tells the story.)
	41	T:	We go up the hill, (T points to the picture and mimes.) (2.0)
	42		[hui shi hui shi]
→	43	L:	[他不是要去抓熊] ((tr: isn't he going to catch a bear?))
	44	T:	We go down the hill, (T points to the picture and mimes.) (2.0)
			(4 lines omitted; T tells the story)
	49		okay, we go: (.) along the street (.)
→	50	B:	Ba[ba baba

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51   T:          [Baba baba]…
52   G2:      The bear=
53   T:          = (T mimes.) ha (sigh) we are safe (.) (T mimes.) hurrah.=
54   G2:      =but the bear
```

When Teacher A is telling the story, it sounds like a narrative monologue. As we can see in the extract, instead of initiating turns to elicit the pupils' production, Teacher A just tells the story by means of gestures, mime, pointing to the pictures and making sounds. However, the pupils are found to self-initiate turns to join in telling the story with Teacher A, either by producing English in line 3 or making sounds in lines 22 and 50. Some pupils even initiate turns to predict what will happen next (line 15), or to question why the characters return without catching a bear (line 43). Their initiations are however ignored by Teacher A at this point. While retelling the story, Teacher A invites the pupils to make sounds. Although she does not attempt to elicit their production in English, some pupils are found to contribute English utterances and to retell the story with Teacher A in addition to making sounds.

As interview data show, Teacher A expected her pupils to appreciate English literature and simply enjoy the pleasure of listening to the story. She argued that the pupils should be given an opportunity to guess the meaning from the context. She therefore preferred not being interrupted while telling the story. This explains why she ignored the pupils' initiations while telling the story, but spent more time on the post-story discussion.

At the follow-up stage, Teacher A utilizes the referential questions to facilitate discussion. Teacher A adopts a variety of strategies to help the pupils understand the questions, such as speaking more slowly, breaking the whole up into parts, pointing to the picture, and using gestures, pauses, reformulation or L1 translations. During story discussion time, the topics for discussion are initiated by the teacher but may be shifted freely by all the participants, as exemplified in Extract 10.

Extract 10: (at the follow-up stage)

→	1	T:	Do you like the story? (T looks at G15.)
	2	G15:	老師你說什麼?((tr: teacher, what do you say?))
	3	T:	喜歡這個故事嗎?((tr: like this story?))
	4	LL:	Yes.
→	5	T:	Why?
	6	G15:	Because (unintelligible)
	7	T:	Interesting.
	8		看老師耍把戲 ((tr: watching teacher juggling)), (.)
	9		很好玩, 對不對? ((tr: it's fun, isn't it?))
	10	G15:	(unintelligible)
	11	T:	Huh
	12	G15:	很有趣 ((tr: interesting))
→	13	T:	很有趣,那邊有趣? ((tr: interesting, which part is interesting?))
→	14	G15:	遇到熊的時候((tr: when (we) see the bear))
	15	T:	遇到熊的時候
	16		((tr: when (we) see the bear))
	17		(T mimes running.)
→	18	L:	用跑的 ((tr: running))
→	19	B2:	要, (.)要裝死 ((tr: must pretend to be dead))
	20	T:	(1.5) 裝死((tr: pretend to be dead)). (T mimes.) (.)Oh::
	21		(T gestures to give a turn to G9)
→	22	G9:	因為熊只吃活的東西
	23		((tr: because bears only eat something alive.))
	24	T:	Ah ha,
	25	B2:	誰說的?((tr: who said?))
	26	G2:	(G2 raises her hand.)
	27	T:	I know that story. I know that story, Okay.
	28		(T gestures to allocate G2 a turn.)
→	29	G2:	可是有些黑熊((tr: but some black bears))(.)
	30		黑熊也會吃((tr: black bears will also eat))(.)
	31		也會吃那個活的也會吃死的呀.((tr: also eat live stuff and dead
	32		stuff))

In the above extract, Teacher A initiates an open and referential question in English in line 1. G15 initiates repair in line 2 because she does not understand the question. Teacher A then repairs the original question in Chinese in line 3. Later, G15 takes a response turn and so do the other pupils. Teacher A asks uptake questions in lines 5 and 13 to probe further; G15 responds in lines 6, 12 and 14. Teacher A is seen to follow G15's utterance in mime (line 17) and probably with an attempt to review the plot: when the children saw the bear, they ran away. An unidentified pupil then voices this in

Chinese in line 18. B2 continues by offering another solution (line 19) based on his previous knowledge. His suggestion seems to be dealing with another issue, about what people should do when seeing a bear.

In lines 22-32, the discussion involves what food bears eat. In this extract, we see that the topic has shifted from whether the pupils like the story, to what people should do when they see a bear, and what kinds of food bears eat. It appears that Teacher A does not attempt to control what is said or in what way.

Usually, use of the target language is preferred in EFL classrooms, but in this case L1 contribution is considered valid. Therefore, we see that in the sequence from line 8 to line 32 (except line 27), all participants code-switch to the L1. In addition, such discussion (lines 19- 32) seems to restore the balance of power between the teacher and the pupils to a certain extent.

Teacher A expressed her satisfaction with post-story discussion with the pupils, because they shared their thinking and opinions with her. The pupils' comments sometimes amazed her. From this, she noted that teaching was not a matter of "one-way lecturing" and that her relationship with the pupils was also getting closer.

b Case Two: Teacher B

During the period of implementation of the story-based lessons, Teacher B only introduced certain key vocabulary items and little talk is found before storytelling. A lot of time was spent on storytelling and teaching vocabulary at this stage. After storytelling, Teacher B sometimes asked display questions to check the pupils' comprehension, and usually conducted TPR activities to reinforce vocabulary learning, instead of post-story discussion. In fact, she had tried story discussion with the pupils in the first story-based lesson but abandoned it afterwards because she found many pupils code-switched to Chinese during discussion, which is contrary to her classroom rule of speaking English.

In this lesson, at the preparatory stage, she chose to start by showing the pupils a picture, and then brought up the topic of bears. Vocabulary to do with bears was introduced during this stage. However, other key words, such as street, bridge and various prepositions were taught while she was telling the story. In

order to achieve the final teaching objective (the pupils are able to retell the story in English), Teacher B had told the story with the pupils three times.

As in Case One, the interaction patterns in this lesson are far more complex than in the SB lesson. In the recorded story-based lesson (STB), at the preparation stage when Teacher B asks questions to do with background knowledge about bears, many pupils participate enthusiastically in the discussion. They may respond to another pupil's questions, and repair his or her statement, or react to other pupils' answers with further information, based on their existing knowledge, as shown in Extract b9.5.

Extract b9.5: (At the preparation stage)
```
1   T:    What is honey?
2   LL:   蜂蜜 ((tr: honey))(many pupils say this together but it is not clear.)
3   B1:   小熊維尼喜歡吃的((tr: (It's what)Winnie The Pooh likes to eat)
4   B3:   [Uh, 蜂蜜]((tr: honey))
5   T:    [That's right.] Very good,
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In Extract b9.5, we see an adjacency pair consisting of the teacher's question and pupils' answer in lines 1-2, and then B1 initiates a turn to indicate that honey is what Winnie The Pooh likes to eat. B1's utterance in line 3 demonstrates his knowledge of honey associated with a character in the storybook he has read. In line 4, B3 utters "uh", indicating his acceptance of this additional information and takes B1's utterance as a clue to working out what "honey" means (maybe B3 does not hear the answer in line 2 clearly). At the end of this sequence, Teacher B provides a positive evaluation of the answer and confirms B1's contribution.

At the core activity stage, when Teacher B is telling the story, vocabulary teaching is embedded and the pupils are prompted to tell the story with Teacher B. During her storytelling, we can still find the teacher-led exchange pattern, and the flow of the story is disrupted occasionally. Unlike Teacher A, Teacher B endeavours to elicit the pupils' production, and encourages them to participate in the storytelling, as exemplified in Extract b10.2.

Extract b10.2: (At the core activity stage)

→	12	T:	What's (.) inside the cave? (low voice)
	13	LL:	bear
	14	B1:	Teddy bear=
	15	T:	=It's a:::
	16	LL:	Bear/brown bear
	17	T:	It's a:: brown bear. (T shows the bear's picture.)
	18	LL:	(unintelligible)
→	19	T:	And what are they going to do?(.)
	20		Are they going to: run? (T mimes.)
	21	LL:	No.
→	22	T:	Or are they going to (.) kick the bear? (T mimes.)
	23	B3:	Kian kian kian (B3 makes a sound.)
→	24	T:	Or to piu (T mimes and makes a sound)
	25		[(unintelligible)]
	26	B3:	[Arr] (B3 pretends to be shot down.)
→	27	T:	No, they started to:: (T mimes.)
	28	LL:	Run=
	29	T:	=Run, they run (.) out of the cave?
	30		And (.) (T changes the picture.)
	31		they (.) run (1.5)(T points to the picture.)
	32		go up the [hill]
	33	LL:	[hill]

In Extract b10.2, we see Teacher B using different strategies to encourage the pupils to participate during her storytelling. For instance, she asks the pupils to make predictions (lines 12, 19-20, 22, 24) and mimes (lines 20, 22, 24, 27) to elicit pupils' production. Many pupils are heard to shout in response and overlapping occurs from time to time (line 33). They may predict wrongly or offer an answer for fun, as in line 14. This extract thus shows a high level of participation and excitement from the pupils and the teacher's endeavour to prompt the pupils' production during this period.

During the interview, Teacher B expressed a serious interest in the pedagogical function of the story in language learning. As a result of this interest, she was found to be more dominant in controlling the turn-taking system in the story-based lesson than Teacher A. In addition, she preferred to engage in more interaction with the pupils during the telling of the story. She therefore made efforts to prompt the pupils' production while telling the story.

After Teacher B has told the story three times, she invites pupils to come to the front to retell the story individually. The pictures are put on the blackboard as cues to help them.

Extract b11.1: (At the follow-up stage)

→	14	B1:	Boy and girl go to (1.0)
→	15	G1:	One day
	16	B1:	Monday
	17	G1:	Monday (G1 smiles)
	18	T:	(T gestures to stop G1 with a smile.)
→	19	B1:	Monday, go to (1.0) go to ai(1.0)
→	20	T:	Go to what?
	21	B1:	(unintelligible)(2.0)
	22	T:	Bear (T points to the picture of the bear.)
	23	B1:	Bear
	24	T:	(T points to the word of 'hunt' on the blackboard.)
	25	B1:	(1.0)
	26	T:	hunt
→	27	B1:	Hunt bear (1.5)

B1 is the first volunteer to retell the story, as shown in Extract b11.1. When B1 pauses for one second in line 14, G1 takes a turn to add "one day" in line 15 to initiate repair for B1. He, however, completes the repair wrongly in lines 16 and 19. G1 does not correct B1's utterance but repeats it for fun in line 17. After B1 has repeatedly struggled with his limited L2 knowledge and has paused twice in line 19, Teacher B takes a turn to prompt him to proceed and assess his actual development level. Without any proper response from B1, Teacher B first provides a key word (bear) for him in line 22. In line 24, Teacher B points to the word "hunt" on the blackboard, but B1 is silent for one second. This silence is perceived by Teacher B as showing that B1 is unable to pronounce the word, so she demonstrates "hunt" for him in line 26. Instead of repeating "hunt" after the teacher, B1 produces a phrase in line 27 to self-repair his incomplete utterance in line 19. Although "hunt bear" is in fact grammatically incorrect, this error is ignored by Teacher B.

In this Extract we observe that B1 cannot even construct a complete sentence. His actual development level is displayed in line 14, but his proximal development level may be "boy and girl go to hunt bear". Teacher B is observed first to access his actual

development level (line 20) and then to divide the phrase up into pieces in lines 22, 24 and 26 to provide scaffolds by modeling (lines 22, 26), thereby reducing the degree of freedom (line 24) for B1. It is B1 who utters "hunt bear" by himself in order to make sense of constructing discourse. Not only Teacher B but also his peers provide scaffolds to help him.

In this follow-up activity, we see Teacher B initiates an invitation for pupils to retell the story, and one pupil accepts and conducts the storytelling. In this case, B1 cannot carry out the monologue in one turn, so Teacher B and the other pupils (e.g., G1) initiate turns to provide scaffolds to help him accomplish this task. The evidence here seems to show that scaffolding is more likely to occur and can be more finely tuned to a pupil's ZPD in this one-to-multiple parties (one pupil to the whole class and the teacher) situation in the teacher-fronted whole classroom setting.

V Discussion

The data from the two cases show that the pattern of teacher-pupil interaction differs in these two types of lesson. In the standard lessons, the major interaction pattern is the teacher-controlled exchange (teacher prompt, learner production with optional evaluation or follow-up action). The interaction pattern varies only at the follow-up stage, when the pupils are engaged in carrying out tasks or playing a game. In the story-based lessons, the teacher-controlled exchange still exists but there are more variations of interactional pattern to be found. A variation in the interactional pattern may occur at any time when the pupils are motivated to initiate turns.

1 Features of the standard lessons (baseline data)

In the standard lessons, at the preparation and core activity stages, the teacher controls classroom talk. She decides who says what and in what way. The turns are usually initiated by the teacher to elicit the target linguistic forms from the pupils. The pupils are usually busy responding to the teacher's prompt and they seldom initiate turns and gain the floor. At the follow-up stage, the turn-taking system varies in response to the change in the participants' roles defined by the nature of the task or game.

In this study, these two teachers usually ask display questions and adopt a variety of

techniques to prompt the pupils to produce the target linguistic forms. As for the pupils, they rarely initiate turns, and even if they do, they are rarely listened to if they are not related to the pedagogical purpose. However, at the follow-up stage, when the pupils are doing tasks or playing a game, the interaction pattern is not controlled so tightly by the teachers. The pupils are seen to initiate turns in order to accomplish the task, win the game or express their emotions. The teachers at this time act as an information supplier or a referee/score keeper, besides being a teacher. The teachers were found to initiate a turn for a confirmation check or take a response turn to the pupils' request for information. When the teacher resumes her teaching role, the teacher-controlled exchange pattern is reinstated. The interaction pattern at this stage, therefore, is subject to the nature of the task or the game and the different roles the teachers and pupils play during the follow-up activities.

2 Features of the story-based lessons

In the story-based lessons, the teacher sometimes has no idea or does not control what the pupils will say at what time and in what way. The interaction patterns of the story-based lessons are far more complex and overlapping also occurs more frequently. Variations in the turn-taking system occur not only at the follow-up stage but at any time when the pupils are motivated to initiate turns driven by their curiosity and eagerness to make sense of the story, to participate for fun, or to express their opinions. More pupil initiations are found but mainly in the L1 Chinese.

In comparison with Teacher A, Teacher B seems more dominant in controlling the turn-taking system since she asks many display questions while very few referential questions are used. Unlike Teacher A's class, the teacher-controlled exchange pattern in Teacher B's class also occurs during storytelling, because these two teachers adopt different styles of storytelling. Teacher A tends to carry on a monologue in a dramatic way, neither providing explicit explanations of vocabulary nor eliciting any input from the pupils. She acts more like a storyteller or an actor than a teacher while telling the story. Such a style may be labelled a performance-oriented style. Teacher B, in contrast, endeavours to elicit

the pupils' production, checking their comprehension and teaching vocabulary. She acts more like a teacher, but sometimes assumes the role of a storyteller or a director who gestures to the pupils to tell the story with her. Her style can hence be identified as a didactic-interactional style. It is reasonable to assume that the teachers' different perception of using storytelling in their classrooms is an influential variable.

While listening to the story, the pupils in Class A are found to make a number of contributions to classroom discourse. The pupils in Class B are also observed to participate in the storytelling in a similar way, but they seldom initiate a topic for discussion or comment on the story, and they provide fewer L1 translations. This is probably because the pupils in Case Two are busy responding to the teacher's prompts, so they have no time to think or give comments. In addition, Teacher B provides vocabulary teaching and checks the pupils' comprehension occasionally during storytelling, whereas Teacher A does not, so Class B may not rely on the L1 as a tool as much as Class A do in order to make sense of the story. When Teacher A spends more time on key vocabulary teaching before storytelling, Class A is found to provide L1 translations less often. Therefore, the most influential factor may be the teacher's style of storytelling. The alternative explanations may be related to the classroom policy concerning the use of the L1, and to whether the post-story discussion has become a routine.

In both cases, the pupils are found to make more initiations than in the standard lessons; however, they are more likely to resort to the L1 to express their meanings due to a lack of L2 competence. The monolingual context (the research context) is different from the multilingual context. Since teachers and pupils share the same language in the monolingual context, the pupils may easily resort to the L1 for communication purposes when they have difficulty in the L2. Like Cary's (1998) study, we found a high level of pupil participation during storytelling. However the lower percentage of English use by the pupils during story discussion in this study seemed to highlight a different effect of storytelling in the ESL and EFL contexts.

VI Conclusion

Van Lier (1988:106) indicates that the rigid control of turning taking in the classroom may deprive the learners of opportunities to develop interactional skills in L2 and of an intrinsic motivation for listening. Johnson (1995) also suggests that when the teacher allows the learners space (what to say in which form is decided by learners), this creates more opportunities for learner participation in the learning process by allowing for variability in the patterns of communication. The result of data analyses finds that there are more variations in the turn-taking system in the story-based lesson, and the teacher does not know what pupils will say and in what way during story discussion. Therefore, we might reasonably assume that the story-based approach is likely to provide more learning opportunities for pupils. Most of their initiations, however, are still in the L1, so whether these learning opportunities can in turn develop their interactional skills in the L2 is not certain. The large number of pupil initiations and the large amount of overlapping do at least suggest that the story-based approach engenders a high level of intrinsic motivation and engagement on the part of the pupils.

Furthermore, in the story-based lessons, there are more opportunities for the pupils to be exposed to unplanned discourse and to a wider variety of lexis from their peers' utterances and the teacher's extended talk during discussion, or from pupil-initiated talk with the puppets. They are more actively involved in learning new vocabulary, judging by their initiations to self-repeat new words or new phrases, or to ask for confirmations and clarifications during the first storytelling. Since the story motivates them to say something, they have a purpose or need to communicate in the classroom. Although they tended to use the L1 in the monolingual context due to a lack of L2 competence, some pupils with a higher English proficiency level still produced pushed output with their limited L2 knowledge to express their meaning.

In addition, two story-telling styles are identified: performance oriented and didactic interactional styles (Dickinson and Smith 1994). Pupil production in these two cases varies slightly. The pupils in Case One are found to initiate topics for discussion, develop their argument, give comments on the story, and provide more L1 translations. The pupils in Case Two, by contrast, seldom initiate a topic for discussion, give comments on the story and they provide fewer L1 translations; however they produce more English in

order to respond to the teacher's prompt. This study suggests that how the teacher uses the story in the classroom and what he or she expects the pupils to learn from the story seem to affect pupils' production in the classroom.

The originality of this study lies in its method of data analysis for evaluating classroom interaction, and in the provision of baseline data for making a comparison. Applying a CA approach and Cameron's task framework, the study examines teacher-pupil interaction in story-based EFL primary classrooms, revealing its distinctive features by means of a comparison with baseline data. This study contributes to the literature concerned with the use of storytelling in the EFL classroom, which is a relatively un-researched area. The findings of this study advance our knowledge and provide preliminary evidence of what goes on in primary EFL classrooms when implementing the story-based approach. The features of the story-based classroom discourse, revealed in this study, provide an explanation for the positive effects discovered in previous story-based studies, such as "book flood" studies (e.g. Elley et al., 1996). The investigation of this study, however, is confined to two schools, two teachers, 4 full lessons, supplemented with the fragments of 17 lessons from a database of 26 recorded lessons. This limits the potential for generalizability of the findings beyond the cases under study. By looking at a wider sample, the existence of additional story-telling styles in EFL primary classrooms could be further identified. Longitudinal studies are also suggested to evaluate the effects of different patterns of interaction created by using stories in the classroom on children's vocabulary growth, and on the development of imagination and thinking skills, in order to determine whether there is a more effective way to use stories, or whether each story-telling style contributes to different aspects of children's learning.

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APPENDIX

Transcription conventions

T	teacher
G:	unidentified girl
B:	unidentified boy
L:	unidentified learner
LL:	Several or all learners simultaneously
B1: B2: etc,	identified boy
G1: G2: etc,	identified girl
[	indicates the point of overlap onset
]	indicates the point of overlap termination
=	a) turn continues below, at the next identical symbol
	b) if inserted at the end of one speaker's turn and at the beginning of the next speaker's adjacent turn, it indicates that there is no gap at all between the two turns
Yes/yah/ok/	Overlapping or simultaneous utterances by more than one learner
(2.5)	Interval between utterances (in seconds)
(.)	pause
e:r the:::	One or more colons indicate lengthening of the preceding sound
熊 ((tr:bear))	Non-English words are showed in traditional Chinese characters and are immediately followed by an English translation
(T shows picture)	Non-verbal actions or editor's comments
?	Rising intonation, not necessarily a question
,	Low-rising intonation, suggesting continuation
.	Falling (final) intonation
scared	Underlining indicates speaker emphasis
→	Mark features of special interest

Book Review

International Students in American Colleges and Universities: A History

Teresa B. Bevis and Christopher J. Lucas. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp. xi + 285.

Reviewed by Pi-Chi Han

University of Missouri, USA

Intended as an up-to-date and comprehensive historical overview of international students (both undergraduate and graduate) sojourning in American universities and colleges, *International Students in American Colleges and Universities: A History* offers an easy to read narrative for faculty and administrators interested in the history of international students as well as for the many stakeholders who interact with international students who come to study in the United States.

Covered with an old photo of an intelligent and determined looking, young Chinese student dressed in the Qing Dynasty era clothing, the book opens with an introduction that provides a brief overview of America in seeking internationalism and being the largest host country for international students. The narrative then follows with eight historically ordered chapters and concludes with future challenges and imperatives of reforming immigration law, initiating strategic planning for attracting global talents, and embracing large-scale political implications in global competition and international

education.

The first chapter explores centers of higher learning and foreign students in ancient European history; the second reveals the first Latin American, Chinese, and Japanese enrollments in American colleges and the beginning of immigration policy in the 19th century; and the third offers abundant documentation of major topics of the early 20th century such as the first foreign students census (1900-1930), growing Latin American and Chinese enrollments, increasing enrollments from other world regions, international clubs and houses, female foreign students in the early 1900s, foreign students and Christianity, and the establishment of the Institute of International Education (IIE).

Chapters four through eight deal with the contemporary historical issues beginning with World War II through the Cold War to the present. Offering data from the next four censuses (1948, 1955, 1969-1970, 1999-2000), the authors analyze the influence of American foreign policy, the growth of foreign students, and the change after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Specific attention is given to (1) the importance of community colleges in attracting foreign students, (2) the intellectual migration in the fields of science and engineering, and (3) the debate between homeland security and global competition of recruiting international students.

In the conclusion, the authors pose queries into several significant areas: the overall decline of the international student enrollments between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004; the call from the authors to reform immigration law and the visa system; and the need for strategic planning in recruiting international students.

In addition to all of the interesting content the authors provide, they have avoided ethnocentric perspectives from the host nationals and instead elaborate on the positive outcomes such as foreign talent, brain gain, intellectual migration, and financial

contribution international students have made in the U.S. Finally, the authors urge the readers to acknowledge how international students have assisted the U.S. in the cutting-edge technological development and in the growing knowledge economy for embracing the unprecedented changes in the world.

Highly comprehensive and informative, the book nevertheless leaves the readers wondering what the authors might have done better. First, while the text is an up-to-date book, the authors fail to provide the data from the latest international student annually census (2001- 2007). Second, although the authors have offered suggestions for policy makers in the final epilogue, they might have offered persuasive research literature and current interview data or other qualitative data of international students; thus making their case stronger. Third, while the book is about international students, the authors might have also explored more issues regarding the huge intercultural adjustment, adaptation, or even barriers that international students have encountered in the U.S. Taking these questions into account, readers will also, because of the book's reader friendly story-telling style and its comprehensive coverage, no doubt treasure this book as an important resource for learning about and working with international students.

Book Review

From Language Learner to Language Teacher: An Introduction to Teaching English as a Second Language

Don Snow. Alexandria, Virginia: TESOL, 2007. Pp. ix + 357.

Reviewed by Marilyn N. Lewis

The University of Auckland, New Zealand

The title of Snow's latest book, F*rom Language Learner to Language Teacher: An Introduction to Teaching English as a Second Language* makes a link between the learning and teaching of a language. As the introduction makes clear, the intended readers are second language speakers of English who bring to their teaching both "challenges" and "strengths" (p.v) which are different from those of native speakers (NSs), but NSs too could most certainly relate to the principles and examples in this latest publication.

The thirteen chapters of text are divided into two parts. Part one, Preparing to Teach, has five chapters, starting with "Language teachers as language learners". Here the author often uses the device of question and answer, as in "Why should an English teacher be a *successful* English learner?" Chapter 2 presents language learning principles and the teacher's role. Here, as elsewhere in the book, Snow makes links between general theory and his own experiences, as in the section "Language learning as a battle of the heart" where he recalls his own early efforts to learn Russian. He also refers to the Confucian

teaching approach as the role of a sage, which contrasts with the metaphor of teacher as coach. Chapters 3 to 5 deal with general information: course and lesson planning, evaluation and grading, as well as something he realistically calls "classroom survival." While Snow avoids being dogmatic ("There are as many ways to structure a lesson plan as there are different teaching situations" p. 67), he does provide concrete suggestions for the reader to accept or modify.

The second part of the book , Aspects of English Teaching, has eight chapters. Here the author turns to the more traditional divisions used in advice to teachers, with one chapter each for the four skills and for the teaching of vocabulary, of culture and of grammar. Then chapter 13 addresses a number of problems common to language teachers all over the world: large classes, disparate skill levels, students who participate too much or too little, and others. With his love of the metaphor, Snow presents the teacher as a traveler whose goal is "to cross the desert and reach lush, green meadows on the other side" (p. 228).

The five appendices include one of which has some ready-to-go ideas for classes on oral English. There are also three pages of Internet resources. Finally, Snow points to further reading through the occasional internal referencing and a one page list of sources. Chronologically, these range from Ur's 1981 *Discussions that Work* (Cambridge) to the author's own 2004 student and teacher text from the Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. Geographically, the two sources acknowledge the value of both traditional and newer sources in informing English language teaching.

A number of helpful devices make the content accessible. One is the personal style of writing already noted. Others are the key statements that open each chapter with bullet

points, and the concluding items for thought, discussion and action. This latter feature would make the book into a useful text for pre- or in-service courses.

For its practical ideas, its readability and its many examples, this book is recommended to both its intended readership and to NSs.

Book Review

A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners

Christina Coombe, Keith Folse, and Nancy Hubley. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of

Michigan Press, 2007. Pp. xxx + 202.

Reviewed by Slobodanka Dimova

East Carolina University, USA

Christina Coombe, Keith Folse, and Nancy Hubley's book *A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners* targets pre- and in-service classroom teachers who have difficulties finding their way in the world of language assessment (p. iii). The authors offer to assist teachers in finding their way by leading them through the process of developing, administering, and using language assessment. For that purpose, they use simple explanations of the basic testing principles, concrete examples, and practical tips.

The book comprises ten chapters preceded by a preface, a language assessment quiz, and an introduction. The purpose of the introduction is to provide definitions of the rudiments of good assessment (e.g., test type and categorization, validity, reliability, washback, practicality, transparency, and security).

In the first two chapters, the authors discuss the different steps in assessment development and the types of test items. While chapter 1 presents the first stages in assessment development such as planning, test and item specification design, assessment

construction, and outcome analysis, chapter 2 provides descriptions of different item types, including multiple choice, true/false, matching format, cloze/gap-fill, short answer, and performance-based items.

Chapters 3-6 introduce assessment techniques for each of the four language skills--reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In the first sections of these chapters, the authors identify the importance of each skill's assessment in different types of language teaching contexts (intensive programs, non-academic, and K-12). Then they explore the definitions and the components of each skill before they present the different assessment techniques.

In chapters 7-9, the authors explain how assessment administration and use, as well as student test-taking strategies, may influence assessment results positively or negatively. They suggest that students should use different study techniques and become familiar with the test format in order to achieve successful assessment performances. Assessment administrators should perform careful assessment planning and administration taking into consideration the effects of the assessment procedures and formats on students' performance.

The final chapter discusses ESL students' content knowledge assessment in K-12 classes. With the increased number of ESL students in the mainstream classrooms, especially in U.S. public schools, every teacher becomes and ESL teacher. The authors acknowledge this phenomenon, explaining how ESL students' performance on content-based assessments may depend on their English language proficiency.

Throughout the book, the authors use case studies and visual aids to contextualize the techniques and concepts they present. Each chapter has a case study in which an inexperienced teacher is focusing on different principles and aspects of language

assessment. Readers are challenged to analyze and discuss the teacher's decisions as to whether they conform to or violate language assessment principles. In addition, the authors visually represent the information through flowcharts, graphs, figures, and tables. For example, each chapter ends with a table summarizing some of the basic language assessment tips as a list of "Ten Things to Remember."

Language teachers will find the case studies, the visual representation of information, and the lists of practical tips very useful. Of particular importance are the case studies with concrete examples which can help teachers understand how assessment becomes an essential part of any language teaching curriculum.

One topic that is relevant but receives little attention in the book is standardized testing and its impact on teaching and learning. Even though the book aims at classroom assessment, understanding standardized testing may also be important because most teachers are involved in administration, scoring, and use of standardized tests. Some teachers would benefit from more information on how these standardized tests can have an impact on the teaching curricula and how the impact can change the quality of education.

Regardless of this shortcoming, the book effectively addresses the intended audience. Pre- and in-service classroom ESL teachers will appreciate the simple but practical approach to language assessment. Teacher-trainers, too, may consider using it as a language assessment textbook.

Book Review

Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies

Zoltán Dörnyei. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 1 + 336.

Reviewed by Vander Viana

Queen's University Belfast, UK

Zóltan Dörnyei's *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methodologies*, as the title indicates, is dedicated to (future) applied linguists. However, given that the book "show[s] that with a bit of care and lots of common sense *all of us* [italics added] can conduct investigations that will yield valuable results" (p. 15), it does not limit its target readership to those within the academia, but goes further.

The volume is structured in five parts and fourteen chapters. The first part offers a look at the basics of research, including a discussion on what it takes to be a good researcher. The author then presents "one of the most general and best known distinctions in research methodology" (p. 24): qualitative and quantitative studies. Instead of conceiving them as two opposing fields without any intersection, Dörnyei sees them as the two ends of a continuum. Thus, special emphasis falls on mixed methods research, which combines both types of investigations. More intricate concepts within the label of quality criteria are introduced in chapter 3, such as reliability, validity, and practical

considerations for designing a study. The final chapter in part I details longitudinal research from the different viewpoints of the three methods.

Part II deals with collecting data once a study has been designed. Readers learn how to carry out this task from the quantitative end (chapter 5), the qualitative perspective (chapter 6) and the mixed methods approach (chapter 7). Different from the threefold pattern which is adopted throughout the volume, Part II also reports on classroom research since "the classroom . . . is a primary research site in applied linguistic investigations and the unique features of this context have a strong bearing on the way we conduct research in it" (p. 176).

Data analysis forms the bulk of Part III. Here again the volume focuses on methodological procedures which are characteristic of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods in three independent chapters.

Since "research is inherently a social activity" (p. 277), the author argues that writing up and disclosing results is an integral aspect of any study. Thus, Part IV details how to write a quantitative-based report in one chapter while the other blends recommendations on both qualitative and mixed methods papers.

Following a book-length presentation of methodological aspects, Part V offers, in a single chapter, some final considerations as far as method selection is concerned. Dörnyei proposes that readers should take a pragmatic orientation by considering aspects such as their own personal stance, the research itself and its audience.

Research Methods in Applied Linguistics does what it promises: it offers a way to get started in research methodology. The volume does not need to be read in a traditional way. In fact, one may eventually choose, for instance, to read all chapters on aspects of doing quantitative research first or only those which concern mixed methods. As the book

is rich in cross-references, it is easy to find out to which page one should turn in order to read up on a topic. On the other hand, some readers may find these abundant references to be rather tiresome. In relation to the content, it would have been useful if the author had only made use of applied linguistic research to exemplify some of his points. This is especially the case in the discussion of quantitative techniques where novices in the area may have problems with some examples from the 1991 General US Social Survey, as is the case with the possible relationship between sex and race (pp. 229-230) and in the level of happiness and race (pp. 219-221). It might have been more fitting to stick to examples on, for instance, students' performance on listening and reading tests as in the illustration of t-tests (pp. 217-218).

Keeping its positive points in mind, Dörnyei's R*esearch Methods in Applied Linguistics* can be recommended for courses on research methods both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It may also be useful to those who have a keen interest in the area and are willing to learn or develop their understanding of the methods employed in applied linguistics.

Book Review

Language in South Asia

Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, and Shikaripur Sridhar (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xxiv + 608.

Reviewed by Bal K. Sharma

Tribhuvan University, Nepal

The recently published volume *Language in South Asia* is a welcome contribution to the field of language and linguistics as it provides an extensive treatment of languages spoken in South Asian contexts.

Braj Kachru opens this ten part, 19 chapter volume with an introduction where he introduces the general language situation in the South Asian region. Asher and Subbarao, respectively, then provide part I, "Language history, families, and typology." Here they offer chapters which explore language in historical context and the typological characteristics of South Asian languages.

The chapters in part 2, "Languages and their functions," explore major languages and their domains of functions. Y. Kachru, one of the editors of the volume, examines Hindi–Urdu–Hindustani and points out the distinction between Hindi and Urdu in terms of phonological, morphological and syntactic features. Abidi and Gargesh continue by exploring the spread of Persian in South Asia and explain the process of Indianization of

Persian languages and vice versa. And then, Bhatia, outlining several major regional languages (Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, etc.) in descending order in terms of number of speakers, presents a case of Punjabi and Bengali languages. Bhatt and Manhoob follow with a discussion of minority languages' status in planning and education, and Abbi closes with a chapter with a language profile of South Asian region.

Part 3, "Sanskrit and traditions of language study," consisting of two chapters, covers the issues regarding the Sanskrit language. In the first Deshpande discusses the Sanskrit language from its sociolinguistic perspective, and Aklujkar, in the second, explores the language study traditions in South Asia, with a particular focus on Pānini's approach to grammar.

In part 4, "Multilingualism, contact, and convergence," three authors discuss the implications of South Asia's linguistic pluralism. Annamalai treats India's multilingualism from demographic, communicative, functional, political and cultural contexts, Sridhar, another editor of the volume, explores the issues of language variation and language contact and their sociolinguistic implications, and Smith presents the case of emergence of new varieties of language like pidgin and creole due to language contacts.

The next part, "Orality, literacy, and writing systems," consists of only two authors' works. Agnihotri presents perspectives on orality and literacy in the South Asian multilingual context and Daniels outlines the writing systems and scripts of several languages in the region.

Parts 6 and 7 are the shortest sections of the book, each containing only one chapter. In part 6 "Language conflicts," King (drawing cases from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) offers discussion on language conflicts in South Asia. This is followed by

Sridhar's outlining of language modernization in Kannada in part 7 where he discusses linguistic processes, controversies, and implications for language modernization.

The following section, "Language and discourse," the longest unit in the book, has five chapters. In the first Y. Kachru presents a discussion on the role language plays in social and ethnic interaction. Then Bhatia and Sharma explore how languages are represented in the legal system in the South Asian nations. Afterwards, Bhatia continues by coauthoring another chapter with Baumgardner where they present major issues of language use in media and advertising. Dissanayake then offers the linguistic structures and features of code switching in Indian cinemas, and Pandharipande finishes the section with ideology, power hierarchy, and language choice in contemporary South Asia.

The next to last section of the book, "Language and identity," begins with material by Valentine where she offers a discussion of the relationship between language and gender and explores in length the historical debate of dominance and difference in language use. Valentine's work is followed by a chapter by Zelliot who presents the case of Dalits and how their literature constructs their identity, and the section is closed by Nair's exploration of the issues of language and youth culture in South Asian contexts.

The section "Languages in diaspora" closes the text with chapters by Mesthrie and Sridhar. In this section, Mesthrie provides a discussion on a relocated South Asian population in South Africa, and Sridhar presents the cases of identity and assimilation of South Asians in Europe and the United States.

The book's major strength lies in its comprehensive coverage and diversity of issues and controversies related to languages and people of South Asia. The readers, however, will find that some language issues receive less or no attention (e.g. languages from Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives). Regardless, this interdisciplinary book will be equally

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useful for students and scholars, both novice and experienced, in areas such as, but not exclusive to, sociolinguistics, multilingualism, language planning, and South Asian Studies.

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