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dante.fabros@site.edu.au

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Foreword from the editor

It is exciting to present the new edition of our journal publication. It IS new because we have got a new journal title: TESOL International Journal. This change testifies the journal's increasing recognition in academic community, but will also help establish its unique identity. I welcome this move.

Before introducing the contents of this issue, I would like to share with you updates from our journal. First, we have established a team of Associate Editors in order to offer more efficient service to our reviewers and timely support to our authors. Our journal has been attracting increasing number of submissions and this new editorial structure is of utmost importance and necessity.

Secondly, the 2015 TESOL International Conference, co-sponsored by our journal, will be held 14th – 16th May, 2015 at Shanghai University, China. The conference features some very renowned speakers and cutting-edge research topics. I thus sincerely invite you to submit abstracts and attend this conference. In addition, we tend to make this TESOL International Conference a biennial event and if you and your institution are interested in hosting this conference, please do not hesitate to contact me. We are here to assist you to plan this important professional event.

Now, I would like to introduce you to this volume which has eight papers. The first two are concerned with textbook evaluation and raise serious concerns for English teaching material development. In the first paper, **Hanh thi Nguyen** examined the use of dialogues in some Asian government-approved textbooks and found that these textbooks overall do not sufficiently inform students of the multiple interactional practices they need in order to enter topical talk. In the second paper, **Fatemeh Mahbod Karamouzian** and colleagues investigated the overall quality of four textbooks used in Pakistani secondary schools and they found that overall their quality is not satisfactory and they do not well meet curriculum objectives set aside by the Pakistani National Curriculum for English IX and X. The third paper presented by **Stephen Krashen** adopted a 'case histories' approach in second language acquisition research and demonstrated the validity of the Comprehension Hypothesis. In the fourth paper, **Chiu-Hui Wu** reported a critical approach in teaching literature reading in a college-level EFL classroom context and well demonstrated how a critical reading could help EFL student detect prejudice and bias in texts and understand the interaction among language, culture, society and discourse. **Reza Dashtestani and Hossein Samoudi** in the fifth paper investigated both EFL teachers and

students' attitudes towards the use of laptops in learning English. They found that though teachers and students held positive attitudes, there are difficulties and challenges. In the sixth paper, **Pham Thi Thanh Xuan** traced convincingly Vietnamese university EFL students' challenges in self-representation/identity to communicative incompetence, unavailability of English communities of practice and incomplete exploit of cultural capital. Some measures and moves are suggested to help Vietnamese students overcome such challenges. In the seventh paper, through soliciting teachers and students' attitudes and feelings towards language testing, **Tanzina Tahereen** held that language testing has an impeding effect on language teaching curriculum in Bangladesh. **YaseminYildiz and Buket Kömürcü** in the last paper compared the auditory perceptual skills of two groups of learners with different age ranges and intellectual abilities and found the gifted young learners outperformed the best. Useful theoretical and pedagogical implications are discussed.

I hope you would enjoy reading what we present here and also would like to invite you to submit your research and share with international TESOL community your good experience and practice. We are open to different theories, practices, and research paradigms. Last, I would like to hear your feedback and comments on our publication which will help us grow together.

Xinghua (Kevin) Liu
School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China
Email: liuxinghua@sjtu.edu.cn

An Analysis of First-encounter Dialogues in EFL Textbooks

Hanh thi Nguyen

(hnguyen@hpu.edu)

Hawaii Pacific University, USA

Saeko Tsukimi

(saekotsukimi@rikkyo.w-sussex.sch.uk)

Rikkyo School, England

Wen-Pei Lin

(wlin4@my.hpu.edu)

ELS Language Centers, Honolulu, USA

Abstract

In this paper, we use findings from conversation analysis on the development of setting talk and pre-topical sequences in first encounters (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Svennevig, 2000) to inform an examination of dialogues in government-approved textbooks in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Our analysis concentrates on the types of topics introduced and the sequential organization of talk. With respect to the sequential organization, we focus on (a) whether the dialogues include pre-topical talk and if they do, we examine (b) the forms of response to pre-topical questions, namely, rejection (short-form reply plus a return question) or acceptance (short-form reply or long-form response beyond what is asked in the question), (c) the use of topicalizers as a way to invite the other speaker to further the topic, and (d) the transition from pre-topical talk to topical talk.

Key words: Textbook dialogues, Authenticity, Pragmatics, Conversation analysis, Initial interactions, Conversation openings

Introduction

A major goal of foreign language teaching is to enable students to communicate in the target language. This goal is explicitly expressed by the governments of several countries in Asia including China (National Academy of Education, 2001), Japan (Ministry of Education Culture Sports Science & Technology, 2011), Korea (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2011), and Vietnam (Prime Minister, 2008). A common trend among these EFL (English as a Foreign Language) countries is the shift from an emphasis on mastering grammar and vocabulary to enabling students to *use* the target language for communication. In the implementation of this new goal, an important resource is government-approved textbooks, as they are the primary source of language input and language practice in most EFL classrooms (Razmjoo, 2007; Richards, 2002). The role of textbooks is further heightened in countries where pragmatic competence development in teacher training is often scarce (El-Okda, 2011). For the purpose of enabling students to use the target language, textbook language should, at a minimum, introduce students to the basic interactional practices needed to carry out everyday conversations. Of particular importance are conversations with people, native or non-native users of English, whom they meet for the first time, since further communication opportunities depend on these initial encounters. This paper aims to examine the extent to which English textbooks in five EFL countries in Asia equip students with examples of how to develop topics in first-encounter conversations.

When English language textbooks' authenticity has been under scrutiny, it is often found that textbook language differs considerably from real-life interaction, particularly with respect to pragmatic and discourse phenomena (El-Okda, 2011; Gilmore, 2004, 2007). For example, Scotton and Bernsten (1988) focused on direction-giving exchanges and found that whereas textbook dialogues present a three-step model (request for directions – giving directions – thanking), authentic encounters contain a richer array of interactional elements such as orientation checkers, confirmation checkers, parenthetical comments, non-fluencies (pauses, hesitation markers, cut-off talk, etc.), and notably, a post-question sequence in which the direction giver may produce a filler, a pause, a repetition of the question, or a comment about the target location. Similarly, other researchers (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, & Reynolds, 1991; Nguyen & Ishitobi, 2012; Wong, 2002, 2007) have demonstrated that the

sequential organization of conversations in textbooks are much less dynamic and elaborate than what is found in natural interaction.

The discrepancies between textbook language and real-life language can have an impact on language learning. Gilmore (2011) demonstrated that students exposed to authentic input developed higher communicative competence compared to those exposed to only textbook materials. When textbook language examples lack the kind of interactional phenomena found in naturally occurring language, learners may be deprived of the opportunities to comprehend meaning negotiation exchanges (Scotton & Bernsten, 1988), manipulate interactional practices to fit their agendas (see Goodwin, 1979, 1980, 1981), and select essential information from interactional disturbances (Scotton & Bernsten, 1988) – all these are part of the ability to communicate successfully in a second language. We believe that although introducing raw dialogue samples to EFL learners may not always be possible, dialogues presented to students should at least have authentic sequential organization and interactional phenomena frequently associated with the given situation (see also Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991). More importantly, the need to introduce students to language samples that resemble real-life conversations is supported by the notion that language use is always contextualized in specific situations and language exists nowhere but in discursive practices (Young, 2009) or speech events (Hymes, 1964) (see also Wittgenstein (1958) on the notion of “language games”).

In order to bring textbook materials closer to real-life interaction, educators can utilize findings from research on the organization of social interaction, in particular, conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Conversation analysis examines naturally occurring interaction in order to discover the patterns that are part of the language users’ competencies (Have, 2007; Heritage, 1984). However, the application of conversation analytic findings to the improvement of pedagogical materials has been limited (see Wong, 2002, 2007; Nguyen & Ishitobi, 2012). This study aims to expand this area of research.

In this paper, we focus on one of the most basic and common activities that a language learner may encounter: engaging in conversations with people that they meet for the first time. To our knowledge, no other studies have examined the authenticity of this type of interaction in textbook dialogues, and yet a common challenge for EFL learners in several Asian countries is how to further the conversation after the initial greetings and introduction. To enlighten our analysis of the textbook dialogues, we consult the conversation analytic works by Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) and

Svennevig (2000). In the next section, we review their analyses of what topics people typically talk about in first encounters and how they introduce, respond to, and expand on these topics.

Talk in first Encounters

Setting Talk

According to Maynard and Zimmerman (1984), in a first encounter, unacquainted participants may engage in *setting talk*, i.e., talk that “may be generally characterized as a topical form available to parties by virtue of co-presence and co-access to events and objects in their environment” (p. 304). Examples of setting talk include talk about the weather, the time, and the physical aspects of the surrounding. Setting talk allows the participants to achieve a degree of anonymity (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984) and does not normally enable them to get to know much about each other (Svennevig, 2000). It is thus a “safe” topic to introduce in a first encounter and is a common topic among people who meet for the first time. An important feature of setting talk, however, is that it does not usually develop into extended talk; it is often quickly abandoned, hence setting talk topics have been considered “false” topics (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In short, setting talk is a safe and common topic in first encounters, but they usually do not lead to sustained topical talk. In the next section, we describe a type of first-encounter topics which have potentials for further development.

Pre-topical Sequences

In addition to setting talk, unacquainted participants in a first encounter may engage in series of questions and answers in which they attempt to gain biographical knowledge about each other. The questioner may invite the recipient to identify him/herself as a member of certain relevant social categories, forming what Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) termed *categorization sequences* (Excerpt 1). For college students, these categories may be year of study, local residence, home residence, and major. For newly acquainted members in an association, these might be occupation and place or origin (Svennevig, 2000). Alternatively, the questioner may ask about an activity typically associated with some relevant social categories, forming what Maynard and Zimmerman termed *category-activity sequences* (Excerpt 2). For college students, these activities may be taking classes or participating in campus events. For newly

acquainted members in an association, these might be past experience, current activities, and future plans (Svennevig, 2000).

Excerpt 1 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 305)

B2: Where'd you come from

B1: Sacramento

Excerpt 2 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 306)

A: Ah, what are you taking anyway

B: Well, sociology, anthropology, and art history

Unlike setting talk, categorization and category-activity sequences like these provide opportunities for participants to develop the conversation into topical talk. For this reason, they function as *pre-topical sequences* (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). It is through pre-topical sequences that participants negotiate how the conversation will develop.

The pre-topical *question* functions as an invitation for the recipient to produce topical talk. A recipient may *decline* the invitation to topical talk by providing a short-form response and then return the question, as in Excerpt 3 (line 2). Although B does not reject the topic, by producing a short answer and then immediately returning the question to A, he does not further the conversation into topical talk.

Excerpt 3 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 306)

1 A: Are you a freshman here?

2 B: Sophomore. Are you- what are you

3 A: uh, I'm a freshman

In contrast, if a recipient accepts the invitation, he or she produces a *topic-initial utterance*, which may be a short-form response without a return question (Excerpt 4), or a long-form response (Excerpt 5).

Excerpt 4 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 307)

1 A1: What's your major.

2 A2: Sociology.

3 A1: Really?

4 A2: Yeah

5 A1: uh, you taking Soc one or-

6 A2: um, right now I'm in Soc two

Excerpt 5 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 306)

1 A1: What's your major?

2 A2: Um, well my major's physics but I

3 haven't really taken a physics class yet

4 so I have a good chance to change it.

5 Probably to anthro if I change it

6 A1: I've heard that's a good major

In Excerpt 4, A2's short answer (line 2) neither accepts nor rejects the invitation to provide topical talk. After this short answer, it is up to the questioner to pursue the topic or not. In this sense, the short-form response without a return question is an *implicit topical offer*. In contrast, in Excerpt 5, after A1's invitation in line 1 for A2 to categorize himself, from line 2 to line 5, A2 not only categorizes himself but also comments on the categorization. His extended turn is thus an *explicit topical offer*, as it unequivocally indicates acceptance to the pre-topical invitation. Along the same lines, Svennevig (2000) observed that participants with an interest in developing a relationship beyond the first meeting sometimes engage in question-answer series that help establish personal information about one of the participants as the "topical focus" (p. 99). In these series, one participant asks the questions and the other provides *extended answers* – answers that volunteer uninvited but relevant information beyond what is requested by the questioner. The extra information in these answers then receives uptakes from the person who asks the first question.

When the recipient of a pre-topical question accepts the invitation and produces a topic-initial utterance, Maynard and Zimmerman observed that the questioner may then produce a *downgraded response* in the form of silence or delayed acknowledgement (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 307)

- 1 A1: Where you from?
- 2 A2: Ah, I'm just from L.A.
- 3 (1.0)
- 4 A2: Basically from L.A.
- 5 A2: I don't have any idea
- 6 A1: [Yeah]
- 7 A2: what to expect
- 8 A1: Heh heh, heh heh heh really

After A2's response (line 2), A1 does not take a turn to speak during the silence in line 3. A2 then continues with a reiteration of the same information in line 4, and A1's response (line 6) is produced after A2 has taken another turn to speak (line 5). A1's response ("yeah") is thus delayed, and A2 seems to orient to this delay by changing the topic to the experiment setting (line 5).

In contrast to the above scenario, after a topic-initial utterance by the recipient of the pre-topical question, the questioner may show interest and occasion further topical talk via the production of a *topicalizer* in the forms of expressions such as *really?* (Excerpt 4, line 3), *ah* (Excerpt 7, line 3) or an *echo response* (Excerpt 8, line 3).

Excerpt 7 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 307)

- 1 A: Where d'you live, in IV? or-
- 2 B: Yeah, I live in, uh, at the Tropicana.
- 3 A: Ah.
- 4 B: Good ol' Trop.
- 5 A: Did you try to get into the dorms or-
- 6 B: Mm hmm. I thought Id meet more people that way ...

Excerpt 8 (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984: 307)

- 1 A: Where do you live anyway?
- 2 B: Ventura
- 3 A: Ventura? Ah, you're just right down the road aren't you?

4 B: Yeah. Where're you from?

5 A: Um, Forest Park eh heh which is ...

The topicalizers in these excerpts provide the other participant a second chance to produce a topic-initial utterance. This opportunity may be accepted with further talk on the topic (Excerpt 7) or declined via a return question (Excerpt 8).

In short, based on the findings offered by Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) and Svennevig (2000), the sequential development of conversations among unacquainted participants from pre-topical talk to topical talk can be outlined as follows (A and B refer to speakers).

Position 1: A: Question to elicit topic-initial utterance

Position 2: B: Response:

Decline: Short-form reply + return question

or

Acceptance: Implicit offer to do topical talk in short-form reply

or

Explicit offer to do topical talk in long-form reply (extended response)

Position 3: A: Delay, no response, or minimal response

Position 4: B: May or may not produce topical talk

Or

Position 3: A: Topicalizer

Position 4: B: Topical talk

The sequential organization formats observed by Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) and Svennevig (2000) suggest that participants in a first encounter have several options to negotiate how topics will be introduced, developed, or terminated.

In addition to the interactional practices to enter topical talk, conversationalists in pre-topical sequences also need to work out which topics to bring up. As mentioned above, setting talk usually does not develop into topical talk; it is talk about biographical information that has potential to develop into topical talk. The elicitation of biographical information, however, needs to be done with care, as pre-topical questions are personal but not too private. Participants need to use common-sense knowledge to decide which social categories are relevant in the pre-topical sequences (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). Also, pre-topical questions need to display common ground while seeking new information (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984; Svennevig, 2000). For example, the question “Are you going to become a teacher?” is built on the common understanding that the recipient is in education.

Successful management of pre-topical talk is crucial in first encounters. Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) observed that since pre-topical talk allows participants to categorize each other, it can help them avoid bringing up offensive comments later in the conversation. At the same time, it helps participants build affiliation with each other if shared membership is found. The ability to initiate and respond to pre-topical talk is thus an important part of an individual’s communicative abilities.

In this paper, we are interested in how EFL textbooks prepare students for this critical aspect of social interaction. Our analysis concentrates on the sequential organization of talk and the types of topics introduced. With respect to the sequential organization, we focus on (a) whether the dialogues include pre-topical talk and if they do, we examine (b) the forms of response to pre-topical questions, namely, rejection (short-form reply plus a return question) or acceptance (short-form reply or long-form response beyond what is asked in the question), and (c) the use of topicalizers as a way to invite the other speaker to further the topic. With respect to the types of topic, we aim to find out the frequency of setting talk and pre-topical talk on biographical information.

Methodology

We examined textbooks that are approved by the governments in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam to be used in their public schools. We surveyed textbooks for all the grades where English is

taught. In countries where there are several publishers of government-approved English textbooks, we selected the major publishers. What we noticed in the textbooks surveyed is a tendency to introduce advanced vocabulary and reading content in the higher grades while attention to basic conversational routines becomes limited (see also Bouangeune, Sakigawa, and Hirakawa (2008)). From the textbook sources, we gathered 99 first-encounter dialogues. We excluded first encounters in which a task rather than topic development is an interactional goal, such as business transactions, questionnaire interviews, and radio talk show calls. Table 1 lists the countries and publishers we surveyed and the number of first-encounter dialogues found in each textbook series.

Countries and publishers	Number of first-encounter dialogues found
China, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press	10
China, People's Education Press	24
China, Hebei Education Press	12
Korea, Chunjae Education Inc.	20
Japan, Tokyo Shosheki	7
Japan, Daiichi Gakushusha	5
Taiwan, Kang Hsuan Educational Publishing	9
Taiwan, Nani Publishing	3
Taiwan, Joy Publishing	2
Vietnam, Education Publishing House	7
TOTAL:	99

Table 1. Number Of First-Encounter Dialogues In Government-Approved Textbooks Surveyed

In the sections below, we compare the textbook dialogues with the patterns found in naturally occurring conversations reviewed above.

Results

The Inclusion Of Pre-Topical Talk

Most of the dialogues in our data involve introductions and only a few (6 out of 99) are small talk where introduction is not present. We found that half of the introduction dialogues (55%) do not include talk beyond greetings and introduction (Example 1).

Example 1. [Japan] *New Horizon English Course 1* (Tokyo Shosheki, 2012: 14, 15)

- 1 Sakura: Hi. I'm Sakura.
- 2 Becky : Hi. I'm Becky.
- 3 Sakura: Nice to meet you.
- 4 Becky : Nice to meet you, too.

While most of these dialogues end after the greeting and introduction as shown above, some of them contain an action shift that bypasses pre-topical talk (Example 2).

Example 2. [Taiwan] *English: Book 1* (Kang Hsuan Educational Publishing, 2012: 48)

- 1 Linda: Is your father tall, Peter?
- 2 Peter: Yes, he is. Oh, Mom and Dad, over here!
- 3 Mr. Brown: Your school is big and beautiful.
- 4 Peter, who is this young lady?
- 5 Peter: This is my classmate, Linda.
- 6 Linda: Nice to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Brown.
- 7 Mr. Brown and Mrs. Brown: Nice to meet you, too.
- 8→ Peter: The talent show is on. We're late.
- 9 Mr. Brown: OK. Let's go.

In Example 2, immediately after the introduction, Peter initiates a request for others to hurry to a show (line 8). While scenarios like this are quite likely in reality, the dialogue fails to show students how pre-topical talk is initiated and managed after greeting and introduction.

Several of the introduction dialogues in our collection (14%) include one pre-topical question-answer adjacency pair, typically about some biographical information (Example 3).

Example 3. [Korea] *Middle School English Activities 1* (Chunjae Education Inc., 2009: 10)

- 1 A: Hi, my name is Rooney. What's your name?
- 2 B: I'm Ji-sung. Nice to meet you.
- 3 A: Nice to meet you, too. Where are you from?
- 4 B: I'm from Korea.

Thus, in about two thirds (69%) of the dialogues examined, there is no dialogue material to show students how conversation participants develop and negotiate pre-topical talk sequences and enter into topical talk after greetings and introduction. Only in a third of the dialogues, there is pre-topical talk that is beyond the first pre-topical question-answer adjacency pair, and we will examine these more closely in the next sections.

Forms of Response to Pre-Topical Questions

Decline of Invitation for Topical Talk

Among the dialogues that go beyond the first pre-topical question, we found that about 17% (note: A given dialogue may contain more than one form of response to pre-topical questions) contains a decline of

the invitation to further topical talk, i.e., a response in the form of a short-form reply and a return question (Example 4).

Example 4. [Korea] *Middle School English 1 E-Textbook* (Chunjae Education Inc., 2008: 10)

- 1 Emma: Hi, my name is Emma.
- 2 Sam: Hello. I'm Sam.
- 3 Emma: Nice to meet you, Sam. Where are you from?
- 4 → Sam: I'm from London. Where are you from, Emma?
- 5 Emma: Oh, I'm from New York.
- 6 Sam: I'm twelve. How old are you?
- 7 Emma: I'm twelve, too.

In this dialogue, when Emma asks Sam about his place of origin (line 3), Sam gives a short answer then immediately returns the question to Emma (line 4), thus declining Emma's invitation for him to develop further talk on this topic and simultaneously blocking her opportunity to comment on the topic. While declining the invitation to topical talk is a strategy employed by participants in naturally occurring conversations, it is important to inform students that this strategy prevents the transition from pre-topical talk to topical talk.

Acceptance as Implicit Offer to Develop Topical Talk

Among the dialogues with some pre-topical talk beyond the first question-answer adjacency pair, about half (54%) contain short-form responses that do not answer more than the question (Example 5).

Example 5. [Vietnam] *English 6* (Education Publishing House, 2005: 23)

- 1 A: What's your name?
- 2 Nam: My name's Nam.
- 3 A: Where do you live?
- 4 Nam: I live on Tran Phu Street.
- 5 A: How old are you?
- 6 Nam: I'm twelve years old.

After A's question about Nam's place of residence (line 3), Nam responds with a short answer that does not go beyond the question. While this form of response does not block further talk on the topic, it does not develop it either (Maynard & Zimmerman, 1984). With such an equivocal response, the questioner can either continue or close the current topic. In Example 5, A introduces another pre-topical question about Nam's age (line 5), thus closing up the first pre-topical sequence.

The lack of extended responses beyond the questions, that is, the type of response that contributes to development from pre-topical talk to topical talk, indicates that neither party is interested in pursuing the topics just introduced. The dialogue ends without reaching any topical talk and students are not introduced to how pre-topical talk may lead to topical talk.

Acceptance as Explicit Offer to Develop Topical Talk

Only in about a third (37%) of the dialogues with more than one pre-topical question-answer adjacency pair (or in about 13% of the total number of dialogues surveyed) did we find the presence of long-form responses. Although they answer more than what is asked for in the question, they tend to be brief and the topic does not extend beyond a few turns. Example 6 presents a rare dialogue in which extended responses are multi-unit turns. However, the topical talk that results is also short-lived.

Example 6. [China] *Learning English: Student Book 7* (Hebei Education Press, 2012: 14)

- 1 Wu Li: Hello!
- 2 Danny: Ah! You scared me!
- 3 Wu Li: My name is Wu Li. What's your name?
- 4 Danny: My name is Danny. Nice to meet you!
- 5 Wu Li: Nice to meet you, too! Where are you from?
- 6 Danny: I'm from Canada. I came to China with my friend, Jenny.
- 7 We're going on a trip to Beijing with Li Ming and his
- 8 mother. Where are you from?
- 9 Wu Li: I'm from China, of course. I live in Handan.
- 10 I'm going to Beijing, too! There are a lot of places of
- 11 interest in Beijing. I hope you will enjoy your trip.
- 12 Danny: I hope so, to. But can I buy donuts in Beijing?
- 13 Wu Li: I'm not sure, Danny.
- 14 Danny: hmm... I feel hungry now. How about you?
- 15 Wu Li: Well, I feel hungry, too, but I don't like donuts.
- 16 I like noodles best.

In line 5, Wu Li produces the first pre-topical question, to which Danny responds with more information than what the question asks for. However, when Danny returns the question to Wu Li (line 8), he in effect closes down the opportunity for Wu Li to comment on his extended response. In lines 9-11, Wu Li also produces an extended response. However, rather than elaborating on the “places of interest in Beijing,” he quickly ends his turn with an optimistic projection (Jefferson, 1988), thus closing the current topic. In the

next turn, Danny joins in the closing of this topic, and the conversation shifts to a request for information (line 12). In short, dialogues like Example 6 do provide students with a sample of how pre-topical talk can be expanded; however, they still fall short as a sample of how pre-topical talk can be developed into topical talk.

The Use of Topicalizers

The use of topicalizers is rare in the dialogues we examined: they appear in only 20% of those dialogues that go beyond one pre-topical adjacency pair or 7% of the total dialogues examined. The absence of topicalizers in a dialogue implies a lack of interest in developing pre-topical talk into topical talk, thus the students of the textbooks examined may not be introduced to how participants can actively pursue and achieve topical talk.

Among the dialogues that do introduce topicalizers, all but one fails to show topicalizers' function to elicit further topical talk from the recipient (Examples 7, 8).

Example 7. [Taiwan] *iEnglish: English Textbook, Grade 7* (Joy Publishing, 2011: 10)

- 1 Patty: Good morning. I'm your classmate, Patty. Patty Lin.
- 2 Amy: Good morning, Patty. I'm Amy Brown.
- 3 Patty: Nice to meet you, Amy.
- 4 Amy: Nice to meet you, too.
- 5 Patty: Is he your brother?
- 6 Amy: No he isn't. He's my cousin, Ted.
- 7 Patty: Is he a doctor?
- 8 Amy: Yes, he is. He's a doctor.
- 9 → Patty: Really? My mother is a doctor, too.

Example 8. [Taiwan] *English: Book 1, Grade 7* (Kang Hsuan Educational Publishing, 2012: 10)

- 1 Peter: Sam, this is my sister, Amanda.
2 And this is my classmate, Sam.
3 Sam: Nice to meet you, Amanda.
4 Amanda: Nice to meet you, too.
5 Sam: Are you a painter?
6 Amanda: No, I'm not. I'm an engineer.
7→ Sam: Wow! An engineer. Ouch! What's this?
8 Amanda: It's my robot.
9→ Sam: Cool.

In Example 7, Patty topicalizes the information given in Amy's turn in line 8 with "really?" (line 9) but she then immediately produces a reclaimer to talk about herself, thus thwarting Amy's opportunity to continue the topic of her brother.

In Example 8, Sam produces a topicalizer in the form of "wow" and an echo response (line 6). However, he is immediately interrupted by Amanda's robot. In the same way, Sam's topicalizer in line 8 is not shown to function as an invitation for further topical talk because the dialogue ends right after the topicalizer.

In short, topicalizers are not adequately presented to students in the dialogues we examined, and when they are included, most of the time their interactional function is not introduced.

Topic Types

Only seven (about 7%) among the dialogues we examined contains setting talk (involving topics such as the weather, a late bus or train, a long line, and the other person's appearance). While brief and tend not to lead to topical talk, setting talk involves "safe" content and thus allows the participants to maintain mutual engagement while not entering into each other's personal space. The infrequency of setting talk in our data could mean that students are not sufficiently introduced to an important type of ice-breaking strategy in initial conversations.

In the dialogues when pre-topical questions are presented, they involve topics about activities such as visiting a city, hobbies, sports, club membership, and general habits, country or city of origin, age, school-related categories such as grade or class, place of residence, occupation, and English ability. Table 2 provides a summary of these topics and their frequency.

Activities	Place of origin	Age	Grade/Class	Place of residence	Occupation	Language ability
27%	26%	16%	11%	9%	5.5%	5.5%
(n = 15)	(n = 14)	(n = 9)	(n = 6)	(n = 5)	(n = 3)	(n = 3)

Table 2. Frequency of Pre-Topical Topics in Textbook Dialogues

Note: The total number of topics in the dialogues examined is 55. The percentages have been rounded.

Overall, these topics reflect the students' learning context. The most common topic, activities, covers both the participants' ongoing activities (e.g., visiting a country) and their general activities such as sports, hobbies, and daily activities. The topic of grade or class occurs more frequently than the topic of occupation because most dialogues involve student-student interaction and not student-adult interaction. The topic of English ability seems to incorporate the students' identity as language learners. Interestingly, perhaps due to the students' age range and the Asian cultural influence, the topic of age is considered appropriate in several first encounters. The cultural appropriateness of the topics in these dialogues seems to stand in contrast with the cultural biases in other aspects of some EFL textbooks (Ahmed & Narcy-Combes, 2011).

A difference between the textbook dialogues examined and naturally occurring conversations is not in what topics are introduced, but how they are introduced. In Example 9, the encounter between Ichiro and a new teacher, Ms. Brown, takes place after class, in which Ms. Brown was introduced to the class as coming from America and liking soccer and music. Ichiro asked her if she came to school everyday and another student asked if she came to school by bicycle. Thus, the encounter in Example 9 would be the first one-on-one interaction between Ichiro and his new teacher as a follow-up to the introduction in class.

Example 9. [Japan] *New Horizon English Course 1* (Tokyo Shoseki, 2012: 32-33)

- 1 Ichiro: Excuse me.
- 2 Ms. Brown: Yes?
- 3 Ichiro: Do you drive?
- 4 Ms. Brown: Yes, but I don't have a car now.
- 5 Ichiro: Do you want a car?
- 6 Ms. Brown: No, I don't. I like walking.
- 7 Sakura: Do you speak Japanese?
- 8 Ms. Brown: *Sukoshi*. [a little]

After obtaining the teacher's attention, Ichiro asks two questions to introduce the topics of her driving (line 3) then car ownership (line 5). These questions resemble pre-offer questions (Wong & Waring, 2010) as if Ichiro is about to offer the teacher a ride, or a car. The unnaturalness of the dialogue is furthered by the abrupt shift to the next topic about the teacher's language ability (line 7).

Discussions and Conclusion

In our analysis, we found that a majority of the first-encounter dialogues do not contain talk beyond greetings and introduction or a minimal question-answer adjacency pair, thus students are overall not adequately introduced to how an initial conversation may be developed further. Among the dialogues that contain some pre-topical talk, some include a decline to the invitation to develop topical talk while most include an acceptance to the invitation to develop topical talk. Among the dialogues with acceptance, however, most include series of questions and short-form answers that constitute only an implicit, equivocal acceptance to develop topical talk and only some include an explicit acceptance to develop topical talk in the form of an extended response. When topicalizers are used, they tend to be presented as acknowledgements of a response rather than what they function in naturally occurring conversations as invitation to further topical talk by the other participant. These findings suggest that these textbooks overall do not sufficiently inform students of the multiple interactional practices that can be used to manage pre-topical talk in order to enter topical talk. With respect to the types of topics, setting talk is not adequately introduced in these dialogues, while pre-topical topics are sometimes introduced in a contrived manner.

If the goal of English education is to enable learners to become effective language users, government-approved textbooks in several Asian countries could be improved to provide learners with more natural and diverse examples of how topics can be developed in first encounters. Textbook dialogues could include more pre-topical talk sequences with the various shapes as described by conversation analysts such as Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) and Svennevig (2000) as reviewed above. Students should have several opportunities throughout the course of training to observe how topical talk may be strategically avoided (e.g., via the use of a short-form reply and a return question, or the use of a delay or minimal response), ambivalently pursued (e.g., via the use of short-form reply), or actively pursued and developed (e.g., via the use of extended responses, or topicalizers). On a broader scale, we believe that conversation analysis findings are invaluable in language teaching as they can assist materials developers and teachers in bringing authentic materials to students in order to develop their communicative competence.

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A Post-Use Evaluation of Pakistani Secondary School English Textbooks

Fatemeh Mahbod Karamouzian

(f.m.karamouzian@gmail.com)

University of Nantes, France

Marie-Françoise Narcy-Combes

(Marie-Francoise.Narcy-Combes@univ-nantes.fr)

University of Nantes, France

Fasih Ahmed

(ahmadfasih33@gmail.com)

Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad

Abstract

This study evaluated the content of two English language series used at public secondary schools in two regions of Pakistan namely *English 9* and *10* used in the Punjab and *English Book 1* and *2* used in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. To this end, a textbook evaluation checklist was adapted and applied to the materials, and their major aspects regarding the *Overall Impression*, *Organization*, *Content*, and *Overall Consideration* were examined. Quantitative data were collected by matching each of the evaluating items to the related features of the materials, and the extent of conformation was revealed by percentages. Detailed quality descriptions were also provided. The results revealed that the four books lack quality features regarding their *Overall Consideration*. *English 9* and *10* obtain the highest scores for the *Overall Impression* and *Organization*, and *English 10* achieves the highest score for the *Content* and the highest total average score. The results suggest that *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* are of *poor* quality and

should be extensively reconsidered and revised or quality alternatives should be substituted. *English 9* and *10* are of *medium* quality and can be either substituted by quality alternatives, or be adapted and used with appropriate supplementary materials.

Key words: Textbook evaluation, Textbook evaluation checklist, Reading comprehension, Public secondary schools, Pakistan

Introduction

‘Textbooks’ are “the most obvious and common form of material support for language instruction” (Brown, 2001, p.136). They influence “what teachers teach and what and to some extent how learners learn” (McGrath, 2002, p.12). The question of whether to use textbooks and their roles in English language programs have long been debated among the experts in the field. However, despite the “development of new technologies” the demand for the use of textbooks continues to grow (Garinger, 2002, p.1).

Textbook evaluation includes any “attempts to measure the value of materials” (Tomlinson, 1998, p.3). A distinction is made between ‘analysis’ and ‘evaluation’. These two processes, though logically related, are different in nature. “In its simplest form analysis seeks to discover what is there (Littlejohn 1998), whereas evaluation is more concerned to discover whether *what one is looking for* is there - and, if it is, to put a value on it” (McGrath, 2002, p.22). Textbook evaluation is used to achieve a vast range of objectives including textbook selection, lesson planning, adaptation and supplementation, and so on (McGrath, 2002). In many educational environments, textbook evaluation is not carried out systematically and based on standardized criteria. This can lead to difficulties in implementing materials and even in program failure.

Mainly three types of textbook evaluation processes are considered by the experts in the field: ‘pre-use’, ‘in-use’, and ‘post-use’ evaluation. The most common type is the ‘pre-use’ or ‘predictive’ evaluation that aims to choose a textbook which is closest to the objectives of a course. The other type of textbook evaluation is the ‘in-use’ evaluation that aims to monitor the materials, currently being used, to determine their success in achieving the aims of the course and the progress of students. The ‘post-use’ or ‘retrospective’ or ‘reflective’ evaluation is applied to determine the effectiveness of a textbook, that has been used for a course, in order to establish if it needs to be substituted, supplemented, adapted, or

retained without any specific change (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997; cited in Litz, 2005; and McGrath, 2002).

Irrespective of the way evaluation is defined or carried out, the use of explicit criteria on which the judgments of an evaluation are based is necessary as it distinguishes evaluation from simply giving an opinion. Three basic methods of textbook evaluation are distinct in the literature: the ‘impressionistic method’, the ‘checklist method’, and the ‘in-depth method’.

Compared to the other alternatives, ‘impressionistic evaluation’ that involves dipping into a book, and ‘in-depth evaluation’ based on close analysis of features or sections, the ‘checklist method’ has at least four advantages: it is ‘systematic’ which ensures that all important elements are considered; it is ‘cost effective’ that permits recording a great deal of information in a relatively short space of time; the information is recorded in a ‘convenient format’ which allows for easy comparison between competing sets of material; and it is ‘explicit’ which provides the distinct categories that are well understood by those involved in the evaluation and can offer a common framework for those who make decisions (McGrath, 2002).

Background and Context for the Study

The national language of Pakistan is Urdu. Urdu is the mother tongue of only 7.75% of Pakistanis, but it is the most largely used urban second language. The other indigenous mother tongues of the people in Pakistan are Punjabi (44.15%), Pashto (15.42%), Sindhi (14.1%), Siraiki (10.53%), Balochi (3.57%) and ‘other languages’ (4.66%) (Census 2001 cited in Rahman, 2009).

With the arrival of the British in the sub-continent, English replaced the languages of education like Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. The need for English increased in 1854 when eligibility to government service was limited to those who had English education (Mansoor, 1993 cited in Naeem & Rizvi, 2011). At the present time, English is the official language of Pakistan and is used in almost all domains related to the government, bureaucracy, military, judiciary, commerce, media, education and research (Rahman, 2005).

Pakistani students start learning English as a compulsory subject from grade one (Rehman, 2003 cited in Naeem & Rizvi, 2011). Formal education has different levels in Pakistan: classes 1 to 5 are the primary level; 6 to 8, middle school; 9 to 10, secondary; and 11 to 12, higher secondary education. The

Pakistani education system is classifiable with reference to the medium of instruction which corresponds with socioeconomic classes. These systems include government schools, private schools, and religious schools. English is the medium of instruction in private schools, *elite* schools. Urdu is the most commonly used medium of instruction in public schools, mostly for non-science subjects, and the Islamic seminaries named *madrasas* (Rahman, 2004 cited in Rahman, 2009).

Reform is mostly needed in the governmental school systems which cater for four out of five children who attend schools in general. The structure of the government school system is based on a formalized bureaucratic model. The federal Ministry of Education (MOE) retains the authority to formulate educational plans and policies to be implemented in the provinces and districts by the respective provincial and local district governments (Rizvi, 2008).

Pakistan is comprised of four autonomous provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. Education in Pakistan is essentially a provincial affair. However, in order to ensure national cohesion, integration and preservation of the ideological foundation of the state, certain educational functions are the responsibilities of the federation via the MOE. These responsibilities include arranging functions with regard to curriculum, syllabus, planning, policy and educational standards. There have been major paradigm shifts in policy and structural reforms during the last five years under the current Education Sector Reform (ESR) program (Ministry of Education, 2001 cited in Rizvi, 2008).

The MOE is authorized to appoint competent authorities who, in connection with the implementation of the education policy of the federal Government of Pakistan (GOP), would prepare or commission: schemes for studies; curricula, textbook manuscripts and strategic schedules for their introduction in various classes of educational institutions; approve manuscripts of textbooks produced by other agencies, before they are prescribed in various classes of an educational institution; direct any person or agency in writing to delete, amend or withdraw the portions or whole of a curriculum, textbook or reference material prescribed for any class of an educational institution.

Accordingly, a National Bureau of Curriculum and Textbooks (NBCT), commonly known as the 'Curriculum Wing (CW)', was appointed to supervise curriculum and textbook development and approval processes, and to maintain curriculum standards from the primary to the higher secondary levels. As a result, four Provincial Textbook Boards (PTTB) and curriculum centers, one in each province, were established to ensure provincial collaboration and evolve consensus in all activities falling within the

limits of the Federation. These PTTBs are responsible for preparing, publishing, stocking, distributing and marketing school textbooks (UNESCO, 1998).

Both the PTTBs and the private publishers have to follow the guidelines given in the National Curriculum, but they have their own procedure for textbook development. They develop textbooks and present these books to CW for the review and approval. The CW constitutes a National Curriculum Review Committee (NCRC) for this purpose. A new NCRC is constituted whenever a textbook or a series of textbooks are introduced (Mahmood, 2006).

“The textbook is the only available learning material in most schools” of Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2006, p.53) as for most teachers “additional materials like teaching aids, supplementary materials and school libraries are virtually non-existent” (Government of Pakistan, 2006, p.53). However, textbook development and evaluation has always been a subject of debate in Pakistan (Mahmood, 2010) and a limited number of studies have examined this issue (Mahmood, Iqbal & Saeed 2009).

Sultana, Khan, Ali and Rehman (2007) evaluated the content of English textbooks used for IX and X classes at secondary school level. In order to evaluate the textbooks, they took the items from Shepherd’s (1982 cited in Sultana, Khan, Ali & Rehman, 2007) evaluation criteria. They grouped and reconsidered the items in the Pakistani context and modified them through discussion with academicians. The final items and their contents were further validated through a pre-testing process.

They then evaluated a number of features such as appropriate technical vocabulary, style of writing, and illustrations; content-balance in terms of social significance; emphasis on problem solving skills; application to life situation; student-teacher’s manuals; table of contents; glossary; quality of paper; and cost; etc. This study concerned English language teachers at secondary education environments. Based on the obtained results, the researchers argued that the English textbooks are not appropriate, not in accordance with experts’ viewpoints, and need revision. They suggested that these materials should be reconsidered in terms of their ‘get up’, ‘content’, and ‘presentation’.

Mahmood, Iqbal, and Saeed (2009) conducted a study in which they identified the indicators of quality textbooks and developed a set of criteria for review, evaluation, and approval of textbooks in Pakistan. They considered textbooks as products and used Garvin’s (1988 cited in Mahmood, Iqbal & Saeed, 2009) framework to identify indicators of quality and employed Delphi technique to reach to consensus on them. Based on their exploration, they developed a list of indicators that include features

such as curriculum scope; content reliability; vocabulary, illustrations & format; critical and creative learning; assessment and evaluation; and teacher guide; etc.

Asad (2010) developed an 'eclectic checklist method' based on a number of textbook evaluation frameworks (Grant, 1987; Harmer, 1991; Cunningsworth, 1995; Ur, 1996; and McDonough & Shaw, 2003; cited in Asad, 2010). Her checklist covers a number of criteria: general overview (e.g. organization of material, teaching methodology, topics; objectives; etc.); language skills; grammar; vocabulary; visual materials and their integration into texts; and socio-cultural aspects. She then descriptively analyzed the content of a textbook which is used for grade six in *elite* English medium schools, Beacon House School System in Pakistan. Based on the obtained results she concluded that the *Step Ahead 1* is a 'suitable' course book which matched with five out of seven considered criteria.

Purpose of the Study

"Currently, curriculum revision is underway in Pakistan" (Mahmood, 2010, p.10). Consequently, new textbooks will be developed and submitted to the MOE to be evaluated. Considering the fact that textbook evaluation is not a haphazard process and should be done systematically (Mahmood, 2010), there is an absolute need to introduce a set of reliable evaluating criteria and perform systematic textbook evaluation studies.

Therefore, the underlying consideration of this research was a post-use evaluation of English language textbooks used at public secondary schools in Pakistan to achieve a number of objectives: to reveal the overall structure and content of the textbooks, the extent to which these materials satisfy the objectives of the national curriculum for English language learning, the way they foster different language items and skills, the way they enhance higher-level thinking skills and various language learning strategies, and if they are representative of current theories and research on teaching-learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL).

Furthermore, this study had a comparative dimension that permitted evaluating and comparing the two series of textbooks which are designed and are in use in two regions of Pakistan. Moreover, the study had a special focus on the reading and writing skills that are emphasized for the higher grades in the national curriculum.

Research Questions

The present study, tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the overall structure and content of English language textbooks used in public secondary schools in Pakistan?
2. To what extent does the content of these materials match the objectives of Pakistani national curriculum for English language learning?
3. To what extent do these materials foster different language items and skills?
4. To what extent do the books enhance higher-level thinking skills (e.g., evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, etc.) and various learning strategies?
5. To what extent do these materials reflect the current theories and research on EFL/ESL teaching and learning?

Method

With regard to the advantages of the checklist method, as it is evident from the literature, this method was selected and applied in the present study.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a checklist adapted from Karamouzian's (2010) framework. This instrument was selected with regard to the objectives of the current study, and due to its advantages such as its format, scope and flexibility, rating system, etc. (Karamoozian and Riazi, 2008).

The Pakistani national curriculum for English language learning lays particular emphasis on reading and writing skills in the higher grades (National Curriculum for English Language, 2006). An overview of the target textbooks revealed that they mainly target reading comprehension skills. As the selected checklist has a special focus on evaluating the quality features of reading comprehension materials as well as other language skills and items, it could fully satisfy the objectives of this study.

The checklist consists of five major parts: 1) *General Information*, 2) *Overall Impression*, 3) *Organization*, 4) *Content*, and 5) *Overall Consideration*. Each part includes a number of quality features

and factors. Section 4 is the most comprehensive part designed to evaluate the quality of presentation and practice sections of the textbooks devoted to various language items and skills, and the content of their graphics.

Materials

English 9 (Rasul & Saleem, 2010) and *English 10* (Afzal, Bashir, Chaudhry, Shah, Naqi & Rasul, 2010) are two textbooks prepared and published under the approval of Punjab Textbook Board, Lahore. *English Book 1 for Class IX* (Rehman & Khan, 2011a) and *English Book 2 for Class X* (Rehman & Khan, 2011b) are two textbooks prepared and published under the approval of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, Peshawar, which comprised the materials of this research study.

Procedure

This study was conducted in two main phases: data collection, and data analysis and interpretation:

Data Collection

The development of textbooks for classes I to XII is the responsibility of the four provincial Textbook Boards in Pakistan: Punjab Textbook Board, Lahore; Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, Peshawar; and the Baluchistan Textbook Board, Quetta. With the approval of the Federal Ministry of Education in Pakistan, each of these Textbook Boards produces and publishes a series of books for the public schools in their own regions. Materials which are used in this study were randomly chosen series currently in use in the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions.

With regard to the objectives of the study, a checklist was selected and considered as the criteria of evaluation. Then, the quality items and their features were matched to the related features of the target materials and the extent of conformation was revealed by percentages. For the first part of the checklist, *General Information*, the descriptive data was provided by glancing through the materials. The second and third parts, *Overall Impression* and *Organization*, were scored through careful observation and matching the evaluating features with the features of the target textbooks.

The *Content*, section four, was the most demanding part of the evaluation process in which a detailed examination and an in-depth analysis was carried out. Moreover, to be able to score some items in this part, two text analyzer programs were used to facilitate the process of data collection and increase the reliability of the results. To this end, the texts of the target materials were scanned and converted into the Word Office program. These texts were then compared with the original materials to avoid the probable defaults arising from the conversion process. Finally, the texts were used to obtain the data.

The text analyzer programs, used in this stage, were the Word Office and the VocabProfile (VP). The Word Office program was used to analyze the text difficulty of the target textbooks. In part four of the checklist several factors are considered as the selection criteria for the main texts. Text complexity is one of these factors. To evaluate the complexity of the texts, the index related to “Flesch Reading Ease” was calculated for each main text using the Word Office program. Flesch and Flesch-Kincaid grade level are the most common readability formulas. For the Flesch Reading Ease, a range from 0 to 100 is considered. Higher scores display easier reading texts and the average texts should have a Flesch Reading Ease score between 60 and 70 (Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004).

To process the vocabulary items of the target textbooks, VP (VocabProfile) was used. This program is available at Cobb's (1999) website. To obtain the data, new vocabulary items in each unit/lesson were submitted to the considered window in this program and the results were recorded. VP program processes and divides the words into four categories by frequency: 1) the most frequent thousand words of English, 2) the second most frequent thousand words of English (1001 to 2000), 3) the academic words of English (570 words that are frequently found in academic texts across subjects), and 4) the remainder which are not found on the other lists (Sevier, 2004).

The content of graphics was also scored by observations and interpretation. The last part of the checklist, *Overall Consideration*, was scored with regard to the overall impression of the target textbooks. During each stage of the whole data collection process and content analyses, concise descriptive information was recorded on the features of the textbooks.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the two benchmarks that accompanied the applied checklist (Karamouzian, 2010), the obtained quantitative data was qualitatively described to reveal the strong and weak points of different parts (e.g.

vocabulary, pronunciation, etc.) and the whole textbooks. The benchmarks were used to decrease the subjectivity of the evaluation process. The obtained results were then interpreted in details, using the records which were kept during the data collection process.

Results and Discussion

General Information

English 9 and *10* are two books of a series entitled *English*. Book 9 is the second edition published by Paradise Publishers in Lahore, Pakistan. Book 10 is the first edition and published by Malik and Company publications in Lahore, Pakistan. The books are intended for general English courses and target public secondary school students and teachers in the Punjab region. *Book 9* contains 58 pages (22 lessons) and *Book 10* contains 70 pages (21 lessons).

English Book 1 and *English Book 2* are two books of a new series entitled *English Book*. Book 1 is the first edition and published by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board Peshawar, Pakistan. Book 2 is also the first edition and is published by the same publisher. The books are intended for general English courses and target public secondary school students and teachers in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. *Book 1* contains 97 pages (21 units) and *Book 2* contains 93 pages (19 units).

Overall Impression

A number of quality features related to *Overall Impression* of the books were evaluated in this study (see Table A1 in Appendix A). The obtained results revealed that several quality features are ignored in all four books concerning their availability in rural areas; labeled spines; blurbs on the covers; good paper quality; the number, appeal and quality of graphics, the appeal and quality of texts; different components and a website to support their use. Moreover, the quality features related to binding in *English 9* and *10*, and the features regarding the appeal and durability of cover in *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* do not fulfill the criteria. The average scores for the total features of this evaluating part were also evaluated based on a benchmark (Table 1).

Scores	0-25	25-50	50-75	75-100
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Quality				
Descriptions	Poor- Inefficient	Inadequate- medium	Convenient- Suitable	Satisfactory- Perfect

Table 1. A Benchmark to Evaluate the Final Results of Each Part of the Checklist Taken from Karamouzian (2010)

The achieved results revealed that the average score for the total features of this evaluating part is about 42 for *English 9* and *10* and the overall quality of these features is *medium* in the two books (Table 2). For *English Book 1* and *English Book 2*, the average score for the total features of this section is about 35 and the overall quality of these features is *inadequate* in the two books (Table 2).

English 9- Punjab (P)	English 10- (P)	English Book 1 for Class IX- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	English Book 2 for Class X- (KP)
42/ Medium	42/Medium	35/Inadequate	35/Inadequate

Table 2. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Overall Impression in the Four Books

The superiority of *English 9* and *10* compared to two other books in this section (see Figure 1) is owed to the quality features regarding their visually appealing (i.e. including good colors and good designs) and durable covers (for details on the considered quality factors for each evaluating item/feature refer to Karamouzian, 2010).

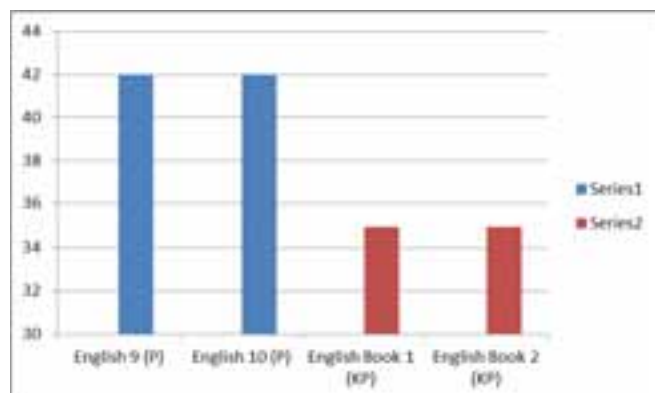


Figure 1. Results for the Overall Impression Part and a Comparison of the Four Books

Organization

Various quality features related to the *Organization* of the books were evaluated in this study (see Table A2 in Appendix A). The achieved results revealed that certain quality features are ignored in all four books including a comprehensive table of content that contains practical information on the content of each unit/lesson; appropriate font size; optimum density of texts in each page/unit/lesson; appropriate use of space especially among different sections of a unit/lesson; signposted paragraphs/lines for reading texts; defined objectives for each unit/lesson; logical development of each unit/lesson and their sections; helpful recommended resource lists to be used by teachers and students; bibliographies/references that the materials are based on; indexes, appendices, expression glossaries, grammar summary tables, list of phonemic alphabets, and answer keys at the end of the books.

Moreover, *English 9* and *10* do not contain an introduction at the beginning; and book 10 does not contain word lists at the end. *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* possess an introduction which does not present the objectives of the course, and advice for the students on how content can be exploited. In addition, divisions and subdivisions are not signposted or the signposts are inefficient, the two books do not contain any types of graphics, and Book 1 contains a number of repeated pages.

Furthermore, the introduction in these two books includes some misleading information for instance: “Grammar and exercises are only requirements of the syllabus, not of learning a language. Did you learn the grammar of your mother-tongue when you were acquiring it? Most of you may still not

know the grammar of your mother-tongue but you speak it effortlessly” (Rehman & Khan, 2011a and 2011b, p.v). Although the role of grammar is one of the most controversial issues in language teaching, research shows that grammar teaching does aid second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 2002 cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002). In recent years, most experts in the field agree that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners’ language development will be severely constrained. Therefore, the issue is not whether or not grammar should be taught, but which grammar items do learners need most, and what are the effective ways of teaching them (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

English 9 (P)	English 10 (P)	English Book 1 for Class IX (KP)	English Book 2 for Class X (KP)
56/Convenient	56/Convenient	49/Medium	49/Medium

Table 3. Scores and Quality Descriptions for *Organization* in the Four Books

The average score for the total features of the *Organization* part is about 56 for *English 9* and *10* and therefore the overall quality of these features is *convenient* in the two books. For *English Book 1* and *English Book 2*, the average score for the total features of this section is about 49 and the overall quality of these features is *medium* in the two books (Table 3). The superior quality of *English 9* and *10* compared to the two other books in this section is owed to the existence of signposted divisions and subdivisions, and the existence of some graphics that are signposted and/or are accompanied by captions (Figure 2).

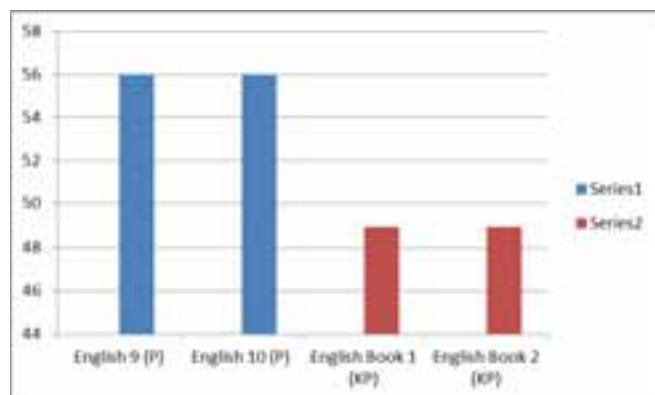


Figure 2. Results for the Organization Part and a Comparison of the Four Books

Content

Vocabulary

A number of quality features related to *Vocabulary* were evaluated and scored in the four books (see Table A3 in Appendix A). The results revealed that *English 9* contains hardly any vocabulary presentation and/or practice sections. Although the three other books contain vocabulary presentation and/or practice sections, but certain quality features are ignored regarding: the logical criteria for vocabulary selection concerning the frequency count of words, students' needs and levels; appropriate load and sequence of vocabulary items in each lesson/unit and throughout the textbooks; different quality features for presentation and practice of vocabularies including aspects of meaning, word forms, grammatical patterns of words, word parts, and collocations; various techniques for vocabulary presentation and practice; instruction on vocabulary learning strategies; and recycling of new vocabulary items through other language items and skills in each unit/lesson and throughout the textbook.

In *English 10*, the applied presentation and practice techniques are mainly concise definitions and to a lesser degree synonyms and antonyms. Practice sections are limited to exercises that demand making sentences using vocabulary items and to a lesser degree finding synonym and antonyms, and hardly definitions for them. *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* do not contain practice sections for vocabulary. The most widely used presentation and practice techniques for vocabulary learning are concise definitions. To lesser degree synonyms are used and for some vocabulary items different meanings are

provided. The proportion specified to vocabulary is lesser than the considered criterion for each language item and skill to maintain a balance in these books.

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
0/Poor	34/Inadequate	19 /Inefficient	19/Inefficient

Table 4. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Vocabulary in the Four Books

The average score for the total features of the *Vocabulary* subpart is 0 for *English 9*, 34 for *English 10*, 19 for *English Book 1* and *English Book 2*. Therefore, the overall quality of these features is *poor* in *English 9*, *inadequate* in *English 10*, and *inefficient* in *English Book 1* and 2 (Table 4).

The superiority of *English 10* compared to *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* in this part is owed to the existence of practice sections for vocabulary items, and sufficient proportion that is specified to vocabulary presentation and practice in this book (Figure 3). With regard to the Pakistani national curriculum for English language learning that emphasizes teaching and learning reading and writing skills in the higher grades, it was considered that these two language skills should cover nearly 50 percent of the materials and other language items and skills should be dealt with nearly equal portions:

Reading Comprehension=Writing>Speaking=Listening=Vocabulary=Grammar=Pronuciation

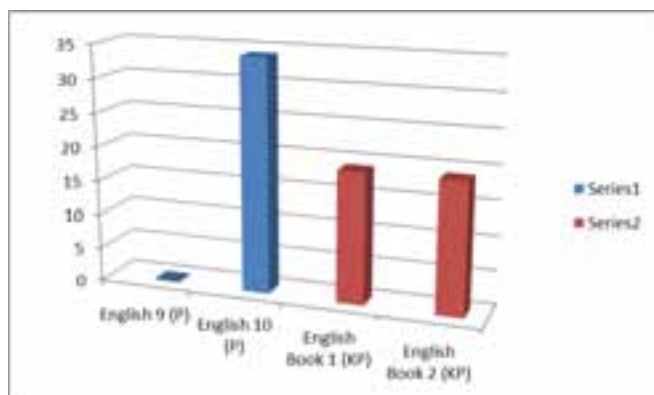


Figure 3. Results for the Vocabulary Subpart and a Comparison of the Four Books

Grammar

Several quality features related to *Grammar* were evaluated in the four books (Table A4 in Appendix A). Based on the obtained results, certain quality features are not satisfied in the four books regarding the integration of new grammatical points with various language items and skills, the application of different techniques for presentation and practice of grammar, the instruction and application of various grammar learning strategies, and the proportion specified to this language item in each book. Although, the selection criteria for grammatical topics are based on Pakistani national curriculum in the four books, they do not cover the main considered topics. Moreover, examples are the only type of applied techniques, and deduction, and to a lesser degree, recombination and using new grammar are the only applied grammar learning strategies in the two books. Repetition technique is used in one unit in *English Book 2*.

In *English 9* and *English 10* distinct sections are not considered for grammar presentation and practice, the proportion devoted to grammar is lesser than the considered criterion for each language item and skill to maintain a balance, and the integration of new grammar points is limited to writing through written grammar exercises. Furthermore, *English 9* does not provide appropriate explanations for most new grammar points and *English 10* neither provides appropriate explanations nor examples for most topics.

In *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* explanations that are provided for new grammatical points are mostly appropriate. However, grammatical terminology is widely applied to introduce grammatical topics, and some units contain complex linguistic concepts like ‘parsing’ (e.g. unit 15 in Book 2).

Moreover, new grammar points are not recycled in *English Book 2* and the proportion devoted to grammar is much greater than the considered criterion for each language item and skill to maintain a balance.

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
33/Inadequate	28/ Inadequate	50/Medium	39/Medium

Table 5. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Grammar in the Four Books

The average score for the total features of the *Grammar* subpart is about 33 for *English 9*, 28 for *English 10*, 50 for *English Book 1*, and 39 for *English Book 2*. Therefore, the overall quality of these features is *inadequate* in *English 9* and *10*, and *medium* in *English Book 1* and *2* (Table 5).

The superiority of *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* compared to the two other books in this part is owed to the existence of distinct presentation and practice sections for grammatical topics in each unit, and the appropriate explanations. The superior quality of *English Book 1* compared to *English Book 2* is due to the recycling of previously introduced grammatical items in the textbook (Figure 4).

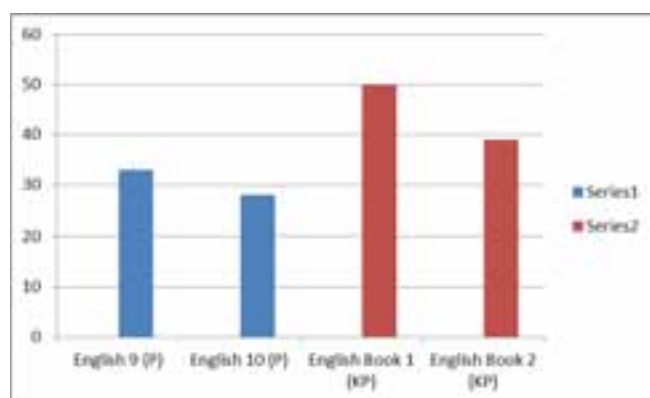


Figure 4. Results for the Grammar Subpart and a Comparison of the Four Books

Pronunciation

A number of quality features were examined in the four books (see Table A5 in Appendix A). The obtained results revealed that *English 9*, *English Book 1*, and *English Book 2* do not contain any materials on the presentation and practice of pronunciation. In *English 10*, limited and incomplete information about individual phonemes (lesson 4, 9, 19) and word stress (lesson 4) is provided. However, none of the four books met the considered quality criteria related to the presentation and practice of this language item.

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
0/Poor	0/Poor	0/Poor	0/Poor

Table 6. Scores and Quality Descriptions for *Pronunciation* in the Four Books

Therefore, the score for the whole features in this section is 0 and the overall quality of these features is equally *poor* (Table 6) for all the books (Figure 5).

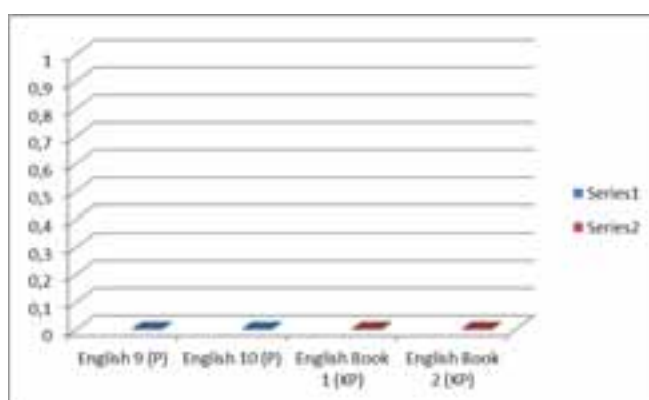


Figure 5. Results for the Pronunciation Subpart and a Comparison of the Four Books

Reading Comprehension & Other Skills

Several quality features related to *Reading Comprehension and other Language Skills* were evaluated in this study (see Table A6 in Appendix A). Based on the achieved results, the four books showed a large number of deficiencies as follows:

- 1) They do not contain pre- and during-reading phases, and therefore the instruction and/or the application of various reading comprehension strategies in these phases are ignored. Moreover, reading comprehension strategies are not instructed in the post-reading phases.
- 2) Based on the Pakistani Curriculum for English IX and X the materials should develop ethnical and social values for a multicultural and civilized society which might be embedded in the lesson topics and themes that value tolerance; humanism; patience; equity; justice; honesty; empathy; diversity and equality among people; peaceful coexistence between individuals, groups and nations; global issues, etc. An examination of the topics and themes of main texts and activities/tasks revealed that only a few number of topics/themes cover the proposed issues. Furthermore, the topics/themes are not free of stereotypes and discriminations. Examples of religion and gender discriminations can be found in each book.
- 3) Selection of main texts is not based on the integral elements including topics/themes (they do not cover real-life and interesting issues, they do not consider students' needs, they do not cover proposed issues by the Pakistani Curriculum, etc.) and features of legibility (print type, size, and layout) are not considered for them. Moreover, the obtained results for the *Flesch Reading Ease* revealed that most texts obtain a score that is below or above the considered criteria (60-70). Therefore a logical range of complexity is not considered for the main texts.
- 4) Main texts are not up-to-date. Furthermore, according to the characteristics of authentic and authentic-like texts (Day, 2004) they are not mainly authentic or authentic-like. Considering different text types (Grellet 1981 cited in Hadely, 2003) the texts used in these books are mainly of *literary* type including essays, poems, and stories. However, *English 9* contains a few advertisements and forms, and *English 10* and *English Book 2* a few letters.
- 5) The obtained results for the *Flesch Reading Ease* revealed that the complexity and length of main texts are not progressively appropriate throughout the textbooks.

- 6) There is not a balance in presentation of various types of pedagogic (selected-response and constructed-response types) and authentic activities/tasks (constructed-response, product, and performance types) in the textbooks. Most of activities/tasks are of pedagogic types including short-answer questions, multiple-choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, and matching. Some authentic task/activities including constructed-response and product types also exist in each textbook that mainly include short answer essay questions; preparing essays, compositions, and summaries. Performance types of activities/tasks do not exist in the books.
- 7) Various types of authentic activities/tasks do not exist in each unit/lesson.
- 8) Post-reading phases do not promote the application of strategies that demand higher-level thinking skills including analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. The most widely used reading comprehension strategies are recall/remember material and grasping/comprehending the meaning. *English 10* also contains post-reading activities/tasks that are designed to improve vocabulary skills.
- 9) There is not a good balance in the integration of various language skills throughout the books. All four language skills should be presented in a reasonably integrated way as integration of skills reflect the natural use of the language and therefore provides opportunities for the learners to develop various language skills together.
- 10) Progression of practice sections is not developmentally appropriate in each unit/lesson and in the books. Different types of activities/tasks should progress from more controlled types to freer types and more considerable ones in depth and length in each unit/lesson and throughout the textbook. This is due to the gradual progress of students in their knowledge and skills that can be coincided with the developmental progression in both linguistic and cognitive demands of activities/tasks.
- 11) Sufficient proportion of each book is not specified to different language skills. Compared to the considered criteria based on the Pakistani Curriculum for English language, the results revealed that the largest proportion is devoted to reading comprehension skills, writing is the second, speaking the third and listening is the least covered skill in the four books:

Reading comprehension> Writing> Speaking> Listening

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
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(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
24/ Inefficient	25/ Inefficient	24/ Inefficient	24/ Inefficient

Table 7. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Reading Comprehension and other Language Skills in the Four Books

Based on the obtained results, the average score for the total features related to the *Reading Comprehension and other Language Skills* is 24 for *English 9*, *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* and 25 for *English 10*. The overall quality of these features is therefore *inefficient* in all four books (Table 7). The superiority of *English 10* (Figure 6) compared to the three other books is due to the promotion of post-reading strategies that aim at improving vocabulary skills.

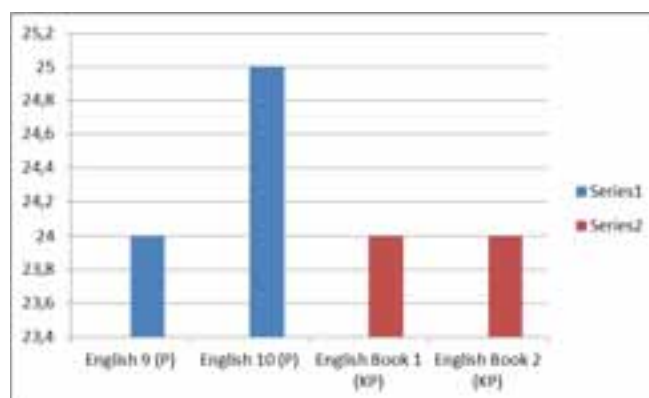


Figure 6. Results for the Reading Comprehension (RC) and other Language Skills Subpart and a Comparison of the Four Books

Graphics

Certain quality features related to the graphics were evaluated in the four books (see Table A7 in Appendix A). The results showed that *English Book 1* and *English Book 2* do not contain any graphics. *English 9* contains some tables and a schema that are mainly related to the language skills, reading parts. *English 10* contains tables in most of the lessons mainly in language items sections, vocabulary parts, and a few number in language skills section, reading parts. However, the application of various types of

graphics (e.g. photographs, drawings, figures, charts, tables, graphs, maps, diagrams, webs, frames, etc.) are ignored in these two books and they only contain tables which are not mostly used efficiently.

Graphics play an important role in language materials. They provide context for the texts, help learners to obtain the meaning of the text, and motivate students to study and learn the text. A good selection of attractive graphics with a combination of different colors can be closer to real life situations and the material will be more appealing for the students.

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
33/Inadequate	50/Medium	0/Poor	0/Poor

Table 8. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Graphics in the Four Books

Based on the achieved results, the average score for the total features related to the *graphics* is 0 for *English Book 1* and *English Book 2*, 33 for *English 9*, and 50 for *English 10*. The overall quality of these features in the books is therefore *poor*, *poor*, *inadequate*, and *medium* respectively (Table 8). The superiority of *English 10* (Figure 7) compared to the three other books is due to the existence of tables in most lessons.

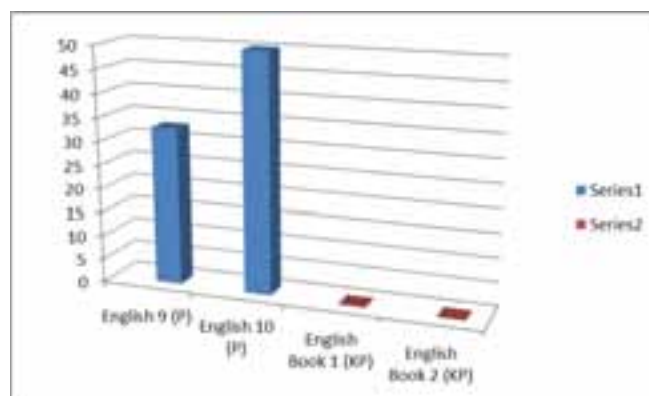


Figure 7. Results for the Graphics Subpart and a Comparison of the Four Books

Overall Consideration

Several quality features related to *Overall Consideration* were evaluated in the four books see Table A8 in Appendix A). The obtained results revealed that none of the textbooks fulfill the considered quality features in this part. Based on the Pakistani Curriculum for English IX and X, a large number of considered criteria are not met and various objectives with regard to different aspects of the curriculum (e.g. reading and thinking skills, writing skills, oral communication skills, formal and lexical aspects of language, appropriate ethical and social development, etc.) are not accomplished.

English 9	English 10	English Book 1 for Class IX	English Book 2 for Class X
(P)	(P)	(KP)	(KP)
0/Poor	0/Poor	0/Poor	0/Poor

Table 9. Scores and Quality Descriptions for Overall Consideration in the Four Books

Moreover, the textbooks mainly lack the features of learner-centered materials that aim at developing communication skills, co-operative learning, consciousness-raising activities, personalizing learning process, the use of computer and internet technology, choices for learner differences and helpful referential materials. In addition, they are not accompanied by teacher's books and lack instructions and suggestions in this regard. The average score for these features is 0 and the *overall quality* of these features is therefore *poor* (Table 9) in all four books (Figure 8).

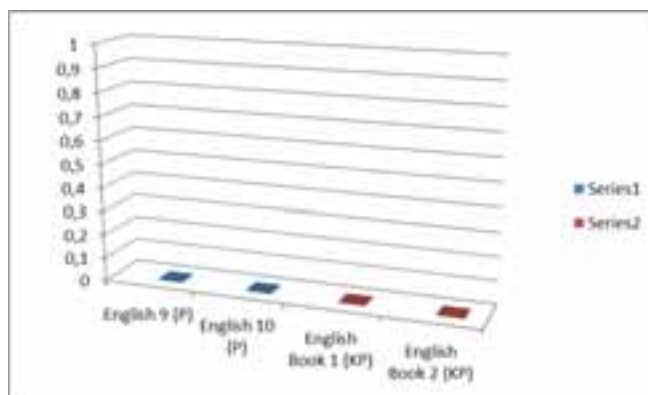


Figure 8. Results for the Overall Consideration Part and a Comparison of the Four Books

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the total average scores for *Overall Impression*, *Organization*, *Content*, and *Overall Consideration* are close in each series. The overall quality is *medium* in *English Book 9* and *10*, and *poor* in *English Book 1* and *2* (see Appendix B). Many aspects of curriculum objectives, with regard to the Pakistani National Curriculum for English IX and X, are not accomplished in the four textbooks. The materials do not equally develop various language skills and items (Appendix C). Pronunciation is not systematically presented and/or practiced in the four books. Vocabulary is ignored in *English 9*. *English Book 1* and *2* overemphasize grammar, and all four books underestimate listening and speaking skills.

Moreover, reading and writing skills, that are emphasized for the higher grades with regard to the National Curriculum, are not equally developed in the four books. All books mainly focus on lower-level thinking skills and higher-level thinking skills are seldom developed in these materials. The textbooks do not promote the application of different learning strategies in their language items and skill sections. Reading comprehension sections are the only parts of the materials that develop a few types of strategies including recall/remember and grasping/comprehending materials. Furthermore, these textbooks are not generally in line with the current theories and practices of EFL/ESL teaching and learning.

A comparison of the achieved scores shows that *English 9* and *10* obtain the highest scores for the features related to the *Overall Impression* and *Organization*, and *English 10* obtains the highest score for the features related to the *Content*. Furthermore, *English 10* achieves the highest total average score (Appendix C). The results of this study suggest that the content of *English Book 1* and *2* are of *poor* quality and should be extensively reconsidered and revised or quality alternatives should be substituted. *English 9* and *10* are of *medium* quality. They can be either substituted by quality alternatives, or they should be well adapted and used with appropriate supplementary materials.

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Appendix A

The Quality Items/Features Adapted from Karamouzian's (2010) Checklist Used to Evaluate the Content of the Textbooks

Table A1

Overall Impression

Textbook is updated .	Binding , and papers are in a good quality .
Textbook is readily available at a good price .	Reasonable number of graphics in a good quality , and visually appealing exists.
Textbook is in appropriate size , and weight .	Texts are in a good quality , and visually appealing .
Cover is durable , and visually appealing .	Different types of components are available at a good price .
Title is appropriate , and spine is labeled .	A website is designed for the textbook.
There is a blurb on the cover.	

Table A2

Organization

Textbook begins with title/author , and copyright pages .	In units/lessons objectives are defined , length logically develops ,
A table of contents , and an introduction exist at the beginning of the textbook.	design & organization are integrated , and recommended resource lists exist .
Textbook is composed of divisions with signposts , and subdivisions with signposts .	Bibliographies/References exist , and contain up-to-date sources .
	Number of units/lessons exceeds the estimated number of sessions.
Quality features are considered in the layouts: appropriate font type , and size ; optimum density of texts & graphics ; appropriate use of margins , and space ; signposted lines/paragraphs , and graphics ; appropriate use of captions for graphics .	Pages are numbered. Indexes , appendices , word lists , expression glossaries , grammar summary tables , lists of phonemic alphabets , and answer keys exist at the end of the textbook.

Table A3

Vocabulary

Each unit/lesson contains a distinct section for vocabulary presentation and practice.	Load, and sequence of vocabulary items are appropriate.
New vocabulary items in each unit/lesson are distinct.	In the textbook, various techniques are applied for vocabulary presentation and/or practice.
Selection of new vocabulary items is based on logical criteria: frequency count of words, topics, students' need, and students' level.	In each unit/lesson new vocabulary items are practiced through other language items & skills.
	Vocabulary learning strategies are instructed in each unit/ lesson.
In each unit/lesson, numbers of features are considered for vocabulary items in presentation and/or practice: aspects of meaning, word forms, grammatical patterns of words, word parts, and collocations.	New vocabulary items are recycled in the textbook.
	Sufficient proportion of the textbook is specified to vocabulary presentation and practice.

Table A4

Grammar

Each unit/lesson contains a distinct section for grammar presentation and practice.	Load of grammar points being covered by each unit/lesson is appropriate.
New grammar points are presented with appropriate explanations, and examples.	Various techniques are applied for grammar presentation and/or practice in the textbook.
	The use of various grammar learning strategies are promoted in the textbook.
Selection criteria for grammatical topics are logical.	New grammar points are recycled in the textbook.
In each unit/lesson new grammar points are practiced through other language items and skills.	Sufficient proportion of the textbook is specified to grammar presentation and practice.

Table A5

Pronunciation

Each unit/lesson contains a distinct section for pronunciation presentation and/or practice.	New pronunciation features are presented with phonemic scripts and/or terminology, appropriate explanations, and examples.
Segmental and suprasegmental features are presented and practiced in the textbook: individual phonemes, word stress, sentence stress, intonation, features of connected speech.	
	In each unit/lesson new pronunciation features are practiced through other language items & skills.
	Sufficient proportion of the textbook is specified to pronunciation presentation and practice.
Various techniques are applied for pronunciation presentation and/or practice in the textbook.	

Table A6

Reading Comprehension and other Language Skills

Each unit/lesson distinctly contains pre-, during-, and post-reading phases.	During-reading activities/tasks promote application of various RC strategies and aim at: comprehension monitoring, making use of clues/contexts, selective reading/reading in chunks, predicting/judging, integrating prior knowledge, constructing semantic associations, clarifying meaning, identifying authors' intent, and analyzing text.
Topics/Themes of main texts & activities/tasks are: integrated in each unit/lesson, varied in the textbook, thought-provoking, and free of stereotypes/taboos.	
Main texts are authentic/authentic like, up-to-date, and in various types.	
Selection of main texts is based on logical criteria: internal elements including topics/themes, organization, complexity, and external elements.	Post-reading activities/tasks promote application of various RC strategies and aim at: recall/remember material, grasping/comprehending the meaning, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, personalizing, promoting students' interaction/co-
Complexity,	

and length of main texts are developmentally appropriate in the textbook.	operation, improving vocabulary skills.
Various types of pedagogic, and authentic activities/tasks exist in each unit/lesson.	Various RC strategies are explicitly instructed in pre-, during-, and post-reading phases.
There is a good balance in presentation of various types of activities/tasks in the textbook.	There is a good balance in integration of other language skills with RC in the textbook.
Instructions of activities/tasks are efficient.	
Pre-reading activities/tasks promote application of various Reading Comprehension (RC) strategies and aim at: establishing purposes for reading, building/activating schemata, engaging/motivating students, predicting/hypothesizing, drawing key words/ideas, and providing knowledge of the text structure.	Progression of practice sections is developmentally appropriate in each unit/lesson, and in the textbook.
	Sufficient proportion of the textbook is specified to RC, and other skills.

Table A7

Graphics

Each unit/lesson contains graphics in its language items, and skills parts.	Graphics are free of stereotypes, taboo topics, and unnecessary details.
Graphics are relevant to the texts, and well placed.	

Table A8

Overall Impression

<p>Generally, material:</p> <p>conforms to the new methodological developments,</p> <p>coincides with the curriculum objectives,</p> <p>does what it claims,</p> <p>provides practical ideas,</p> <p>is learner-centered,</p> <p>and is user-friendly.</p>	<p>Teacher's manual contains</p> <p>instructions/suggestions on:</p> <p>methodology,</p> <p>detailed lesson procedure,</p> <p>adapting lessons,</p> <p>supplementing material,</p> <p>extension texts/exercises/activities/tasks,</p> <p>background/cultural information,</p> <p>use of technology,</p> <p>teaching/learning strategies,</p> <p>additional resources,</p> <p>additional references,</p> <p>and assessment.</p>
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Average Scores for Each Part and the Total Score and Descriptions in Each Book

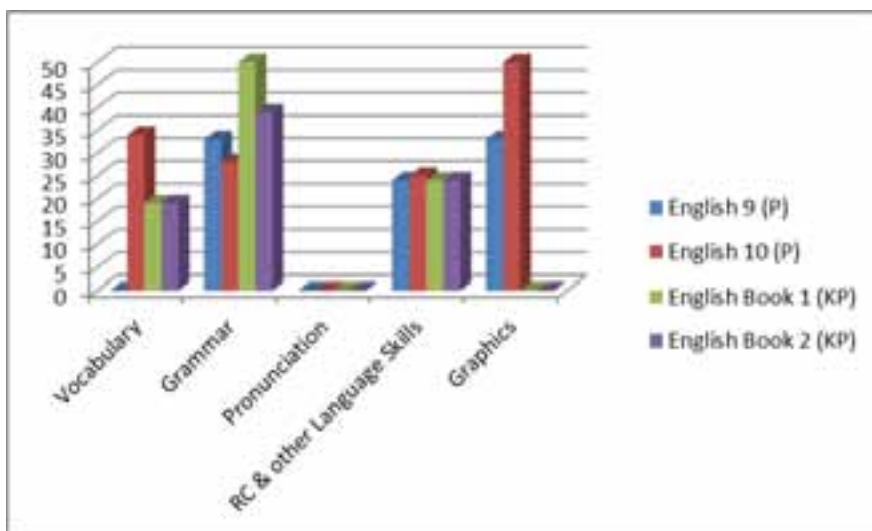
Book	Overall Impression	Organization	Content	Overall Consideration	Total
English 9 (Punjab)	42	56	18	0	29/Medium
English 10 (P)	42	56	27	0	31/Medium
English Book 1 for Class IX (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)	35	49	19	0	26/Poor
English Book 2 for Class X (KP)	35	49	16	0	25/Poor

Quality Descriptions Are Based on Karamouzian's (2010) Benchmark

Average Scores for Each Content Subpart and the Total Score in Each Book

Content Subparts	English 9 (Punjab)	English 10 (P)	English Book 1 for Class IX (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)	English Book 2 for Class X (KP)
Vocabulary	0	34	19	19
Grammar	33	28	50	39
Pronunciation	0	0	0	0
Reading Comprehension	24	25	24	24
and other Language Skills				
Graphics	33	50	0	0
Total Average	18	27	19	16

Results for the Content Subparts and a Comparison of the Four Books



Case Histories and the Comprehension Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen

(skrashen@yahoo.com)
University of Southern California, USA

Abstract

There are three major views of language acquisition: The Comprehension Hypothesis, the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, and the Skill-Building Hypothesis. Only the Comprehension Hypothesis is fully consistent with all case histories of language acquirers, including cases of polyglots and those who have acquired language despite handicaps.

Key words: Comprehension Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis, Skill-Building Hypothesis

Are Case Histories Scientific?

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on controlled experimental studies, and a de-emphasis of other forms of inquiry. What about case histories? My view is that case histories can be valid forms of scientific research.

For the case histories to be presented here, we will ask, in each case, whether the experiences described are consistent with central hypotheses about language acquisition, and, most important, whether some hypothesis are consistent with all cases, while others are consistent with some but not others. Of course, for a hypothesis to be valid, it must be consistent with all cases.

The hypotheses to be considered are these:

The Comprehension Hypothesis, the view that we acquire language and develop literacy when we understand what we hear and what we read.

The Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, which claims that language acquisition occurs when we are forced to produce language beyond our current competence. We change our hypothesis about grammatical rules and word meanings when we are not understand and have to “try again.”

The Output plus Correction Hypothesis says that we improve when we make mistakes and are corrected, thus changing our conscious idea of what the rules of the language are.

The Learning becomes Acquisition Hypothesis, the claim that we first consciously learn about language, that is, study the rules and vocabulary, through output practice the vocabulary and grammar become automatic.

The Output plus Correction and Learning becomes Acquisition hypotheses together make up what is known as “skill-building.” Comprehensible Output appears to be the basis for the “communicative approach” to language teaching.

In the discussion that follows, I will assume strong versions of each hypothesis, that is, I will assume that each is proposed as the only way language is acquired. This is clearly not the assumption of some writers, who propose that comprehensible input is crucial and that one or more of the other hypotheses can serve as a supplement, increasing the power of comprehensible input (e.g. Swain, 1980). We begin with a case from first language development.

Richard Boydell: Acquisition from Input Alone

The Comprehension Hypothesis maintains that language acquisition is the result of comprehensible input, not output. Evidence for this includes cases of the “silent period,” which is quite common among children in a new country faced with a new language. They are typically silent for quite a while, their output limited to a few set phrases they hear frequently (and whose meaning they may not understand completely). “True” language production may not emerge for several months, and is, according to the Comprehension hypothesis, the result of the comprehensible input the children get during the silent

period.

A spectacular case of the silent period, one that does not allow for any alternative explanation for the emergence of competence, is Richard Boydell, described in Fourcin (1975). Boydell contributed the introduction to Fourcin's paper and tells his own story:

"Like every child, I was born without language. Unfortunately, I was also born with cerebral palsy which, in my case, means that although my intelligence is unimpaired, I have a very severe speech defect and no use in my hands and arms. So, to start with, I acquired an understanding of language by listening to those around me. Later, thanks to my mother's tireless, patient work I began learning to read and so became familiar with written, as well as spoken, language. As my interests developed – particularly in the field of science, I read books and listened to educational programs on radio and, later, television which were at a level that was normal, or sometimes rather above, for my age. Also when people visited us ... I enjoyed listening to the conversation even though I could only play a passive role and could not take an active part in any discussion or argument. Even this may, however, have had its compensation, for I was often reminded of the rhyme:

There was an old owl who lived in a tree
And the more he heard the less said he
And the less he said
The more he heard
Now wasn't he a wise old bird!

But, even so, it was sometimes very frustrating not to be able to express my own opinion except to my parents afterward, as they were, at that time, the only people who had the patience to try to understand my speech ... " (pp. 263-4).

Boydell was educated at home by his parents until, he reports, he was old enough to study on his own: "As well as reading books and listening to radio and television to continue my general education, I read the newspaper every day to keep in touch with current events" (p. 264).

When he was thirty, Boydell was provided with a foot-controlled electric typewriter that he was able to use. Only nine days after receiving the typewriter, he produced his first letter. According to Fourcin, it was "elegantly phrased" and also made suggestions for improving the typewriter (that were eventually accepted).

The Comprehension hypothesis provides an explanation for Boydell's ability to suddenly produced

“elegantly phrased” English without any significant previous production practice. He had built up a great deal of competence over the years via listening and reading. He was, when very young, able to communicate enough to indicate to his parents when he understood and when he did not. As Fourcin noted, “by the age of 4 1/2 he could produce vocally only versions of no and yes, but his head and body movements appeared to indicate, to his mother, good speech comprehension and from that age she started systematically to teach him, using these movements as responses to spoken questions” (p. 265). After a while, his competence was high enough for him to be able to understand input from the “mainstream.” The special typewriter allowed him to display his real competence for the first time.

Table 1, presented at the end of this paper, will serve as a scorecard for these case histories. For Richard Boydell, we can agree, I think, that he had plenty of comprehensible input, but produced no comprehensible output, was not corrected, and never engaged in the study of vocabulary or grammar or any other aspect of language.

Indigenous People of the Vaupes River

Hill (1970) warns us against making assumptions about language acquisition based only on our own culture, and presents Sorenson’s studies of the indigenous people living in the Vaupes River area in the Amazon basin in Columbia and Brazil as an example. Multilingualism in this group is the norm: About two dozen languages are (or were, in the 1960’s) spoken by only 10,000 people, and multilingualism is stimulated by an unusual custom: People are required to marry someone who does not speak the same language!

Sorenson points out that although some of the languages spoken in this area were mutually intelligible, requiring only a few days to understand (p. 675), others are not, even some of those that are closely genetically related (p. 674). Sorenson also emphasizes that the people of the Vaupes do not exaggerate their competence: When a speaker from this area says he knows “some” of a language, with the same competence, we would say we know it “quite well” (p. 679).

Children grow up with the father’s and mother’s languages, but during adolescence, according to Sorenson, an individual “actively and almost suddenly” begins to speak the two or three other languages he or she has been exposed to. “In adulthood he may acquire more languages; as he approaches old age ... he will go on to perfect his knowledge of all the languages at his disposal” (p. 678).

Most interesting for this discussion is how these multilinguals go about the task of language acquisition. According to Sorenson,

“The Indians do not practice speaking a language they do not know well yet. Instead, they passively learn lists of words, forms, phrases in it and familiarize themselves with the sound of its pronunciation... They may make an occasional attempt to speak a new language in an appropriate situation, but if it does not come easily, they will not try to force it.” (p. 679-80).

Sorensen was told that “it takes from at least one to two years to learn a new language fluently” (p. 680).

Of great interest is the observation that “It is rare for speakers to correct one another, and then it is usually only done with embarrassment” (Jackson, cited in Grimes, 1985, p. 392).

Returning to our scorecard (table 1), it is clear that the Vaupes multilinguals got plenty of comprehensible input, produced little or no forced speech, and were rarely corrected. It is possible that they did some conscious learning: Recall that they learned “lists of words, forms, phrases ...” before attempting to speak.

Francois Gouin

We turn now to case histories of those who say they did not focus on getting comprehensible input but “studied hard.”

The all-time champion of hard study was Francois Gouin, who describes his efforts to learn (not acquire) German in his book *The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages*, published in 1892 and translated into English from French.

When a young man, Gouin traveled to Germany to study German philosophy, but had no knowledge of German. Expecting to acquire German in a few weeks, he attended a lecture and understood nothing. He then “set to work” (p. 10), using the only method he knew: The “classical process,” the way he had studied Greek and Latin. He began by applying himself “resolutely to the study of the grammar” of German, and he claims it took him only ten days to fully master it. He then returned to the university, but again understood nothing: “... not a word, not a single word would penetrate to my understanding. Nay,

more than this, I did not even distinguish a single one of the irregular verbs freshly learnt, though they must have certainly fallen in crowds from the lips of the speakers” (p. 11).

Gouin decided that the problem was that he had only memorized verbs. The real solution was to memorize verb roots, which he found in an obscure book. But after learning 800 roots in four days, the result was the same: Zero comprehension.

He then turned to conversation. He would spent hours in his hosts’ hairdresser salon, trying to understand what was being said, “hazarding from time to time a sentence carefully prepared beforehand, awkwardly constructed with the aid of my roots and grammar, and apparently always possessing the property of astonishing and hugely amusing the customers” (p. 14).

Gouin became aware that memorized knowledge of language was fragile: “Studied in this manner, a language appeared to me under the guise of Penelope’s web, where the work of the night destroyed the work of the day” (p. 15). Undaunted, he returned to reading, not comprehensible texts but those he needed to translate with the use of a dictionary – the works of Goethe and Schiller. The study of verbs and roots, however, didn’t help: In reading the texts, he could hardly recognize anything he had studied.

One extremely interesting observation provides a useful description, in my view, of the difference between acquiring and learning: Even when he had determined the meaning of a word from the dictionary, the meaning of words on the page appeared lifeless, in contrast to the vocabulary he acquired in his first language. “The word was always as a dead body stretched on the paper. Its meaning shone not forth under my gaze; I could draw forth neither the idea nor the life” (p. 16).

Gouin didn’t give up on the classical method. The next quote reminds me of all those the hard-working researchers determined to show that hard study of grammar and vocabulary is the path to second language proficiency:

“So my work on the roots and irregular verbs seemed to have been in vain. Nevertheless I could not bring myself to believe this seriously. ‘The fire smolders under the ashes,’ I assured myself, ‘and will brighten up little by little. We must read, read, day in and day out; translate, translate continually; hunt, hunt a hundred times after the same word in the dictionary, catch it a hundred times, after a hundred times release it; we shall finish by taming it’ (p. 16).

But after a full week, “I had hardly interpreted the meaning of eight pages, and the ninth did not promise to be less obscure or less laborious than the preceding” (p. 16). Gouin then gave up on translation and turned to several popular books that promised to teach the reader German, and found that they gave contradictory advice. None of them worked. Gouin’s evaluation of another book, *Systematic Vocabulary*, is interesting: “The book made the fortune of its author without producing the results sought for by him” (p. 24).

On meeting his professors in Berlin, Gouin noted that they spoke French quite well, and “... never ceased wondering how all these people had learnt this language” (p. 25).

But Gouin still didn’t get it, doing everything except find comprehensible input: He spent a full week listening to lectures in German, seven to eight hours per day, and concluded that “I might attend the German university for a thousand years under these conditions without learning German” (p. 26). But his next step was the strangest of all: He actually memorized the entire dictionary, 300 pages and 30,000 words, ten pages a day, over one month. But the result was the same: When Gouin returned to the university, he still understood nothing. Nor was reading any easier: Gouin tells us that it took half a day to read two to three pages of Goethe and Schiller, “and then I was not absolutely sure of having found the real meaning of the sentences” (p. 31). Gouin then spent another two weeks reviewing the dictionary, convinced that he had not learned it thoroughly enough the first time. And after time off because what he described as “a disease to the eyesight,” he went through the dictionary again, reviewing “only” one-seventh of it each day of the week. The result was the same.

After this ten month ordeal, Gouin returned home to France. While he was gone, his nephew, two and a half years old when he left, had learned to speak French, his first language, and spoke it with “so much ease, applied to everything with so much surety, so much precision, so much relevancy ...” (p. 34), and acquired it as a result of “playing round with his mother, running after flowers, butterflies, and birds, without weariness, without apparent effort, without even being conscious of his work ...” (p 34), quite a contrast with Gouin’s experience. (It should be noted that Gouin’s experiences with German led him to develop an early version of the “direct method” for foreign language teaching, which was consistent in some ways with the Comprehension hypothesis, known as the Series Method.)

Gouin thus had little comprehensible input; in fact, he seemed to have avoided it. He appears to have engaged in some forced speech at the hairdresser’s salon, but does not tell us whether his errors were corrected. His main effort, of course, was conscious learning of grammar and vocabulary, which he hoped

would become automatic language. One can, of course, argue that Gouin's learning did not become automatic because he did not practice enough, i.e. he did not produce enough, did not try to apply the rules and words he learned in oral and written output.

Heinrich Schliemann

My interest in the next case, Heinrich Schliemann, was stimulated by a claim made by McLaughlin (1987), that cases exist of people who had developed high levels of competence in language "without any opportunity for 'acquiring' it" (p. 30). Horner (1987) claims that Heinrich Schliemann was such a person, that Schliemann "mastered English in six months ... by writing, having corrected and memorizing essays while working as an office boy" (p. 340), in other words using only Output plus Correction.

This one line is Horner's entire discussion of Schliemann. A look at other sources shows that Schliemann, although he did in fact "study" English, got plenty of comprehensible input. He studied with a native speaker of English every day for one hour, "read out loud for extended periods of time" (Jahn, 1979, p. 273), and attended two church in English services every Sunday. He not only memorized his own corrected essays, he also claimed to have memorized *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Ivanhoe* (Ludwig, 1932, p. 63)! Schliemann said that he only needed three readings to memorize a text, averaging 20 pages per day.

Schliemann devoted every spare moment to language study, reading and memorizing while on errands and while waiting in line. Jahn (1979) estimated that in six months Schliemann was exposed to about 1350 hours of English, the equivalent of seven years of formal study.

Schliemann's methods were not, according to the Comprehension Hypothesis, the most efficient. If, however, he understood even some of what he read outloud, his corrected essays, and the texts he memorized, and even partly understood the sermons he heard, he obtained a great deal of comprehensible input, enough to attain at least a reasonable level of proficiency in English.

Of course, it would be impossible to investigate every proposed case of second language acquisition without comprehensible input. But the case of Heinrich Schliemann is not one of them. For more common are cases like Gouin's, where massive amounts of study led to nothing. (Of course we have no test results verifying Schliemann's competence in English and other languages, but even his critics concede that he was very good at languages, see Traill, 1986, p. 64).

Lee Kuan Yew

Lee Kuan Yew, president of Singapore from 1959 to 1990, was born in Singapore and grew up in an English-speaking family. His education was in English, and he studied law in Cambridge. His book, *Keeping My Mandarin Alive*, describes his decades-long efforts to acquire Mandarin, beginning at age 32.

He describes his competence at the time of the writing of the book (published in 2005) as good but not perfect: “Before I go to China, I practice Mandarin for three or four lessons. The first few exchanges with the mayor or others, I can do in Mandarin without difficulty. When we start serious discussions, I will still be able to understand three-quarters of what is said, then I will answer in English” (p. 83). One of his teachers, Prof. Chew Chang Hai, felt that Yew “can practically use Mandarin to discuss any topic” (p. 157).

It is clear that Yew relied on traditional methods. He began with six months of self-study, working through traditional textbooks written in English, focusing primarily on mastering the writing system, and the basic meaning of the characters, in a way reminiscent of Gouin. Realizing the limitations of this method, he hired a teacher, but when he discovered that his teacher did not have the correct accent in Mandarin (Beijing), but spoke a dialect. Yew said he “erased” what he had learned (p. 19). About ten years later, he tried again, taking lessons for a few days a week over eight to nine months. Yew tells us little about the method used, only that he tape recorded the lessons. His teacher did not approve of this, and the lessons ended, giving Yew only a “slight basis” in Mandarin (p. 20).

A few years later, his political career and his post as secretary-general of his party forced him to get more serious about Mandarin, and he had lessons with a private teacher every day for an hour. Again, Yew does not provide details, probably because the method was the usual prescription for those days. He clearly made progress: “By 1959, I could make speeches in Mandarin without difficulty” (p. 27) although he acknowledged that there were gaps in his competence.

Lee Kuan Yew and Output plus Correction

Soon after, around 1961, Yew devoted some time to acquiring another Chinese language, Hokkien, again for political reasons, and reported that he was able to give a simple but imperfect speech after three

months of study. His method was “output plus correction”: Yew would often give the same speech several times; a colleague would listen to him, and provide him with corrections, “so that by the time I got on television, I would be almost word perfect” (p. 30).

Yew is very explicit about this: “The quickest way I learnt was when I had to make a speech. I have to translate the words, the phrases I need, then I have to memorize them and use them. Because I use them, they get deeper in” (p. 52). Yew makes it clear that he thinks that speaking is the key to language acquisition. Input, at best, will only help you keep what you have acquired. According to Yew, reading is just “passive learning, not active, but it keeps it up” (p. 52). He recommended that his son take some Chinese novels with him when he went to England to study, “to read and to keep his familiarity with words” (pp. 53-54).

I suspect that Yew was really thinking about ease of retrieval rather than language acquisition in his praise of output practice. He notes that his son, after returning from England, “had to warm up his Mandarin again, but it came back easily because it was embedded deep in his hard disk” (p. 54), a.k.a. it was acquired.

At no time did Yew or any of his teachers mention extensive reading, reading for pleasure, listening to the radio, watching TV or films for pleasure, except for the following: “.... After a trip to Beijing, we went on a plane to different provinces. I asked (the interpreters) what they did to keep up with their English. They said they read, listened to tapes, and if they didn’t interpret and didn’t read, then they were unable to keep it up” (p 41). In other words: Input.

He notes, nearly in passing, that input was a part of his approach to language acquisition: “ ... very seldom do I make speeches in Malay. When I had to meet Suharto, I would listen to his tapes, his speeches, to refresh my memory of his accent, the way he pronounced words and the words he used. So, when I met him, I had no difficulty understanding him” (p. 58).

Lee Kwan Yew and grammar study

Yew understands that acquisition is real, that we can “pick up” language, but feels that in the absence of living in the environment “where a language comes alive” (p. 68), we have to rely on teachers. And he clearly feels that conscious knowledge of grammar is central. His advice to teachers: “if we can, we should teach them grammar, syntax – in English, you say it this way, in Mandarin you say it this other

way ...” (p. 79).

Lee Kwan Yew and forced speech

“I once told the English-educated MPs who were learning Mandarin, to have a luncheon club once a week or once a fortnight, to meet and get the Chinese MPs together and speak nothing but Mandarin. Force yourself and you will keep it up. That was the way I learnt” (p. 89)

Lee Kwan Yew and reading

Yew sees some role for reading as a means of language acquisition and not just maintenance, but his version of reading differs profoundly from that implied by the Comprehension hypothesis: “Don’t just read passively, silently: Read aloud, you must be able to pronounce it correctly” (p. 115). Reading aloud was a part of the Mandarin lessons Yew received (pp. 166-167), with Yew repeating a paragraph read to him by his instructor.

The reading activities provided by one of his instructors had the advantage of dealing with topics Yew was interested in, but the approach was clearly intensive, not extensive, with a glossary provided of new words and fill-in-the-blank and similar exercises (p. 177).

Of course, as a public speaker, Yew has good reason to focus on speech production and to make sure his speeches are reasonably error-free. In his situation, I would certainly do the same, that is, present the same speech several times, and have the errors corrected. The error is the assumption that this how language is acquired.

Lee Kuan Yew appeared to have done everything wrong: Like Goiun, he had great respect for study of grammar and vocabulary, and a deep concern for correctness. He relied on output plus correction and promoted the use of forced speech, and barely mentioned input in the entire book.

Yew claimed that his approach was necessary for someone attempting to improve in a language not spoken in the community. But Mandarin is spoken in Singapore. It is one of the official languages, and the ethnic Chinese are by far the largest subgroup in Singapore. In fact, the percentage of Mandarin speakers among Chinese language speakers in Singapore has increased noticeably in the last few decades,

thanks to Mr. Yew's efforts as prime minister.

In addition, Mr. Yew's language lessons, despite their focus on form, provided him with a considerable amount of comprehensible input, including both the readings mentioned earlier and conversation. They were not like Gouin's sessions. They may have allowed him to progress to the point where at least some input outside of class was comprehensible, and continuous exposure to comprehensible spoken and written Mandarin did the rest of the job.

Neither Yew nor any of the three instructors interviewed in the book appear to have any awareness of the reality of subconscious language acquisition. His accomplishments could have come a lot easier.

Lomb Kato

I gathered some of the data for this case history on my own. I heard about Lomb Kato when I was teaching, briefly, in Hungary, in 1995. My students told me that I should really meet Lomb Kato (her name would be Kato Lomb in English), a professional interpreter living in Budapest considered by Hungarians to be the world's greatest living polyglot. I visited Dr. Lomb several times. One of my students read her book, *This is How I Learn Languages*, written in Hungarian, and gave me a summary of the important points, which were confirmed in our conversations.

Dr. Lomb lived in Budapest her entire life, and yet has acquired 17 languages. She did not grow up bilingual. She got interested in languages after receiving her PhD in Chemistry, first studying French and then studying and teaching English.

The Core Novel method

Her primary method of acquisition, and means of staying in touch with her languages, was reading. When possible, she utilized aural input, from conversation, from radio, and on the job as an interpreter.

It was often been very difficult to get aural input. When she began Russian, for example, it was during the Russian occupation of Hungary, and use of Russian was forbidden. In addition, books were not plentiful. She thus evolved an alternative, her "core novel" method.

She selected one novel in the target language and read it very thoroughly, preferring novels to

language textbooks because of the artificial language used in the latter. Often, it was a difficult novel (the first English author she read was Galsworthy), but when easier reading was available, she took advantage of it.

When she started working on Russian, she tried some “serious” novels but found them difficult. Then she and her husband moved into an apartment that had been previously occupied by a Russian family that had to leave hastily and she discovered that a number of Russian romance novels had been left behind. She read them eagerly: “Without hesitation, I started reading them ... I worked so hard to understand them that even today I remember some passages” (Lomb, 1970, p. 12, passage translated by N. Kiss). Because of the romance novels, her Russian improved, and eventually she was able to read Gogol. She occasionally rereads the “core novel” years later, in order to bring back her knowledge of the language.

Dr. Lomb told me that she does nearly all her pleasure reading in other languages. Of course, she is aware that reading alone will not suffice to fully understand oral, everyday language. She notes that those who rely exclusively on reading “may find difficulty in the oral language” (p. 87). In combination with aural input, however, reading is of enormous help.

Lomb Kato and comprehensible input

Dr. Lomb used a number of strategies to make sure she got comprehensible input. One was to use a teacher. What she expected from a language teacher “is what I cannot get from either books or from the radio ... I ask the teacher to speak at a slower than average speed so that I can catch as many words as possible from the context” (Alkire, p. 21).

A strategy she used in reading was to select literature published before 1950: “... (I can have trouble understanding the style of modern novels, even in my native Hungarian.) I always buy books in pairs: this increases the chance that at least one will be comprehensible” (Alkire, p. 19). She did not insist on reading “authentic” literature, and preferred to read “adapted” texts when first starting out in another language.

Lomb also understood how helpful background knowledge can be: When listening to the news in another language, she first listens to it in a language she is familiar with. This, she says, gives her a “key” to what to expect (Alkire, p. 20).

Her strategies for taking advantage of being in the country where the language is spoken include going on guided tours and going to the movies: “Studying a language provides an excellent excuse for going to the movies” (Alkire, p. 22). She also notes, in agreement with the Comprehension Hypothesis, that residence in the country works best for those at the intermediate level: “Those who know nothing at the outset will probably return with virgin minds. For those at a very advanced level, improvement will be difficult to detect. The best results will show ... at the intermediate level” (p. 22). In terms of the Comprehension Hypothesis, the intermediate has the best chance of getting comprehensible input containing aspects of language that have not yet been acquired (Krashen, 1982).

Dr. Lomb told me that she was deeply interested in both vocabulary and grammar. She had an excellent collection of dictionaries, and even read them for pleasure from time to time! But she did not look up words when she read, unless the word kept coming back and she still did not know its meaning. She advises language students that when they are reading for pleasure in another language, “do not get obsessed with words you don’t know or structures you don’t understand. Build comprehension on what you already know. Do not automatically reach for the dictionary if you encounter a word or two that you don’t understand. If the expression is important, it will reappear and explain itself; if it is not so important, it is no big loss to gloss over it (Alkire, p. 24).

Lomb Kato and grammar

She included grammar study as part of her personal program in working on new languages, but she considered herself to be an average language student (!); for this reason she tried to find grammar books that gave answers to the exercises (Alkire, 2005; p. 19).

In her view, however, grammar is not the most important aspect of developing competence in languages; grammar study should be optional for adults, and should consist only of the most straightforward rules. Requiring children to study grammar was, in her opinion, “absurd” (Krashen and Kiss, 1996).

Nevertheless, she valued being corrected: When doing free writing in another language, “On the basis of the teacher’s corrections, I verify whether I grasped their meanings and functions properly” (Alkire, p. 21).

In fact, she stated that “Uncorrected mistakes are very perilous! If one keeps repeating wrong

formulas, they take root in the mind and one will be inclined to accept them as authentic” (Alkire, p. 21). In other words, the fear is that we can acquire from our own imperfect output.

Like others, e.g. Lee Kuan Yew, Lomb Kato valued grammar study, and was interested in vocabulary. But she de-emphasized their importance, and her main focus was clearly comprehensible input.

Daniel Tammet

The case of Daniel Tammet became well-known after a documentary, *Brainman*, was made. It has been shown world-wide since May, 2005. Tammet suffers from savant syndrome, a form of autism characterized by “an obsessive need to order and routine” (Tammet, 2006) and in his case, and extraordinary ability to deal with numbers. The documentary featured his linguistic abilities: After ten days of study of Icelandic, Tammet was able to converse in the language with two native speakers for 15 minutes.

Tammet tells his own story in his autobiography, *Born on a Blue Day*. His interest in languages, he tells us, began when he did a report for school on the Seoul Olympics when he was nine years old, and discovered a book about the writing systems used in different languages.

Much of his ability in language acquisition is, without question, really a profound ability in language learning, not acquisition: Tammet has an incredible memory. He holds the European and British record for memorizing pi, at 22, 514 digits. (This is, incidentally, fifth in the world. The world record is held by Chao Lu, 67,890; see <http://www.pi-world-ranking-list.com>).

Unfortunately, Tammet doesn’t tell us too much about how he goes about mastering a language (he says he now knows ten languages, and has even invented a language). His comments about language, however, scattered through his book, show that Tammet is clearly in favor of both learning and acquisition.

While studying Lithuanian, while working as an English teacher in Lithuania, he worked with a teacher: “I wrote words down as I learned them to help me visualize and remember them” (conscious learning) and read children’s books ... (acquisition)” (p. 134). (Parenthetical notes added by SK.

When he started working on Icelandic, he read texts outloud so his teacher could check his

pronunciation (conscious learning), but he also stated that “the large amount of reading helped me to develop an intuitive sense of the language’s grammar (acquisition)” (pp. 208-209).

“When I’m learning a language there are a number of things that I consider essential materials to begin with. The first is a good-size dictionary. I also need a variety of texts in the language, such as children’s books, stories and newspaper articles, because I prefer to learn words within whole sentences to help give me a feeling for how the language works” (p. 161). This appears to me to combine acquisition and learning.

In his study of Welsh, Tammet is clearly deeply involved with grammar; he discusses Welsh word order and morphophonemics. He also pays attention to acquisition, noting that “an invaluable resource for my Welsh study has been the Welsh language television channel S4C, which I’m able to watch through my satellite receiver. Programs are varied and interesting, from the soap opera *Pobol y Cwm* (People of the Valley) to the *newyddian* (news.) It has proven an excellent way for me to improve my comprehension and pronunciation skills” (p. 160).

Tammet has set up a website, selling lessons in beginning and intermediate Spanish and French (<http://www.optimnem.co.uk>). An inspection of the syllabi, available without charge, reveals a clear orientation toward grammar: The focus of each lesson is a point of grammar, e.g. possessives, reflexive sentences, comparisons, “this/that/those/these,” etc.

Before we conclude from this case that the best approach is a combination of acquisition and learning, we have to remember that Daniel Tammet has memorized pi to 22,512 digits. A safer conclusion is that conscious learning works well for those with the prodigious mental powers of Daniel Tammet, those with savant syndrome, a very rare condition.

Andrew Weil

Andrew Weil is well-known as an expert on nutrition, and his view of combining the best of mainstream and alternative medicine. In his book, *The Marriage of the Sun and the Moon*, he describes his experiences with Spanish at an experimental school in Tepoztlan, run by Marco Polanksy:

“Marco’s philosophy of learning languages was out of the ordinary but struck me as correct. He said that we all had the capacity to learn languages, since we did it as infants, that it had nothing to do with

intellect but rather was an operation of the unconscious mind. The only abilities it depended upon were accurate listening and accurate imitating. Therefore, the way to learn a new language is to want to learn it badly and immerse yourself in it, letting as much of it flow into the unconscious mind as possible. Whether you understand it or not is irrelevant. Forget about grammar books and formal instruction, Marco said. Just listen and imitate.

‘Classes’ at the Colegio de Tepoztlan were bizarre. Sometimes Marco would have us fall into trance states to the accompaniment of recorded chamber music while he intoned vocabulary words from a Spanish comic book. When pressed for more-structured help, he would decline, saying that there was no way to teach another person a language. He did arrange for us to be apprenticed to local people to force us to talk. I was placed in the care of the village carpenter and spent many pleasant afternoons with him in an outdoor shop, helping to make furniture.

I must say that the Polansky method worked like a charm. In three months I was speaking passable Spanish and three months after that I was speaking good Spanish. The only other language I ever learned as well was German, and that took four years of painful work in high school. I would never again attempt to learn a language by studying it and I have no doubt that I can learn any language now just by really wanting to and placing myself in the right part of the world. I am grateful to Marco for teaching me that lesson” (pp. 5-6).

Polansky’s method is clearly a version of Suggestopedia, and his focus on the unconscious mind is also consistent with the Comprehension Hypothesis. Inconsistent is the “forced speech” aspect – getting students “apprenticed ... to force us to talk,” but this is clearly a way of getting comprehensible input, after the student is beyond the beginning stages. Also, of course, the claim that an acquirer need not understand the input appears to be contradictory to the Comprehension Hypothesis, but it is likely that Polansky was simply trying to get his students to relax. What is clear is that Dr. Weil made good gains without grammar study.

Armando

A reporter from the Los Angeles Times asked me to meet Armando, a 29-year-old immigrant from Mexico who had lived in the United States for 12 years. Armando, who attended school in Mexico up to grade nine, worked in an Israeli restaurant in Los Angeles nearly the entire time he has lived in the United

States. While Armando speaks English quite well, he says he speaks Hebrew better.

According to the article in the Times (Silverstein, 1999), Armando picked up Hebrew "by observing and listening to co-workers and friends," through interaction and conversation, occasionally asking for the meanings of unknown words. According to the "patriarch" of the family-owned restaurant, Armando "speaks Hebrew like an Israeli" (p. 1).

Armando's experience

I interviewed Armando, in English, at the restaurant where he worked. Armando told me that it was two or three years until he was comfortable in conversation even though he heard Hebrew all day on the job. He said that he never forced or pushed himself with Hebrew, that his approach was relaxed. He also informed me that he had a very friendly relationship with the other restaurant staff, with the owners, and enjoyed chatting with Hebrew-speaking customers. Armando's good relationship with speakers of Hebrew was confirmed by Times reporter, who noted that Armando formed "close friendships" with the family that owns the restaurant, his Israeli-born co-workers, and many customers. When Armando was seriously injured in a car accident in Arizona, several members of the family visited him in the hospital, there were calls "nearly every day," and prayers were said for him at nearby synagogues.

Armando told me that he had never learned to read Hebrew, never studied Hebrew grammar, had no idea of what the rules of Hebrew grammar were, and certainly did not think about grammar when speaking. He said that he received about five corrections a day, but none of these were aimed at grammar; it was all vocabulary.

An informal evaluation

I conducted an informal evaluation of Armando's Hebrew competence. I tape-recorded a brief conversation, somewhat contrived, but the best that could be done under the circumstances. (It would be much better to obtain some completely unmonitored speech, recorded when Armando was not aware it was being recorded; this, of course, would hardly be ethical.) At my request, Armando chatted with a native speaker, an Israeli friend of his, about what he did the day before (it was the Sabbath). The conversation lasted about five minutes.

I played the recording was played the next day for four adult native speakers of Hebrew: two employees of the Israeli consulate and two employees of the Israeli tourist office in Los Angeles. I did not indicate who the speaker was but only asked them to listen and evaluate Armando's Hebrew. The judges listened to about two minutes of Armando talking about his activities on Saturday. The listening was done in a corridor in an office building (because of tight security in the consulate), and the recording was not of high quality. The judges were not told anything about Armando until after they made their judgment.

Here are the results: One judge felt that the speaker was a native speaker of Hebrew, had no accent, and made no grammatical errors. Armando's language, however, was judged to be "unsophisticated." The second judge felt that Armando was a long time resident of Israel and could have been born there. He thought that Armando might speak Hebrew as a second language and speaks another language at home. Armando's Hebrew was "not quite standard" but was acceptable. This judge guessed that Armando was Moroccan, which is quite interesting, because the owners of the restaurant are from Morocco. The third judge decided that Armando was not a native speaker of Hebrew, but felt that he was very good: "He can clearly say anything he wants to say," but shows "some hesitancy." This judge guessed that Armando had lived in Israel "perhaps one or two years" and has had lots of interaction with Israelis. The fourth judge thought that Armando was Ethiopian. She felt that he was not a native speaker of Hebrew but is clearly very good, clearly fluent. He is, she felt, obviously "comfortable" in Hebrew and speaks like someone who has lived in Israel for a few years. He uses slang but uses it appropriately.

The range is thus from "very good but nonnative" to native. The case is quite consistent with the Comprehension Hypothesis and shows that "acquisition" alone can lead to impressive levels of competence in a second language.

An additional interesting aspect of this case, in my opinion, is the support it provides for the notion of club membership, the idea that we "talk like the people we perceive ourselves to be." (Smith, 1988, p. 4; see also Beebe, 1985). Armando, it can be hypothesized, made the extraordinary progress he did because he had comprehensible input; but his progress was greatly aided because he joined the club of speakers who used the language. (Note that the "club" in this case was a circle of friends, not a national or ethnic group; Armando has not converted to Judaism.)

Of course, Hebrew was not comprehensible for him right away. His great accomplishment was due to patience, being willing to acquire slowly and gradually with a long silent period (or period of reduced output). With a "natural approach" or TPRS language class Armando would have had comprehensible

input right away and would moved through the beginning stagesmore quickly, and real conversational Hebrew would have been comprehensible earlier. I predict that a traditional class focusing on grammar would not have had this effect.

Armando's case also shows us that one can do quite well in second language acquisition without living in the country in which the language is spoken and without formal instruction. The crucial variables appear to be comprehensible input and having a good relationship with speakers of the language.

Conclusion

Table one presents the cases discussed here. The only column that perfectly correlates with success is the first one, comprehensible input.

Hypotheses tested (see text)	Comp Input	Comp Output	Output + Corr	Lng > Acq
Richard Boydell*	Yes	no	no	no
Vaupes Multilinguals*	yes	no	no	?
Francois Gouin	no	some	?	yes
H. Schliemann*	yes	?	yes	yes
Lee Kuan Yew*	yes	?	yes	yes
Lomb Kato*	yes	?	yes	yes
Daniel Tammet*	yes	?	?	yes
Andrew Weil*	yes	yes	no	no
Armando*	yes	?	no	no

Table 1 Case Histories

NB: * = successful language acquisition

This conclusion is consistent with the view that the Comprehension Hypothesis is correct and that comprehensible input is the true cause of language acquisition. As noted, however, the case is not airtight: The case histories allow the possibility that alternative hypotheses function as a supplement to

comprehensible input. The results of experimental studies, however, suggest that the alternatives do not contribute to language acquisition, but contribute to language learning, which has a limited role in language performance (Krashen, 2003). Additional case histories might shed light on these issues.

Clearly, case histories can be very helpful, but they need to be considered as a group, not in isolation: Only then are we able to use them to test hypotheses about language acquisition.

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Reflections on Teaching Critical Literacy: Reading through Sherlock Holmes Mysteries

Chiu-Hui Wu

(99031@mail.wzu.edu.tw)

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan

Abstract

The Sherlock Holmes mystery series, written by the Scottish author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is one of the most popular detective series in the genre and has been translated into more than 60 languages. However, the pedagogical implications of reading Sherlock Holmes mysteries have rarely been noted, as it is considered a form of reading for pleasure. This study explored how using Sherlock Holmes mysteries in an EFL class can be considered a social act, which the stories provide EFL learners with the historical-political context of the United Kingdom in the 19th century. Using a first-person narrative, the author/instructor shares her experience of teaching critical reading using the Sherlock Holmes series in a college-level EFL classroom. She argued that although Holmes' analytical reasoning and proper British manners impressed young readers, subtle prejudice against non-British individuals was found in the text.

Key words: Critical literacy/reading, Detective stories, Sherlock Holmes, Text analysis

Introduction

Written more than 150 years ago, Sherlock Holmes (SH) stories are among the most popular mysteries for young adults. Indeed, the popular SH texts have been adapted into many mediums of cultural products, including graphic novels, short stories, and films. The texts have been translated into more than 60 languages, suggesting that Sherlockian fiction has attracted young readers across many different cultures and languages. Its success may rely on the establishment of its literary value resulting from both its aesthetic narration and scientific reasoning. In his preface to a SH text, author Jonathan Stroud stated, "Millions more have fallen under Doyle's

spell”, for Holmes is “brilliant...superior, and acerbic and all-seeing” (Doyle, 2005, vi). Although imaginative, Holmes is portrayed as an ideal gentleman who is a rational thinker, observer, and critical thinker. While Sherlock Holmes texts are used as a medium to motivate EFL teenagers to read, the pedagogical implications in EFL classes have rarely been scrutinised because SH texts are widely recognised to be playful and light-hearted.

As an EFL educator, I recognise that language and literacy education would fall short if it focused only on the linguistic features of a language rather than on how language is used in social contexts. Furthermore, it is also my belief that knowledge is never neutral and that developing critical reading skills, such as reading between the lines, is essential for all students. In this case, reading is not a measure of students’ reading comprehension but rather an indication of their understanding of social context. Thus, it becomes essential for students to identify the ideology or patterns of domination in texts by questioning why certain information is included and why other information is excluded.

The original SH detective stories were selected as required reading texts for advanced English majors at the junior college at which I work. As I read the Sherlockian stories, I was more attracted to the profound social change reflected by each crime than by the process of deduction that Holmes made. Thus, despite appreciating Holmes for his logical reasoning, I recognise there is a need to let students infer the social context of the Victorian era and to identify the writer’s biases. Social justice and social change can certainly be salient themes in crime fiction, and these concepts had become the focus of my teaching. In this study, I attempted to invite my students to see how social justice and change were portrayed in the Victorian era through linguistic elements in Sherlockian stories. I present how these detective stories can be a great resource for teaching critical reading to EFL learners, particularly with respect to issues of gender, race, and class with an examination of how social justice is reached.

Critical Literacy in Critical Pedagogy

In educational settings, oppression exists everywhere, as knowledge is a construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations. As students’ race, gender and social class are confounded and mixed with a student’s academic performance, a critical pedagogue should use a counter-hegemonic approach to education that exposes and dispels the dominant ideology related to these

factors. As such, it becomes apparent that oppression is mediated through language and through different types of literacy in producing such stereotypes. Consequently, developing critical literacy reflects the core of critical pedagogy across all subject matter, including EFL (Huang, 2011). As Freire and Macedo (1987) argued critical pedagogy is not a teaching method but rather a humanising pedagogy that fosters respect for all individuals. This respect is attained through an understanding of all people's needs and struggles. Critical pedagogy is situated in dialogue that can be used to enhance understanding among people by examining their underlying values and beliefs and challenging the neutralised assumptions. Furthermore, reading between the lines is crucial for students to develop critical language awareness (Wallace, 2003; Huang, 2011).

My motivation to teach critical reading was inspired by Paulo Freire (1997), who was a critical pedagogue from the 1970s until his death in 1997. According to Freire (1997), reading cannot "separate reading words from reading the world" (p. 304). A critical reader focuses on both *what* is included in the text and *how* it is included to ensure that students are not simply learning facts (emphasis added, Freire & Macedo, 1987). Teaching critical reading is to challenge students to read the ideas and the language which should allow them not only to read the *word* but also to read the *world* (Freire, 1987). As the world is structured by power, language often becomes a medium through which to convey the ideology of the oppressor who aims to maintain their privileges by controlling the oppressed.

Critical Reading/Literacy in English Literature

Critical literacy has expanded its influence in literature in a way that learners are encouraged to examine the mainstream and marginalised voices through texts being read (Huang, 2011; Parmar&Krinsky, 2013). ParmarandKrinsky (2013) noted that English literature is a representation of a cultural product of English speakers and a means for EFL learners to explore the English history through the conflicts in race, class and gender. Indeed, critical literacy allows a new interpretative approach between the text and the reader. For EFL learners, such practice is especially significant for they have been exposed to and more often than not, attracted to the cultural materials of English (Wallace, 2005). Critical literacy allows EFL learners to read texts through the voices of the multilingual and multicultural writers. With an understanding of other cultures, students will prepare themselves to live in a global world (Wallace, 2005).

Symbolizing modernity, the Victorian age represents how British Empire took a leading role in science and celebrated its glorification by extending its power and economy to other countries in the 18th to 19th century. This is well represented in Sherlock Holmes stories. The study of social change within the Victorian society is needed in terms of how the Victorian responded to globalisation and industrialisation in terms of gender, social class, race and the meaning of social justice.

Here in this study, I use critical reading and critical literacy interchangeably because they both aim to encourage students to read beyond the meaning of what is stated and to closely examine the meaning of the placement of each word (Kurland, 1995). Critical reading can be defined as (a) reading to discover, (b) reading with an open mind, and (c) reading between the lines (Kurland, 1995). Critical reading encourages readers to examine beyond the factual knowledge in a text and to focus on the interpretation of symbols, such as a word or an image. It also invites readers to evaluate the textual elements and arrangements of a written text by constantly asking critical questions: Why and how is a text formed? What has been excluded? Hence, critical reading is a practice of critical pedagogy, which is a teaching philosophy that aims to eliminate educational inequity caused by differences in gender, race, and ethnicity.

In classes that promote critical reading/literacy, teachers believe that reading is not a private or individual meaning-making process but rather a social practice. Huang (2011) added that critical reading is not merely a social practice; it is also an ideological practice that requires learners to critically think about how a text is constructed. Yet, critical literacy is not meant to simply develop students' critical thinking; it focuses on uncover the hidden values behind the lines with an ultimate goal to do social justice with any possible transformative actions (Macknish, 2011).

In the case of applying critical reading/literacy practices to teaching SH mysteries, it is important to identify the mainstream discourse on SH literature and to allow EFL readers the space to address their perspectives using a cultural lens (Wallace, 2005).

SH mysteries

Mystery fiction is a popular genre of writing that young adults enjoy. Mysteries can be both playful and educational. The value of using detective stories in the classroom is twofold: (a) they are entertaining, and (b) they can reflect societal issues from the perspective of a detective (Menes, 1980). When mysteries are associated with crime and punishment, they can serve as an alternate approach to teaching students about social justice in a historical context. The ethical and moral concerns within such a text can inspire EFL learners to discuss concepts of social justice (Pearson & Singer, 2009).

Among all detective fiction, SH may be one of the most famous fictional characters in the world (Ellis, 2009). As an innovative British writer, Conan Doyle's crafted writing style wonderfully captured many readers and made his texts ground-breaking works that integrated aesthetics and science. It is clear why his novels have generated such an enthusiastic response for more than a century. Although imaginative, SH is a rational thinker, observer, and critical thinker, always questioning ideas that people typically take for granted. Thus, SH detective stories can be regarded as a type of linguistic and cognitive resource for EFL learners to develop their reading competence.

The EFL Reading Class

The class consisted approximately 50 Taiwanese students, 45 were female with five were male. Aged from 18 to 20, students from this reading class were junior English majors who were at their fourth year of the five year junior college during the study. In this private Catholic school, most of the students in this program come from a socially privileged family background.

As indicated in the syllabus, the Advanced English Reading, a three-credit required course, aimed to promote English majors' critical thinking skills through reading authentic seven SH short stories. These include: *The Speckled Band*, *The Blue Carbuncle*, *The Musgrave Ritual*, *The Six Napoleons*, *The Reigate Squire*, *Silver Blaze* and *The Dancing Men*. Students were making their first entry into authentic reading materials with this reading course. They were also required to demonstrate their reading competence through midterm and final exams, biweekly journal logs, group discussions, and oral presentations, such as role play and mock interviews. The in-class midterm and final exams included one or two essay questions to elicit students' critical thoughts on the texts. The biweekly logs required students to summarise each story and provide a critical reflection.

My approach to critical reading involved teaching students to question the text by introducing a discussion of various forms of stereotypes, such as sexism, racism, and classism. I also invited my students to link each SH detective fiction with its social context, the 19th century Victorian age in England, which had been influenced by the industrial revolution and capitalism. Exploring the Victorian context and the author's ideology were the main critical reading practices employed. Furthermore, I focused on the examination of gender and race/cultural stereotypes as they existed in the stories and the meaning of social justice through the language used in the stories. Stereotypes are generalisations regarding the "typical" characteristics of specific social groups or types of individuals. Students described their critical reflections of the SH stories to demonstrate their competence in critical reading. The students were encouraged to relate the text to its social context by writing self-reflections and asking questions during class. The following section describes my reflection on teaching the SH texts and the responses from my students.

Findings and Discussion

Identifying Gender Roles

Teaching students to recognise the portrayal of gendered roles in the 19th century is also a critical reading practice. The students were encouraged to explore women's independence. For example, the students discussed the ways that Victorian-era women could earn money: (1) by having a job, (2) by inheriting from their biological family (e.g. in *The Speckled Band*, the Stoner sisters could inherit her mother's money), and (3) through marriage. One student, Jane, revealed that 19th century British women were unable to control their fate in the following comments:

...women had little direct contact with society other than within their own homes. It was implied in this chapter that Helen and her sister Julia could only inherit her mother's money through marriage, and if she ever decides not to enter such an institution, she would not receive a penny of the inheritance. Women without money have little power to change their fates. Helen had to put up with her violent step-father constantly and had to be careful with her actions. (Jane)

Another female student, Tera, described her critical reflection in her logs, observing that women of low to middle social class, such as the characters Catherine Cusack from *The Blue Carbuncle* and Rachel Howells from *The Musgrave Ritual*, tend to work as maids:

...I believe the female characters in Conan Doyle's stories were simply a scam; they were like chess in a game, with little opportunities to climb up the social ladder without the aid of their husband. Moreover, in the two stories we read, the only job we see women do were maids (ex: Catherine Cusack of *The Blue Carbuncle* and Rachel Howells in *The Musgrave Ritual*). They work for men or people with superior birth and background, and they will most likely remain so through the rest of their lives. (Tera)

Detecting adjective words that signal an opinion is also an approach to teaching critical reading. For example, the adjectives that are used to describe male and female characters may show hidden gender stereotypes. In SH texts, the image of a British man is presented as gentle and decent, even if a man is criminal. For example, the criminal in *The Musgrave Ritual*—the butler, Brunton—is “a well-grown, handsome man, with a splendid forehead”, (p. 79) and has several talents: “With his personal advantages and his extraordinary gifts—for he can speak several languages and play nearly every musical instrument”(p. 79). The other character, Reginald Musgrave, is depicted as “a man of an exceedingly aristocratic type, thin, high-nosed, and large-eyed, with languid and yet courtly manners” (p. 77). As an additional example, one of the criminals in *The Reigate Puzzle*, the old Cunningham, is described as “a decent fellow”. However, the physical descriptions of non-British characters are relatively negative, as described subsequently in the section on race.

By contrast, females in SH mysteries are often portrayed as weak and emotional, lacking scientific deduction. Helen, whose sister was murdered, had a hypothesis that her sister might have died of fear: “It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine” (Doyle, 2005, p. 13). Such emotional words are also used to describe women in the following phrases and sentences:

1. “The fancies of a nervous woman...” (Helen Stoner from *The Speckled Band*, p. 5)
2. “...the wild scream of a terrified women...” (Helen Stoner's sister from *The Speckled Band*)
3. “I show it to Elsie, and down she dropped in a dead faint. Since then, she has looked like a

woman in a dream, half dazed and with terror always lurking in her eyes”. (Elsie from *The Dancing Men*)

These characterisations reinforce men’s masculinity and women’s sentimentality, widening the gap between the two genders. It is vital to present these characterisations to EFL learners by instructing them to compare and contrast male and female characteristics as portrayed in the story.

The society in which the SH stories occurred could be a means for EFL learners to learn about the gender roles that existed in British society. Gender stereotypes appear to be hidden in Victorian British society, and Conan Doyle did not intend to offend his readers in any way. However, the stereotyping of women is depicted in the stories through the characterisations of female protagonists. The leading characters are one male detective and one male medical doctor, symbolising men’s rationality, whereas women are absent from the leading roles. Men such as Holmes are portrayed as rational thinkers who search for scientific truth and evidence. By contrast, none of the female characters are depicted as having any type of profession. I perceive this limitation as an opportunity to invite students to imagine how a female detective, such as Breeda Leign Johnson in the TV series *The Closer* (Duff, Robin & Shephard, 2005), would investigate such a crime using her female traits.

Conan Doyle also conveyed the message to his readers that men appear to be biologically superior to women. SH hypothesises that a man with a large head is intelligent, as is observed when Watson asks Holmes the following question:

“How did you deduce that this man was intellectual?It is a question of cubic capacity,” said he; “a man with so large a brain must have something in it”. (*The Blue Carbuncle*) (Doyle, 2005, p. 45)

Holmes’ remark infers that intelligence is associated with a person’s cubic capacity. Although such reasoning would be considered *unscientific* today, it may also imply gender stereotypes resulting from a lack of awareness of the biological differences between men and women. If this biological assumption were true, then women’s relatively smaller heads would be a signal of their lesser intelligence compared with men. It is necessary for teachers to dispute such false assumptions, as this stereotype based on apparent biological differences was indeed held true by society.

The Sinister Immigrants

Issues related to race and culture are an important aspect of an EFL classroom, and I have found that the racial and cultural prejudices portrayed in SH can offer great teaching points. It was through linguistic analysis that the students found that Conan Doyle's description of non-British people had been quite passive. For example, non-British people are portrayed as evil criminals with unpleasant personalities or appearances rather than clever, decent, or gentle individuals. Examples include Beppo in *The Six Napoleons*, who was an Italian criminal, and Abe Stanley from *The Dancing Men*, who was an American criminal. Additionally, in *The Musgrave Ritual*, Rachel Howells was the butler's fiancé and was described as "a very good girl, but of an excitable Welsh temperament" (Doyle, 2010, p. 79). As a Welsh woman, Rachel was portrayed as an "emotional" and "hysterical" woman (Doyle, 2010, p. 85), and Conan Doyle appears to illustrate that women's emotions influence their thoughts and behaviours. Furthermore, the descriptions of the non-white characters are even more unfriendly. When describing Pietro Venucci, who was found dead, Doyle described him as "an alert, sharp-featured simian man, with thick eyebrows and a very peculiar projection of the lower part of the face, like the *muzzle of a baboon*" (emphasis added, Doyle, 2005, p. 218). Such descriptions imply the superiority of white British people to other ethnicities and races, and we must therefore encourage students to examine these stereotypes.

As an oral or writing activity, I encouraged students to reflect on the following question: What are the stereotypes hidden in SH stories? The students were asked to use at least two examples from the stories to support their argument. Such stereotypes are hidden in the text and must be noted. In class, the immigration trend of the Victorian era in which a high percentage of immigrants were people of colour and the immigration issue in general were highlighted to examine how SH detective stories present the image of an immigrant. The students learned that the British society in the 19th century was a fairly homogenous society and that the British author unconsciously portrayed non-British individuals as negative, implying that the British are superior to people of other cultures.

Making Meaning of Social Justice

Social justice is a theme that can engage students to reflect through the process of critical reading (Banks, 2007). In the epilogue of an SH book, Jonathan Stroud stated that Conan Doyle created SH to reflect his

interest in science and his passion for social justice; nevertheless, the meaning of social justice is not adequately addressed or justified by Conan Doyle. For example, several criminals paid for their misconduct with their lives. Dr Roylott, who murdered his stepdaughter, was killed at the end of *The Speckled Band* by a snake that he had kept; such penance does not rely on the court system or on the police. A similar consequence occurs for the culprits Brunton in *The Musgrave Ritual* and Straker in *Silver Blaze*. Although a belief in justice is portrayed, it is not often exhibited by the characters themselves. The following example further suggests that the genius Holmes was not keen on justice.

The Blue Carbuncle concludes with Holmes finally finding proof to free the wrongly accused. However, the criminal is permitted to leave without any punishment, even after confessing his guilt, which would be highly unlikely in today's court of justice. Holmes' action suggests that he is more concerned with finding the truth than with upholding justice for the public good, as freeing a thief is not fair to the victim and creates a threat to the public. Holmes' actions to restore social justice can thus be viewed as unethical.

I generated a debate in class to discuss this issue, and the participating students' reflection logs showed a dichotomous response in interpreting social justice through the seven short stories. The following table (Table 1) indicates ideological dissonance among students regarding the issue of whether Holmes has promoted social justice in his role as a detective. A majority of students argued that Holmes promotes social justice by assisting the police to solve crimes; however, a few students who were sceptical of his actions stated that his interest in solving a mystery does not necessarily promote social justice.

Acts for social justice	Acts against social justice
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (SH) helps the most vulnerable, such as Helen Stoner (in <i>The Speckled Band</i>). (SH) helps to discover who is the murderer (in <i>The Speckled Band</i>) (SH) does not judge a person by his or her social status. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In <i>The Blue Carbuncle</i>, without any punishment, SH lets the criminal James Ryder leave, showing his preference for individual reasoning over promoting social justice for the public good. In <i>The Musgrave Ritual</i>, Conan Doyle ends the story without explaining how and why Rachel escaped from the mere without leaving her footprints. If Holmes had

figured out how Rachel escaped, it might have helped the police to trace her and place her in jail.

Table 1. Students' dichotomous view of Holmes' acts for and against social justice

Some readers believed that Holmes promoted social justice not only by helping to solve a mystery when the victim's family member approached him for help but also by always showing empathy towards them, whereas the sceptics in class drew their attention to the pattern in which SH stories often end with a long elaboration of how SH and Dr Watson had more interest in SH's successful deduction than describing how his actions facilitated social justice. It appears that questioning Holmes' actions with respect to social justice succeeded in training these students to be more critical, and their scepticism indicates critical thinking at a deeper level.

Conclusion

The approach to teaching critical reading using SH mystery stories involves situating this imaginary text within the Victorian context and exploring the hidden messages of the text. The Victorian context suggests a global society which modernity has challenged Victorian's cultural values. There is a need to examine their perception in relation to racial and gender equality as well as social justice. It is through the critical reading practice that students have found the less effort and attention in SH texts in terms of racial and gender equity. Furthermore, SH detective texts are a great resource for EFL learners to seek clues that help to solve the crime, and they are also a perfect medium for critical readers to reflect on the cause of a crime resulting from social change.

EFL readers from other cultural contexts reading Conan Doyle's work have generated various interpretations which help student reflect on their ideological assumption. Students practice their critical literacy by acknowledging the competing discourse between the dominant and dominated. The ultimate goal for EFL learners is to be able to examine biases and prejudices against others, which deepen their linguistic and cultural knowledge as critical readers. Students should be able to uncover the stereotypes and prejudices that may not have been fully acknowledged by the author, Conan Doyle. A critical approach to reading SH detective fiction enables imaginative, innovative, and educational readings of the

texts, and a critical reader can observe the interaction among culture, society, and analysis, thus enhancing their critical reading skills.

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The Use of Laptops for Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL): Merits, Challenges, and Current Practices

Reza Dashtestani

(rdashtestani@ut.ac.ir)

University of Tehran, Iran

Hossein Samoudi

Science and Research University, Iran

Abstract

Despite concerns over students' use of laptops in educational contexts, the use of laptops has been considered to facilitate the process of learning and teaching. The goal of the present study is to provide insights into English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of laptops for learning EFL in the EFL context of Iran. To achieve this aim, a mixed methods research design was employed. Questionnaires were administered to 164 EFL students. In addition, a total of 32 EFL teachers and 76 EFL students participated in the interviews. The findings suggested that the teachers and students held positive attitudes toward the use of laptops for EFL learning. The results indicated several considerable challenges and obstacles to the use of laptops for learning EFL. The obstacles comprised distraction, lack of teachers' computer assisted language learning (CALL) knowledge and computer literacy, students' non-academic use of laptops, high costs of laptops, lack of support and attention from teachers and authorities to include laptops in learning, and heaviness of laptop devices. It appears that students use laptops for non-academic purposes. The study proposes recommendations and strategies for the effective integration of technology in students' and teachers' educational practices.

Key words: English as a foreign language, CALL, Attitudes, Laptops, Technology

Introduction

In recent years, a plethora of educational institutions and universities have taken increasing interest in the integration of laptops in educational practices (Brown, 2008; Percival & Percival, 2009; Weaver & Nilson, 2005). As a consequence, the ubiquitous access to laptops is provided for university students and professors in a wide range of educational settings (Brown & Petitto, 2003; Fried, 2008; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2008). Providing students with laptops is one of the significant conditions of facilitating the use of laptops and technology in educational contexts (Percival & Percival, 2009). On the contrary, the use of laptops in education has created considerable challenges for both teachers and students. As a result, some experts of educational technology have expressed concerns over the use of laptops in educational contexts (Lindroth & Bergquist, 2010; McVay, Snyder, & Graetz, 2005; Young, 2006).

As for the merits of using laptops for educational purposes, Fried (2003) points out several studies which have identified the positive effect of using laptops for learning. Opportunities for ubiquitous learning and continuous access to computers (Brown & Petitto, 2003), improvement of student-teacher interaction and class participation (Stephens, 2005), enhancement of class and group work participation (Driver, 2003), and increase in students' motivation and overall achievement (Mackinnon & Vibert, 2002) are the examples of the advantages of the use of laptops for learning. The merits of the application of laptops in education have encouraged teachers and students to make use of laptops for their academic and educational purposes.

There is convincing evidence that the use of laptops for learning might create some concerns for teachers and educational authorities (Fisher, Keenan, & Butler, 2004; Fried, 2008). Lauricella and Kay (2010) argue that the most considerable drawback of the use of laptops for learning might be distraction from learning. Specifically, distraction would occur during attending to lectures (Hembrooke & Gay, 2003). Instructors can train and help students to use laptops systematically and purposefully. This measure might mitigate students' levels of distraction from learning.

Previous research

Research related to the use of laptops for learning has indicated mixed findings and results. For example, Fried (2008) found that using laptops in the classroom created challenges for both instructors and students. Specifically, students' use of laptop caused distraction, while provided the opportunity of multitasking for them. Students' laptop use reduced their attention and understanding of the content of lectures and decreased students' test scores. Percival & Percival (2009) undertook a cross-disciplinary study on the use of laptops for learning. They reported that the perceived usefulness of laptops would be different for students of different majors. They proposed that different models of laptop use be adopted for different majors. Hussein, Al-Muhtaseb, El-Sawy, Haggag, and Shahin (2007) conducted a four-year project on students' use of laptops at the college of engineering. They reported that the use of laptops facilitated and improved students' learning based on the reports of the faculty members and students. However, the findings suggested that frameworks and faculty development are required for the successful implementation of laptop-assisted learning. Similarly, DiGangi, Kilic, Yu, Jannasch-Pennel, Long, Kim, and Kang (2007) identified that the majority of students adopted positive attitudes toward the use of laptops for learning. However, only half of the students accepted to purchase laptops for their learning purposes.

Another study related to students' use of wireless laptops was conducted by Barak, Lipson, and Lerman (2006). They reported that the students held positive attitudes toward the use of wireless laptops. The use of wireless laptops improved students' participation and interaction in the classroom. The results of this study indicated that the use of wireless laptops might distract students if they do not use them for learning purposes. In a longitudinal study of a laptop program at a university, Finn and Inman (2004) found that the use of laptops developed a positive attitude in students and decreased the digital divide. Mitra and Steffensmeier (2000) carried out another longitudinal study on students' use of laptops and their attitudes toward them. Based on the results of the study, they argued that the laptop program improved students' attitudes toward computers and their role in learning. McVay, Snyder and Graetz (2005) suggested that students' attitudes and satisfaction may be improved if they are motivated to use laptops for their academic purposes.

As for the drawbacks of the use of laptops for learning, Hembrooke and Gay (2003) investigated the effect of laptop multi-tasking on students' learning. They reported that laptop multi-tasking had a negative effect on students' learning. Barkhuus (2005) assessed the impact of multi-tasking on students' learning during the use of laptops. The findings showed that students used their laptops to do activities unrelated to the learning and classroom tasks in the classroom. Therefore, multi-tasking was an impeding factor which influenced students' rate of learning in the classroom. However, Young (2006) posits that

the multi-tasking feature of using laptops would be beneficial to students' learning. Therefore, it is apparent that there is controversy regarding the issue of distraction caused by the laptop use for learning.

Accordingly, in EFL contexts, limited attention has been directed towards the issue of exploring the merits and drawbacks of using laptops for learning EFL. More specifically, limited research has been undertaken to investigate the use of laptops for learning EFL in the EFL context of Iran, even though a large number of students have become interested in the use of laptops for learning in this context. There are several obstacles to the use of technology and computers in the EFL context of Iran (Dashtestani, 2012). Therefore, the present study attempted to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers and students on the use of laptops in the Iranian EFL context. Considering the importance and popularity of using laptops for language learners, the findings of this study will have implications for the teaching and learning of EFL in Iran and other similar contexts. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers and EFL students towards the use of laptops for learning EFL?
2. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers and EFL students on the challenges to the use of laptops for learning EFL?
3. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers and EFL students on the strategies that can be taken to include laptops in EFL learning?
4. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers and EFL students on students' current use of laptops?

Methodology

Research Design

Since the main aim of this study is to examine participants' attitudes toward the use of laptops for learning English, two instruments were used to collect the relevant data. The methodological type of triangulation was conducted to ensure the validity of the findings. Both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) methods were included in the study. The purpose of conducting triangulation was to provide confirmatory and supplementary data. Participant triangulation was implemented as well. Therefore, the inclusion of two sample groups (EFL teachers and students) provided the opportunity for a more in-depth analysis of the perceptions of the participants.

Instrumentation

The first instrument of this study included a Likert format questionnaire which was administered to the students. The questionnaire was developed based on reviewing research related to the use of laptops in

educational and EFL contexts (e.g., Brown & Petitto, 2003; Digangi et al., 2007; Fisher, Keenan, & Butler, 2004; Fried, 2008; Mitra & Steffensmeier, 2000; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Percival & Percival, 2009; Tapscott, 2008). To establish the content validity of the survey, it was sent to 10 EFL teachers and seven senior professors of Applied Linguistics and Educational Technology. Several revisions were made on the items of the questionnaire based on the suggestions of the jury of experts. After ensuring face and content validity of the questionnaire (Black & Champion, 1976), it was finalized. As for the reliability of the questionnaire, a satisfactory range of Cronbach Alpha (0.83-0.91) was achieved and the reliability of the survey was established. As for the ethical considerations of the administration of the questionnaire, the purposes of the study were explained to the participants and they participated in the survey voluntarily.

The paper-based Persian version of the questionnaire was administered to the students since their native language is Persian. The first section of the questionnaire was designed to explore the attitudes of EFL teachers and students toward the use of laptops for learning EFL. A total of eight four-point Likert items were included in this section of the questionnaire. The second section sought the perceptions of EFL teachers and students on the challenges to the use of laptops for learning EFL and comprised eight four-point Likert items. The next section was an investigation into the perceptions of EFL teachers and students on the strategies that should be taken to include laptops in EFL learning. This section consisted of four four-point Likert items. The last section assessed the perceptions of EFL teachers and students on students' current use of laptops. Three items were included in the last section of the questionnaire.

Following the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both EFL teachers and students. The questions of the interview were developed based on the literature relevant to the use of laptops in educational contexts. The same jury of experts, including 10 EFL teachers and seven senior professors of Applied Linguistics and Educational Technology, validated the content of the questions of the interviews. To triangulate the results obtained from the interviews, the questions for students and teachers were focused on the same issues. The questions of the interview were open-ended. Specifically, the question of the interviews included:

1. What do you think about the benefits of using laptops for learning EFL in the classroom?
2. What do you think about the limitations of using laptops for learning EFL in the classroom?
3. What do you think about the strategies that should be taken to include laptops in EFL learning?
4. What is EFL students' current use of laptops for learning EFL?

Data analysis

The results of the questionnaire were analyzed and shown based on the percentages, means, and standard deviations. The SPSS statistical software package version 16 was employed for the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire. Moreover, for analyzing the results of the interviews, content analysis was performed. To conduct interrater reliability, two raters read the interview data and reported the themes. The common themes which were reported by both raters were selected and shown. Excerpts from actual statements of the participants were included accordingly.

Participants

The EFL teachers (n=32) who participated in the interviews were selected from eight language teaching institutions in Tehran and Alborz, Iran. The teachers had an average of 7.8 years of EFL teaching experience. The teachers have used computers for an average of 10.3 and the Internet for 8.8 years. The teachers also rated their English proficiency as upper-intermediate or advanced. All the teachers had at least one year of teaching experience and had attended teacher training/education programs before their employment. All the teachers had been using laptops for an average of 3.7 years. The teachers were MA/MS holders (n=8) and BA/BS holders (n=24). The students who participated in the questionnaire phase of the study were 164 EFL learners who were learning English at eight language teaching institutions. The students' age ranged 19-27. The students were at an upper-intermediate or advanced level of proficiency according to their educational profiles available at their institution. The students included 83 males and 81 females. All the students had been using laptops more than 2 years. In addition, 76 students who had also participated in the questionnaire phase of the study took part in the interview phase of the study.

Findings

Students' and teachers' attitudes toward the use of laptops for EFL

Survey

Table 1 reveals that the students adopted positive attitudes toward the use of laptops for learning EFL. Specifically, the EFL students perceived the use of laptops beneficial in terms of ease of use, attractiveness, easy access to the Internet, promotion of students' computer literacy, time-efficiency, ubiquitous use of multimedia, and lightness.

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
Laptops are light to be carried	7.9	16.5	48.8	26.8	2.94	0.87
It is easy to use laptops	4.9	11.6	19.5	64	3.41	0.89
Using laptops for learning English is interesting	1.8	13.4	27.4	57.3	3.40	0.76
Laptops provide easy access to the Internet	1.2	6.1	50.6	42.1	3.34	0.63
Videos and audios can be accessed everywhere using laptops	6.1	14	58.5	21.3	2.95	0.77
Using laptops helps me promote my computer literacy	5.4	3	42.1	49.4	3.37	0.71
Using laptops promotes my autonomy in learning EFL	9.8	14.6	61.6	14	2.79	0.80
Using laptops saves my time in learning EFL	8.5	12.2	31.7	47.6	3.17	0.96

Table 1. Students' attitudes toward the use of laptops

Students' interviews

The interview results showed that the majority of students believed that the use of laptops in EFL courses would be beneficial and facilitate the process of learning. The students reported that they enjoy using laptops and including them in EFL instruction.

I cannot do without my laptop even for one day. I spend most of my time using my laptop. Using laptops is really enjoyable and interesting. I also use my laptop for learning English. I think it improves my English learning (Student 3).

It's so nice to learn English using laptops. It's all fun. You really can understand your progress when you use your laptop for learning English (Student 19).

The students further stated that the use of laptops for language learning helps them have access to a wide range of information sources. They asserted that this property of using laptops improves EFL learning for them.

In fact, when I use my laptop, I can save and access a lot of information easily. Information in any format and type can be saved for future access. I myself have a large quantity of information on my laptop and I use them frequently (Student 44).

Most students mentioned that using laptops facilitate their access to the Internet. They were of the opinion that the use of laptops enables them to connect to wireless Internet services in different places.

I think the best benefit of laptops is that you can get connected everywhere. This is very important to me. Of course, for the Internet connection, mobile phones are appropriate too but you can do more things with your laptop when you are connected (Student 38).

Teachers' interviews

The majority of EFL teachers held positive attitudes toward students' use of laptops for EFL learning. However, most of them did not feel positive about students' use of laptops in the EFL class. The EFL teachers' believed that using laptops can facilitate the learning of EFL provided that the students make use of laptops appropriately and for their academic purposes. The teachers stated that the use of laptops in the EFL class might cause distraction for students.

The idea of using laptops for learning EFL is a good one. I see that my students are really enthusiastic about the use of laptops. Most of them have laptops and like to use them everywhere (Teacher 9).

Laptops?! Yeah! They can be useful if students use them in a good way. I don't think the use of laptops in the classroom may be a good strategy. It might reduce teachers' supervision on students (Teacher 17).

The teachers reported that the use of laptops helps students have easy and ubiquitous access to the Internet. Furthermore, the teachers mentioned that laptops are portable and this property is a very useful one regarding students' learning.

Laptops are very good learning devices due to their portability. Students can carry a large amount of EFL materials in their laptops and use them in places where there is no access to language learning opportunities (Teacher 11).

I believe the Internet can offer a lot of opportunities for EFL students. Laptops can facilitate EFL students' access to the Internet. In my opinion, providing access to the Internet is a very useful advantage of laptops for learning EFL (Teacher 2).

Limitation of the use of laptops for learning EFL

Survey

Based on the values shown in Table 2, the students pointed out some limitations of using laptops for learning EFL, including high prices of laptops, heaviness, eye strain, and need of power.

		Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
Laptops are costly to be purchased	3	12.8	27.4	56.7	3.38	0.83	
Using laptops cause distraction from learning	20.7	34.1	37.8	7.3	2.32	0.88	
The screen size of laptops is small	45.7	26.2	20.1	7.9	1.9	0.99	
Learning English via laptops is not interesting	29.8	44.5	14.6	11	2.07	0.94	
Laptops are heavy to be carried	9.8	16.4	36.9	37.2	3.01	0.97	
Using laptops causes eye strain for me	21.3	26.2	23.8	28.7	2.61	1.12	
Laptops are slower than personal computers	24.4	41.5	22.6	11.6	2.23	0.95	
Laptops need power continuously	7.3	23.2	29.9	39.6	3.03	0.96	

Table 2. Students' perceptions of limitations of laptops

Students' interviews

In the interviews, the students stated that high-quality laptops are very expensive to be bought. They complained that most cost-effective laptops are slow and low-quality.

Nowadays laptops are very expensive to be bought. We are students and we lack money because most of us do not have jobs. My laptop is a bit old and slow but I can't upgrade it or buy a new one because I can't afford it. I believe this situation is the same for many students (Student 62).

The other important obstacle was that students were not allowed to use their laptops in the classroom by their teachers.

I just wish that our teachers allowed us to use our laptops in the EFL classroom. When our teachers don't trust laptops, how can one expect students to use them?(Student 4).

Some students believed that laptops were very heavy and difficult to be carried.

One thing that really irritates me is that most laptops are heavy and hard to be carried. I really prefer not carrying them with me (Student 10).

Teachers' interviews

Most EFL teachers asserted that one major disadvantage of using laptops in EFL learning is that it may cause students' distraction in the classroom.

Using laptops at home may be useful for EFL learning provided that students use them for their academic and EFL purposes. When it comes to students' use of laptops in the classroom, I think using laptops is distractive for students (Teacher 32).

The idea of using laptops to learn EFL is a good one, but the question is how teachers can check out every student's use of laptop in the classroom. Can we be sure that each student is doing the task and not some other irrelevant activities?(Teacher 23).

Some teachers stated that all students or teachers may not know how to make use of laptops for their learning and teaching purposes efficiently. They asserted that this is an important obstacle to the use of laptops for learning EFL.

Apparently, there is no guarantee that students and even some teachers can work with laptops for learning and teaching EFL. We should make a distinction between using laptops for EFL purposes and non-EFL purposes (Teacher 7).

Strategies to include laptops in EFL instruction

As Table 3 reveals, the students agreed on the adoption of several strategies to include laptops in EFL learning. The students expected their teachers to encourage them to use their laptops for EFL learning, guide students on buying suitable laptops for EFL learning, and recommend EFL software tools to them. The students also expected educational authorities to provide them with training on the effective use of laptops for EFL learning.

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	SD
EFL teachers should encourage students to use their laptops for EFL learning	5.5	10.4	36	48.2	3.26	0.87
EFL teachers should guide students on buying suitable	9.1	14	45.7	31.1	2.99	0.90

laptops for EFL learning

EFL teachers should recommend EFL software tools to their students	5.4	4.9	28.7	61	3.46	0.81
EFL authorities should provide students with training on effective use of laptops for EFL learning	2.4	7.3	34.1	56.1	3.49	0.72

Table 3. Strategies to include laptops in EFL instruction*Students' interviews*

The majority of students stated that their teachers should help them to use laptops appropriately for their EFL learning and choose the right EFL software programs and applications.

I am not sure what can be done, but at least our teachers can help us find and use the right types of computer applications required for language learning. Honestly, whenever I ask my teachers about how I can choose the most effective software for my learning, most teachers don't give me enough information and some of them ignore answering my questions. Worse than this, there are some teachers who don't know anything about new language learning software programs and their use (Student 36).

Some students pointed out that they needed to improve their computer literacy in order to make use of laptops effectively.

I think one important measure to be taken is to improve our (students') computer literacy so that we become able to use laptops effectively. There are a lot of computer applications and software tools about which I don't have enough information (Student 71).

Teachers' interviews

Most teachers reported that the teachers need to have more information and knowledge about CALL and the use of laptops in language teaching.

Well, as you know, teachers should be informed of the benefits and affordances of laptops for learning English. There is a need for having more information about the use of technology in language teaching and learning (Teacher 15).

The majority of teachers believed that for encouraging students to use laptops for EFL learning out of the classroom, there should be sufficient awareness-raising activities by teachers and authorities. They asserted that the use of technology, including laptops, should be integrated in the EFL syllabus of their teaching. They were of the opinion that the decision of including laptops in students' in-class learning program is one that should be confirmed and supported by EFL supervisors and authorities in the first place.

Frankly speaking, I think it's very hard to convince our supervisors to allow us support students' use of laptops in the classroom. I myself feel somehow positive about the appropriate use of laptops in the classroom. As I told you, it's very hard to convince other teachers or supervisors to do such work (Teacher 25).

One way to persuade students to use their laptops for EFL learning purposes is to make them conscious about the benefits that laptops might have for their EFL learning progress. They should be helped to understand how to make use of laptops efficiently and effectively (Teacher 19).

Students' current use of laptops

The students reported that they rarely use laptops for their EFL and academic purposes, while they frequently use their laptops for non-academic purposes (Table 4).

	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Frequently %	Always %	Mean	SD
Students' use of laptops for academic purposes	32.3	43.3	14.6	8.5	1.2	2.04	0.96
Students' use of laptops for non-academic purposes	0	5.5	41.5	36	17.13	63	0.73
Students' use of laptops for EFL learning purposes	26.8	39.6	27.4	5.5	0.6	2.14	0.92

Table 4. EFL students' current use of laptops

Students' interviews

In the interviews, the students mentioned that they mainly used their laptops for non-academic purposes, such as downloading music, using search engines, checking social networks, etc. A few students reported that they rarely used their laptops for learning English or academic purposes.

I use the laptop for doing a lot of things. As I use my laptop in my free time, I try to do things that entertain me such as listening to music or watching picture or movies (Student 4).

Discussion

This study was an attempt to analyze EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on students' use of laptops for learning EFL. The analysis of the data showed that both EFL teachers and students adopted positive attitudes toward the use of laptops for learning English. Both EFL teachers and students perceived that the use of laptops would offer several benefits and affordances for students' EFL learning. Ubiquitous access to the Internet is a considerable merit of the use of laptops for learning EFL which was mentioned by EFL teachers and students. Having access to different information sources, ease of use, lightness, ubiquitous access to multimedia properties, improvement of students' computer literacy, and time-efficiency were the other considerable disadvantages of using laptops for learning EFL from the perspectives of EFL students. The findings related to the merits of using laptops for learning EFL accord with the results of previous research in other educational contexts (Brown & Petitto, 2003; Driver, 2003; Fried, 2008; Mackinnon & Vibert, 2002; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2008). It is essential that the EFL authorities and providers in Iran take specific heed to students' technological needs and strive to plan their courses based on what students and teachers perceive as facilitative in students' learning processes. Additionally, as it was pointed out by the students of this study, EFL teachers and authorities can foster students' computer literacy through encouraging them to use laptops for their learning (Schaumburg, 2001).

Even though both teachers and students held positive attitudes toward using laptops for language learning, they reported several obstacles and impediments which would affect their positive attitudes and discourage them from using laptops for learning EFL. Most of these obstacles and limitation can be removed or at least alleviated if due measures are taken by EFL authorities and providers. Distraction from learning was considered to be an important drawback of using laptops for learning EFL. This finding is commensurate with the previous research studies which have referred to the distractive nature of using laptops for learning EFL (e.g., Fried, 2008; Hembrooke & Gay, 2003; Lauricella & Kay, 2010). Obviously, for successful and effective implementation of CALL in language teaching, both positive and negative aspects of using specific types of technologies should be considered. EFL teachers are able to help students not be distracted by the use of laptops and direct their attention to the tasks and learning activities. Without teachers' involvement in preparing students for the use of laptops, students might be distracted from and uninterested in using laptops for learning EFL. Furthermore, EFL supervisors are recommended to plan workshops and training sessions for teachers in which they become able to overcome the obstacles to the use of laptops in language teaching contexts.

In addition, high costs of purchasing suitable and efficient laptops for students might make them disappointed to use laptops. If it is feasible, EFL providers can provide laptops for students' in-class use. Some students also complained about their laptop heaviness. EFL teachers and supervisors can guide

students to purchase laptops which are suitable for their learning purposes. Purchasing more small-sized laptops would increase student satisfaction and motivation. EFL students should not be deprived of using laptops for their learning due to their limitations and obstacles. Eye strain and need of power were the other significant limitations of using laptops for learning EFL. More specifically, Dashtestani (2012) asserts that in the Iranian EFL contexts, a myriad of barriers would impede the process of including technology in language teaching. To remove these obstacles and limitations, all EFL stakeholders should make attempts to normalize the use of technology in the Iranian EFL context. Apparently, students or teachers alone should not be blamed for lack of technology use in the EFL context of Iran.

The other significant finding was related to the measures and strategies that should be taken and considered to enable teachers and learners to use laptops for learning EFL. As the teachers suggested, including laptops in EFL learning and classrooms is not an issue that teachers can decide without the confirmation and support of EFL authorities. The rigid and traditional syllabus of EFL in many contexts might restrict language teachers to integrating laptops and technology in language teaching. Teachers' lack of knowledge of CALL and the use of laptops in language teaching contexts might have an adverse impact on their attitude toward including laptops in students' in-class learning activities. Some training and awareness-raising activities regarding students' ability to use laptops can increase students' motivation of and interest in the use of laptops. Therefore, the incorporation of computer literacy training courses for EFL students can be beneficial to students' use of laptops for their learning.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of Iranian EFL students do not use laptops for their EFL and academic purposes. The non-academic use of laptops and technologies can be linked to several factors, including lack of computer literacy, lack of awareness of the benefits of laptops and technology for learning EFL, lack of motivation, lack of trust in the use of technology, etc. It is recommended that teachers and supervisors identify the reasons for which students are discouraged from using laptops and technology for their academic purposes.

Should the use of laptops be banned or encouraged? The response would depend on one's attitude toward technology and its inclusion in education. When one considers the benefits of using laptops for learning, it is not a wise decision to discourage students from their use. As a consequence, the most practical recommendation that can be made is that laptops should be included in language teaching and learning, while several preliminary measures should be taken to pave the way for their inclusion in language teaching and learning contexts. Thus, further empirical research should be carried out to examine the nature of impeding factors which discourage EFL stakeholders from using laptops in learning

EFL. Only when these obstacles are identified and evaluated, the EFL authorities and teachers will become able to propose appropriate strategies to facilitate the integration of laptops in language teaching curricula. At present, the issue of using laptops for learning EFL seems to be an uninvestigated area of research in the EFL contexts.

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What are challenges that Vietnamese students encounter when representing themselves through speaking English?

Pham Thi Thanh Xuan

(thanhxuan.dhnn@gmail.com)

Hanoi University of Agriculture, Vietnam

Abstract

Not many studies have been concerned with the voices of Vietnamese learners of English regarding their self-representation through speaking English inside and outside class context. Drawing on Miller's (2003) theory of how language learners move towards self-representation through using English, this case study examined challenges that Vietnamese students whose English is not a major of study at a university encounter during the process of representing who they really are through speaking English. The findings demonstrated that communicative competence was one of the most challengeable factors preventing the participants from raising their voice. Besides, accessing communicative events, taking advantages of cultural capital as well as legitimizing themselves as speakers of English are not always easy for the participants to achieve and exploit maximally, all contributing to their silence both inside and outside classroom communication contexts. The study, therefore, throws some new light on how to assist Vietnamese students to represent themselves successfully through speaking English. Teachers and language educators need to provide available communicative events and situations for Vietnamese students to access as well as accomplish their legitimacy as speakers of English.

Key words: Speaking English, Self-representation, Communicative competence and events, Cultural capital, Legitimacy

Teaching English Speaking in Vietnam

Thanks to 1980 Doi Moi – a renovation policy, Vietnam began to open up its economy and social interaction to the world. By the 1990s, there was a growing realization that competence in foreign languages was a key factor in facilitating the Doi Moi policy approach and in enhancing Vietnam's

competitive position in the international economic and political arena. In particular, the teaching and learning English, increasingly seen as a world language (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), became more popular and widespread in Vietnam. Over time, English language teaching and learning has gained its status, has had much impact on language planning and policy, and has spread in terms of use. Specifically, one area of English teaching given much concern from not only language educators, policy makers but also teachers and students is speaking English (Dang et. al, 2013).

Given the context of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam, many studies have concerned with challenges of teaching and learning English speaking from the perspective of teachers and language educators. First, both Vietnamese and Western researchers critically point out the unimaginable classroom size in which there are over fifty or even sixty students per class (Phan, 2004; Pham, 2005; Hoang, 2005; Dang et al., 2013, Lewis & McCook, 2003). Hoang (2005) even persuasively explained that such class size would put too much pressure on not only teachers but also students to perform interactive activities effectively, resulting in poor quality of both learning and teaching speaking English. He further indicated that several other factors attached to class size are poor teaching and learning facilities as well as uncooperative working environment like too much noise without having ventilation. Similarly, Lewis and McCook (2003), in a study associated with how Vietnamese teachers of English perceived communicative language teaching approach, pictured a general description of university English classroom in Vietnam in which the number of students in a class usually exceeded thirty, which could be challengeable for teachers to interact with each individual student.

Second, many Vietnamese teachers are conflicted, feeling that their circumstances prevent them to employ communicative practices. As Pham (2005, p. 337) showed that they (Vietnamese teachers) have to prepare students for grammar-based examinations and have to finish certain content in the textbook in a certain amount of time. They may have classes of 60 students, many of whom are more concerned about the immediate goal – to pass the exam, to get a degree, rather than the long-term goal – to develop communicative competence.

In other words, it is what Hoang (2005, p. 16) called a “mismatch” between testing system and pedagogical approach of English teaching in Vietnam. Whereas teaching follows communicative approach which is positively perceived by many teachers, testing seems to be more grammar-oriented. Due to the educational policy and testing system of the government, Vietnamese teachers, particularly those who go overseas for further study, are frequently in dilemma between what they want to teach and what they have to teach. According to Phan (2004), in theory it is expected that a perfect teacher must be

the one who knows how to combine global and local practices, to perform his or her work in a way that can easily satisfy his or her students' global and local needs. In practice, however, this appears to be more challengeable. Observing teacher in action, researchers like Sakui (2004) and Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) show that while teachers may easily espouse principles such as using appropriate pedagogy or combining grammar and promoting communicative activities, many fail to realize and apply these principles in practice.

Third, Vietnamese learners of English are unwilling to communicate in speaking class, contributing to less-than-satisfactory learning environment in English class (Pham, 2004; Pham, 2005, Truong & Neomy, 2007). Several researchers have analyzed such cultural aspects constraining students' willingness to speak out (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Novera, 2004; Swoden, 2005; Wen & Clément, 2003). According to Wen and Clément (2003), one factor deeply rooted in Asian culture which is "another-directed self", meaning that Asian people, particularly those who are under the influence of Confucianism, can never separate themselves from obligating others and keep face. Therefore, what students stay silent in class is also a cultural effect working as a typical strategy for them to protect their face in public. However, other researchers have opposed this essential viewpoint, arguing that students' silence is more related to their communicative competence rather than Confucian cultural effects (Phan, 2004; Pham, 2005; Pham 2012; Viete and Peeler, 2007).

A common thread running through above - mentioned studies is the voice of Vietnamese teachers of English regarding challenges of teaching and learning English speaking in class. Little attention, however, has been given to the voice of Vietnamese students to discover how difficult they practice speaking English inside and outside class. The present study responds to the absence of empirical work on this issue.

Theoretical Framework: Speaking English and Self-representation

One of the most powerful theories illuminates fundamental components contributing to the achievement of speaking English and self-representation of language learners is proposed by Miller (2003). According to Miller, language, particularly spoken language is "a form of self-representation, which implicates social identities, the values which attach to particular written and spoken texts, and therefore the link between discourse and power in any social context" (p. 3). Put differently, speaking a language works as a bridge to connect the process of self-representation with social identity construction. During the process

of language learners' self-representation, the role of social interactions and contexts is crucial (Norton & Toohey, 2001; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). If language learners are provided with diverse opportunities for learning and practicing English inside and especially outside formal classroom contexts, the processes of English language acquisition and self-representation will be more successful. On the other hand, the more isolated language learners are from the dominant language group, the more difficult the processes must be. Therefore, the relationship between speaking English and English language learners' self-representation is mutual and contributive. If speaking English is effectively achieved, the process of representing oneself is much easier and satisfactory.

Miller figures out a diagram to embrace prominent conditions contributing the successful self-representation of language learners through speaking English based on her study on immigrant ESL learners at high schools in Australia.

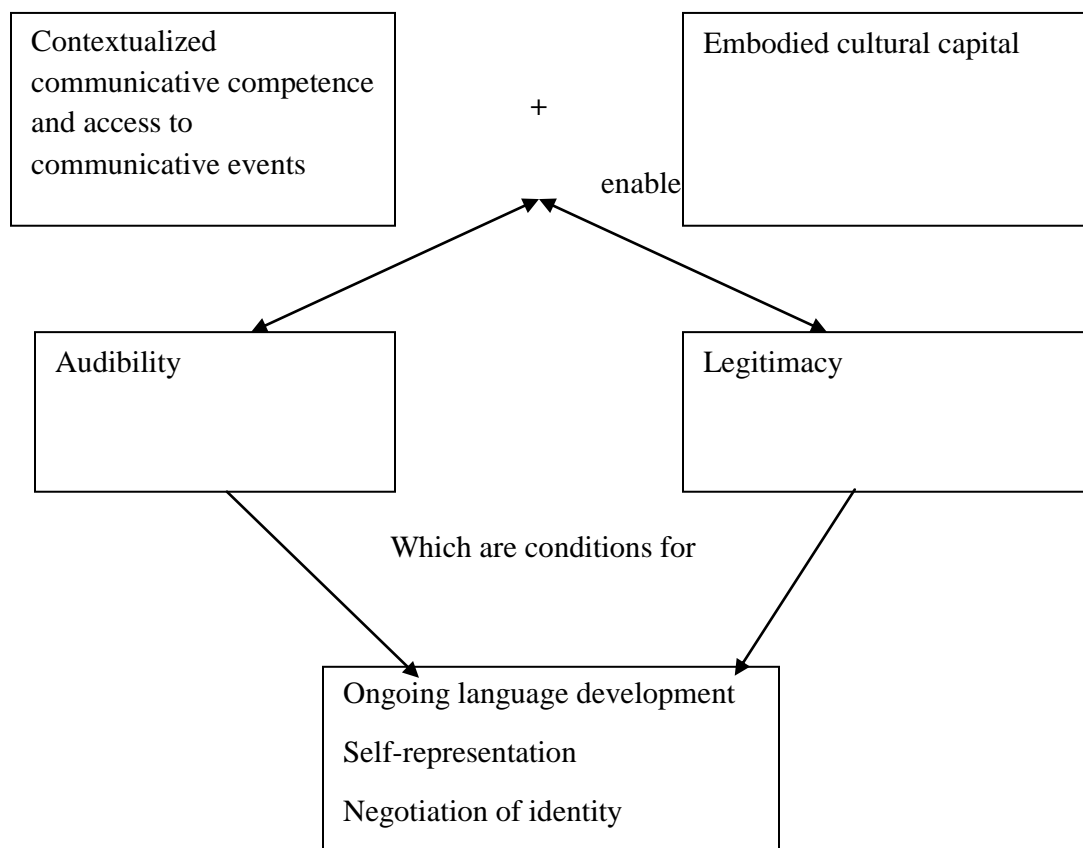


Figure 2.1 The move towards self-representation (Miller, 20003, p. 176)

The first level of the diagram shows that the move towards self-representation begins with the acquisition of communicative competence in speaking which includes the combination of “linguistic, phonological, discourse and sociocultural knowledge” (p.173). In this process, if language learners are able to access communicative events through the target language in social interaction, the improvement of their communicative competence can be achieved.

Communicative events are viewed as essential factors for learners to practice, learn and acquire the new language, and are produced by the “community of practice” and “human agency” (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p.311 - 317). “Community of practice” refers to “a set of relations among people, activity and the world” as a way to theorize and investigate social contexts (Laver & Wenger, 1991, p. 98, as cited in Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 311). “Human agency” in language learning indicates how learners make use of intellectual and social resources to gain access to peers for language learning and social affiliation (Norton & Toohey, 2000, p. 317). In other words, it is similar to what Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of cultural capital, referring to “knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications” (p. 14).

The second level of the diagram depicts how two elements, ‘audibility’ and ‘legitimacy’, are concerned with the hearer and interaction between the speaker and the hearer. If the speaker gains both communicative competence and is able to access communicative events, he or she makes himself or herself understood and audible to the hearer, resulting in his or her legitimate position as a speaker of English. However, Miller notes that mainstream hearers may deny and devalue the competence of language learners, along with their embodied cultural capital due to power imposition. Mainstream hearers may position themselves in more powerful subject positions compared to language learners as speakers, thinking that they own the language and all values attached to it.

Finally, the diagram defines ‘audibility’ and ‘legitimacy’ as the conditions to uncover the possibility of language development, self-representation, and identity negotiation. Linked to this notion is agency, which indicates “the self as agent who is able to speak and act in the interest of self” (Miller, 2003, p. 175). Through the diagram, it can be seen that if language learners are enabled to acquire communicative competence, gain access to community of English practice, make use of cultural capital and legitimize themselves as speakers of English, they can represent themselves as well as speak English

successfully. In contrast, if they cannot gain the above conditions, their process of moving towards self-representation through speaking English is incomplete.

Based on this issue, education language researchers have pictured a wide range of images associated with the self-representation of English language learners, particularly Asian EFL learners in various contexts. They are viewed as the uncreative, passive and inferior Other – the non-native speaker (NNS) as compared to the creative, active and superior Self – the native speaker (NS) (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Novera, 2004; Swoden, 2005; Wen & Clément, 2003). However, many scholars have critiqued the Self - the NS and the Other – the NNS dichotomy for “being more of a social construction rather than a linguistically based parameter” (Higgins, 2003; p. 616) and have clearly stated that speaker’s viewpoint of their own linguistic identities should be more important than what they are labeled by others (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Holliday, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003; Miller, 2007; Pennycook, 1998; Phan, 2004; Phan, 2008; Pham, 2012). Therefore, Asian EFL learners in these studies are appreciated as the legitimate speaker who owns English as equally as the NS.

It is important to tell more stories of Vietnamese learners of English concerning their difficulties and self-representation in speaking English. Specifically, this study investigates how a group of Vietnamese students of English whose major is not English in a university encounter certain difficulties in speaking English and representing themselves as who they really are. The designed research question is as follows:

Which factors prevent the participants in this study from speaking English in formal and informal interaction context?

The study

The study adopted a qualitative case study approach, where the case was the challenges that the participants encountered during the process of moving towards self-representation through speaking English. The study was conducted with 30 students (23 female and 7 male) studying English in the advanced bio-technology class at a non-English major university in Vietnam. At the time of the research, they were learning only English in the first year of the course and would transfer to their major from the second year, which would be delivered by English. In this way, English works as a linguistic tool for

academic purpose. The participants were required to produce their reflective writing based on suggested questions (refer to Appendix 1 for questions used for data collection). I chose reflective writing as a tool for data collection because it is described as a means by which students are enabled to connect the knowledge, concepts and ideas that they acquire from the course to their past and present experiences, thoughts, work, and self-reflections or to other books, articles and courses (Hettich, 1976, as cited in Moon, 2006). In addition, most of the participants are able to freely express what they want to say in their writing due to their constraining of communication capability in English. For this reason, I allowed the participants to write in English or in their mother tongue – Vietnamese as long as they found whichever way was more convenient and effective.

I chose thematic analysis as the main tool to analyze the data. I adopted five main phases in thematic analysis that Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest. First, the researcher needs to familiarize himself or herself with the data. To follow this, after translating and editing students' writing, I read and re-read the reflective writing and then noted down initial ideas. Second, I started to generate initial coding. Specifically, I coded the interesting features in the reflective writing to figure out common codes and at the same time collected more data relevant to each code. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.88) also note that the second phase, coding, to some extent, depends on whether the themes are more “data-driven” or “theory-driven”. If it is the former, the themes will completely depend on the data, but in the latter, the researcher might approach the data with some specific questions in mind that he/she wishes to code around. For my research, I decided to code the data based on my research questions, implying that this analysis is “theory-driven”. This allowed me to critically evaluate the connection and relevance between what I presented in the literature review and the data.

Third, after coding, I searched for emerging themes. Put differently, I collected codes into potential themes and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme. Next, I reviewed all these potential themes by checking if the themes worked in relation to coded extracts and the entire data that I had selected. Finally, I refined the specifics of each potential theme and also identified the overall story the analysis tells and generated clear definitions and names for each theme. This resulted in three main themes guided by the research questions:

Findings

Communicative Competence: It Is the Biggest Challenge

All the students in the group acknowledged that communicative competence was their first and biggest weakness as communication was processed. Many of them were concerned about their insufficient range of vocabulary to perform communicative tasks inside and outside class.

I am shy and I couldn't dare to practice English in class. I want to change myself so many times but sometimes I just can't open my mouth. I am afraid that nobody would understand what I say and also I lack a lot of vocabulary and I couldn't find the right words to express myself properly and persuasively. (Student30 [S30])

I am not able to make my presentation good enough because I don't have enough vocabulary to answer questions from my friends and teachers through questions and answers section after a presentation. That why sometimes I slip my tongue and explain in Vietnamese. (S19)

Besides vocabulary, the participants also pictured how the incompetence of other skills like pronunciation and listening constrained them to speak out in some situations. Some of them seemed to highly appreciate the role of native pronunciation as the standard measurement for language ability. Therefore, as they were not able to achieve desired native-like pronunciation, they were under confident to raise their voice.

I am ok with grammar of English, I think. But the problem happens as it comes with speaking and listening. I am attending a speaking class with a German English teacher. One day during break time, he told me something and I couldn't catch what it was. So I just nodded and laughed after what he told me but in reality I didn't understand at all. It's so embarrassing. (S21)

My pronunciation is really problematic. I struggle a lot with some difficult sounds and my accent is simultaneously too Vietnamese. I come from the central region so as other people in here; I have a very strong accent, which has been embedded in my English as well. Sometimes I talk and my classmates and teachers just ask like: sorry, say it again please. It seems I am not understood. (S11)

Though communicative competence was challengeable, not all students surrendered to raise their voice, making themselves as communicable speaker of English with their own effort. Their range of vocabulary might be limited but they used several strategies to compensate for this. Some of students managed to

“move around class” every session or participate in English clubs of their faculties so that they could make great improvement on speaking English.

Despite of my limited vocabulary and pronunciation ability, I always make all my attempts to move around class rather than just sit silently and don't communicate with friends at all. (S15)

I use other channels to improve my English speaking like joining English clubs at my faculty, which is fun and great. (S3)

Others, surprisingly, sought any opportunities to talk to foreigners by visiting the center of the city or historical monuments which are favorable destinations for Western tourists.

I know that I am not good at speaking and expressing myself, I still visit Van Mieu University (the first university of Vietnam established in 13 century) because there are a lot of foreigners in here. So I try to make conversation with them whenever I can. (S5)

It seems that inadequate communicative competence prevented many students to attend speaking class actively and raise their own voice. Though regarded communicative competence as the biggest challenge, not all of them were dependent on this factor. Interestingly, they made advantages of other strategies like moving around, trying to talk to foreigners as much as possible to improve communicative competence.

Gaining Access to Communicative Events: It Is not Always Easy

20 out of 30 students in the group all agreed that it was not always easy for them to access community of English practice. This happened not only in class but also outside classroom environment where they were expected to further practice speaking English. In class, they believed that they lacked a real environment to use English.

It is really weird for me sometimes to speak English in class through such activities like pair work, group work, role-play or simulation. The teacher is Vietnamese and the classmates are Vietnamese. I wonder whether we are able to apply these activities in real life communication later on. (S17)

The teacher asks us to follow the rule “only English in class” but it seems too hard for me. I am Vietnamese and I feel really surprised as I have to talk to my friend in English. For me, it is not real. (S13)

According to these participants, English speaking environment should be between themselves and foreigners like American or British. What the teacher was trying to instruct them in class was merely compulsory tasks that they had to perform.

In contrast, other participants were deeply interested in communicative tasks in class, allowing them to access communities of English practice. However, what they were not satisfied was inappropriate English environment in class where many of their friends were unwilling to communicate. They might “move around” to exchange talk with more partners, but their friends seemed not to cooperate persuasively. Some of their partners were “*demotivated to talk in English*” or “*chat together*” and paid no attention to these active language learners.

I try to team up with different classmates in each session. However, the result is not necessarily satisfactory. I might be very contributive and participative but some of them do not want to share ideas in English. They are demotivated to talk in English because they are afraid that other students in the group will not understand them. (S15)

In some situations, I talk and my group members do not respect me. They chat and chat together and do not pay attention to my talk. (S19)

Besides inappropriateness of English speaking environments in class, the participants complained how such factors of outside classroom environment had unsupportive influence on them. Roommates were viewed as the most frequently influential indicator preventing the participants to raise voice in English.

Around me, no one talks in English. My roommates even hate it so I cannot practice English with them. If I try to communicate with them in English sometimes, they will not understand and laugh at me. (S22)

My friends will think I am crazy or want to show off and I cannot find a friend who is good at English to practice every day. (S30)

Following after the influence of roommates, the absence of multicultural environment also had negative effect on their available opportunity to speak English. This is completely true for EFL context, particularly for those participants in this study who are studying English at a non-linguistic major university. The infrequent appearance of visitor professors from other countries to the university seemed not to meet the long-term requirement of the students to learn and speak English.

Sometimes, there are some professors from European countries or America visiting our faculty. However, we desire more opportunity to speak English. I wish one day I could go overseas for studying so that the chance to talk in English is no longer limited. (S24)

How can I practice speaking English because wherever I go, I just see a lot and a lot of Vietnamese people? I know that I am not living in a multicultural country so the chance to communicate with foreigners is very limited. It is not always easy to gain access to communities of English practice in here. (S11)

However, it is not always the case that participants are unable to access communities of English practice. 10 out of 30 participants were quite positive about seeking English speaking environment around them. According to them, talking to foreigners, particularly to native speakers was definitely important but that was not the only way for enhancing English. They might talk with a friend who had the same interest of practicing English for every morning walk. Others, instead of attending one English club in their faculty, registered for membership in other linguistic clubs both inside and outside university.

Sometimes I walk in the morning with my friends and we use English quite often. I think we ourselves need to create English speaking environment rather than expect the presence of foreigners at our university. Where are we studying? It is Vietnam not England or USA. (S27)

I register in a lot of English clubs, which is really useful. I can communicate in English with members and at the same time get a lot of English learning experience. I even plan to join another club at Hanoi National University. (S15)

Those who still desired to converse with foreigners made frequent visit to the hostel of international students or to the tourist sites in the central city. These places allowed them to further improve both speaking and listening skills as well as integrate into multicultural environment.

I came to the hostel of international students quite often. Though they might come from China or Cambodia, at least I still can talk to them in English, which is always much better than no English communication. Other times, I visit some historical sites in the city where I could meet and chat with Western backpackers. (S9)

Cultural Capital: I Am Unable to Maximally Exploit

Concerning how the participants were able to take advantages of their cultural capital in speaking English, I gave the question “What are some advantages you have that can help you study English better?”. 11 out of 30 students, however, believed that their hard working attitude and motivation played primary roles. I did not categorize these two factors in the group of cultural capital as I employed Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of cultural capital as “knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications” (p. 14). Also, as mentioned earlier, cultural capital is, to some extent, similar to what Norton and Toohey (20001) propose the concept of “human agency” which indicates how learners make use of intellectual and social resources to gain access to peers for language learning and social affiliation (Norton & Toohey, 2001, p. 317).

9 in 30 students, surprisingly, were unable to exploit their own cultural capital or “human agency” to facilitate English communication. They, instead of drawing on the available intellectual and social resources, acknowledged that they did not possess any strength for English communication.

I don’t have any advantage. As I mentioned before, I don’t normally speak out in class due to my limited vocabulary and expression. I need to try more like my classmates (S11).

Others, nevertheless, use several strategies which I believe work as effective means of accumulating cultural capital for them to communicate in English more easily. Exposing cultural knowledge of Vietnam as well as English speaking countries was frequently mentioned in the participants’ writings to show how capable they were of making use of cultural capital. This ranged from their understanding of “traditional

customs” of Vietnamese people in different regions to of historical sites which has been popular with the world for over the years. S24 believed his good understanding of famous tourist sites made him easily converse with Western tourists.

I know that to easily communicate with Western people at such historical tourist sites, it is better to enrich my cultural and historical understanding of these places. Therefore, I made a lot of successful communications at, for instance, Van Mieu University, Sword Lake and One Pillar pagoda. I explained to them the legends attached to these sites and how they worked as prestigious symbols of Hanoi.

While S24 positively showed how his cultural capital facilitated English communication participation, he also indicated his difficulty of accessing communicative events which prevented him from exploiting cultural capital maximally.

Even though I always try to build up vocabulary, and make gradual improvement in learning English, it is not always easy to use up the cultural knowledge for communication. The reason is that I can't meet foreigners frequently to share. And even if I meet, they may be not English speaker though they are White.

Another means several participants employed as the contribution of “human agency” for their facilitative interaction was the help of their friends whose English was much better than them.

My brother has two German friends who frequently come to Vietnam for international projects of agriculture, so I have the chance to talk to them quite often. They help me quite a lot with some slangs, uncommon vocabulary and native speaking expressions.

Accomplishing Legitimacy as a Speaker of English: A Mismatch between the Non-native Speaker and the Owner of English

The participants' images as a speaker of English can be categorized into three types: a silent speaker, a non-native speaker and an owner of English. Their narratives attached to these three images are in turn illuminated. First, 6 out of 30 students indicated that they were frequently unable to raise their voice through both class discussions and informal talks outside class. Their silence once again originated from the biggest weakness – communicative competence. These participants told several incidents in which their image as a silent speaker of English was pictured.

In the class, I hardly speak out because I am such a very timid person. Also, I am afraid that people will not understand what I say. There was one session in an English class with my English German teacher which I never forget. He led a discussion about dreams and ambitions in which I was so much interested. However, as he came to our group discussion, I was still talking with lots of interruptions and then I suddenly stopped. I was too afraid of many things: my vocabulary, my accent and my body language. (S30)

From my teaching experience, this situation sometimes happens, particularly towards silent language learners. They can actively participate in their own pair or group talk, and the presence of teacher might prevent them from doing so. The possible explanation for this is that they are afraid of losing face in front of their teacher - the one who have higher social status than them.

Whereas S30 told her story as a silent speaker of English in class, S18 painfully revealed how he could not claim his right to speak English to protect the face of Vietnamese people in front of Western friends. He was invited to his classmate's party where there were several Westerners working for international projects of agriculture. These foreigners were discussing with them about traffic in Vietnam, which caused them to be late to their work sometimes and to the current party as well. The other friends at the party agreed and added that traffic in Hanoi was terribly miserable partially due to the awareness of the citizens. S18, in this situation, was quite unhappy and wanted to argue with the attendees but he was unable to do so:

I wanted to speak out, explaining that the awareness of people in Hanoi was not like that. However, in front of many people, particularly Western friends, I became embarrassed about

what happened to them rather than trying to speak out. I was afraid that whether my explanation was not clear enough for everyone to understand. I couldn't raise my voice at all in this situation. I was really a silent speaker of English at the party.

Second, 15 in 30 students believed that they were merely the non-native speaker of English due to their inappropriate communicative competence, their local Vietnamese accent and the assumption of equating Whiteness with native speaker. Once again, the lack of communicative competence was suggested as clear evidence that these participants viewed themselves as the non-native speaker who needed to make further effort to be like native speaker one day.

I think I am just an incompetent native speaker of English. But I am also trying to master American accent through the book American accent training which I believe will assist me a lot to gain native-like accent. (S26)

I never think I can speak like native speaker. I don't have good accent like some of friends. Also, I believe that the white people can easily become native speaker if they speak English well. Just see the presence of visitor professors at our university. Every student believes that they are native speaker due to their skin color regardless of their actual nationality. (S14)

As perceiving themselves as non-native speakers, the participants like many Asian EFL learners and even teachers were strongly influenced by the dichotomy between native and non-native speaker in ELT. Consequently, native speakerness was regarded as the perfect yardstick for these students to measure their language competence by attempting to learn American accent or equating whiteness with native speaker.

Third, the rest of the participants, though they might not be always confident of their language competence, indicated that they were also as equal as native speaker regarding their ownership of English. Specifically, they viewed English as an international language which everyone use as a means to “communicate across culturally” (S21). In addition to that, these participants deemphasized the role of native-like accent as the effective tool to evaluate language competence of learners. They, therefore, confidently believed that accent was no longer important because speaking English with the local accent was one way to show “who you were” (S23).

I speak English with Vietnamese accent and anyone can realize it. However, I no longer care about it because at least people know where I come from through my English. I even met a

German teacher of English who told me right the beginning of our chat that I was from Vietnam. She told me I had Vietnamese accent and the way I pronounced with the ending consonants of words helped her to know that. However, I am ok with this. (S23)

I don't think I need to speak English with American or British accent. I am Vietnamese speaker of English and I am fine with my accent. There are many varieties of English like Singaporean, Indian, Malay and everyone still listens to these Englishes. English is an international language that people use to communicate cross culturally. (S5)

Discussions

To discuss challenges that the participants encountered in speaking English inside and outside classroom context, I draw on Miller's (2003) argument of moving towards self-representation through speaking as a useful conceptual tool. As mentioned earlier, Miller indicates in the diagram that the first and the prior condition for learners to speak English successfully is the accumulation of communicative competence which is composed of "linguistic, phonological, discourse and sociocultural knowledge" (Miller, 2003, p.173). These four components are mutually supportive and the absence of one will lead to the incompetence of the others.

Regarding the communicative competence of the participants, what they lacked right at the beginning of a talk was "linguistic and phonological knowledge". The insufficient and inappropriate use of vocabulary was frequently observed through their narratives like "*I don't have enough vocabulary to answer questions from friends and teacher*" (S19) and "*I couldn't find the right words to express myself properly*" (S30). In addition to vocabulary, the issue of pronouncing some difficult English sounds was regularly raised, showing how they might be unable to achieve phonological knowledge as Miller points out in the diagram. However, it is likely that the participants were too much embedded in the native like accent, leading them to believe that being unable to pronounce some difficult English sounds would constrain their communication process. Besides the inappropriate linguistic and phonological knowledge of the participants, their incompetence of discourse knowledge was another aspect contributing to their biggest challenge – communicative competence. Discourse knowledge is specifically defined as "coherence and cohesion as a linguistic correlate" (Shaw, 1992, p. 12). Because several participants were incapable of gaining discourse knowledge in speaking English, their speeches were sometimes incoherent and vague, which made themselves not to be *understood* by others (S11).

Although the participants might not gain adequate communicative competence with four suggested aspects by Miller (2003), some of them still managed to practice speaking English regularly by moving around class every session rather than remaining only one partner (S15), participating in English club of their faculty (S3), and visiting the first university of Vietnam to communicate with Western tourists (S5). These strategies work effectively to assist them to be integrated into English speaking situations and to gradually improve their communicative competence.

Concerning the access to communicative events, their challenges originated from both objective and subjective reasons. It was objective in the sense that the participants were studying English in EFL context, resulting in the infrequency to gain access to community of English practice. As explained earlier, “community of practice” refers to “a set of relations among people, activity and the world” as a way to theorize and investigate social contexts (Laver & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). There were two main communities of practice that the participants indicating how challengeable they were to access including the community inside class and the community in social contexts outside class.

With regard to the one inside class, some of them could not find any “set of relations among people, activity and the world” as Laver and Wenger (1991) points out. The “relations” in here are the participants’ interaction with classmates and teacher. The “activity” is speaking tasks that the participants have to perform while the “world” is the English communication environment. Therefore, several participants wondered about the practice of speaking English with Vietnamese teachers and Vietnamese friends, which they believed was “weird” (S17) or “not real” (S13) whereas others were concerned about the involuntariness of the partners who “were demotivated to talk in English” (S12) or did not “pay attention to” their group discussion (S19). As far as the community in social contexts outside class is concerned, once again, the participants were unable to accomplish any “relations” among themselves, English communication contexts and other English speakers. They, therefore, were criticized (S22) or perceived as trying to show off (S30) by the roommates. Some others expressed the strong desire to study abroad one day so that they could fulfill the dream of living in English speaking environment (S24, S11).

Besides the objective cause of living and studying English in EFL context, the reason why certain participants could not gain access to community of English practice originated from themselves – their subjectivity. Other students still overcame such obstacles of studying English in EFL context which their classmates consider as no “real” English communication among the local Vietnamese students (S13) or the lack of authentic situations for proceeding communication (S17). They were able to do so because they might probably find the “relations” among individuals, the activities of speaking English inside and

outside class and the social context of using English. They were satisfied with the circumstances of EFL context by indicating that they were studying “in Vietnam, not in England or USA” (S27). Obviously, they made use of EFL context through creating communicative activities like talking with roommates every morning walk (S27) or visiting the hostel of international students (S9). What these participants tried to do, I believe, is one way of expressing their ownership of English. They no longer think that English is the language of only the native speaker and that the process the non-native speaker communicates in English is inauthentic. Those other participants, however, were unable to assume their ownership of English, perceiving themselves as outsiders who need to communicate with the white people – the native speakers according to their assumption in order to make English communication authentic.

As far as the making use of the participants’ cultural capital was concerned, it is surprising that many of them were unable to employ cultural capital to gain access to the social networks of their communities. The possible explanation for this originates from their inappropriate communicative competence, making themselves unable to raise their voice and take advantages of the cultural capital regardless of its availability. For any language learner, such cultural capital as knowledge of the first language, cultural understanding of their own society is always potentially available. However, almost a third of the participants could not make use of such potentiality. The others, to some extent, developed several strategies to practice speaking English more and simultaneously to exploit cultural capital. These strategies are employed through two aspects which might be similar to what Norton and Toohey (2000) define as “intellectual and social resources” (p. 317).

With regard to intellectual resources, several participants were able to draw on historical knowledge of popular tourist sites and the competent understanding of Vietnamese tradition and custom to contribute to conversations with peers and foreigners. Though they were exposed to English in an institutional context in which English was not the major means of communication, they still made certain attempts to exploit such intellectual resources. Also, the reception for their intellectual offering was quite positive. Accordingly, they were able to make “successful conversations” (S24) by explaining to international tourists the legends underlying historical sites.

With regard to social resources, just a few participants had community or extra community allies to position themselves more favorably within their peer networks. On managing to practice English more, for instance, S17’s brother not only introduced her with his international co-workers but also helped position S17 as someone in a desirable position. Had S17’s brother not helped her get acquainted with his

foreign friends, she might not have been able to negotiate more desirable places for herself and more opportunities for verbal and social interaction. Others, however, seemed not to be able to exploit social resources to access communicative events, preventing themselves from raising voice inside and outside English class.

Finally, as far as the participants' legitimacy as a speaker of English is concerned, once again, Miller's (2003) diagram of moving towards self-representation through speaking English serves as a valuable conceptual tool to explain why the participants are associated themselves with three images: a silent speaker, a non-native speaker and the owner of English. As Miller argues, language learners who cannot accumulate communicative competence and gain access to communicative events, consequently, self-ascribe as silent speakers who separate themselves from the target language community. Also, those participants who could not accomplish their legitimacy as a speaker of English consider themselves non-native or illegitimate speakers. In contrast, the participants who were able to make attempts to access communicative events, to take advantages of cultural capital and to establish the ownership of English subsequently perceived themselves as legitimate speakers.

Conclusion and Implications

This research paper has discussed some primary challenges of speaking English that Vietnamese students with non-language major at a university encounter including: the lack of communicative competence and communicative events, the difficulty of taking advantages of cultural capital and the mismatch between self-ascribing as legitimate and illegitimate speakers of English. Inadequate communicative competence originates from the limitation of linguistic, phonological, discourse and sociocultural knowledge of the participants. The insufficiency of English communities comes from both objective and subjective causes. It is objective in the sense that the participants studying English in an EFL context in which everyone around them share the same linguistic background and hardly uses English for real life communication. It is subjective because some participants are unable to find the relationship among themselves, the communities of English and people around them whereas the other could do so, resulting in their successful achievement of English communication. Moreover, cultural capital which is not maximally

exploited due to their lack of communicative competence contributes to further challenge that the students face. Finally, it is due to the communicative incompetence, unavailability of English communities of practice and incomplete exploit of cultural capital brings about the participants' accomplishment as a silent and non-native speaker of English. The research has also revealed that those participants who are unable to achieve communicative competence and gain access to communicative events tend to look at themselves as illegitimate speakers of English. In contrast, those who can affiliate themselves with communities of English practice consequently claim their ownership of English.

The study throws some new light on how to help Vietnamese students overcome such challenges in speaking English and move towards self-representation successfully. Though this study does not investigate those students whose major is English, such recommendations below might be applicable. First, educators and teachers can assist students to gain access to communicative events more both inside and outside class. Within classroom, this can be done by encouraging students to move their position around rather than sit in the same place every session. Organizing such warm - up activities as seeking information from classmates might encourage students to interact more and change their seating.

Second, language educators and teachers can encourage students to share their own experience of how they gain access to communicative events outside the classroom environment. Through group discussions, each student may reveal how they can make use of their cultural capital to interact and socialize with other people whose linguistic backgrounds are different. At the same time, silent students may share why they find it difficult to get involved in communicative events even though their friends interact readily. By sharing and learning from each other, I believe that students are definitely able to increase their opportunity to communicate in English and simultaneously improve their language competency. If this activity has no potential to be conducted in the official time of class, study group would be a good option.

Third, for such students who identify themselves as illegitimate speakers of English, the appropriate use of teaching materials is probably helpful. Teachers and language educators are encouraged to use teaching materials which nicely combine Asian and Western contexts through people and communication situations as well as a wide variety of Englishes. These challenge the perception that English belongs to native speakers help students realize that English is a global language which people all use to interact cross-culturally.

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Appendix: Questions for reflective writing

1. How do you participate in your English class? (active or passive, how?)
2. What factors prevent you from speaking English inside and outside classroom? (yourself and environment)
3. How do you study English every day?
4. Whose English do you speak? Is that important or not and why?
5. What are some advantages you have that can help you study English better?

Testing Based Language Teaching in Bangladesh: Does It Promote or Impede Learning?

Tanzina Tahereen

(tan.zina@yahoo.com)

East West University, Bangladesh

Abstract

English is considered as a foreign language in Bangladesh; and it is taught, and tested as a subject like all other subjects. English language teaching is influenced by testing in such a way that it controls the way of teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, this extreme reliance on testing has shaped the opinions of the teachers, students and parents about language teaching. So, to some extent, passing the test with a high score is the main objective, rather than learning a language. So, real learning gets impeded. This paper attempts to answer the question whether testing based teaching promotes language learning or not. For finding the answer, it starts with the overall discussion of the issues and trends of language testing in Bangladesh. Then, it aims at focusing on the consequences and the impact of this testing system on language curriculum, teaching pedagogy, students' learning, and students' affective factors, etc. Therefore, this paper applies the quantitative research method to analyze the questionnaires, interviews responded by the students and teachers regarding this approach. Finally, the paper ends with discussion of the major findings how this testing based teaching impedes actual language learning for most of the students.

Key words: Assessment, Testing, High stakes examinations, Teaching pedagogy, Curriculum, Learning.

Introduction

Assessment and testing are directly connected to teaching and learning (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). Testing is considered as a major means to improve education and students' achievement (West, 2007). In Bangladesh, people rely on testing very much. It has become such an ultimate criterion without which a learner cannot establish his academic performance. As a result, testing prominently dominates teaching pedagogy so much that learning objective has become changed. The reasons for the amplified use of testing are many.

The testing advocates and policy makers believe that “testing sets meaningful standards to which school system, and schools, teachers and students can aspire; that test data can help shape instruction; that it serves important accountability purposes; and that coupled with effective incentives and/or sanctions” (Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990, p 1). They consider testing as a “powerful engine of change” (p 1). In Bangladesh, entire education system is in the strong belief that testing provides a reliable gateway for the learners to learn something with a guarantee. A student has to go through a lot of examinations at every level of his/her academic life for showing his/her learning expertise, and ability with an evidence. This creates a huge pressure not only on students but also on the people who are connected to education system. From teachers to policy makers, no one is exempted from this pressure of testing. Consequently, English language teaching in Bangladesh has become completely testing dependant, and so, it plays its controls over everything.

Therefore, this paper focuses on this testing based language teaching in Bangladesh. It can undoubtedly be said that in Bangladesh, teaching is entirely depended on testing and assessment. This paper discusses, and shows through the surveys and interviews how this dependency on testing is hampering learners’ learning situation. It discusses how language teaching becomes affected, how classroom environment gets changed, and how students’ learning becomes obstructed because of such dependency. Moreover, administration, institutions, society, parents and people’s level of expectation also get affected. Therefore, this paper attempts to find out how much language learning is possible in such academic environment in Bangladesh.

History

There are three main categories in the education system of Bangladesh. These are: a) general education system, b) madrasah education system, and c) technical- vocational education system. There exists a professional education system as well. Each of these three main systems consists of five levels, and these are: a) primary level (class 1 to 5), b) junior level (class 6 to 8), c) secondary level (class 9 to 10), d) higher secondary level (class 11 and 12) and e) tertiary level (BANBEIS, 2007). At the end of every level, except tertiary level, a student has to sit for a public examination which is of high stakes. Moreover, every year they have to sit for a final examination which is considered as the doorway to get promoted for the next class. And, at tertiary level, tests and evaluations are equally important.

English language is a skill-based subject not content based one (NCTB, 1995). But, in reality, English is taught in the classroom like all other subjects in Bangladesh. These examinations at every level are designed in such a way that the test items mainly emphasize on students' memorization skill, and the power to reproduce them in examination hall. A student's knowledge application skill, analytic skill, and critical thinking ability are hardly into consideration in testing. Besides, oral presentation, leadership skill, co-curricular activities are not included at all. So, learners mostly depend on memorization that makes them 'crippled' (Begum & Farooqui, 2008). So, the history of ELT in Bangladesh only represents this dependency on rote learning. From the very beginning, the grammar-translation method has been promoting it. Before the change in the English syllabus for secondary schools in 1990, rote memorization and grammar translation with the aural-oral method dominated the teaching methodology in this way. Therefore, it has become integrated with our English language teaching in such a way that teachers still cannot get out of its grip even with the advent of the communicative approach in 1990. The four skills were then emphasized in order to help students to communicate in English in CLT. Unfortunately, language testing methods did not change accordingly. 'Discrete-point tests in multiple-choice format' are still the most used approach, especially in high-stakes examinations. However, most of the tests still aim to test the structure of the language, and its functions. So, there remains a severe mismatch between efforts to modify the national syllabus, and reliance on the existing testing practices in Bangladeshi institutions. Naturally, teaching practices are inclined to follow testing practices. To reform and bring a change into the curriculum, the government, non-government and other educational organizations have been giving efforts long since 1990. But, steps to implement a 'communicative' syllabus are undermined whenever tests are not restructured to assess communicative outcomes. As a result, no changes brought any positive upshot (Begum & Farooqui, 2008).

However, the government has recently taken a lot of initiatives to ensure the quality of education. There is a considerable innovation in teaching and learning at the secondary level in Bangladesh recently. In June, 2007, all the schools across the country are asked for following School Based Assessment (SBA) of students of grade VI- IX, instead of the existing evaluation system that depends solely on examination. With the introduction of new system, students' promotion to the next class level will depend on both the examination result, and overall yearly performance in class (Begum & Farooqui, 2008). With this new scheme, a change in testing system and teachers' attitude are highly expected. Therefore, the success of SBA invites a new situation where teachers should be aware of the complete assessment system, should be skilled and well-trained, should be supplied with proper logistic

support (Torrance, 1995, cited in Begum & Farooqui, 2008); and, that is still absent in our education system. So, at its absence, dependency on the high stakes examinations remains. Rather, students are facing these more with the introduction of PSC (Primary School Certificate), and JSC (Junior School Certificate) examination. Even at the tertiary level, the scenario is quite similar though CLT is maintained both in teaching and testing here. First of all, the pressure of examinations is more severe here. Second, students do not get a lot of time for the language courses as there are only two or three language courses at this level. Third, students, who are used to grammar-translation method, often find it difficult to follow the instructions of CLT. As a result, language learning is still at risk, and examination is in the focus.

Literature Review

The effect of testing on teaching and learning is termed as backwash or washback (Hughes, 2003). He adds, washback is “a part of the impact a test may have on learners and teachers, on educational system in general, and on society at large” (2003, p 53). There has long been a debate on the issue of the potentiality of the effects of test on education. Along with these debates, these effects have been promoted as both negative and positive by many. The concept of washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993) or backwash (Briggs, 1995, 1996) is mainly rooted in the concept of measurement-driven-instruction (MDI) which says that test drives teaching and learning (Popham, 1987, cited in Cheng & Curtis, 2004). As a result, meeting the test requirements, a ‘match’ or an overlap between the content and format of the test, and those of the curriculum happens which is termed as “curriculum alignment” by Shepard (1990, 91, 92, 93, cited in Cheng, 2000, p 1). This concept is considered as “unethical” by many. Batchman, Palmer & Baker termed all these impacts as test impact-the influence of testing on teaching and learning. Thus, washback is variously known as ‘test impact’ (Baker, 1991), ‘consequential validity’ (Messick, 1989) or ‘systematic validity’ (Fredericksen & Collins, 1989, cited in Alderson & Hamp-Lyon, 1996).

In 1993, Alderson & Wall first published an article titled “Does Washback Exist?” They advocated washback hypothesis in order to present washback as a deterministic phenomenon that can exert both positive and negative effects on teaching and learning. They talk about 15 washback hypothesis regarding the influences of testing. These are about the influence of testing on teaching, learning, teaching methodology, instruction, teaching content, learning content and materials, learning styles, the duration, depth, rate and sequences of teaching and learning and attitudes and behavior towards teaching and

learning, and so on. (1992, p 9-10). In 1996, Sohamy (2001, 2005, 2006) and McNamara & Roever (2006) talked about the influence of test in broader context. They presented test as a powerful instrument that controls its effects on government strategies even. According to Hughes, the more the high stakes tests are there, the more test preparations are there; and this can dominate all teaching and learning activities (2003). As a result, the syllabus is redesigned, new books are chosen, and classes are conducted differently. Policy makers also try to control the institution, administration, teachers and students. Popham (1987) terms testing as 'powerful curricular magnets' as it induces teachers' attention to the content of test items. He adds, in high stakes environment, reward, sanction or public scrutiny, and professional status can motivate teachers to meet the test targets, and achieve good reputation (cited in Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990, p 6).

After washback hypothesis came into focus, Bailey (1996) propounded a basic model of washback through synthesizing Alderson & Wall's washback

hypothesis and Hughes' concept of washback (1989). According to Hughes (1993), "In order to clarify our thinking about backwash, it is helpful, I believe, to distinguish between participants, process and product in teaching and learning, recognizing that all three may be affected by the nature of a test"(p. 2, cited in Bailey, 1999, p 9). By the term 'participants' he refers students, teachers, administrators, material designers and publishers. The process means the actions taken by the participant associated with the learning and teaching. Moreover, the product refers to the facts, skills and fluency acquired or achieved by the learners (Bailey, 1999). This connection among participant, process and products suggested by Hughes (1993) led Bailey to come up with a washback model (1996a, p 264):

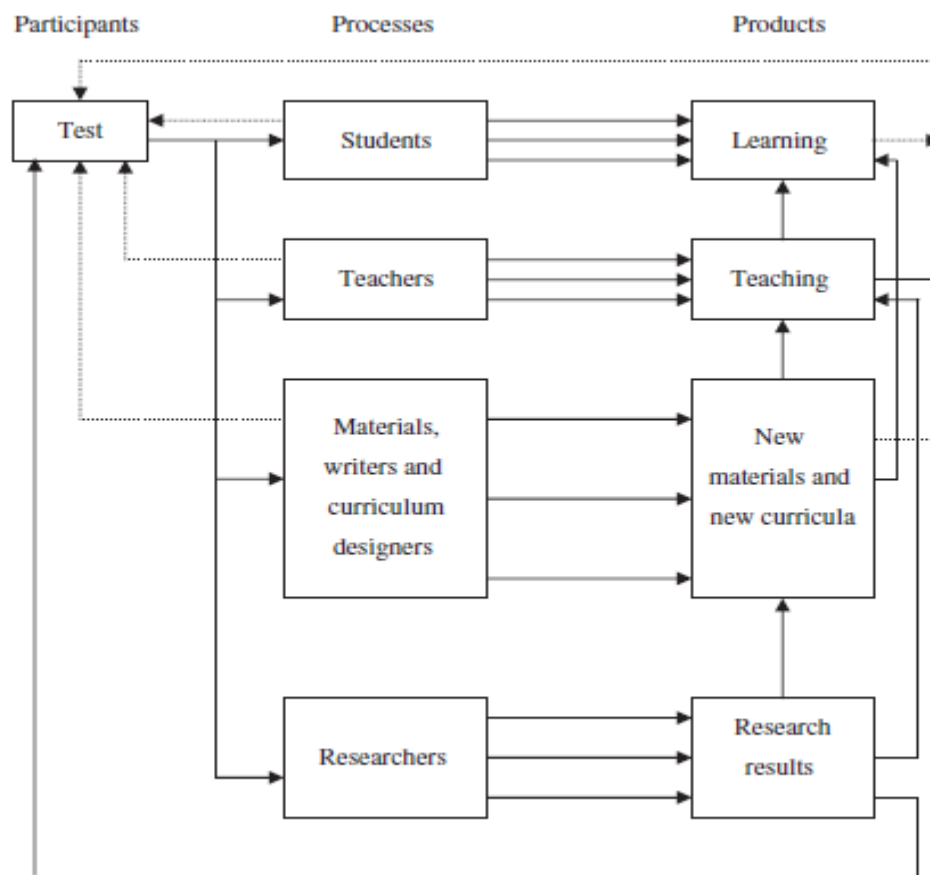


Figure1. A Basic Model of Washback (Bailey,1996)

Bailey talked about two dimensions of washback: one referring to the washback to the learners, and the other referring to the washback to the program. These include all the people who are impacted by the test, such as test takers, teachers, administrators, curriculum developers and counselors. The model also incorporates researchers and participants in the list (Shih, 2007).

The Present Scenario of Language Assessment: Issues and Trends

If we go through the academic system of Bangladesh, we might sum up the issues and trends of our testing and assessment system into few points. These are discussed below:

Summative assessment. Crooks (2002) explains, summative assessment intends to present an over-all clear picture of a student's existing competence, development, aptitudes and further needs, requirements and potentials (cited in Ali, 2011). Summative assessment comes at the end of the term or

semester or year in order to evaluate what has been achieved by individual or group. On the other hand, the focus of formative assessment is on enhancing students' development, and providing such an environment where student-student and teacher-student constructive interaction is encouraged (p 241). Pryor and Croussand (2008) consider "summative assessment as a powerful institutionalized discourse, as it contributes to text marks, academic reports and qualification" (cited in Ali, 2011, p 12). Language assessment in Bangladesh is mainly summative at every level of education starting from the primary to tertiary level. In Bangladesh, students sit for the examination at the end of every term, and they are judged based on their performance in it. Basically, testing skills are examined, not all other important skills, such as, learners' presentation skills, ability of analysis, synthesis, and critical thinking (Begum & Farooqui, 2008). These are completely ignored in our assessment system. Students are taking tests on the same patterns of question papers years after years. Moreover, teachers concentrate more on the test preparation, rather than language learning. As a result, most of the time, a student with a good score does not even achieve normal communicative skills in English. Consequently, students become the victims of negative washback issues which will be discussed later on in the paper.

Absence of application of CLT in reality. Communicative language teaching is a teaching method which views language as a system for the expression of meaning where the main function of language is to permit interaction and communication (Richard, 2001). To achieve the communicative competences is the main objective of this method. In this approach, classroom interaction, use of authentic texts, communicative competence, speaking skills are given main focus. Though CLT has been introduced in education system in Bangladesh in 1990, its real implementation has not started yet in teaching. Because of the previous reliance on Grammar- Translation Method, teachers still cannot implement CLT effectively in their classrooms. Moreover, testing system did not change accordingly. Therefore, teachers feel more inclined to follow GTM, rather than CLT for meeting the test target. According to Brown (2004, cited in Rahman, Babu & Ashrafuzzaman, 2011), in many countries, curriculum has become communicative, but testing system has not changed, and remained 'traditional' which assesses grammatical form, structure, not the meaning, and lower order thinking not critical thinking because "these are the kinds of tests and test items that exist" (Eckes et al, 2005, Rahman, Babu & Ashrafuzzaman, 2011). Moreover, Begum and Farooqui (2008) add that our testing system consists of the test items which are easy to test not which are required to test. Though speaking and listening skills play a major role in CLT, these are still completely absent in our English language teaching and testing. So, English is taught basically as a subject, not as a language; and so, the aim is not learning the skills but getting scores. Only teachers are not responsible for that. The entire education system is faulty here.

Lack of test validity. This existing English language testing system is not capable of assessing many of the important objectives of secondary or higher secondary education system. It does not assess learners' skills of using English language in different real life contexts and situations, such as, in solving problems, in expressing personal thoughts orally, in learning to behave appropriately, and in developing some personal and social skills. So, the testing objectives and the course objectives do not match often. Moreover, the suggested method of teaching in the class room, and the followed method by the teachers are not the same. Though all the four skills are prescribed to give equal importance in teaching, students' reading and writing skills are tested again and again ignoring the other two skills completely. Moreover, most of the test items are predictable. Thus, it encourages memorization. Communicative competency is not tested anyhow. So, in many ways, the test validity is questioned.

Imbalanced emphasis on skills. This is the most significant problem in English language testing in Bangladesh. In order to achieve the communicative competence in a specific language which is the main target of CLT, all the four skills should be taught and assessed. Nevertheless, though CLT is the method to be followed in classroom, speaking and listening are neither included in lesson plans nor in the test items. Even the classroom instruction is hardly given in English. Moreover, the public examinations undermine these skills, and consequently, students face difficulties in higher education. As a result, even after having twelve years of academic experiences in English language learning, they cannot communicate in English properly. Furthermore, the reading and writing skills are not instructed, and assessed appropriately. Grammatical rules and forms learning, translations and vocabulary memorizations cover the major part of language learning in Bangladesh. Moreover, the kinds of writing they have to do are based on some predictable topics which never assess or show their real writing skills. Though at tertiary level, all four skills are focused, due to time limitations and test pressures both teachers and students do not get benefitted much.

Lack of creativity in test items. The English courses generally lack diversity in items to teach and test. So, the reading and writing materials these courses contain, do not offer anything which incite critical and analytical thinking, and creativity in producing anything. The reading part hardly offers any contextual or authentic reading. Moreover, the writing exercises are not varied. Therefore, the final examination offers a very little or no scope for the assessment of creative writing skills or free writing skills as paragraphs and essays are based on some highly predictable over-used topics. For example, the sample questions that the text books of class IX and X have provided, show that the test items of English paper 1 will be reading comprehensions with MCQ, "gap filling", and "choosing right words",

“rearranging sentences”; and Paper 2 consists of paragraph writing and essay writing which could have offered scope of some creative writing (Begum & Farooqui, 2008). But, the problem is the topics for writing are mostly predictable which students can produce from their memories, rather than creative thoughts. However, creative method has been applied to encourage students to avoid memorization, and make them capable for producing something new. But, the opposite has happened. The appearance of predictable test items has not decreased yet. So, students still memorize, and this time it is worse. Students do a lot of practices in the classroom for test preparation, and try to find out the common items which might have high possibility for examination. Teachers make them familiar with the test items, and instruct them to practice on those predictable items and similar structures. As a result, a lot of notebooks or guidebooks, and cram schools appear and survive successfully to distort students’ critical thinking and creativity more. Rahman (1999, p 109) states “Notebooks and guidebooks are a lifeline to most learners and the negative backwash effect of the examination on teaching and learning strategies complete the cycle of monolithic pattern of knowledge and education” (cited in Begum & Farooqui, 2008, p 46)

Traditional approach to teaching reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary, and translations. Begum & Farooqui (2008) found that in Bangladesh in secondary schools, a traditional approach in the assessment of reading skills, grammar, and vocabulary still exists. Though communicative approach has been introduced in the language curriculum, most teachers are actually following the traditional grammar-translation method concentrating on the syllabus completion within a specific set of time, and obtaining a good score in the examination. Deductive way of teaching grammar has been continuing for years after years as it takes very little time, and apparently, it seems that students grab it properly. There is no direct application of those grammatical rules anywhere in the teaching method. Moreover, for teaching vocabulary, teachers always prefer memorization of the equivalent meaning in Bangla to application of any other ways. Since a student can guess through the assessment process and teaching policies what s/he might get in the examination, s/he easily becomes motivated to memorization. Moreover, as a student can answer the entire question paper without applying his/her real language skills, s/he never feels the necessity to apply his/her analytic ability or critical thinking. S/he just can answer everything from his/her memories. Therefore, there is a huge gap between the learners’ needs and expectations, and teachers’ teaching methods. As students do not face any problem passing the examinations in schools and after that, teachers and students easily rely on such approaches of teaching for long. Furthermore, grammar and translation are one of the major parts of our English language teaching. It is obvious that grammar is important to teach and learn. But, which approach is being followed for that is more important to consider. Here, the level of competency in English is judged

through how much grammar and translation a student does know. So, whenever they try to produce something in English, they become so concerned about the grammatical rules and translations that real communication or production gets impeded.

High-stakes testing. Testing is of high stakes when the result of the tests creates an impact on the important decisions about students' promotion, teachers' evaluation, curriculum designing, and program appropriation. The future of the students, the accountability of the teachers, and the institutions' and parents' expectation are very much connected with this kind of testing, and thus, teaching has become testing dependent. Obviously, when the stakes are high, its impact on students, teachers and overall education system is high as well. Though SBA has been introduced, dependency on high stakes did not decrease at all. In fact, there is huge pressure from everywhere on the test and grades.

Research Questions

This research is based on one major research question. But this major question includes some other minor questions. The major research question is:

“Does high dependency on testing create any negative impact on language learning and teaching?”

The minor questions are:

1. Does test dependency change teaching strategy?
2. Does test dependency hamper students' real learning and distort learning style?
3. Does test dependency limit the scope of creating proper learning environment?
4. Does test dependency create any pressure on students, teachers and institutions?
5. Does test dependency have any impact on socio-cultural structure in Bangladesh?

Methodology

Participants

In this research, data were collected from 100 students (Questionnaire-2), and 50 school teachers, 50 college teachers and 50 university teachers (Questionnaire1) who teach English language in different institutions. Among them, 60% teachers are from urban, and 40% are from sub urban areas. The duration of teaching experience of these teachers varies from 2 – 22 years. All the teachers were intentionally selected from the urban and sub urban areas as it was possible to communicate with them. Moreover, teachers from these areas were eager and interested to think about such issues regarding testing.

Instruments & Data Collection

In order to collect quantitative data, a survey and some informal interviews were conducted. Two questionnaires were prepared for the survey and interviews. Questionnaire 1 (Appendix 1) was for the teachers, and Questionnaire-2 (Appendix 2) for the students. The questionnaires (Appendix 1) were distributed among the teachers from different institutions. Following the survey, semi interviews were taken sometimes directly or sometimes over phone when it was not possible to use the questionnaires directly. The questions of the interviews were based on the questionnaires. The questionnaires for the students (Appendix 2) were distributed among the students from different universities (50 students) and colleges (30 students) from those selected areas. Students (20 students) from schools did not respond to the questionnaires directly. Their opinions (based on Questionnaire 2) were collected through some semi interviews or informal discussion. Some of the interviews and information were collected in Bangla for the sake of easy data collection, and later on, those were translated into English. Though there are 20 questions in questionnaire 1 and 19 questions in questionnaire 2, results of all the questions are not included in the research as those are not apparently effective and relevant to the research questions directly. Those were used as supporting questions.

The questionnaire for teachers reflects teachers' opinions, feeling, thinking and attitude towards testing, and its connection to teaching and learning. Though, I think, this survey reflects the impacts of testing on English language teaching in Bangladesh, it is not a complete research. It has some limitations as it was not possible to collect opinions from maximum teachers of Bangladesh; and it does not cover the rural areas. Moreover, school going students did not show proper understanding of the issue. On the other

hand, the questionnaire for the students was based on their attitudes regarding testing, the psychological factors that get affected because of the testing, and their parents' attitude for testing and test scores.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data which were collected through the questionnaires have been shown through different figures (graphs, pie charts, etc). The MS Excel has been used for preparing the graphs and pie charts.

Findings & Discussion

Findings through the surveys and interviews are shown through different figures below. All the findings are followed by their discussions. The findings reflect the impact of testing on the areas of 'washback model' by Bailey (1996).

Consequences and impacts of testing based teaching

Curriculum control. Curriculum covers a range of content knowledge that is expected to be taught, and learned in some way. Content, form or structure and pedagogy are the three aspects of curriculum (Au, 2007). It is highly connected to classroom practices as well. There are a lot of research which discuss how testing upholds different kinds of classroom practices. Therefore, the high stakes examinations have a great influence on classroom practices which might lead to curriculum confinement (Au, 2007). According to the research done by Wayne Lu (2007), more than 80% of the studies contained the theme 'content change', whether by contraction or expansion. Out of the pressure of testing, the content of the curriculum mostly gets concise or narrowed. Most of the teachers in Bangladesh participated in the survey responded for the contraction of the syllabus (e.g. Figure 1).

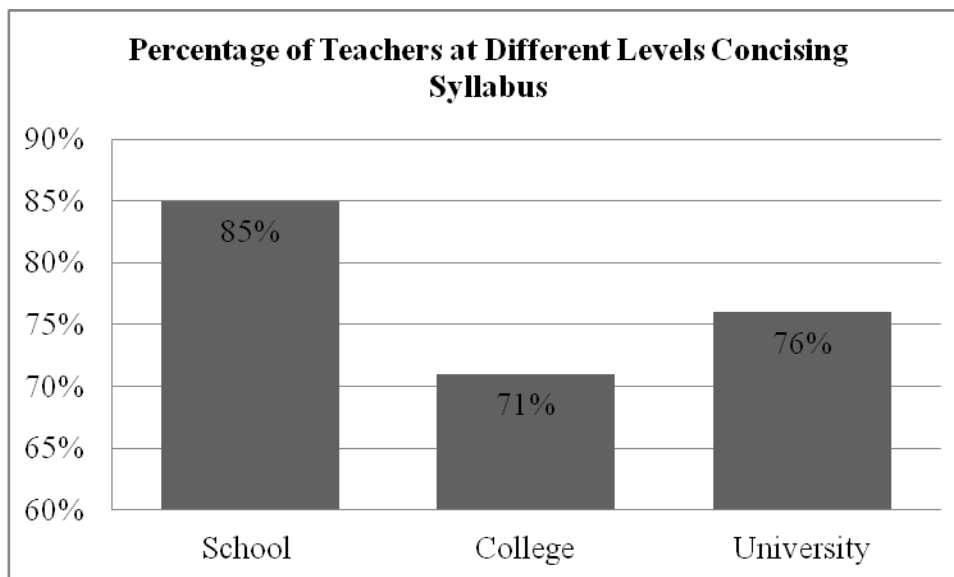


Figure1. Percentage of the Teachers at Different Institutions Concising Syllabus

The percentages of the teachers here represent the rate of contraction of the syllabus by them while focusing on the test items. 85% schools teachers, 71% college teachers and 76% university teachers agreed that they have to concise their syllabus frequently due to test pressure. Consequently, the low frequency topics in the test are not usually taught in the class. The teachers and the institutions always try to bring into line the curriculum with the test constraints. For example, in secondary and higher secondary level of education in Bangladesh, there is no scope or place for testing speaking and listening skills of a student in the language course whereas it is mentioned in the CLT curriculum that four skills should be equally focused. As a result, teachers never allocate any time or give efforts to teach these two skills in the class. So, neither the students nor the teachers feel interested to teach or learn these skills as test score is very important to them. Instead, spending time for these skills in the class is considered as the wastage of time to them. Thus, testing can lead the teachers to narrow down the curriculum and syllabus in many ways. This finding obviously aligns with the research questions.

Moreover, Smith et al (1987, p 268) has found in their study of elementary schools that in high stakes environment, schools neglect materials that external examinations do not include, such as, reading real books, writing in authentic context, solving higher order problems, creative

and divergent thinking project, long term integrative unit project, computer education; and these are gradually getting squeezed out of ordinary instruction (cited in Herman, Dreyfus, & Golan, 1990, p 7). Thus, standardized test affects instructional techniques. Moreover, according to Strecher (2002), whenever teachers are aware of the test items of their students' test, and try to prepare their teaching instructions and lesson plans accordingly instead of focusing on the broad topics of the overall curriculum designed for students' learning, the test scores do not reflect students' original ability and knowledge, and scores become anecdotal (cited in West, 2007). As a result, high dependency on testing eventually compels teachers to 'teach to the test' (West, 2007, p 47).

Teaching pedagogy. Because of the high dependency on testing, the teaching pedagogy of a teacher can be affected. Teachers often change their instructional strategies along with the curriculum changes because of the test pressure. In Bangladesh, it is not possible to follow CLT as a teaching method because of the unchanged test items and testing system. According to CLT, classroom should be learners-centered and interaction based. There should be teacher-student and student-student interaction. But, due to the pressure of the test and high expectation for the score, teachers can hardly follow these strategies. Many teachers from different schools, colleges and universities agree in this survey that they often have to change their instructional strategies due to the pressure of completion of the syllabus for the upcoming test (e.g. Figure 2).

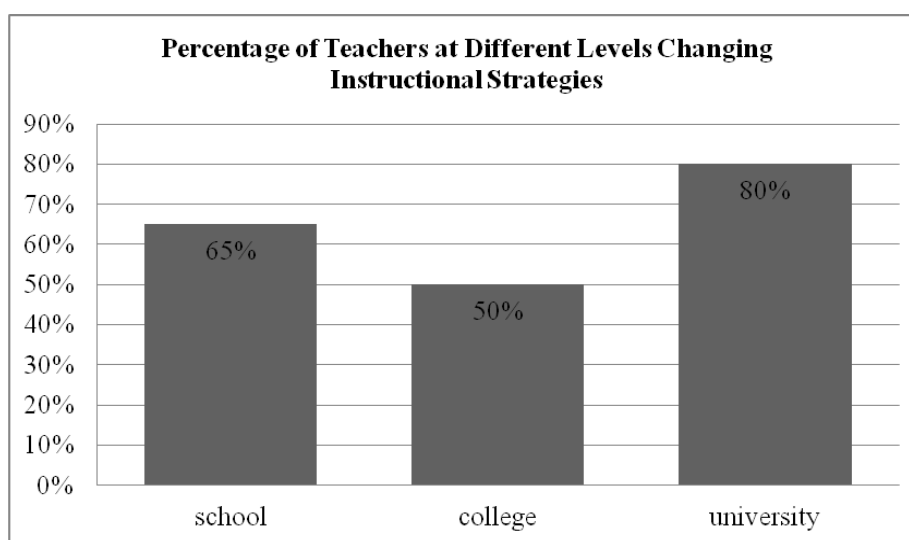


Figure 2. Percentage of Teachers at Different Institutions Changing Instructional Strategies

The figure 2 shows that 65% school teachers, 50% college teachers and 80% university teachers have to change their teaching methodology in order to cope up with the test preparation which actually results in poor teaching and learning. In most of the cases, classrooms are teacher-centered and lecture-based. Furthermore, there are deductive way of grammar teaching, practices of grammatical forms and structures, pattern drills, translations, memorization of vocabularies, rigid approach to error correction, use of Bangla as a medium of instruction, and practices of lots of writings. As the test items highly reflect these, teachers feel motivated to go for these kinds of practices instead of communicative strategies. Moreover, they spend a lot of time for preparing their students for the examination. Students are also greatly interested to follow those instructions which are directly related to the test items, and test preparation. So, the classroom activities are mostly dominated by the very sense of test preparation practices, rather than communicative activities and learning. West (2007, p 1) mentions some prominent scholars, and talks about their assertion that “a heavy reliance on testing distorts instruction and undermines authentic learning”. He thinks “what gets tested gets taught badly” (p1). Moreover, he also denigrates the “extrinsic reward”, “sanction for students” which high stakes testing promotes (p 1). He considers these responsible for devaluing learning, and discouraging some students who really want improvement. Research shows that due to pressure of the test preparation, a dramatic increase is observed in the amount of teacher-centered, fact-driven instruction in subjects included in state-mandated tests. Teachers use the worksheet that duplicated the question format of standardized test, and make their students practiced with those (Smith et al, 1987, cited in Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990). Thus, teacher-centered pedagogy increases highly. As a result, class room interaction, group or pair works, needs analysis, error analysis, and feedback on students’ performances are overlooked in the teaching pedagogy.

Fragmentation of teachers’ knowledge. There is a significant relationship between high-stakes testing, and augmentation in the teachers’ fragmentation of knowledge. Such fragmentation is obvious when teaching is dedicated to test preparation and good scores. The more pressure of the test exists, the more teachers try to teach the content in small, individuated,

and isolated test-size pieces, as well as, in direct relation to the tests, rather than in relation to other knowledge. As a result, teachers do not even get chance to apply their complete knowledge for the development of their students. All they can do is to make their students ready for the examination. According to Au (2007), “Leading to fragmentation of knowledge, high-stakes testing affects curricular form, that is, it leverages formal control over the curriculum” (p 262). Increased teacher-centered pedagogy and amplified fragmentation of knowledge forms concur together in response to high-stakes testing.

According to the survey conducted for the purpose of this study, teachers at different levels feel highly pressurised by the tests. The figure 3 shows 63% school teachers, 88% college teachers and 81% university teachers feel that they can not present their complete knowledge while teaching their students in the class due to the pressure of upcoming test.

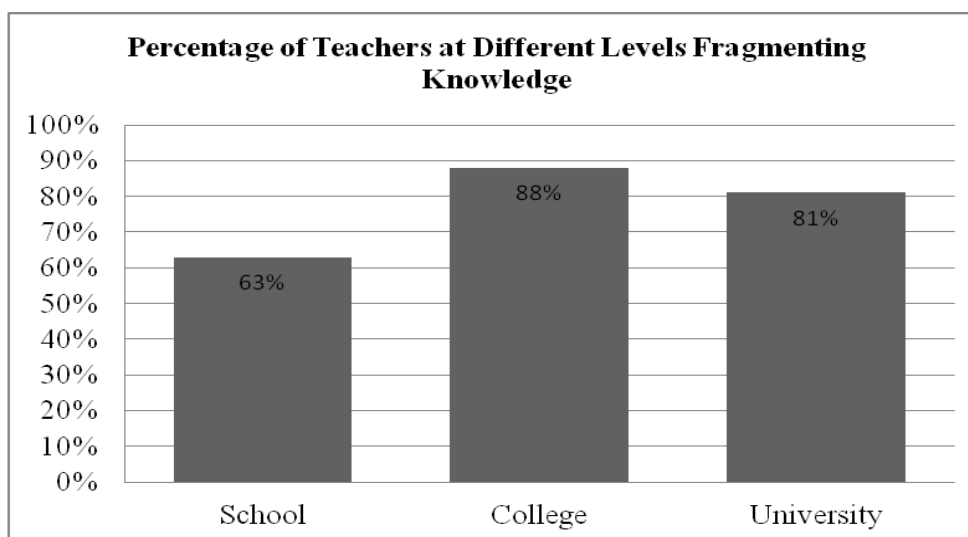


Figure 3. Percentage of Teachers at Different Institutions Fragmenting Teaching Knowledge

Distortion of learning style. Not only the curriculum content, knowledge of the teacher and teaching pedagogy in the classroom are getting affected by the testing dependency but also the learners’ learning styles are also becoming unnatural because of the high dependency on testing. As students focus more on the issues which test items cover, they are not inclined to know, or learn anything else, except the

test preferable things. They are always in a peer pressure in the classroom in terms of achieving high score. Most significantly, students are also in the pressure of competition and high expectation. Teachers and parents mostly expect score, grade and good results. As the good grade is the criterion to judge a student's success in education, s/he also compels teachers to cover high frequency items for the examination. They do not feel interested and inclined to learn anything else which they will not face in the test as test scores really matter. In Bangladesh, students are always into these kinds of pressure receiving from institutions, teachers, and parents. Thus, this test pressure is distorting students' learning styles as well. Students who are not into lecture based instruction or memorization, are bound to put themselves into the followed trend, and finally, loses the interest and learning aptitude. Distortion of students' own learning style and interest, I think, is the most severe effect among all the problems. Figure 4, 5 & 6 are presenting the data of the learning preferences of different students. Though CLT has been introduced, and students are discouraged for memorization, translation and traditional lecture based method, most of the students are still into it without caring about the consequences.

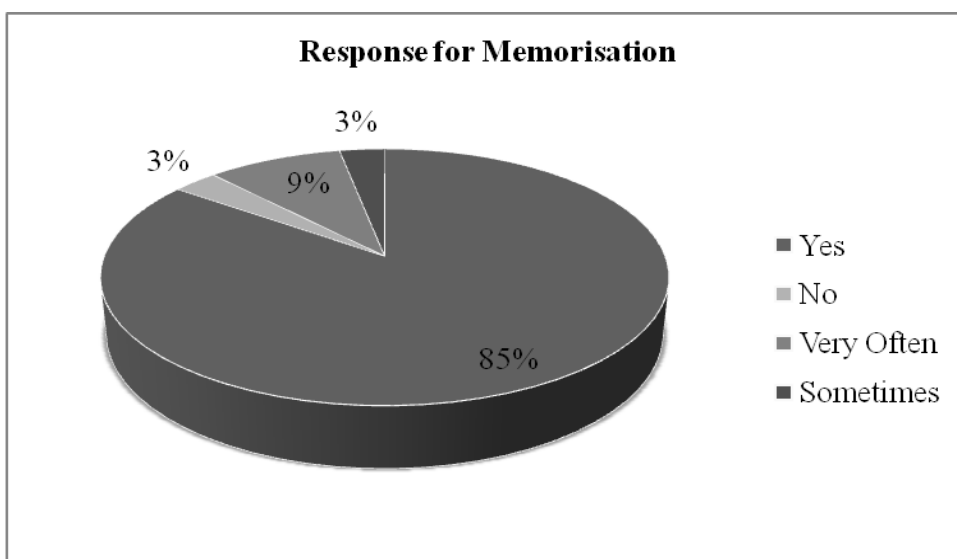


Figure 4.

Percentage of Students Who Prefer Memorization

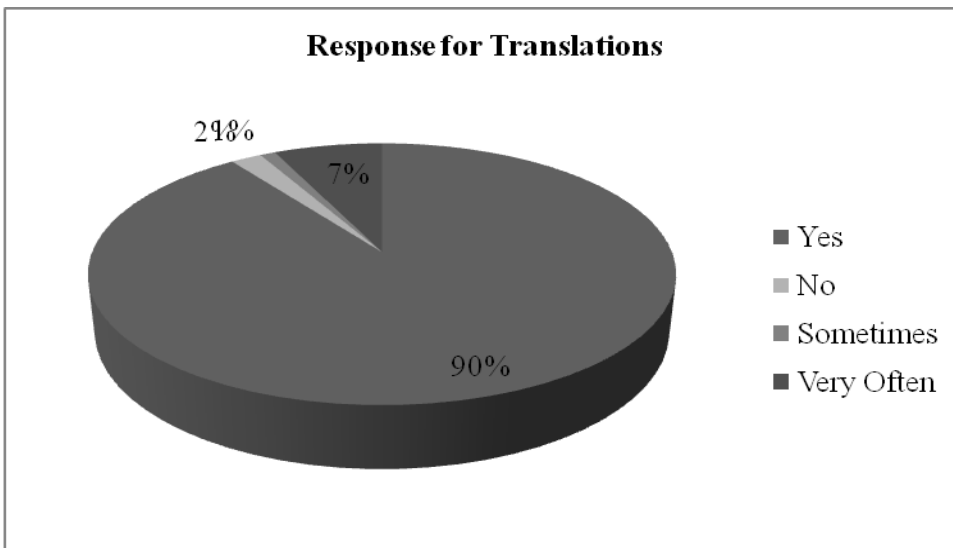


Figure5. Percentage of Students Who Prefer Translations

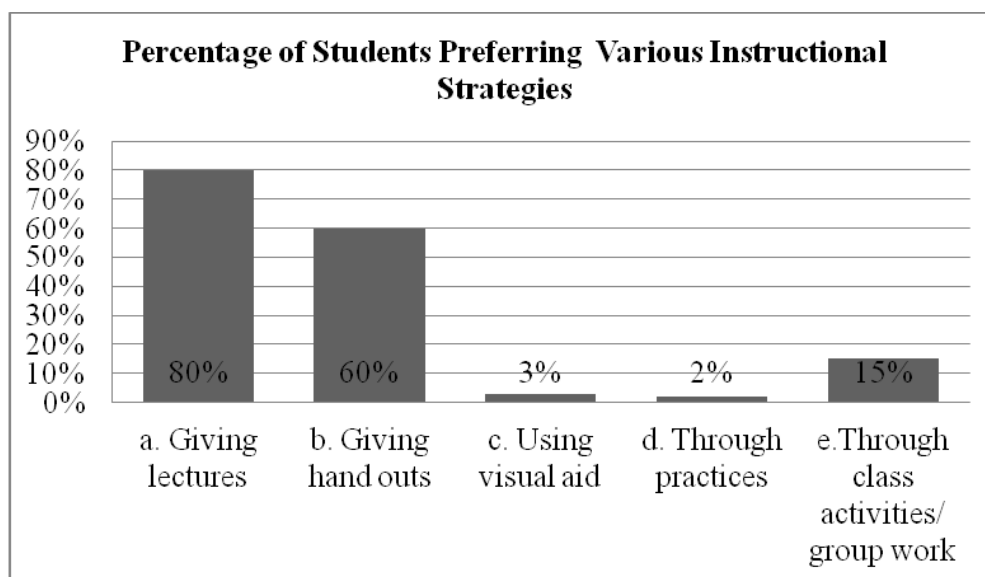


Figure 6. Percentage of Students Preferring Various Instructional Strategies

Figure 4 and 5 show 85% students still prefer memorization, and 90% students like translations. Figure 6 reflects, students still prefer traditional teaching method to new participatory methods. A very few students opined for participatory methods. So, this kind of students can neither learn

anything properly nor perform better in the examination. As a result, their learning gets hindered. These findings actually support the hypothesis of this research.

Effect on learner's affective filters. In Bangladesh, a student has to face the pressure and loads of high-stake tests at the very early years of his/her academic life. It starts at the age of five, and it continues for rest of the years. For some, it starts earlier. Moreover, there are public examinations starting from class five. The pressure of these high stakes tests is huge. At the age of 10, a student starts taking peer pressure, facing competition, and meeting the expectation of achieving good grades. Parents and teachers give huge pressure, and try to motivate them to be good at test. So, they concentrate more on getting score, rather than learning independently. They do not learn how to enjoy their study, and how to learn through entertainment. But, they learn how to create balance between own capacity for competing, and aspiration for meeting others' expectation. As a result, they suffer from anxiety, fear, and low motivation; and develop bitterness for study, hatred for examination, and a very negative feeling for parents, teachers and schools (e.g. Figure 7 &8).

The questionnaire-2 was distributed among students in order to collect their opinions and attitudes regarding test and test scores. The data shown in the figure 7 reflect the quantity of the students who are psychologically and physically affected by examination. 90% students have high level of anxiety and 71% has fear for examinations. 8% students get sick during the test. So, these tests are not having positive impact on students at all.

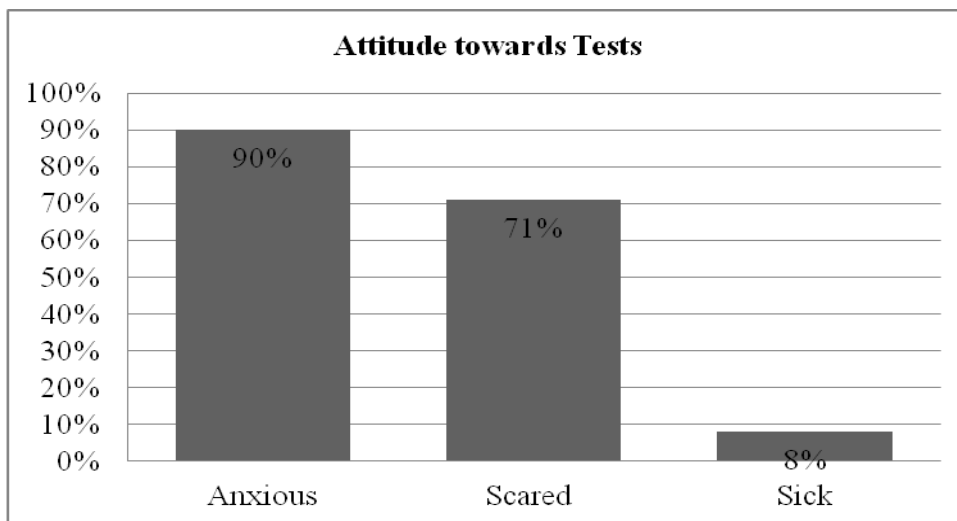
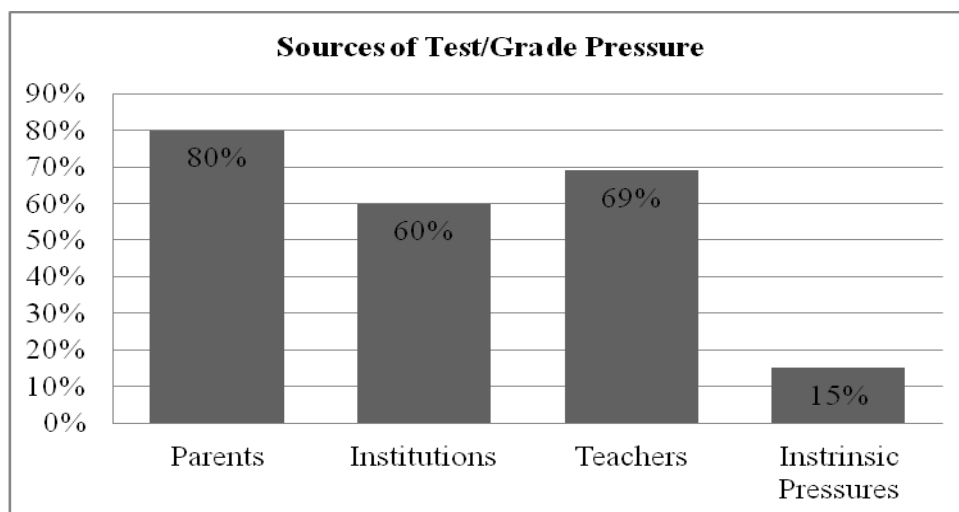


Figure7. Percentage of Students Who Feel Scared, Anxious & Get Sick about Test**Figure 8.** Percentage of Students Who Receive Test Pressure from Various Sources

Moreover, the data in figure 8 acknowledge the various sources from where students receive pressure for test scores. 80% students receive pressure for good test scores from the parents, 60% student from institutions, 69% from teachers. But, 15% students are intrinsically motivated to achieve good scores. All these mainly impede learning, rather than promoting it. When students are supposed to learn sportively, they are spending days and nights solving problems, memorizing and competing. So, from that stage, students develop a very negative feeling for English as it is not their mother tongue, but they have to give a lot of effort for it. So, the negative feeling that they develop about this language becomes a hindrance to learning it. It remains throughout the whole life for many. As a result, students hardly develop any language aptitude. They always feel being shackled in expectations, and pressure of examination. Some develop psychological trauma nowadays. A teacher, in Smith et al study (1987, p 217), has said “test injures pupils’ psychological well being and sense of themselves as a competent learner” (cited in Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990, p 8). He adds, some students might get sick, feel vomiting and have stomach trouble. These develop from a tendency to avoid, or refuse exam. Thus, this psychological disorder obviously can create physical problem as well. As we know, having a positive attitude towards a language can increase the rate of acquisition or learning of

language highly. The reverse, of course, impedes. So, dependency on testing creates hatred for testing and learning. Instead of developing communicative competency, students develop psychological trauma.

Test consumes learning and teaching time. Because of the dependency on testing, it has been found that testing consumes learner's maximum time for learning. Apart from the high stake tests, there are many other terminal examinations, class tests, quizzes and presentations. Smith et al (1989, p 267), in their study of high stakes examination in two elementary schools, found that "somewhere between two to four weeks was spent on testing and test preparation" (cited in Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990, p 4). In our context, it is more than that. Most of the teachers start taking preparation and make the student prepared for the test two or three months before the test. For English, it starts earlier. 99% of the teachers involve the students in test preparation practice examinations during the test or just before the test. So, teaching which leads towards the testing, and depends on testing not only is based on and controlled by the testing but also is full of some other practice tests for the upcoming test. Among all these tests, it is hardly possible to find real time for learning and teaching. Therefore, learning gets hampered.

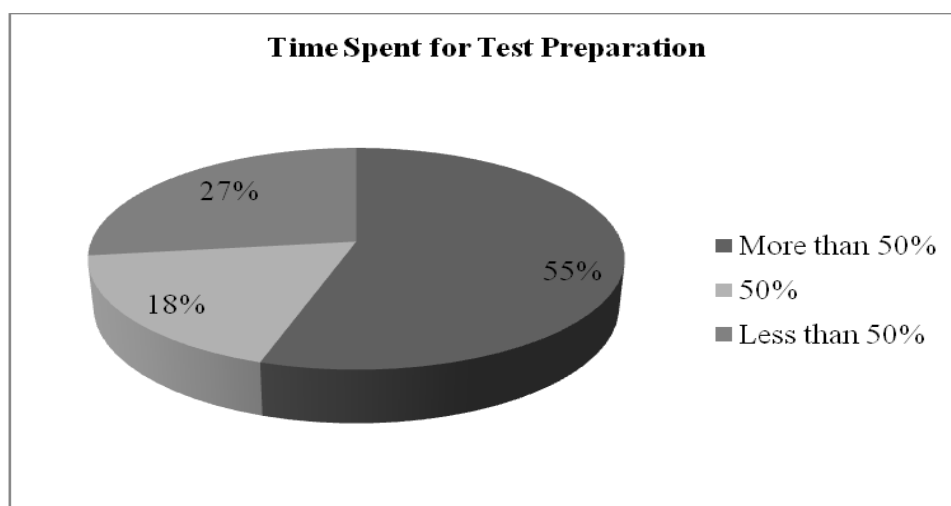


Figure 9. Percentage of Teachers Spending Class Time for Test Preparation

Figure 9 shows the percentage of the teachers who talk about their own time that they spend for test preparation. 55% English teachers spend more than 50% time of their total class time in test preparation. 18% teachers spend 50% and 27% teachers spend less than 50% class time in test

preparation. Therefore, teachers hardly can concentrate on students' real learning and knowledge.

Impact of testing on institutions. Testing affects schools, colleges and universities as well as affects those who are involved with the institutions, such as, administrations, teachers and students. We have already found that testing affects classroom organization, teaching evaluation, curriculum decision, and the overall learning environment. As teachers know that important decisions will be taken being influenced by the test scores, teachers teach students to the test. To make students skilled in test items, teachers train the students in testing formats. According to Smith et al (1987, cited in Herman, Dreyfus & Golan, 1990), testing affects the staffs and administration by creating tension among them. Actually the reputation, promotion, and evaluation of a teacher, a principal and a school are influenced by the test performance of their students. Sometimes, some unexpected occurrences happen, such as, the dismissal or suspension of a teacher or a principal or any other staffs. It creates anxiety inside the administration which create a great impact on teaching pedagogy and curriculum. In other words, the institution demands good results of the students from the teachers. The parents want the same thing. As a result, teachers feel pressurized for maintaining their position while meeting their demands. 4% of the teachers participated in the survey reveal that they feel pressurized to improve the test scores of the students because the test performance of the students help to improve their reputation or represent their professional success.

Socio-economical effect. "Washback is inextricably linked to the social and educational contexts in which test is administered" (Shih, 2007, p 137). Setting many tests, organizing tests, and maintaining test administration invite administrative, social, economical and political involvement. For example, publishing result of public examination is a media issue now. If a school has good record of result, it will get fame and name in the media and in the country, and the administration will be happy. Moreover, if there is great percentage of good result, it becomes a political success in Bangladesh as well. Consequently, this creates a huge pressure on administration of the institution, and the policy makers. Shohamy (2001) has pointed out that tests are frequently used as instrument of educational policy, and this can be powerful (cited in Prapphal, 2011). 96% teachers in Bangladesh participated in the survey of this study opined that they always get pressure from their institutions for improving test scores (e.g. figure 10). They also receive pressure from the parents, students. 2% teachers have peer pressure from their colleagues to improve the test score of their students. Consequently, there is a huge pressure everywhere

under which real learning is losing its status. 3% teachers have pressure from other sources, such as, from media, government, reputation, promotion. But, this creates some negative impact among the people in education system. Thus, it has an adverse effect on teaching and learning.

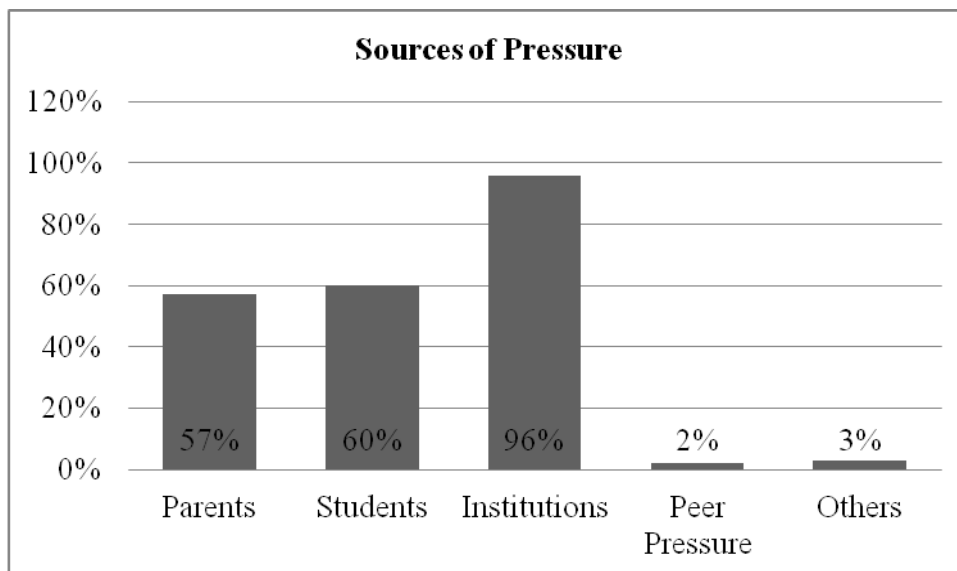


Figure 10. Percentage of Teachers Receiving Pressure for Improving Test Scores from Various Sources

Effects on parenting. Parenting is the most important source of someone's learning. Parents always dream for children's education, and in our social context, parents have great expectation regarding it. In Bangladesh, parents become so desperate about their children's study, especially, about the result that they forget to give them real parenting and support. At the age of 3, a student starts sitting for the examinations when s/he does not even understand what s/he has to eat; and parents become desperate and tensed about their test scores. Parents, consciously or unconsciously, are introducing their children with the hideous sense of competition of doing well in the tests, and getting good scores at the very early stage of their children's lives. With this high pressure, a student struggles throughout his/her student life to get a good score. Most of the parents continuously judge their children's merit and knowledge through their results. They always set a goal for their children. They hardly know what they are learning, but all they do care is their scores. Without a good score, a student cannot be considered as a good child to his/her parents. With that pressure, a student just thinks about the test, and expects good test preparation from the teachers, and prepares himself/herself for the test. They do not care about learning. For learning a language, this pressure can never create a positive scenario for a student. Most of the students participated in the survey say that their parents are highly concerned about their test scores. The data in Figure 11

reflect parents' attitudes towards testing and test scores. Thus, even parenting is getting paralyzed (e.g. Figure11).

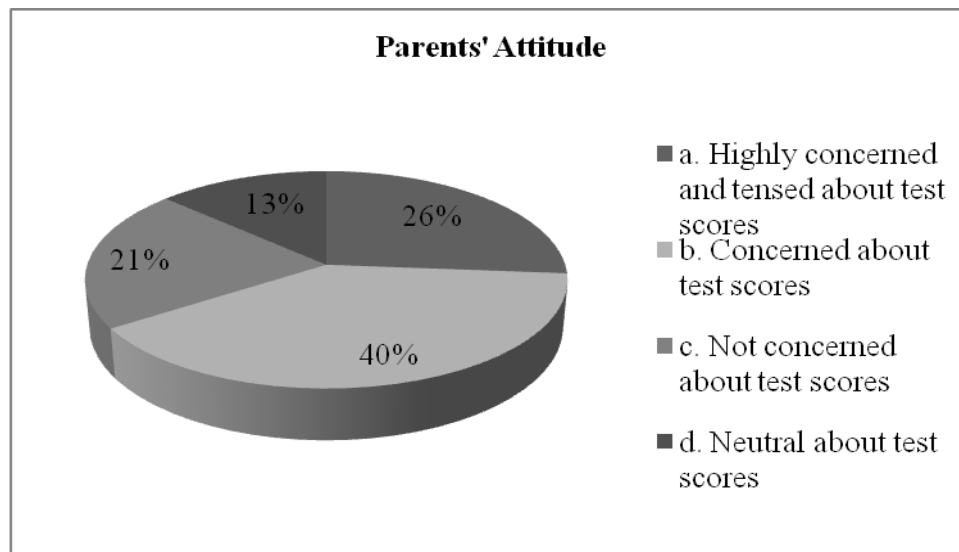


Figure11. Percentage of Parents with Various Attitudes for Tests and Test Scores of Their Children

It shows 40% parents are highly concerned about their children's test score, 26% are only normally concerned. Their high concern also makes student valuing test scores rather than learning.

Conclusion

All the findings which are presented and discussed above show the major findings of the research. These findings highly align with the research questions of the paper. Language testing in Bangladesh has created such a scenario where everything is happening centering on testing. This idea of testing is imbedded in the language teaching curriculum in such a way that without testing, the teaching seems incomplete and paralyzed. Students do not want to come to school or college, parents cannot rely on the teachers, and the institutions cannot think of any teaching pedagogy omitting testing. It has actually constructed our point of view regarding teaching and testing which is very difficult to change. The survey shows how much such dependency can have an impact on English language teaching and learning. As a result, English as a

language still resides outside the learning boundary of most of the students. Instead of promoting learning, testing scenario in Bangladesh is creating a great impediment for language learning. Therefore, the nearest solution that can be applicable easily is to change the typical traditional testing and assessment approach. Otherwise, this imperfect learning and teaching circumstances will continue.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire 1

About you

- a. Which level are you teaching at? school/ college/ university
- b. How long have you been teaching language?

You can answer in any form. Full sentences may not be required all the time. Keywords will do.

Questionnaire for teachers

1. To what extent do you (as a teacher) feel pressure to improve test scores?
2. From which source do you (as a teacher) get the pressure? (You can put tick(√) on more than one)
 - a) Institution
 - b) Students
 - c) Parents
 - d) Media
 - e) Peer-pressure
3. Others- specify.....
4. How much attention do your institutions (school/ college/ university) give to test scores?

5. What is the influence of testing on your instructional planning?
6. How do you test the language skills of your students? Do you have scope to focus on all four skills? Do your test items focus on them equally?
7. How much class time do you spend on test preparation? (In percentage %)
8. Do you think testing creates negative pressure on the teachers and students? Does it hamper learning sometimes? If yes, to what extent?
9. Do you think our language teaching mainly concentrates on testing and good scores rather than language learning?
10. What are teachers' attitudes (your attitudes) about testing?
11. Do you ever have to concise the language syllabus in class because of the test preparation?
12. As a teacher, do you ever feel any kind of pressure to improve test scores of your students related to test score trends?
13. Do you face any kind of pressure or problem while meeting the test targets? Please write in details.
14. Do you think it is possible to put together facilitating language learning and taking test preparation? To what extent? Do you face any problem while doing this?
15. How is school attention to test score related to test score trends?
16. Do you ever have to change the instructional strategy because of the test pressure? How often does it happen? To what extent do you have to go through such changes?
17. Do you find any significant correlation existing among school characteristics, teachers' attitude and testing variables?
18. Do you ever have to fragment your teaching knowledge due to test pressure to meet the test target?
19. What kind of connection should exist between teaching and testing to promote language learning?
20. What kind of students' attitude do you observe regarding testing and test scores in class?
21. What kind of parents' attitudes do you observe regarding testing and test scores? Do you feel any pressure from them? If yes, what kind of pressure?

Appendix 2

Questionnaires 2- for Students:

1. What do you dislike most about your study? (You can put tick on more than one)

- a) Classes
 - b) Home works
 - c) Assignments
 - d) Presentations
 - e) Project works/ Group Works
 - f) Examinations
 - g) Grades
2. What does make you most worried and tensed? (You can put tick on more than one)
- a) Classes
 - b) Home works
 - c) Assignments
 - d) Presentations
 - e) Project works/ Group Works
 - f) Examinations
 - g) Grades
3. From which do you feel the highest pressure? (You can put tick on more than one)
- a) Classes
 - b) Home works
 - c) Assignments
 - d) Presentations
 - e) Project works/ Group Works
 - f) Examinations
 - g) Grades
4. Does your exam make you anxious, worried?
- a) Yes b) No
5. Do you ever feel sick because of the test pressure?
- a) Yes b) No c
6. Do you feel any pressure of examination in your language classes?
- A) Yes b) No
7. Do you get scared of your test scores or grades?
- a) Yes b)No
8. How do you love to get your class instruction? Or how do you understand better? (You can put tick on more than one)

- a) When teacher gives lecture
 - b) When teacher gives hand outs
 - c) When teacher teaches through visual aid like, pictures images, videos
 - d) When teachers teach you through practices and worksheets
 - e) When teachers make you participating in class activities/ group works.
9. Do you like to memorise?
- a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes, d) very often
10. Can you remember the meaning of the vocabulary that you memorise?
- a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes, d) very often
11. Do you like translations?
- a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes, d) very often
12. What is your parents' attitude for test scores/ grade?
- a) do really care and often get tensed about test scores
 - b) do care about scores but do not get tensed
 - c) do not care about test scores
 - d) neutral attitude
13. What do your parents ask you often regarding your study?
- a) Classes, b) teachers c) teaching style d) exam e) grades
14. Do your teachers care a lot about your test scores?
- a) Yes b) no c) Sometimes
15. Will you like it if your teacher will teach something that is not directly connected to your tests?
- a) Yes b) no c) sometimes
16. Do you think teachers should only teach the things that are important for examinations?
- a) Yes b) no c) do not know
17. Do you think getting a good score decides how much good a student is in English?
- a) Yes b) No c) Sometimes
18. Do you care a lot about testing and good grade?
- a) Yes b) No c) sometimes
19. Which form of assessment do you like most? (You can put tick on more than one)
- a) Assignment
 - b) Homework
 - c) Class performance

- d) Testing
- e) Presentation
- f) Project work

Assessing the Auditory Perceptual Skills of Gifted and Non-Gifted Turkish-Speaking Child L2 Learners of English

YaseminYildiz

(yasemin.yildiz@buid.ac.ae)

The British University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Buket Kömürcü

Maltepe University, Turkey

Abstract

This paper reports on the auditory perceptual skills of child Turkish learners of English in differentiating native and non-native consonantal minimal pairs in word-initial and final positions. The study intends to enhance our understanding of a less analyzed population sample, namely gifted learners. The subjects were divided into two groups and (sub) groups according to their age and ability: Group (1a): 10 *normal* 4 year olds and Group (1b): 10 *normal* 6 year olds; and Group (2a): 10 *gifted* 6-7 year olds and Group (2b): 10 *gifted* 9-10 year olds. The study has revealed two key findings. Firstly, Groups (1a) and (2a) outperformed Groups (1b) and (2b) in word-final non-native voice distinctions. Secondly, the gifted outperformed the normal children, yet their performance was shaped by similar first language constraints as Group (1). The study presents pedagogical and linguistic implications with regard to gifted learners. The Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best, 1994) will guide the study.

Key words: Speech perception, Perceptual assimilation model, WISC-R

Introduction

Age has been considered an important condition both in first (L1) and second language acquisition (L2). The role of maturational constraints on first and second language development is best captured by the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (Lenneberg, 1967). The CPH holds that there is an optimal age for language acquisition (Scovel, 2000) and this window of opportunity ends about the age of six, with the establishment of cerebral lateralization of language function. Although it has been argued that this critical period ends by puberty, there appears to be no clear consensus in relation to the exact age for the critical period, with some L2 studies claiming it to be age twelve (e.g. Birdsong, 2006), while other studies claiming it to be as young as age six, especially for L2 phonology (e.g. Long, 1990). Previous studies have shown in comparison to adult learners, child L2 learners are able to attain native-like pronunciation (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Flege et al., 2006; Moyer, 1999, 2004). This study identifies three limitations on the existing studies which measures the age effects on L2 phonology. Firstly, the sample population dominantly compares child (or adolescent) learners with adult L2 learners, yet there are limited studies which compare different age groups across child L2 learners. Secondly, these comparisons rely heavily on L2 learners with normal language development, and whether these findings also hold for learners with special educational needs is an area that has not yet been explored. Lastly, the previous studies have prioritized L2 learner's 'production' skills as opposed to their 'perceptual' skills; hence there are limited studies which focus on infant's native and non-native auditory discrimination skills (e.g. Tsao, Liu, & Kuhl, 2004). Central to this study, speech perception is closely linked to the field of phonetics, phonology, and cognitive psychology. Research in speech perception seeks to understand the recognition of speech sounds, and one's hearing capacity. Speech production, by contrast, involves the production of spoken language- i.e. articulation of sounds.

Based on the aforementioned limitations, this study has two broad aims; these are respectively 1) to examine the role of age, by focusing on two different age groups of young Turkish-speaking L2 learners of English and 2) to compare the speech auditory skills of normally developing and gifted child L2 learners. In relation to Turkish L2 learners of English, there are limited studies which examine L2 learner's production as well as speech perceptual skills. For instance, Yildiz (2006) examined the acquisition of the English interdental fricative /θ/ by Turkish child and adult learners. This target phoneme is absent in the Turkish consonant inventory, thus Turkish is often regarded as a '[t] language' (e.g. Yavaş, 2006) - i.e. [t] replaces the L2 phoneme /θ/. The L2 data in this study was elicited through both spontaneous (i.e. production) and controlled (i.e. perception) speech. In the spontaneous speech observation [t] substitution was common for both child and adult L2 learners. Interestingly, however, [s] substitution was also observed in the controlled speech, particularly with child learners. This finding

confirms that child L2 learner's perceptual abilities outperformed the adult learners, since [s] substitution is phonetically closer to the target phoneme, with both sharing the [+strident] distinctive feature. The study further suggests the possibility that *phonetic deafness* and incorrect (or limited) phonetic input are some of the potential factors responsible for the underachievement of the adult L2 learners. In another study, Komurcu and Yildiz (2011) compared the auditory speech perceptual skills of child L2 learners of English between the ages of four and six and found that the six-year-olds outperformed the four-year-olds for place and voice distinction, whereas the four-year-olds performed better with word-final non-native voice distinctions. This study indicated that the four-year-olds' L1 parameters, such as the final devoicing rule, is not yet set in the same way as the six-year-olds.

Review of the Related Literature

First Language Acquisition

Infants in L1 acquisition are automatically born with a perceptual capacity that is especially designed for listening to speech. In other words, speech perception units specific to language are assumed to exist innately in a new born (e.g., Eimas, 1978, 1982; Werker, Gilbert, Humphrey, & Tees, 1981). Further, according to the Ecological Theory (Gibson, 1979) the infant is biologically pre-adjusted to the ecological niche into which it is born. All humans experience a silent period before starting to produce certain sounds. Newborns respond differently to human voices than to other sounds, they show a desire for the language of their parents over other languages by the time they are two days old, and they can recognize their mother's voice within a matter of weeks. As of one month of age children start to distinguish among certain sounds. For instance, infants are very sensitive to the vowel contrasts in their L1 by 6 months of age; and also sensitive to their L1 consonant contrasts by 10–12 months (Best & McRoberts, 2003; Best, McRoberts, LaFleur, & Silver-Isenstadt, 1995). Perceptual development includes the higher-order cognitive functions, such as awareness, recognition, discrimination and patterning (Lezak, 1995). During infancy and early childhood, attention and perception undergo rapid development. In fact, in perceptual development infants can differentiate speech sounds as early as 1 to 2 months of age. Contrary, visual capacities are limited in early infancy. Lecanuet (1993) indicated that the auditory activities appear in the matrix in the last three months of pregnancy, when middle ear structures are normally completed. Visual activities, by contrast, cannot begin to construct perception until after birth.

The speech sound signal contains a number of acoustic cues that are used in speech perception. Speech sounds that are differentiated by the cues belong to different phonetic categories. For example, one of the most widely used cues in speech is Voice Onset Time (VOT). VOT is a primary cue signalling the difference between voiced and voiceless stop consonants, such as /b/ and /p/. In one of the earliest studies, which were conducted within the VOT framework, Eimas, Siqueland, Jusczyk, & Vigorito (1971) focused on sound contrasts, including consonantal distinctions. Infant discrimination capacity was shown for voicing distinctions, such as between [ta]/[da] or [pa]/[ba]. Similarly, Aslin, Pisoni, Hennessy, and Perey (1981) found that young infants can discriminate both native and non-native phonetic contrasts. The overall research findings indicate that although infants are born with the ability to discriminate the universal set of phonetic distinctions, this ability declines as the L1 develops (e.g. Strange, 1980). The implications of this perceptual limitation through time cannot be dismissed, particularly in relation to L2 acquisition.

Second Language Acquisition

The notion of ‘earlier is better’ has been considered a major factor in L2 acquisition and this is also supported by the CPH. According to Penfield and Roberts (1959), a child’s brain is more flexible compared with that of an adult, and before the age of 9 a child is better able to accomplish the ability of learning an L2. Moreover, the auditory perceptual abilities of infants (both in native and non-native context) are at a high level in their early infancy, and they can discriminate a variety of speech sounds (phonemes) that are used not only in a native sound context, but also within non-native sounds (Kuhl et al., 1992). However, as the infant passes the critical period his/her ability to discriminate phonemes becomes language specific and this in return may hinder their L2 perceptual skills. Strange (1995) provides further support for this supposition “perceptual difficulties are not due to a loss of sensory capabilities, but rather reflect perceptual attunement to phonetic information that is phonologically relevant in their native language” (p. 79).

Giftedness and Second Language Acquisition

Gifted children are the individuals whose capacity levels are determined as they have high level of capacity more than their peers by the experts in terms of general and special skills. The general perception

is that gifted children have no special needs that merit serious clinical attention. At present there stands to be no one definition of “gifted”, “talented” or “giftedness” that is universally accepted since this very much depends on the instrument used for identification (Gallagher, 2008). The Marland report (1972) provided the first formal definition of giftedness:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society (p.5).

According to TÜİK (Turkish Institution of Statistics, 2012) when we consider the birth rate as 1.250.000 per year in Turkey, it is predicted to exist approximately 18.750.000 children between the ages 3-18. Therefore, based on these rates the total population of the gifted children in Turkey can be estimated as 375.000-562.000 and that is about 2-3% of the child population. In Turkey, there are different private schools and foundations which provide education for gifted and talented pupils. These can be classified as Science and Art Centres, Education Programs for Talented Students (EPTS), TEV İnanc Türkiye Private High School (TEVITOL), The Centre for Gifted and Talented and Inonu Children’s University, NB Interest and Ability Domains Development Program, Weekend Special Ability Groups (WSG), Summer and Winter Special Clusters (SWSC) (for a review see Baykoç, Uyaroğlu, Aydemir, & Seval, 2012). There are no special programs for gifted students at primary (K-8) levels in public schools (Sak, 2006). Among these schools and foundations the only official organization under the control of the government for the education of gifted children is Science and Arts Centers (Ataman, 2003). These are nationally recognized centers with experts who develop and help the delivery of gifted and talented education in Turkey. Today, there are 61 Science and Arts Centers in Turkey which embodies approximately 10,000 students.

The current literature L2 acquisition studies have focused heavily on typical populations and studies focusing on atypical learners, such as those with special educational needs are limited in numbers and scope. The studies specific to Turkish children with special educational needs are also heavily focusing on children with phonological disorders, and only examining their performance in their L1 (e.g. Topbaş & Konrot, 1998; Kopkallı-Yavuz & Topbaş, 1998; Topbaş & Dinçer, 2002; Yavaş & Topbaş, 2004). At present there stands to be no studies which have focused on Turkish gifted children’s perceptual skills, both in L1 and L2 acquisition. Although a number of studies within Turkey context have explored the psychological, social, and mathematical perceptions of gifted children (e.g. Davis & Rimm, 1998;

Burak, 1995; Şahin, 1995; Renzulli, 1999; Yeşilova, 1997; Gallagher, 2000; Schultz, 2000; Diffly, 2002; Atalay, 2000; Cürebal, 2004; Tarhan, 2005; Uzun, 2006; Budak, 2007), there are limited studies on how gifted children learn foreign languages, including English (e.g. İspinar Akcayoğlu, 2011). This study will be of its first kind, in which the auditory perceptual skills of gifted and non-gifted Turkish-speaking learners of English will be documented.

Perceptual Assimilation Model

The two main non-native speech perception models which are relevant to the scope of this study includes Flege's (1995; 1999; 2002) L2 Speech Learning Model (SLM) and Best's Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best, 1994a, 1994b, 1995) (PAM). Both models posit that the pronunciation difficulty encountered by L2 learners is determined by perceptual limitations. PAM in that sense is an extension of PAM since it also classifies the L2 sound contrasts into categories according to their similarities and dissimilarities, within the native and non-native sound context. These classifications signify how the contrasts are assimilated into native categories, whether L2 sounds are perceived as speech or non-speech sounds. PAM explains the L2 contrasts under 3 categories (Pilus, 2003, p. 3):

- 1- *Two-Category (TC)*: members of the L2 contrast assimilate to two different native categories, that is, one member assimilates to one native category and the other one to another category.
- 2- *Category goodness (CG)*: each member of the L2 contrast assimilates to the same one native category with one of the members being more deviant from the native sound than the other.
- 3- *Single Category (SC)*: both L2 phones assimilate to one phoneme in the native category and both are equally deviant from the native sound.

These L2 contrasts are graded according to their degree of contrasts between the L1 and L2 sounds. For instance, if the phones involved should assimilate to two different and easily discriminable native phoneme discrimination should be possible (TC). If the L2 sounds are similar discrimination is assumed to be moderate (CG). Discrimination in (SC) contrast is predicted to be poor as the two sounds are either equally different from, or similar to the native sound. Discrimination in TC contrast is therefore easier to

predict, than CG and SC contrasts. The degree of difficulty in discriminating the L2 sounds, particularly for Turkish learners of English, is discussed in the results section.

A Contrastive Analysis of English and Turkish Phonemics

This study will focus on the discrimination of English consonant minimal pairs by Turkish child L2 learners. Turkish exhibits the following consonants /p, b, m, f, v, t, d, s, z, n, r, l, ʈ, ɟ, j, k, ɰ, h, ʁ/, while the consonant inventory of English is the following /p, b, m, f, v, ʈ, ɟ, t, d, s, z, n, w, r, l, ʈ, ɟ, j, k, ɰ, h, ʁ/. The English consonants in bold are not exhibited in the Turkish phonemic inventory. This classification represents a contrastive analysis between the native (Turkish) and non-native (English) consonant phonemes that are used in the study. The phonological *final devoicing rule* in Turkish is of particular importance, as this may affect the learner's perceptual skills and lead to negative transfer, as they may not be able to differentiate word-final voicing contrasts. According to this rule, Turkish does not permit voiced obstruent phonemes at coda position, such as /b, d, dʒ, ɰ/. This is why for example the final voiced stop consonant in the Arabic loanword *cevab* 'answer' and *mesud* 'happy' is devoiced in Turkish and modified to *cevap* and *mesut*.

The Study

Based on the aforementioned rationale, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the symmetries and asymmetries between both groups and sub-groups for place and voice discrimination?

RQ2: To what extent is the Speech Assimilation Model applicable to gifted and non-gifted child L2 learners?

The Setting

Based on the 2012 statistics Turkey provides education to a total population of 16,905,143 students between early childhood and secondary education in general schools and vocational education programs

(Ministry of National Education, 2012). Additionally, 1,134 specialized schools provide education for 173,507 pupils with special needs. According to the *Decree Law on Special Education No: 573 Article-24*) all pre-primary, primary, secondary schools and non-formal education institutions in both private and state sectors have to ensure provision of special education services for individuals in need of special education in their surroundings. The current policies provide inclusive education for the disadvantaged, both in private (mainly segregated) and public (mainly inclusive) schools.

Subjects

A total of forty subjects were divided into two main groups according to their learning ability- i.e. normal vs. gifted. These two groups were then divided into two sub-groups according to their age, as follows: Group (1a): 10 *normal* 4 year olds and Group (1b): 10 *normal* 6 year olds; and Group (2a): 10 *gifted* 6-7 year olds and Group (2b): 10 *gifted* 9-10 year olds. The gifted subjects are diagnosed with the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised* (WISC-R; Wechsler, 1974) intelligence test conducted in Turkish and attained a score of 125 and above. The Turkish version of WISC-R, which was standardized to Turkish by Savaşır and Şahin (1995), closely resembles the original version. The subjects represent a mixed sex population and their first language is Turkish. They are all attending the same private institution, in where the gifted are attending segregated classes, and they are all learning English as a Foreign Language. In order to maintain anonymity the subject's name and any other distinguishing features are not disclosed. Full parental consent has also been obtained in order to conduct the study.

Instrumentation and Procedure

Based on the contrastive analysis of the L1 and L2 the research designed and implemented an Auditory Discrimination Test (ADT) in order to measure the subjects' phonological awareness in spoken words. The stimulus consisted of twenty minimal pairs which were categorized under voice and place distinctions. The pairs were further grouped under native and non-native minimal pairs, and word-initial and word-final positions. Each stimulus was read aloud individually and the subject's responses were coded by the researcher. In order to ensure validity each protocol was carried out individually for each subject in a specially designated classroom.

Stimulus sets

The stimulus for this study consisted of a total of 37 minimal pairs (see 2-9) and categorized in according to two broad categories: 1) between-category discrimination (i.e. word-initial and word-final, and place and manner L2 contrastive consonants 2) within-category discrimination (i.e. native vs. non-native consonants). Those phonemes in bold font are absent in the Turkish phonemic inventory, while those minimal pairs which are underlined are not present in Turkish due to the final devoicing rule. Based on the predictions of PAM, the following hierarchy of difficulty could be posited in (1). This prediction assumes strong phonological influence from the native language and must be cautioned that the source support for PAM came primarily from adult listeners (e.g. Harnsberger, 2001; Best, McRoberts & Goodell, 2001). Child listeners, by contrast, are expected to be good for most native and non-native contrasts. Hence, whether the predictions in (1) hold for both gifted and non-gifted child learners will be tested and addressed in research question 2.

(1) PAM for non-native contrasts


- a. TC: with the /**ʈ**-**ʂ**/ pairs the L2 phonemes /**ʈ**/ and /**ʂ**/ respectively assimilates to the L1 phonemes /t/ and /d/
- b. CG: with the word initial and final pairs /t-**ʈ**/ the L2 phoneme assimilates to the similar L1 phoneme /t/; with the word final minimal pairs /b-t/ /k-**ʈ**/ /p-b/ the voiced counterpart assimilates to the voiceless L1 counterpart
- c. SG: with the /**w**-j/ and /r-**w**/ pairs the L2 phoneme /w/ may assimilate to the labiodental voiced fricative /v/ which is a deviant of the L2 phoneme.

(2) Voice distinction word-initial native sounds

- a. /**t**-j/ *cello- yellow*
- b. /z-s/ *zip-sip*
- c. /**t**-d[Ⓢ]/ *choke-joke*

d. /p-b/ *park-bark*



e. /s-z/ *sue-zoo*

f. /k-/ *kill-gill*

g. /t-d/ *toll-doll*

h. /f-v/ *fan-van*


(3) Voice distinction word-initial non-native sounds

a. /-/ *thigh-thy*

(4) Place distinction word-final native sounds

a. /t-k/ *tar-car*

b. /r-l/ *rot-lot*


c. /s-/ *save-shave*

d. /r-l/ *road-load*

e. /k-p/ *cat-pat*

f. /m-n/ *might-night*

(5) Place distinction word-initial non-native sounds and/or contrasts


a. /t-/ *tick-thick*

b. /w-j/ *wet-yet*

c. /r-w/ *rake-wake*

(6) Voice distinction word-final native sounds


a. /b-t/ *bet-bed*

b. /k-/ *buck-bug*



c. /p-b/ *lamp-lamb*

d. /z-s/ *buzz-bus*


e. /f-v/ *safe-save*

f. /k-/ *tuck-tug*

g. /p-b/ *cop-cob*


h. /t--d/ *batch-badge*


(7) Place (& Voice) distinction word-final non-native sounds

a. /s-/ *sooth-soothe*

(8) Place distinction word-final native sounds



a. /r-l/ *hear-heal*

b. /t-/ *rat-rash*

c. /s-/ *swiss-swish*


d. /k-t/ *arc-art*


e. /r-l/ *pier-peel*


f. /t--/ *match-mash*

g. /k-t/ *make-mate*

(9) Place distinction word-final non-native contrasts

a. /t-/ *pat-path*

b. /t-/ *bat-bath*

c. /t-/ *tent-tenth*

Findings and Discussion

Results of Question 1

In order to answer the first research question, the descriptive statistics for the overall correct scores for both groups are compared. Accordingly, the comparison within the groups is necessary to first understand the role of age and followed by this a comparison between two groups is made in order to understand the symmetries and asymmetries between gifted and non-gifted learners. The results in Table 1 show that Group (1a) outperformed Group (1b) in two categories: 1) place distinctions for both word initial and final positions; 2) voice distinctions at word-initial position. Contrary, Group (1a) outperformed Group (1b) for voice distinctions at word final position. This may be attributed to the fact that the no voiced coda constraint (final devoicing rule) is lowly ranked in the phonological grammar of Group (1a). Interestingly, Group (1a) also scored highest for voice distinction word final contrasts by 78%, while the Group (1b) scored the lowest by 72% which is a significant drop when compared to their voice distinction word initial score of 91%. The overall correct scores for the gifted students in Table 2, by contrast, indicate that Group (2a) outperformed Group (2b) in all four categorical contrasts. This difference is particularly observed with word-final contrasts. The findings for both groups also indicate that the auditory perceptual skills of the younger gifted learners are more advanced than the older learners.

The comparative scores for the gifted and non-gifted students indicate that gifted learners overall correct scores were significantly higher than the non-gifted learners in all four distinctions. In fact, Table 2 shows that Group (2a) scored 100% correct only for place distinction word final contrasts and 99% correct for voice distinction word-initial contrasts. Interestingly, however, Groups (2a&b) scored lowest for voice distinction word final contrast in where Group (2a) scored 95%, while Group (2b) scored 89%. This finding is also in line with the patterns observed with Group (1) and supports the notion that younger is better, since both Groups (1a) and (2a) outperformed Groups (1b) and (2b) for word final voice distinctions.

The findings within the non-gifted learners indicate that they scored higher with voicing distinctions, while the gifted learners scored higher with the place distinctions. This might indicate that the gifted learners are not only better equipped to use their auditory skills but can also utilize their visual cues and mimic the appropriate manner. In phonological theory, this is expressed by the Optimality-Theoretic constraint MIMIC-MANNER, which rules that the output is identical to the input in [manner] (Yip, 2006). This finding indicates the importance of audio-visual and native oral input (especially with younger L2 learners such as Group (1a) and (2a)) while teaching speaking and listening skills. Although the main focus of this paper is to examine *between group* variation, it is also important to acknowledge that *within group* variation was also observed. For instance, during the data collection procedure it was noticed that S1 and S3 from Group (2a) possessed some characteristics of hyperactivity,

and this may to some extent contaminated the findings (i.e. reduced the gap between the gifted and non-gifted learners and reduced the reliance on visual cues). This is attributed to the fact that these two exceptional children were fidgety and reluctant to maintain constant close eye contact during the ADT.

Similarly, a previous study conducted by Altun and Yazici (2010), which examined the differences between gifted and non-gifted Turkish-speaking children's learning styles, provided important findings for the current study. The findings showed that of the three measured types of learning styles (i.e. visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) the gifted learners preferred to use visual and kinaesthetic learning styles significantly more than the non-gifted. By contrast, the non-gifted children relied more on auditory skills. In connection with the current study, it is suggested that classroom pedagogy should promote the development and use of varying learning styles, not only for instruction but also for assessment and evaluation.

Voice Distinction Word Initial	4 YEAR OLDS										6 YEAR OLDS										Native Sounds	Place Distinction Word Initial	4 YEAR OLDS										6 YEAR OLDS									
	GENDER										GENDER												GENDER										GENDER									
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10			S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Native Sounds	cello-yello (y-j)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C			
	zip-sip (z-s)	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	choke-joke (*-j)	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	park-bark (p-b)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	sue-zoo (s-z)	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	kill-gill (k-g)	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	cold-gold (k-g)	C	C	C	C	I	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	roll-doll (t-d)	C	C	C	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	fan-van (f-v)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	thing-thy (*-j)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
Responses: Correct: 75	Incorrect: 25										Correct: 91										Incorrect: 9																					
Native Sounds	bet-bed (t-d)	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	back-bug (k-g)	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	lamp-lamb (p-b)	C	C	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	buzz-buss (z-s)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	safe-sure (f-v)	C	C	I	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	tuck-tug (k-g)	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	cop-cob (p-b)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	pick-big (k-g)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	batch-budge (*-j)	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	sooth-soothe (*-j)	C	C	I	C	C	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
Responses: Correct: 78	Incorrect: 22										Correct: 72										Incorrect: 28																					
Total Correct Responses for 4 year olds: 153										Total correct responses for 6 year olds:163																																

Voice Distinction Word Initial	4 YEAR OLDS										6 YEAR OLDS										Native Sounds	Place Distinction Word Final	4 YEAR OLDS										6 YEAR OLDS									
	GENDER										GENDER												GENDER										GENDER									
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10			S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Native Sounds	tar-car (t-k)	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	rot-hot (r-l)	I	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	I	I	C	C				
	save-shave (*-sh)	C	C	I	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	road-load (r-l)	C	I	I	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	cat-pat (k-p)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	might-night (m-n)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	tick-thick (t-j)	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	wet-yet (w-j)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	rake-wake (r-w)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	Responses: Correct: 60	Incorrect: 30																				Correct: 76										Incorrect: 14										
Native Sounds	hear-heal (r-l)	C	C	I	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
	rat-rash (t-sh)	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	swiss-swash (s-sh)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	arc-art (k-t)	C	I	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	pie-pee (r-l)	C	C	I	C	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	match-mash (*-sh)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	make-mate (k-t)	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	pat-path (t-j)	C	I	I	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	bat-bath (t-j)	C	I	I	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C					
	tent-tenth (t-j)	C	C	I	I	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				
Responses: Correct: 55	Incorrect: 45										Correct: 77										Incorrect: 23																					
Total Correct Responses for 4 year olds: 85										Total correct responses for 6 year olds: 153																																

Table 1.

Non-gifted

Voice Distinction Word Initial	Native Sounds	6-7 YEAR OLDS										9-10 YEAR OLDS										Voice Distinction Word Final	Native Sounds	6-7 YEAR OLDS										9-10 YEAR OLDS																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																								
		GENDER	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M			F	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M

Table 2.

Gifted

Results of Question 2

To answer the second research question, first we need to categorize the non-native minimal pairs according to the predictions of PAM, as depicted below:

(10) Minimal pair groupings according to PAM

- a. TC: with the /-★/ pairs the L2 phonemes /-/ and /★/ respectively assimilates to the L1 phonemes /t/ and /d/
- b. CG: with the word initial and final pairs /t-•/ the L2 phoneme assimilates to the similar L1 phoneme /t/; with the word final minimal pairs /b-t/ /k-☒/ /p-b/ the voiced counterpart assimilates to the voiceless L1 counterpart
- c. SG: with the /w-j/ and /r-w/ pairs the L2 phoneme /w/ may assimilate to the labiodental voiced fricative /v/ which is a deviant of the L2 phoneme.

The findings in Tables 1 and 2 show that Group (2a) outperformed Groups (1a&b) and (2b) for TC and CG contrasts for the /t-•/ minimal pairs. For the word final minimal pairs /b-t/ /k-☒/ /p-b/ in the CG group both Groups (2a&b) outperformed Group (1). Similarly, Groups (2a&b) outperformed Groups (1a&b) in SG contrasts. This indicates that age is not an indicative factor for success, since the gifted students can better perceive non-L1 voice and place contrasts for all three categories. It is evident however that within Group (1), Group (1a) outperformed Group (b) for TC and SG contrasts in word-initial positions only. With the CG contrasts, Group (1a) outperformed Group (1b) for the word-final minimal pairs and therefore supports the notion that younger is better.

Apart from the native and non-native contrasts it is also important to note that sonority (Selkirk, 1984) may also be a potential factor in determining the differing abilities for each stimulus. The sonority ranking for speech sounds in English depicted in (11) shows that- from left to right- approximants are more sonorous than plosives. The sonority scale generates the expectation that the subjects will better perceive the sonorous consonants. This may help to explain why the non-native word-final minimal pairs such as /b-t/, /p-b/, /k-☒/ are challenging as they are low in sonority, while /w-j/, /r-w/, /-★/, and /t-•/ are high in sonority and thus easier perceived. The gifted learners in this sense can be considered to be more faithful to OT constraints such as MIMIC-MANNER and MIMIC-VOICE (The output is identical to the input in voice), and therefore outperform the non-gifted learners for non-native and less sonorous minimal pairs.

(11) Sonority scale (Plag, Braun, Lappe, Schramm, 2009, p.62)

Vowels >[w], [j] >[☐] >[l] > nasal consonants > fricatives, affricates > plosives



Low sonority

High sonority

Limitations and Future Research Directions

A primary strength of this study is that it has yielded unforeseen data which provides a detailed analysis of the auditory perceptual skills of gifted and non-gifted children between the ages of 4-10. As with all research, however, this study has several limitations that merit some discussion. The first limitation relates to the selection criteria used for identifying the gifted students, that is namely the WISC-R test. Standardized achievement tests such as WISC-R provide excellent indicators of academic talent and produce scores based on national norms. Two important problems should be considered relative to standardized achievement test scores. The first concerns the extent to which these standardized intelligence tests can measure the gifted children's perceptual (i.e. cognition) skills. Gifted children often possess abilities in areas that are well outside the realm of standardized tests. In particular, Osborn (2001) makes an important distinction between 'low' and 'high' ceiling tests, in where the latter is more challenging than the former. Along with this analogy Osborn claims that intelligent tests such WISC-R and Stanford-Binet IV are designed to be most useful for children who are close to average and are less useful for gifted children and therefore low ceiling. The original creator of the Wechsler tests, David Wechsler, has also claimed that his tests are for clinical purposes only and not specifically designed for psychologists (Kaufman, 1994, p.14). The second interrelated limitation is conceptually bound. It is recommended that in the educational settings a distinction is made between 'cognition' and 'intelligence'. Though both these terms are considered synonymous, the former refers to the highest level of mental processes such as perception, memory and problem solving. The latter, by contrast, refers to the summary score on standardized "intelligence" tests (Boring, 1929; Sparrow, & Davis, 2000). Although the IQ score may include measures on cognition, standardized tests are unable to fully represent one's cognitive abilities in all domains (Carter & Sparrow, 1989; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994).

Moreover, although perception, both visual and auditory, may be measured in IQ subtests (e.g. Block Design, Matrices, Digit Span, Word Order), it is not measured in isolation by a single subtest. The time constraints encountered in schools and limited psychometric expertise creates further limitations in providing in-depth clinical interpretation of these standardized test scores. In this respect intelligence assessment of the future must reflect aspects of auditory perception and the teaching materials and methods should provide oral input prior visual input, so the gifted children can further develop their existing perceptual skills. In particular, auditory discrimination tests, as implemented in this study, should constitute an integral part of assessment.

Conclusion and Implications

In this study we compared the auditory perceptual skills of two groups of learners with differing age ranges and intellectual abilities. Age wise the findings have revealed two different pictures. For the non-gifted learners the older age group has outperformed the younger group and performed a lower correct score only with word-final voice distinctions. However, since this is not a longitudinal study, it is difficult to predict if the older age group will be better off in the long-run. With the gifted group, by contrast, there is strong support for the “younger equals better” notion since the younger age group outperformed the older age group. Similarly, the gifted students also attain considerably higher correct scores than the non-gifted students. Nonetheless, the specific distinctions in where the gifted (both age groups) students scored lower are also symmetrical with the non-gifted students. This particularly holds for word-final voice distinctions and this can be attributed to negative L1 transfer, since Turkish does not permit word-final voiced consonants. The fact that the younger non-gifted students are less sensitive to L1 constraints provides support for native input in foreign language instruction, especially for younger age groups. The findings for both non-gifted and gifted have generated the following theoretical and pedagogical recommendations:

- Native input should be provided particularly to young learners, since the L1 parameters are not yet fully set, thus they can better perceive both native and non-native phonemes.
- Perceptual training (raising phonological awareness) should constitute an essential component in the design of pronunciation tasks, since accuracy in production is dependent on the learners’ ability to discern differences between L2 sounds.
- L2 phonology research cannot be considered complete unless it considers both ‘typical’ (i.e. normal) and ‘atypical’ (i.e. gifted or those with special educational needs) learners.
- Identification and assessment of gifted students needs to be re-considered since WISC-R is an *intelligence* test, whereas perception is a *cognitive* skill.
- The standardized listening tests should not solely consist of audio recordings, but other audio-visual resources should also be utilized since young L2 learners, and the gifted in particular, rely on multiple cues (e.g. auditory and visual) when listening.

Last but not least, from a local perspective it is a welcome that in Turkey the gifted learners are able to receive special education, but the fact that this opportunity only holds for private schools implies that the gifted students attending private schools are potential victims of over-identification (Cummins, 1991), while those attending public schools are potential victims of under-identification (Limbos & Geva, 2001), since they are not subject to any standardized tests such as WISC-R. Similarly, the existing WISC-R test is conducted in the students' L2 and this does not shed light on the students' L1 skills. Future research on gifted L2 learners should examine both L1 and L2 skills in order to measure whether certain skills are language specific. Previous studies have also shown that infants' ability to discriminate non-native vowel contrasts is susceptible to reduce earlier than non-native consonant contrasts (see Werker & Desjardins, 1995). This finding shows that there is a strong need to contrast gifted and non-gifted learners auditory perceptual skills in native and non-native consonant and vowel contrasts. The long-term performance of the gifted is also another area that needs further exploration, since it is not yet known what challenges they may encounter when they have to sit high-stakes standardized English language tests during post-secondary education. These myriad challenges remain to be addressed in future studies conducted at national, regional and international levels.

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