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## **Foreword**

### ***By Asian EFL Journal Associate Production and Copy Editors***

This first issue of the Asian EFL Journal for 2013 touches upon a number of topics, which are relevant to the field of English language teaching and learning, as well as applied linguistics. With article topics ranging from teaching pronunciation and grammar in the classroom to advances in CALL and studies on translation, this installment includes authors from a number of contexts such as China, Taiwan, Thailand, Iran, Oman and the USA. We expect it will be of great interest to English language professionals across Asia and beyond.

First, in the paper, *An Analysis of the Writing Needs of Omani EFL Students for the Development of Grade 11 English Program*, Said Hamed Al-Saadi and Moses Stephens Samuel document a study done on Omani Grade 11 students in regards to studying the language needs of an entire population. Utilizing, questionnaires, interviews and content analysis, the researchers gathered information from students, teachers, supervisors and heads of departments. In particular, it was found that the Omani Grade 11 curriculum did not meet the students' needs with regards to developing writing skills and that a disparity exists between the curriculum content and the perceived needs of the students. The authors suggest that all people involved in the development of English language curricula work in partnership to develop a new national curriculum that better addresses students' needs. In addition, the author recommends that further study of the students' discourse samples and readings is warranted in future studies.

Then, in *The Effect of Narrative Structure on Learner Use of English Tense and Aspect in an English as a Foreign Language Context*, Mansoor Al-Surmi considers the relationship between discourse narrative and verbal morphology use in an EFL context. He collected and analyzed data obtained from a group of Thai L2 English learners who were asked to recount a dream after looking at a set of pictures. In keeping with previous studies, Al-Surmi concluded that past forms are generally used in the foreground and non-past forms in the background. In addition, he established that this trend exists for both EFL and ESL learners.

Next, in *A Comparative Study of Intuitive-Imitative and Analytic-Linguistic Approaches to Teaching Pronunciation: Does Age Play a Role?*, Ali Roohani compares the effectiveness of intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches in teaching the pronunciation of English sounds which do not exist in Persian. Fifty low-intermediate Iranian EFL students aged from 13 to 20 were randomly divided into intuitive-linguistic and analytic-linguistic groups, and over a 3-week period were given specific pronunciation instruction according to their group's emphasis. Pre- and post-testing showed that the analytic-linguistic approach was more effective overall in teaching the pronunciation of English sounds which are not found in Persian. However, age was also a factor as younger participants responded more to the intuitive-imitative approach, while older participants showed better results if taught with the analytic-linguistic approach. The author stresses that pronunciation does improve after intervention training. He proposes that analytic-linguistic strategies be included in pronunciation teaching in addition to purely imitative approaches, and that approaches be varied according to the age of the learners.

After this, Chuen-Maan Sheu examines gender differences with respect to learner strategies and learner listening proficiency in *Investigating EFL learning strategy use, GEPT performance, and gender difference among non-English major sophomores at a technological university*. The tools used in the study were the Chinese version of SILL for learner strategies, and the GEPT for listening proficiency. The study found that the learners were medium level strategy learners, indirect strategies were used more often than direct ones, and that learners with high scores in the GEPT used strategies much more frequently than learners with low scores, thus indicating a direct correlation between scores and strategy use, or lack thereof. The study also found that female learners used a higher number of strategies than male learners, except amongst learners with the highest marks, where there was no significant difference in strategy use. The study shows that EFL learners do better if they use language learning strategies, and that proficiency seems more important than gender in terms of the choice and use of strategies.

In the paper entitled *Analysis of the Contributions of In-school Language Clubs in Taiwan* Tsu-Chia Hsu examines extra-curricular speaking activities in universities. He focuses on the Toastmasters clubs which have sprung up across campuses in Taiwan. English has become an essential skill in higher education and students find getting practice beyond the classroom a difficult task. However, with the Toastmaster clubs students are offered a chance to gain leadership and communication training in a non-threatening environment. His study analyzes the benefits of the clubs for students wishing to ameliorate their English-language communication skills. This article will be of interest to those who teach English language skills in non-native milieus.



Then, in the article *Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Asian Learners and Users going Beyond Traditional Frameworks* Huw Jarvis begins with an examination of the historical development of CALL frameworks. He then looks at the changes from a traditional tutorial focus on conscious learning (usually restricted to one program) to the current multi-media approach. He suggests a need to go beyond CALL to include and exploit mobile multimedia (MALU), using a new educational theory recognizing unconscious language acquisition and connected with rapid technological expansion.

Next, John Thurman looks at the element of choice in spoken language tasks in *Choice and its influence on intrinsic motivation and output in task-based language teaching*. In particular, the author asks the question of what might be the effect on language learner performance and level of interest if the student is able to choose the task. Moreover, Thurman explores this area through two studies involving descriptive spoken activities. The results suggest that both oral output and complexity are increased when participants are allowed to choose the task; also, task choice appears to have a positive effect on student interest level.

Lastly, *The Role of Source Text Translation in a Simulated Summary Writing Test: What do Test Takers Say?* addresses the strategies test takers use on summary writing prompts and the differences between writing and translation. Using interviews as a method of validation, Weiqing Wang, interviews Chinese post-graduate students living in the United States about the techniques they used on a simulated summary writing task. The results indicated that summary writing tasks cannot accurately measure writing ability due to the test takers' use of source text translation and concludes with possible recommendations for resolving this issue.

## **An Argument for Holism - Part 1 - (An Editorial Opinion Piece)**

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### **Abstract**

Definitions of 'holism' in applied language studies need to remain broad enough to allow for true epistemological diversity and reject prematurely coherent impermeable systems that do not reflect the present state of knowledge in our field. In Part 1 of this two-part paper, I focus on definitional issues arguing that the atomistic parts of any whole are related within a complex, but fluid, organic system and are more easily understood in relationship to other parts of that system. After considering the relationship between holistic and atomistic phenomena, I argue that ecological studies (Van Lier, 2002), while providing groundbreaking new insights into the holistic nature of applied language study, appear to exclude context-independence as a legitimate perspective. My definition above is therefore closely associated with Pappamihel and Walser's (2009) characterization of complexity theory. Epistemological diversity and complexity lead us to accept dynamism, unpredictability and instability as natural conditions of our field which cannot be ignored.

**Keywords:** Diversity, holism, ecology, context independence

## Introduction

(1) “It is certainly curious,” I agreed. “Still, it is unimportant and need not be taken into account.”

A groan burst from Poirot.

“What have I always told you? Everything must be taken into account. If the facts will not fit the theory – let the theory go.” (Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, p.76)

Conducting and reviewing educational research is rather like being an Agatha Christie detective. Every atomistic detail has to be seen in the light of the whole picture within and even beyond the immediate research context. Fitting the apparently incompatible detail into the whole picture is often the key to resolving the whole investigation. There is an integrative rather than a dialectic binary relationship between the parts of a puzzle. When relevant atomistic evidence is excluded, the whole picture is affected. However, it is equally possible that when two atomistic variables are isolated from the whole in an experimental study, the results are contextualized by the experiment itself and may be distorted when the entire situation is not taken into account. All research evidence requires careful diagnosis within the scope of a broader picture.

In my role as editor, I am frequently called upon to check reviews of accepted and rejected papers. A common reason for rejection is that the paper is too broad and does not have ‘sufficient focus’. On the other hand, I have noticed that papers with a very narrow focus are evaluated as more successful even when the findings are not related to a broader perspective. After presenting my holistic argumentation in some detail in Part 1 of this holistic discussion, in which paradoxically the only common focus is holism itself, I will provide some more detailed examples in Part 2 (upcoming edition *Asian EFL Journal*,

June, 2013) and return in the Conclusion to some implications of the views expressed herein related to academic holism for journal article reviewers and authors.

### **Rational Conceptual Divergence and Holism – an Example from Language Study**

Moser's (2002) epistemological view of diversity serves as a warning against attempting prematurely to devise coherent but impermeable systems of knowledge that are often associated with 'holism'.

Within the tolerant confines of meta-epistemic instrumentalism, we can welcome even as rational, much of the remarkable divergence we see in contemporary epistemology (p.17).

For example, when faced with a broad and divergent body of knowledge, it may be tempting to simplify the different accounts of knowledge into some kind of coherent whole. This might take the form of rejecting scholarship that we cannot reconcile within our own conception. In our field, a common target for rejection has been Chomskyan views of linguistic competence which appeared to stand in opposition to social views of language use such as Hymes' view of communicative competence or Halliday's comprehensive systemic approach to language use. Moser's characterization of 'meta-epistemic instrumentalism' (2002) allows us to reconsider binary disagreements, such as linguistic competence versus communicative competence, as "*rational* conceptual divergence" which reflect "a deeper rational unity" (p.17).

Chomsky's concern is primarily with a universal and innate language faculty rather than with language use. This apparent divergence can at least partly be seen as merely a difference in focus. In Chomsky's "New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind" (2000, pp. 19-45) language use is addressed. He does certainly argue (p. 26) that there is reason to believe that the I-languages ("grammatical competence") are distinct from

conceptual organization and “pragmatic competence” and that these systems can be “selectively impaired and developmentally dissociated.” However, there is also evidence that for Chomsky (2000) “I –languages” are embedded in more over-arching or broader performance systems.

We are studying a real object, the language faculty of the brain, which has assumed the form of a full I-language and is integrated into performance systems that play a role in articulation, interpretation, expression of beliefs and desires, referring, telling stories, and so on ( p.27).

This view of ‘integration’ appears to be at odds with what is normally characterized as a binary competence/performance distinction (See, for example, Van Lier, 1996, p.122). Moser’s epistemological view appears to be appropriate here when he argues (2002, p.16) that some form of conceptual divergence better reflects the current state of our knowledge rather than prematurely attempting to develop a holistic but impervious coherent system of knowledge (holistic coherentism).

The work of Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) in systemic linguistics explicitly addresses the holistic nature of language knowledge and use. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) note that systemic theory attempts to be comprehensive: "it is concerned with language in its entirety, so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture" (p.3). They provide this holistic framework as a representation of the kind of knowledge that underpins competent use of a language. A systemic explanation of language implies that the knowledge required for competent use acts as a holistic resource available to the user. Users create text and "a text is the product of ongoing selection in a very large network of systems – a system network." (p.23). "We cannot explain why a text means what it does, with all the various readings and values that may be given it except by relating it to the linguistic system as a whole" (p.3).

A user makes appropriate local choices and selections in particular contexts based on his holistic systemic knowledge. While Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p.5) concede that systemic linguistics provides a very complex explanation of language knowledge, they justify this by stating that "if the account seems complex, this is because the grammar is complex."

The issue that arises with such a comprehensive coherent systemic approach to language competence is whether it is impervious to other apparently incompatible perspectives, in other words, whether it is more coherent than our current state of knowledge allows. The field of pragmatics provides a less comprehensive and often much simpler view of language use. Huang (in Horn and Ward, 2006) provides another angle in relation to the relationship between language use and language form from the fields of pragmatics and syntax. Interestingly Huang (2006) accepts an independent syntactic level of analysis, advancing a pragmatic theory of anaphora which "presumes the independence of an irreducible grammatical stratum for pragmatically motivated constraints. Calculation of pragmatic inferences has to be made over a level of independent syntactic structure and semantic representation" (p. 304). Huang resumes this relationship in the slogan: "pragmatics without syntax is empty; syntax without pragmatics is blind." Pragmatic inference is then said to depend "on the language user's knowledge of the range of options available in the grammar..."(p.305). This view is clearly compatible with the notion of choices within a systemic linguistic view.

### **The Meaning of Holism**

A holistic philosophy of tolerance of divergence provides a theoretical umbrella for a variety of approaches by exploring constructive relationships between academic

disciplines and actively seeking new relationships between atomistic parts of a theory. Dörnyei (2009b) argues that “within a dynamic systems framework there are no simple cause-effect explanations between variables examined in isolation, which is the standard research focus in most applied linguistic research...” (p. 241).

Definitions of holism (holos) are often linked back to the dictum attributed to Aristotle that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”. I will provisionally define holism here as the view that *the atomistic parts of any whole are related within a complex but fluid, organic system and are more easily understood in relationship to other parts of that system*. A stronger version might change the last part of this definition to *can only be understood in their relationship to other parts of that system*.

The main reason that I do not adopt the stronger version of the definition is my belief that within the study of a large number of areas that are in themselves holistic, there is an essential role in each area for more focused atomistic studies. Hence the need for both focused research by scholars who specialize in individual aspects of holistic phenomena and for papers that attempt to identify different types of relationships between the parts.

### **Ecology of Language Acquisition and Holism**

A very influential, essentially holistic approach to educational linguistics is the ecological-semiotic perspective (Van Lier, 2002), which indisputably promotes a diversity of perspectives. The relationship between holism and atomism can be interestingly discussed based on the following definition.

Ecology is the study of the relationships between all the various organisms and their physical environment. It's a complex and messy study about a complex and messy reality. Its primary requirement is, by definition, that the context is central,

it cannot be reduced, and it cannot be pushed aside or into the background. The context is the focal field of study. (Van Lier, 2002, p.144).

Complexity – which is related to holism - is clearly an important feature, but at the same time there is also a “focal field of study” which might therefore exclude those fields that attempt to be context free. We have already discussed the Chomskyan perspective of language which seems to depend on an argument that there is some benefit in a context-independent cognitive/rationalist level of analysis. We might also consider in this respect the conversational analysis perspective (Sacks et al., 1974) which also centers on the context-free/context-dependent dichotomy, but prefers the context-free perspective.

Classroom analysis, a field of study which appears to be essentially ecological, when based on the analysis of turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) emphasizes the structure of participation and the management of turns in classroom interaction. Schifffrin (1994) refers to the conversational analysis approach as one that attempts to reveal “the way participants in talk construct systematic solutions to recurrent organizational problems of conversation” (p.239). Furthermore, the teaching approach in any particular classroom context is closely related to the way turns are distributed (Nunn, 2011). The norms of speaker-selection reflected in the behaviour observed in the classroom are then of great value in describing both the social and pedagogical roles of teachers and students. However, Sharrock and Anderson (1986) make the strong claim that turn-distribution is independent of social context. Their claim is based on an assumption that universal rules of turn-taking underlie all conversation.

Given that conversation is something that can take place between people of all kinds, the rules which regulate turn-taking must be independent of the social composition of conversation. (p.72)



The lesser claim that turn-distribution can be analyzed independently of social context seems to me to be more reasonable, and is a claim upon which I have based my own studies in classroom analysis. It is relevant because we might find it useful to have a so-called context-independent stage of analysis to describe what is happening in any context in order to be able to make comparisons across contexts and hence better understand what is happening in any particular context. This does not mean that a context free/context independent distinction creates a dialectic binary opposition. My argument is rather that they complement each other within a holistic relationship.

This need not necessarily mean that there exists a universal set of turn-taking rules regardless of context, although Sacks et al.'s model has been remarkably resilient since 1974. It does indicate that an ecological perspective, holistic, broad and useful as it has proved to be in countering narrow and unmotivated classroom approaches, is not synonymous with the kind of rational epistemic divergence that I am attempting to equate with holism. This is because 'context' itself has become an essential focus which might unwittingly exclude useful perspectives within the complex body of theory that helps inform our field of study. Recently, Seedhouse (2010) has further underlined the holistic nature of classroom discourse study. He characterizes classroom discourse study as a "complex adaptive system", suggesting that "the study of spoken interaction as a system may benefit from the insights of complexity theory" (p.4).

Leather and Van Dam (2003), in characterizing the ecology of language acquisition describe their aim as follows:

This volume aims to explore how a number of contemporary approaches and insights in LA research might be coherently interrelated through a perspective that can be called *ecological*. (p.1)

This is certainly holism in practice – and in my view represents an extremely useful way forward in viewing LA (and indeed SLA) – but it is an example of “coherentism” rather than of rational epistemic divergence in that it attempts to provide a coherent but exclusive model.

Van Lier (2002) interestingly proposes different levels of connection between disciplines in relation to his ecological perspective:

Sociolinguistics, pragmatics, the sociology of language, and discourse analysis are therefore relatives of ecological linguistics. However, they are philosophically very different, because they start out from a selection or system of rules and therefore address only one tiny corner of ecology. Ecological research cannot afford to do that, since the context is no longer the context. Ethnography, ethnomethodology, and discursive psychology are closer to an ecological science. (p.144)

The interesting paradox arises as to whether a focus on holism itself, such as the one I am attempting here, can itself end up excluding epistemic divergence. Holism that excludes any atomistic focus is arguably not epistemic divergence at all. The design of holistic curriculum, for example, is a useful area to consider the binary distinction often made between my topic, holism and atomism. Curriculum-in-use (rather than as a document) is sensitive to the relationship between holistic competence and performance and the particular learning needs of students within but also beyond their own learning context. While, holism (as realized for example in the design of projects and holistic tasks) is commonly opposed to reductionism or atomism (as realized in activities such as language exercises), I have proposed (Nunn, 2006) a different synthetic relationship, arguing that holism is an inclusive notion that most usefully subsumes rather than opposes atomistic parts. Rather than an approach built on tasks alone, I have therefore proposed the design

of holistic task-based units which promote the design of pools of materials for each unit. Each unit has available per se a set of atomistic exercises in addition to a set of repeated tasks. The teacher has to decide when to zoom in on atomistic details, (such as the passive voice in academic writing) and when to zoom out (such as looking at a transitivity system as a whole in a systemic sense through which for example it may be revealed that the passive voice does not dominate clause structure even in scientific writing.) The paradox here is that to isolate holism as an exclusive reductionist concept opposed to atomism – as part of a binary distinction - is counter to the meaning I feel we need to give to holism. It would be rigid coherentism rather than rational epistemic divergence, which instead embraces the whole, the parts, and the parts in relationship to each other as well as to the whole.

### **Complexity and Holism**

Pappamihel and Walser (2009) explain the relationship between complexity theory and holism as follows:

Complexity theory provides a framework for understanding complex systems, which range from human beings to weather to business organizations. One of the major tenets of complexity theory is holism; that is, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Byrne 1998; Midgley 2007). Connections and relationships—the interactions—define how complex systems operate (Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton 2007). Thus, complex systems are comprised of many interacting parts that must be understood together, holistically. Moreover, the parts and their interactions cause new parts to form, along with new structures and new rules of behavior. Complex systems are not static; they are emergent, adaptive, dynamic, and changing (Morrison 2002). ( p.134)

Cvetek (2008) underlines the dynamic and unstable aspect of complexity, arguing that complexity and unpredictability are natural conditions of teaching/learning and need to be taken into account. Cvetek (2008) emphasizes that the implications of ‘complexity’ can impact the daily practice of learners and teachers, suggesting that “even a small change in the behaviour of a constituent of the classroom system – for example, an unexpected remark from a learner, a slight change in the way the teacher conducts an activity – can have a major impact on the course of the lesson and its overall effectiveness (p.250)”. In terms of holism, we can restructure this argument to reconsider the relationship between the parts and the whole. A small change in one atomistic part (here of a lesson) has an impact on all other parts and affects the whole (lesson).

Pappamihel and Walser (2009) link complexity theory and holism directly: “One of the major tenets of complexity theory is holism ... complex systems are comprised of many interacting parts that must be understood together, holistically.” Rowland (2007, p.121) relates the potential impact of small parts of a complex system to nonlinearity. “Nonlinearity refers to situations in which effects are not proportional to causes, in other words, situations in which a small action may have enormous effects” (p.134).

Rowland (2007, p. 121) suggests that one questionable assumption of atomistic intervention is that “interventions in parts are assumed to cause predictable and proportional effects for the whole.” Rowland argues that while complexity is often acknowledged in reporting atomistic interventions, the potentially holistic impacts within a complex system are rarely taken into account when recommendations for intervention and measurement are made. Focusing on independent variables may be useful and necessary, but the implications of recommendations that refer to independent parts of any complex system need to be interpreted in relation to the potential impact on the whole

system (and conversely, how the whole system may impact the parts). In this respect, articles with a relatively narrow focus rarely consider how the atomistic phenomenon they have investigated may impact the curriculum as a holistic entity.

## **Conclusion**

In this brief editorial opinion piece, I have attempted to develop the holistic notion of rational conceptual divergence (Moser, 2002) as an important perspective for journal writing and reviewing. I have attempted to distinguish this view from an ecological perspective (Van Lier, 2002) and considered the relationship between complexity (Pappamihiel and Walser, 2009) and holism. One purpose of presenting this argument is to encourage both authors and reviewers of journal submissions to consider the issue of ‘focus’ in relation to the holistic realities for the field of ESL/EFL. In part two of this paper (to appear in the June 2013 quarterly issue of the Asian EFL journal), I will attempt to show how this perspective pertains to several topics that are frequently addressed in Asian EFL submissions, such as motivation and assessment.

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***An Analysis of the Writing Needs of Omani EFL Students for the  
Development of Grade 11 English Program***

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Prof. Dr. Moses Stephens Gunams Samuel is a professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education and Deputy Dean for higher studies at the Faculty of Education in the University of Malaya, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

**Abstract**

*This* article reports a detailed description of the stages of a national large-scale needs analysis in the reform of the grade 11 English language curriculum in Oman. It highlighted the needs analysis practises by using triangulation of multiple sources (students, teachers, supervisors, heads of department, and textbooks) and multiple methods (questionnaires, interviews, content analysis) in the data collection stage to validate the study findings. The actual grade 11 English Language textbooks (n=4) were first analyzed for writing skills content and then contrasted with the perceived needs of 982 students, 64 teachers, 4 supervisors, and 3 heads of department. The findings revealed that a gap existed between the content of the grade 11 curriculum and the perceived needs of the students. The Grade 11 EL curriculum provided little space for students to develop writing competence. The findings related to language innovation/reform were then discussed and implication were made for the grade 11 program aim, principles, teaching methodology, content and teacher training in Oman.



**Keywords:** Needs analysis; writing difficulties; curriculum innovation; implementation needs

## **Introduction**

Needs analysis (NA), by its very nature, is highly context-dependent and population-specific (West, 1994). Most NAs are concerned with needs specification at the level of individuals or, most often, learner type (Long, 2005). Recent researchers like Nelson (2000) and Long (2005) stress that what is needed now is a serious effort by applied linguists to identify generalizations that can be made about how to conduct NA for certain populations in certain sectors. The findings about language tasks, genres, and so forth encountered in various contexts are detailed and insightful, however they are often only of use to students in the same or similar context. On the other hand, the findings based on studies of far differing audiences are of great relevance, especially the methodological lessons arising from such studies. For instance, Long (2005) has pointed out that in a modern era, characterized by globalization and dwindling resources, the need for language audits and needs analyses for entire societies are likely to become quite important. Adapting such broad analysis confronts the analyst with some methodological constraints, including scientific sampling, large sample size and the preference of certain methods such as questionnaires, surveys, studies of government publication or documents, and so forth. Prior NA's literature listened to the students' needs alone to represent students' real needs. This study's novel contribution is its comprehensive data culling of stakeholders' needs and attitudes towards an Omani EFL programme. Stakeholders are defined as not just students, but also teachers, supervisors, heads of departments etc. Furthermore, findings and rationale for recommendation need to be explicit, empirically-

supported (Waters & Vilches, 2001) and expressed in familiar terms since the primary audiences for findings from the public sector NAs include politicians, economists and other stakeholders. This study contributes to the literature of NA by conducting a large scale analysis at the national level of the writing needs of Omani EFL learners in the public schools, which will provide the framework for conducting NA on a national basis, putting in practice all the methodological issues and making the results of this NA available for public in empirically-supported recommendations.

This article reports on the extent to which the current EL program at Omani grade 11 schools fulfill the writing needs of Omani students. The narrative of our journey is organized as follows: First, we discuss some observations regarding the latest NA articles and relate them to the need for such study. Second, we briefly describe the setting and methods of the needs analysis in terms of the triangulation of source and methods. Third, we examine the findings for each of the three research questions. We conclude by discussing in detail some of the pedagogical implications of the findings for the reform of the Grade 11 EFL curriculum in Oman.

## **Literature Review**

The target populations of many NA studies are typically undergraduate students, for example, Patterson (2001), Al-Busaidi (2003) and Shuja'a (2004) study university students' language needs, whereas Al-Dugaily (1999) and Al-Husseini (2004) investigate the linguistic needs in college level students. The findings about the language genres, task, and so forth, are often applied to other contexts with the same or similar students. Recent researchers of NA, such as Coleman (1998), Long (2005), Brecht and Rivers (2005) and Cowling (2007), stress the notion of generalization of the NA findings in the societal

level. Long (2005) argues that “what is needed now is a serious effort by applied linguists to identify generalization, that can be made about how best to conduct needs analysis for population A or B in sector C or D, given constraints E or F. (p. 5)” At the societal level, the needs for language are generally defined within very general social goals such as national security, social justice or the like (Brecht & Rivers, 2005). The rationale behind associating language with societal goal is to motivate policy and planning for language education at the national level. Therefore, the current study rejects the Arlington Curriculum Model which states that formal needs analysis can be dispensed with (Connor-Linton, 1996); rather it supports Zohrabi’s (2008) claim that needs analysis is one of many curriculum components that all curriculum designers should scrutinize carefully. Hence, needs analysis must be considered during any curriculum restructuring as it is of a wider context than other crucial curriculum components. In light of this innovation in language Teaching and Needs Analysis, the present research is devoted to a methodology for laying out—to the best extent possible—the analysis of the Omani EFL students’ learning needs in public schools.

As to methodology, two observations can be made in relation to NA procedures. All studies used English students and English teachers as the main sources of information. This complements with current and previous studies’ finding that learners and teachers have a special right when it comes to deciding the content of the course they are to undertake (Brecht & Rivers, 2005; Hutchinson & Waters 1987; Holliday 1992, 1994; Long, 2005; Nunan, 2001). This conclusion is logical because it raises the level of awareness of both parties as to why they are doing what they are doing and leads them to reflect usefully on means and ends. It is also important to note, that, even when learners and teachers are able to provide useful and reliable insight about present or future needs,

better and more readily accessible sources may be available including other stakeholders like language supervisors, graduates of the program concerned, employers, administrators, and so forth. In this light, this study addresses the question posed by Elisha-Primo et al. (2010) whether listening to the students' needs alone would represent students' real needs and be the basis for changes which will serve the students' English needs, by demonstrating a holistic "mixed methods" methodology that is far more comprehensive and valid than a student-only needs analysis. This is achieved by Al-Husseini (2004), who approached 6 groups of sources and Shuja'a (2004) who also approached employers in addition to students and teachers to make the data obtained more reliable and meaningful. Others, such as Al-Dugily (1999), Patterson (2001) and Al-Busaidi (2003) depend on students and teachers as the main/only source for their data collection; the reliability of their findings is in question since involving other relevant sources would have provided more insight into the language involved in functioning successfully in their target discourse.

The second observation, in relation to the methodological aspect, is that questionnaires and interviews are the most dominant tools used in all studies (see Table 2.3). Al-Dugily (1999) uses them as the only tool for data collection in his study. It is commonly noticed that many of the NA studies in teaching English as a second language (TESL) are carried out via semi-structural interviews, or more commonly questionnaires, for instance, Aguilar (2005), Choo (1999), Abdul Aziz (2004), Keen (2006), Davies (2006), Vadirelu, (2007), Taillefer (2007), Cowling (2007) Cid, Granena and Traght (2009) and Spada, Barkoui, Peters, So and Valeo (2009). Yet, they are not the only resources in most of NA research. Recently, NA studies such as Al-Husseini (2004), Shuja'a (2004) and Patterson (2001), focused their NA by using multi method approach "Triangulation" to, as

Patterson (2001) puts it, “both clarify the meaning and increase the validity” of the research findings. Triangulation is a procedure used by NA researchers to enhance the readability of their interpretation of their data (Long, 2005). It involves the use of multiple-data-collection methods and may also involve the incorporation of multiple data sources, investigators and theoretical perspectives (Aguilar, 2005). The rationale behind the notion of applying triangulation techniques is to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data and increase confidence in research findings. Based on this assumption, the present study considers triangulation of methods and sources as a main research principle that is going to be practically carried out to gain a clearer picture of students’ English language learning needs.

In addition, some studies lack an implementation vision such as Al-Dugaily (1999) and Patterson (2001), while other studies, such as Al-Husseini (2004) and Shuja’a (2004) used the finding to propose and suggest developmental modification in the target context. Implementation has become an important component of NA in recent years. Much research on innovation and implementation has appeared in the last two decades, such as, Holliday and Cooke (1982), Holliday (1994), Waters and Vilches (2001), Boshier and Kmalkoski (2002) and Cowling (2007). The notion “implementation needs” is based on the importance of constructing an understanding on how to implement NA findings and recommendations in the stage of planning (Al-Husseini, 2004). The current study is taking the implementation needs into consideration by suggesting and proposing changes into the current Grade 11 English language program in Oman. The needs analysis has demonstrated both the complex network of elements that play a significant role in determining the needs of Omani EFL students, and the unavoidable necessity to set priorities. To develop the current EL program in Grade 11, it is believed that the language

uses identified by this empirical study should be regarded as learners' target language needs on which the Grade 11 EL curricula should be based.

Based on the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the former studies, the present study tries to take advantage of the development in NA theories by expanding the focus to consider different approaches of NA and by focusing on a national/societal-level needs analysis and implementation needs. It also triangulates theories, methods and sources in order to sustain a more meaningful, valid and reliable information. It is hoped that the present study will help in understanding and developing the state of English language teaching in this part of the world and to put in practice the innovations of NA as suggested by Long (2005) and Cowling (2007).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following research questions guide this study:

- What are the writing skills developed in the current English language course book in grade 11 of Omani schools?
- What are the English language writing needs of Omani students in grade 11 as perceived by students, teachers, supervisors and heads of department?
- To what extent are the students' EL writing needs met by the content of English language course book in grade 11 of Omani schools?

### **Methodology**

Triangulation of data collection techniques and source of information are considered crucial factors in needs analysis (Brecht & Rivers, 2005; Coleman, 1998; Cowling 2007;

Long 2005; Richards, 2001). Therefore, multiple sources, such as, students, teachers, supervisors, heads of departments and the grade 11 textbooks were used for the purpose of data collection. In addition, varieties of data were gathered and compared using multiple methods such as questionnaires, interviews, and content analysis. The two types of data collected in the present study (qualitative and quantitative) allowed for two types of triangulation (Krohn, 2008): methodological triangulation (multiple data gathering procedures) and data triangulations (multiple source of information).

### **Participants**

A stratified sampling technique was used to select 982 EFL students and 46 EL teachers teaching English in grade 11 schools. Also 4 EL supervisors and 3 heads of department (supervision and curriculum department) were purposely selected due to their limited number from the Ministry of Education in Oman. The random students' and teachers' sample are drawn from four out of eleven educational regions of the entire Sultanate. These four regions were Muscat, Al-Sahrqyah South, Al-Batenah South and Al-Batenah North. According to the current study, the Omani students are divided into regions, and each region is divided into schools, the schools are sub-divided into male and female schools. A stratified sampling technique was used to randomly select the study samples as shown in Table 1, which shows that 982 students participated in this study; divided into 524 male students and 458 female students studying English in grade 11 of Omani schools, whereas teachers were divided into 34 male and 30 female teachers teaching grade 11 EL program.

**Table 1***Students' Profile in Terms of Gender and Regions*

		Region				Total
		Muscat	AL-Batyneh North	Al-Batyneh South	Al-Sharqyeh	
Gender	Male	119	103	124	178	524
	Female	43	126	121	168	458
Total		162	229	245	346	982

As to the specific features or key characteristics shared by Omani EFL students, all regions adopt the same language program. In other words, they have the same course books, assessment style, resources, and so forth. The students in all Omani regions share the same background characteristics: Omani, boys and girl, aged between 16 to 18 years, in grade 11. Each of the eleven regions can represent the others in terms of philosophy, contents, objectives, needs, students and teachers. Because of these similarities, the data was collected from four out of the eleven regions.

### Questionnaire

The current study used questionnaires to collect information from students and teachers in the Omani public schools. Questionnaires are widely used in educational researches as a technique to identify attitudes and perceptions (Cowling, 2007; Faillefer, 2007; Kawepet, 2009; Krohn, 2008; Read, 2008; Shuja'a, 2004; Spada, Barkaoui, Peters, So, & Valeo, 2009). The EL teachers' survey was written in English, while the students' survey was in Arabic for two reasons. First, it was easier for students to understand in their native language. Second, the questionnaire's statements were complex and responding to them in English might make it more difficult for students to fully grasp the intent of the



survey. The questionnaires were first written in English and then translated into Arabic. Two procedures were taken to ensure the accuracy of the translation. First, the source version of the questionnaires was translated into Arabic and then the Arabic version was translated back into English by the researcher and other language specialists from the Omani Ministry of Education who were familiar with English and Arabic. The back translation was for two purposes, to ensure that the original intent of the source questionnaire was maintained and to make a comparison between the Arabic and English versions.

The students' and teachers' questionnaires consisted of three sections. Section one collected the demographic information about teachers and students. It is worth saying that the personal information like gender and school type were not considered as study variables; rather they provided information about whether the questionnaires were distributed to a sufficiently varied sample to represent the study population. Section two included the language writing needs. These data were based on self-reports on the type and frequency of writing skills and sub-skills that the students practice. The writing skills were chosen for their documented importance in the skill literature. This included 23 items (refer to the appendix) representing skills and sub-skills, which students were asked to indicate on a scale of frequency about how often they face difficulty doing item one during their study. In developing this test, I consulted the following studies in needs analysis: Graves, (2001), Al-Busaidi (2003), Al-Husseini (2004), Al-Syabi (1995) and from my own experience as an English teacher and supervisor.

### **Piloting the Questionnaire**

Before piloting the questionnaire, it had gone through a pre-piloting stage where it was

distributed among five ELT specialists from Sultan Qaboos University and the Ministry of Education. Other copies were distributed among PhD students studying in University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Their contribution was to comment on the language of the students' questionnaire and its suitability for the Omani post-basic education students. They were also requested to comment on the design and its fitness. They were advised to simplify the language and explain some of the terms used in the questionnaire. The overall outcome of this pre-piloting step was more simplification of the items involved in the questionnaire. The pilot study was carried out in Al-Sharqiyah South region.

The piloting was to find out the general legibility of the study. It provided information about the extent to which participants were co-operative and keen to help in finishing the questionnaire. It also helped in testing the study's trustworthiness in terms of the validity and reliability of the study instrument. Almost 100 students were randomly selected for piloting the questionnaire from four different schools consisting of 50 male students and 50 female students. Students were given the Arabic version of the questionnaire. The researcher himself administered the pilot run to the piloting sample group to gather information regarding the time it took the students to complete the questions, the clarity of the instruction, the ambiguity of the questionnaire items, the requirement to include new topics, and the difficulties encountered in questionnaire adaptation. The pilot questionnaires were collected back immediately. The pilot run gave the researcher useful hints and clues to discover loopholes and inaccuracies in the questionnaire. Only 80 copies of the questionnaires were found suitable to be analyzed and 20 were rejected due to incomplete answers. These 80 copies were divided into 30 male students and 50 female students. This step was followed by an analysis of the subjects' responses to the

questionnaire to ensure more reliability and validity of the scale as explained below.

### **The Questionnaire Reliability**

An indicator of the trustworthiness in the quantitative research tools is the instrument's reliability. It indicates that the developed questionnaire would give the same results if it measures the same thing (Neuman, 2001). The proposed questionnaire's reliability was estimated by the Internal Constancy Approach. This approach was based on calculation of the correlation coefficient between each item score and the score of the whole scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used, and the reliability statistic was .939 which is considered as significant and indicates that the all items included were reliable. Educators like Likert and others (1934) agreed that a reliability coefficient between .62 and .93 can be trusted.

### **The Questionnaire Validity**

Before being able to conclude that this study was trustworthy and ethical, however, some more detailed aspects of the issue must be considered. A qualitative study cannot accomplish its most basic functions if the researcher has not established trust and reciprocity in the field. Therefore, to examine whether the developed instrument would report valid scores, the validity of the instrument was studied (Neuman, 2001) using content validity, which is the extent to which the questions on the instrument are representative of all the possible questions a researcher could ask about the study content (Creswell, 2005). The main rationale behind using this form of validity was that the possibility was high that the involved experts would know and could comment on the investigated topic since the students' linguistic needs are familiar to them. It would have

been less useful if the research theme related to assessing personalities or attitudes' scores.

In order to make use of the panel of judges' or experts' feedback regarding the extent to which the new scale measures the writing competences needed by Omani students, the questionnaires were handed to 12 arbitrators from Oman, Yemen and the UK. They were addressed formally in a letter asking them to read the items and determine the suitability of each item to measure students' linguistic needs and provide their comments regarding the clarity of the items, thoughts and presentation and to comment on the translation (if included). This step resulted in changing some of the terms in the questionnaire to more simplified language to facilitate understanding. It also has resulted in limiting the scope of this study to analyze the writing competence needed by Omani students to enhance their academic standard, so some of the items, which were classified as irrelevant skills were deleted.

### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis as a systematic and objective research method was used in collecting data for research question one. A task-based analysis was used to analyse the English language tasks, skills and sub-skills embedded in the grade 11 English language teaching materials. The content analysis revealed data about the kind of writing tasks embedded in the current Grade 11 EL course books. It provides wide scope and more thoughts on what went on rather than what was said to go on, as in questionnaire or interviews.

As to the questionnaires finding, descriptive statistic were used to analyse the respondents' answers by implementing the SPSS software. The descriptive statistics were used to indicate the percentage and the frequency distribution of the respondents' answers. Measures of central tendencies (mean and median) and independent sample t- test were

used to analyze the data for the research questions 2-3. Interviews' data were analyzed by close study of the transcripts to identify what interviewees say about their attitudes and perceptions about the current English curriculum and the needed writing skills and sub-skills to improve students' linguistic competencies in English. After conducting the interviews, the analysis started with the transcribing of the audio cassettes.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings and the analyses are organized according to the research questions. Question one, and three, are analyzed based on themes addressed in the questions. Whereas, question two is examined based on the perceptions of the different participants because they have different responsibilities and, therefore, different views.

### ***The Actual Writing Skills Included in the Current Grade 11 EL Textbooks***

The first research question analyzes the present learning situation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) by identifying the writing skills and the sub-skills found in the English language textbook through the use of content analysis. Perhaps the most important source of present-situation data in designing an EL syllabus is the analysis of authentic texts (Richards, 2004). Content analysis enhances the readers' and the researcher's understanding of what is the exact content of the grade 11 course book by making explicit the patterns of writing skills choices found in the current textbooks.

Grade 11 EL textbooks are titled 'Engage with English', which aim at teaching English as a foreign language to Omani students in the public schools. The course book and workbooks are divided into two books for two semesters. Each book is divided into five themes and each theme is classified into five different units. Each of the five units

focuses on particular language skills, namely reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening & speaking and writing. At the end, there are two optional pages on 'Across culture' and 'Reading for pleasure'. They were designed as stand-alone units which can be used in class or for self-study. The workbook mirrored the framework of the course book. It is also divided into two books for two semesters. The activities involved in the workbook include writing and further language practice activities. By the end of each theme, there are review pages which provide revision activities for grammar and vocabulary included in the theme as well as wordlist activities and a personalization activity. A grammar reference section and wordlist and a function language review are also provided at the back of the workbooks. In addition, the workbook contains a writing section, where students complete free writing assignments and extended writing tasks.

New approaches to second and foreign language teaching instructions require NAs to be conducted using unit of analysis. The unit of analysis in the current analysis was task-based analysis. Long and Norris (2000), Long (2005) and Ferch (2005) advocated that task based needs analysis allows coherence in course design. The rationale for doing task based analysis rather than linguistic analysis was because the task analysis usually offers more insights about the students' needs compared to 'usages' modelled in grammar based language teaching materials. It revealed more than the text based analysis about the dynamic qualities of target discourse (Long, 2005). Task based NA readily lend themselves as input for the design of language syllabus or course.

The findings of the textbooks analysis identified the main writing skills and sub-skills included in ten themes found in grade 11 English language textbooks. The skills and sub skills are listed in Table 2, which presents a summary of the finding of the writing skills and sub-skills included in grade 11 EL textbooks in both semesters.

**Table 2**

*Summary of the Content analysis Findings of the Writing Tasks Included in Grade 11 EL Textbooks*

Themes	Semester 1	Semester 2
1	<b>Write an email</b> Review writing process Write their own poem using the given cues	<b>Use non-defining relative clause</b> Use the given adjective to write comparative and superlative forms <b>Write a short profile or biography</b>
2	Recognize written instructions <b>Edit a written text</b> Paragraph sequence Write a process text	<b>Write a film review</b> Write a true statement about your partner Use certain verbs to write about your life Write about your television habits
3	<b>Write a holiday post card</b> Complete a postcard with words to describe a holiday <b>Write a description of a tourists resorts</b> Produce a brochure for tourist resort	<b>Write an application letter</b> Rewrite given sentences using yet, already, just... Write up jumbled words as complete sentences Make a list of things that you do every day. Unjumble the letters to words of certain type
4	Write a letter of complaint Write yes no question Correct the given sentences Write their prediction about themselves or their lives	<b>Link ideas together in a written text in a variety of ways</b> Write an essay introducing contrasting arguments
5	Links words together in a written text Write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages Free writing about opinion based on discussion	<b>Review text editing</b> <b>Write a festival report</b> Write passive sentences

Unit five of each theme emphasized development of students' writing skills. Almost all included writing tasks requiring students to write for a purpose rather than writing for the sake of writing. Repeatedly, students were referred to the process involved in writing

before starting to accomplish any writing task. Different genres of writing were highlighted in every theme, such as vocational and academic genres, which provided the space for practising different genres that can build solid foundation of writing skills. Students were exposed to the different stages of the writing process from reading a model text to free writing. Examples of the writing purposes found in grade 11 EL textbooks were to write an email, holiday postcard, description of a tourist resort, letter of complaint, short profile or biography, film review, application letter, and a festival report.

During the analysis, it was noticed that writing tasks were separated at the back of the workbook and students had to refer to that section whenever they want to perform any writing tasks. This created the feeling with teachers and students that writing was not an essential task to be mastered because what was kept at the back of the book was supplementary material or glossaries. It also impressed upon the teachers that writing was not given sufficient attention in the new textbooks as discovered during the teacher interviews. Although the analyzed material provided a chance to practise different writing genres, they should be more creative and have stimulating activities to focus students' attention on the things to be learned. Hobelman and Wiriyaichitra (1995) stressed that writing material should be interesting, related to students' interests, practical and related to real world tasks.

The findings of research question one can be fed back into the grade 11 EL program and can also work as a foundation for material developers, for two reasons. First, the analytical methodology applied here provided real world or real life task analysis, which offered more insights about the students' needs through comparing what is presented to them and their perceived priority as in research question two. Second, the task based NA findings are the bases for Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which as described by



Long (2005), is radically learner-centered and caters for the learners' internal developmental syllabus. The findings of the task-based NA complemented those of the other instruments, providing firsthand information about the writing uses as reported in the questionnaire and interviews findings discussed in the next sections.

### ***The Perceived English Language Writing Needs of Omani Students in Grade 11***

In the following, the findings presentation is organized according to the research participants so, the students findings are presented separately followed by the findings related to the teachers and finally supervisors and heads of department. This is helpful to show the different perceptions and priorities according to each group. It is also helpful to achieve cross group and within group comparison, to draw on the similarity and diversity of language use in post-basic education schools.

### **Findings Related to the Students**

Students' perceptions about their writing skills and sub-skills needs are displayed in Table 3 in descending order. This step is important for making priorities in skills presentation in the curriculum. Students (n = 982) responded to 23 items representing writing micro-skills. It is worth indicating that the frequencies provided next to each item of the questionnaire were given the scores of never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, often=4, and always=5), which helped in coding the subjects responses as well as in calculating the means values.

**Table 3***The Writing Uses Preferred in Grade 11 Schools as Reported by the Students*

N.	Statements		Scale					Mean
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
2	Organizing my writing, so that the reader can understand my main ideas.	Frequency	167	184	243	205	183	3.05
		Percent	17	18.7	24.7	20.9	18.6	
6	Expressing myself well in writing.	Frequency	182	197	197	216	190	3.04
		Percent	18.5	20.1	20.1	22	19.3	
11	Translating some concepts and ideas from Arabic to English.	Frequency	161	216	207	235	163	3.02
		Percent	16.4	22	21.1	23.9	16.6	
4	Taking notes that demonstrate the main points.	Frequency	164	224	212	217	165	2.99
		Percent	16.7	22.8	21.6	22.1	16.8	
10	Structuring clear statements without any ambiguity or vagueness.	Frequency	170	221	228	221	142	2.94
		Percent	17.3	22.5	23.2	22.5	14.5	
8	Using correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling.	Frequency	161	250	197	238	136	2.94
		Percent	16.4	25.5	20.1	24.2	13.8	
9	Sequencing paragraphs in the article.	Frequency	176	232	223	231	120	2.88
		Percent	17.9	23.6	22.7	23.5	12.2	
19	Editing my own or others' papers for grammar and style problems.	Frequency	175	218	279	171	139	2.88
		Percent	17.8	22.2	28.4	17.4	14.2	
13	Relating the topic I write to my knowledge and experience.	Frequency	188	228	219	214	133	2.87
		Percent	19.1	23.2	22.3	21.8	13.5	
23	Writing a proposal about future plans.	Frequency	213	222	202	202	143	2.84
		Percent	21.7	22.6	20.6	20.6	14.6	
1	Writing a summary of information I <i>read or</i> listened <i>to</i> .	Frequency	176	248	241	199	118	2.83
		Percent	17.9	25.3	24.5	20.3	12	
3	Supporting my writing with examples, evidences and data.	Frequency	189	244	229	296	124	2.82
		Percent	19.2	24.8	23.3	20	12.6	

7	Expressing ideas and arguments effectively.	Frequency	183	228	267	196	108	2.81
		Percent	18.6	23.2	27.2	20	11	
14	Writing a good introduction and a conclusion to my article.	Frequency	221	220	210	193	138	2.80
		Percent	22.6	22.4	21.4	19.7	14.1	
16	Writing curriculum vitae CV in English.	Frequency	248	230	159	186	159	2.77
		Percent	25.3	23.4	16.2	18.9	16.2	
5	Writing an essay in the class on an assigned topic.	Frequency	227	238	189	188	140	2.77
		Percent	23.1	24.2	19.2	19.1	14.3	
18	Writing a report about an action in the past.	Frequency	202	259	228	171	122	2.75
		Percent	20.6	26.4	23.2	17.4	12.4	
12	Incorporating data and illustration in my writing.	Frequency	202	252	234	190	104	2.74
		Percent	20.6	25.7	23.8	19.3	10.6	
22	Writing a paragraph from notes.	Frequency	212	266	213	185	106	2.70
		Percent	21.6	27.1	21.7	18.8	10.8	
20	Writing a letter of application.	Frequency	292	199	167	177	147	2.68
		Percent	29.7	20.3	17	18	15	
17	Explaining in writing the content of graphs, tables, charts and diagrams.	Frequency	230	256	218	167	111	2.67
		Percent	23.4	26.1	22.2	17	11.3	
15	Writing a questionnaire in English.	Frequency	295	219	164	161	143	2.63
		Percent	30	22.3	16.7	16.4	14.6	
21	Writing a report on scientific projects done in a laboratory.	Frequency	323	197	159	154	149	2.60
		Percent	32.9	20.1	16.2	15.7	15.2	

As can be noticed from Table 3, the mean values of all the items in the difficulty scale are high and ranging from 3.05 to 2.60. High means values in the difficulty scale denote more difficulty, which is related to less ability. Where students have difficulty in achieving any skill, their ability in the same skill is low. On the other hand, where they have little difficulty in a skill, their ability in that skill is high. The above means values therefore reveal that according to the students' perception they have less ability with English writing or overall face difficulty dealing with any writing task.

The shared pattern about the highest first five items is that they all have communicative and academic purpose. Item number 2, as an example, is the highest scoring item with

mean value of 3.05. This indicates that students' most perceived difficult task, of the included writing tasks, was to organize their writing, so that the reader can understand their main ideas. This is also true for items 6, 11, 4, and 10, which deal with the same phenomena: making themselves clear when writing any text in English or to how best they can express themselves while writing any argument in English

On the other hand, the last items with the lowest mean values in Table 3 (i.e., items 17, 15, and 21) share a scientific purpose. This, however, does not mean that grade 11 students have no problem explaining in English writing the content of graphs, tables, charts and diagrams, or writing a report on scientific projects done in a laboratory. This finding is justified by the fact that the Omani grade 11 students are not learning science in school through the use of English instruction and also there is very little or no exposure to English during their science lesson. Therefore, according to students, writing English for scientific purposes is not really required because they are not using it during their grade 11 study.

### **Findings Related to the Teachers**

Teachers' perceptions about their students' writing skills and sub-skills needs are displayed in Table 4 in descending order. This step is important for making priorities in skills presentation in the curriculum. Teachers (n = 64) responded to 23 items representing writing micro-skills. The frequencies provided next to each item of the questionnaire were scored the same way as the students with never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, often=4, and always=5, which again helped in coding the subjects' responses as well as in calculating the means values.

**Table 4***The Language Writing Uses Preferred in Grade 11 Schools as Reported by the Teachers*

N.	Statements		Scale					Mean
			Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
21	Writing a report on scientific projects done in a laboratory.	Frequency	6	9	12	13	24	3.63
		Percent	9.4	14.1	18.8	20.3	37.5	
11	Translating some concepts and ideas from Arabic to English.	Frequency	2	5	21	27	9	3.56
		Percent	3.1	7.8	32.8	24.2	14.1	
7	Expressing ideas and arguments effectively.	Frequency	3	9	16	23	13	3.53
		Percent	4.7	14.1	25	35.9	20.3	
1	Writing a summary of information they <i>read or</i> listened <i>to</i> .	Frequency	2	10	20	17	15	3.52
		Percent	3.1	15.6	31.3	26.6	23.4	
8	Using correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling.	Frequency	0	12	23	14	15	3.50
		Percent	0	18.8	35.9	21.9	23.4	
16	Writing curriculum vitae (CV) in English.	Frequency	7	11	9	18	19	3.48
		Percent	10.9	17.2	14.1	28.1	29.7	
10	Structuring clear statements without any ambiguity or vagueness.	Frequency	0	12	21	19	12	3.48
		Percent	0	18.8	32.8	29.7	18.8	
19	Writing an essay in the class on an assigned topic.	Frequency	2	11	18	21	12	3.47
		Percent	3.1	17.2	28.1	32.8	18.8	
5	Organizing their writing, so that the reader can understand my main ideas.	Frequency	2	10	18	25	9	3.45
		Percent	3.1	15.6	28.1	39.1	14.1	
3	Supporting their writing with examples, evidences and data.	Frequency	3	6	26	18	11	3.44
		Percent	4.7	9.4	40.6	28.1	17.2	
6	Expressing themselves well in writing.	Frequency	3	10	18	23	10	3.42
		Percent	4.7	15.6	28.1	35.9	15.6	
12	Incorporating data and illustration in their writing.	Frequency	3	6	28	16	11	3.41
		Percent	4.7	9.4	34.8	25	17.2	
15	Writing a questionnaire in English.	Frequency	7	9	18	11	19	3.41
		Percent	10.9	14.1	28.1	17.2	29.7	

19	Editing their own or others' papers for grammar and style problems.	Frequency	4	8	21	22	9	3.38
		Percent	6.3	12.5	32.8	34.4	14.1	
14	Writing a good introduction and a conclusion to their article.	Frequency	1	13	24	16	10	3.33
		Percent	1.6	20.3	37.5	25	15.6	
9	Sequencing paragraphs in the article.	Frequency	2	8	30	18	6	3.28
		Percent	3.1	12.5	46.9	28.1	9.4	
4	Taking notes that demonstrate the main points.	Frequency	3	15	18	18	10	3.27
		Percent	4.7	23.4	28.1	28.1	15.6	
17	Explaining in writing the content of graphs, tables, charts and diagrams.	Frequency	3	14	18	22	7	3.25
		Percent	4.7	21.9	28.1	34.4	10.9	
13	Relating the topic they write to their knowledge and experience.	Frequency	3	12	27	16	6	3.16
		Percent	4.7	18.8	42.2	25	9.4	
23	Writing a proposal about future plans.	Frequency	2	13	33	12	4	3.05
		Percent	3.1	20.3	51.6	18.8	6.3	
20	Writing a letter of application.	Frequency	5	14	26	12	7	3.03
		Percent	7.8	21.9	40.8	18.8	10.9	
18	Writing a report about an action in the past.	Frequency	3	15	27	17	2	3.00
		Percent	4.7	23.4	42.2	26.6	3.1	
22	Writing a paragraph from notes.	Frequency	3	16	27	17	1	2.95
		Percent	4.7	25	42.2	26.6	1.6	

As can be noticed from Table 4, the mean values of all the items in the teachers' difficulty scale are high and ranging from 3.63 to 2.95, which is higher than for the students' self-reported difficulties. High means values in the difficulty scale mean more difficulty, which is related to less ability. The above means values, therefore, reveal that according to the teachers' perception, students have less ability with English writing or overall face challenges while dealing with any writing task.

Another interesting point is the difference found between teachers and students on the priorities among writing sub-skills. Students' first five most needed writing sub-skills shared communicative and academic purpose, such as items 2, 6, 11, 4, and 10. On the

other hand, teachers' first five priorities were scientific and academic oriented writing tasks as in item number 21 to write a report on scientific projects done in a laboratory, item number 11 to translating some concepts and ideas from Arabic to English, item 1 to write a summary of information they have read or listened to, and item 8 to use correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. Scientific-oriented writing tasks were the least needed skills according to students whereas teachers perceived them as the most challenging task to be mastered. This finding can be justified by the fact that the teachers are more aware of the future EL-related challenges that students would face while trying to carry on their further study whereas students' judgment of the most needed writing skills were based on their current classroom needs.

The needs analysis literature has documented instances of discrepancy between the perceptions of different stakeholders groups with regard to the students language needs (e.g., Al-Husseini, 2004; Kakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Krohn, 2008; Purpura, & Graziano-King, 2004; Taillefer, 2007). To learn whether the current study participants differed in their perceptions of the Omani EFL students EL needs, a comparison was performed as in Table 5 between students and teachers. Therefore, Independent Samples t test was used to deduce the differences and to decide on the significance of the deduced differences. A difference is statistically significant if it is less than .05 (Muijs, 2004).

**Table 5**

*Teacher' and Students' Independent Samples Test Results*

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
ting scale	-5.730	1044	.000

Students and teachers seemed to perceive their English-language needs in grade 11 English courses in almost a different way. There were significant differences between students and teachers in the perceived EL needs in writing as determined by the Independent Samples t test: ( $t = -5.730$ ,  $df = 1044$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This finding is similar to other studies done in previous research in NA in other contexts (Ferri, 1998; Robinson, 1991); they revealed that discrepancies exist among the perceptions of instructors and students. The results show that instructors may not always be the best judges of students' needs and challenges.

### **Findings Related to the Supervisors and Heads of Departments**

The supervisors and heads of department were interviewed by the researcher to provide more in-depth insight into the actual needs of the grade 11 students. The interviewees were unable to recall within the time limit of the interview all the language uses that take place in grade 11 schools. This raised questions about the suitability of the interviews to find out about detailed needs. The interviewees were asked to specify the priorities among the four language skills (listening, speaking reading and writing). Despite their post, the informants gave different responses. One head of department perceived that all the four skills carried equal importance because they are very essential to carry out the students' study. Two supervisors stated that 'the priority should be directed first to productive skills then to receptive skills.' They thought that during grade 11 students should be prepared to produce the language according to their demands. This claim agreed with Kittidhaworn's (2001) finding which showed that all four sub-skills of Language Skills were perceived to be equally important for their second-year English courses.



While the needs analysis yielded a lucid picture of the needs of students, supervisors' skill priorities are less clear and, therefore, more difficult to define precisely. The inconsistency of priorities chosen by the supervisors and heads of department reflects the diversity of professional practices which affects not only the extent of their attitudes but also their skill priorities of the four skills. Writing was in the middle ranks. A head of department commented that 'our students in grade 11 all of them without exception should be able to read and to write at least should be taking about an IELTS band 4.5 level'. It should not be all of them because there must be strugglers, but again facilities and places for the strugglers are not available. The system also does not provide the resources either in terms of materials or training, because everybody is provided with the one book. The students at grade 11 clearly need a bit of advanced writing, skills in a variety of extended contexts. They need writing because they are taught to write newspaper reports and articles, formal and informal letters, essays and so forth. They also need to be skillful in some important sub skills of writing such as 'brainstorming, organization of ideas, paragraphing, using signposts, using topic sentences and supporting sentences. The students, according to another supervisor, also need to 'develop critical thinking and lateral thinking skills' accompanied with study skills and research skills as a preparatory kit for their following higher studies at the tertiary level.

### **Students' Perceived Needs vs. Actual Content of the Grade 11 EL Textbooks**

A shared pattern that emerged from analyzing questionnaires and interviews was that writing was placed in the third rank according to all participants. The five most difficult writing tasks according to teachers are scientific and academic-oriented writing tasks such as writing a report on scientific projects done in a laboratory, translating some

concepts and ideas from Arabic to English, expressing ideas and arguments effectively, writing a summary of information they read or listened to, using correct grammar, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling.

With regard to grade 11 EL textbooks, they did not shed light on scientific-oriented tasks. In addition, students were asked not to make use of their mother-tongue language during their English classes as an approach, which is meant to increase students' dependency on English. It would have resulted in better learning conditions if students' first language was strategically used to facilitate their learning. However, students were repeatedly referred to the process involved in writing before starting to accomplish any writing task; the textbooks did give the students the chance to redraft their writing. As many EL textbook students were asked to perform the writing tasks and submit the final draft or write it down in their workbook. Strategies should be developed and included in the course book to give the student the chance to write the first draft and get written feedback and based on that rewrite the second or the final draft again in their workbook, so that by the end students can have the chance to compare the progress in their writing competency. Writing is a very difficult skill, but it can be mastered by continuous writing (Al-Saadi, 2008). There is no short cut to it. Thus it becomes obligatory to involve our students in exclusive writing sessions. It is, in this context, recommended to have at least one full session per week devoted to writing, so that students have plenty of opportunities to practice a variety of different writing skills.

Although the analyzed material provided the chance to practise different writing genres, they should be more creative and have stimulating activities to focus students' attention on things to be learned. Hobelman and Wiriyaichitra (1995) stressed that writing materials should be interesting, related to students' interests, practical and related to real world

tasks. In sum, grade 11 EL provided little space for students to develop writing competence. The new Grade 11 EL syllabus should acknowledge that the skills involved in learning to write include the ability to draft, revise, conference, edit, proofread, and publish, and to form well-structured, effective texts (Richards, 2004). As has been advocated by many researchers such as Kaewpet (2009) and Shuja'a (2004), training in writing skills is being emphasized for EFL students in the present international community. For the Omani grade 11 context, training in writing communicative events should be further promoted as they have been determined to be the most frequently needed skills (Kaewpet, 2009). All previous aspects should be included and dealt with to gradually develop students' abilities to write. In addition, Richards (2004) advocates that English-writing learning opportunities should be through readings, discussions, and controlled exercises as well as independent writing.

### **Implications for the Reform of the Grade 11 EL Program**

Recent writings on the needs analysis literature, e.g. Al-Husseini (2004), Orafi and Borg (2009), Wang (2006), and Waters and Viches (2001), concluded that needs analysts have to consider from the beginning the implementation needs. This can be achieved by seriously involving the different bodies (e.g., teachers, managers, students, administrators, etc.) from early stages and during the planning stage. Non-implementation supported NA throws into question the relevance of conducting NA and the validity of its outcomes (Long, 2005). Therefore, much research on innovation in ELT has appeared in the last two decades, such as Holiday and Cooke (1982); Holiday (1994, 2001); Graves (2001); Orafi and Borg (2009); Waters and Vilches (2001), and has provided language specialists, teachers and material developer with a coherent set of guiding principles for the

implementation of language teaching innovation and reform.

EL writing, both teaching and learning, in the grade 11 Omani schools should aim at raising the writing competency of all pupils while ensuring our most able achieve the best international standards. Based on that, the majority of grade 11 pupils should attain a good level of competence in English, in both writing and reading. All our pupils should be able to use English to express themselves and should attain foundational skills. They should be able to use English in everyday situations and for functional purposes, such as giving directions, information or instructions and making requests.

The underlying principles of EL writing teaching and learning should be based on the following principles, adapted from the previous Omani syllabus and other EL Syllabus, namely, the Singaporean EL Syllabus (Ministry of Education, 2010).

1. Contextualization: Writing tasks and activities should be designed for pupils to learn the language in familiar, authentic and meaningful contexts of use.
2. Learner-Centeredness: Learners are at the centre of the teaching-learning process. Teaching will be differentiated according to pupils' needs, abilities and interests.
3. Process Orientation: The development of writing skills and knowledge involves the teaching of processes. The teacher should model and scaffold such processes for pupils, while guiding them to put together their final written and/ or multimodal products.

As to the content and to the development of the current EL program in grade 11, it is believed that the language uses identified by this empirical study should be regarded as learners' target language needs on which the grade 11 EL curriculums should be based. Table 6 summarizes the grade 11 students' target English writing needs suggested by this study.

**Table 6***Grade 11 Students' Target Area of English Writing Learning Needs*

<b>Area of Language Learning</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>Type of Texts</b>	<b>Skills</b>
<p><b>A: TEXTS FOR CREATIVE AND PERSONAL EXPRESSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poetry e.g., rhymes, song lyrics</li> <li>▪ Personal Recounts e.g., diary, journal entries or personal letters describing and reflecting on self, experiences or past events</li> <li>▪ Narratives e.g., stories about characters in given situations</li> </ul> <p><b>B: TEXTS FOR ACADEMIC AND FUNCTIONAL PURPOSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lists, e.g., lists of 'things to do'</li> <li>▪ Procedures e.g., recipes, instructions on how to create an art or craft work</li> <li>▪ Notes, Letters, Email, Notices and Forms e.g., notes of excuse, notices for notice boards, letters or email to a friend, teacher or principal to ask for information or feedback</li> <li>▪ Information Reports e.g., report on a product/ service project proposal/ brochures for the public on given topics/ lab reports.</li> <li>▪ Explanations e.g., explaining rules of a game or sport, how and/ or why an event or social problem occurs</li> <li>▪ Expositions e.g., online forum supporting/ disagreeing with a position; reviews of computer games or movies, explaining why these were interesting advertisements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write a report on a laboratory and scientific projects (or scientific laboratory projects)</li> <li>▪ Translate some concepts and ideas from Arabic to English.</li> <li>▪ Express ideas and arguments effectively.</li> <li>▪ Write a summary of information</li> <li>▪ Support the writing with examples, evidence and data.</li> <li>▪ Relate the topic to their knowledge and experience.</li> <li>▪ Express feelings and thoughts through free writing</li> <li>▪ Incorporate data and illustration.</li> <li>+ Elaborate on, explain and/ or justify the main idea</li> <li>▪ Use key words, phrases or clauses to introduce the main idea</li> <li>▪ Sequence paragraphs in the article.</li> <li>▪ Organize facts, ideas and/ or points of view in a way appropriate to the purpose and audience.</li> <li>▪ Write curriculum vitae (CV) in English.</li> <li>▪ Structure clear statements without any ambiguity or vagueness.</li> <li>▪ Write an essay in the class on an assigned topic.</li> <li>▪ Write a questionnaire in English.</li> <li>▪ Edit papers for grammar and style problems.</li> <li>▪ Write a good introduction and a conclusion to article.</li> <li>▪ Take notes that demonstrate the main points.</li> <li>▪ Explain the content of graphs, tables, charts and diagrams.</li> <li>▪ Write a proposal about future plans.</li> <li>▪ Write a letter of application.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Note,</b> No particular order is advocated for the teaching of these texts. Pupils should also be encouraged to express themselves creatively and personally through writing.</p>	

- 
- Write a report about an action in the past.
  - Write a paragraph from notes.
  - + Check spelling accuracy
  - + Apply spelling rules and conventions consistently
  - + Plan by identifying the purpose, audience and context.
  - + Use appropriate cohesive devices (e.g., connectors, pronouns) to indicate relations between different sentences.
- 

Table 6 lists all the skills and sub-skills, genre and tasks considered applicable for grade 11 as found by this study. The chart synthesizes the language uses and features resulting from the analysis questionnaires, textbooks analysis and the interviews that were conducted in chapter four.

The fulfillment of the learners' needs by English for general purposes EGP requires consideration of methodology. With a major focus on developing learner ability to use language appropriately, the student-centered approach is suggested for teaching EGP for grade 11 Omani EFL learners. The findings of this study suggest that, teachers and other ELT specialists in Oman need to think about the teaching-learning process in terms of their students, rather than the kind of essentialist and static terms that are dictated by theory-based methods and approaches. The student-centered approach is being welcomed, resulting in positive learning experiences in EFL contexts. For example, Nunan (2001) identifies the involvement of learners in making meaning with both their teacher and their peers as a key factor in determining success. For its principles and other reasons, which are given presently, the students-centred approach is recommended for the design, implementation and teaching of the grade 11 Omani EL program. It is a response to the suggestions made by the interviewees, who suggested that 'we have to look at the way

English is taught how it is taught? What resources are there to support it? And to get the students feedback not only to the curriculum, so we need everyone to be involved in the process.’

Region-wide, ambitious educational innovations can only succeed if the teachers, who can potentially act as supportive agent, operate along agreed principles and have the means and the competence to intensively coach and teach. Borg (2003) described teachers as ‘active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive network of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs’ (p. 81). This can be achieved according to Al-Husseini (2004) by involvement and training.

To make the most of the training program, the ministry should conduct a nationwide training needs analysis for the Omani EL teachers in schools. The training priorities for these teachers should be based on an empirical investigation of their urgent wants, lacks and necessities. Training, therefore, has to keep up with the teachers as refresher courses, especially for those teachers who are resistant to change. The Ministry of Education should also implement national or international intensive English language proficiency upgrading courses for teachers with poor or weak English. These programs should be focused and accompanied with teaching methodology sessions. The Ministry of Higher Education and Omani universities should collaborate to implement an effective and up-to-date BA program for preparing undergraduates to teach EFL using the most appropriate teaching methodology that matches with the principles and philosophy of the Omani EFL curriculum. In addition, it is essential that the Ministry of Higher Education, which certifies any English language BA program in the country, liaise closely with the English language section.

## **Conclusion**

This article presented a framework for analyzing students' language learning needs in a nationwide context for the purpose of establishing better learning objectives, and designing content, material and methodology for English language courses. Recent needs analysts namely Al-Husseini (2004), Long (2005) and Nelson (2000) reported that until now, few—if any—studies have been conducted to analyze the learning needs of a whole society or a nation. The societal approach of NA adopted by this study, particularly with regard to sampling, data collection and analysis, may be applicable to further studies in similar contexts around the world.

In order to put needs analysis on a theoretical and empirical base, Long (2005) calls for “replication with different populations in different sectors” (p.12) as well as a new methodological approach (Krohn, 2008). The present study provided an example of a new unexplored population or context in two ways. Firstly, no attempt has been carried out to systematically study the language needs of school students in the Arab world (Kandil, 2009), or more specifically in the Omani domain to the best knowledge of the researcher. However, the findings of this study cannot be confidently said to represent the language needs of the Arab world because there are differences among EFL learners in the different Arab countries which may produce different needs analysis profiles. This is due to the fact that varieties of English are often used, emphasized or present within different contexts in a particular culture. Secondly, it investigated the learning needs at high school level or pre-university students, which has not been tackled yet. Most of the NA studies investigated the learners' needs at university or college level, such as Al Busaidi (2003), Shuja'a (2004), Al-Husseini, (2004) and Keen (2006).

A particular innovation of this study was its utilization of two types of triangulations:



methodological triangulation and data triangulation (Krohn, 2008). Multiple sources, such as, students, teachers, supervisors, and heads of the departments were approached during data collection. In addition, varieties of data were gathered and compared using multiple methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, and content analysis. The current study also provided a methodological empirical example of an assertion made by Waters and Vilches (2001) and Richards (2001) that involving decision makers, such as, language specialists, supervisors, heads of the departments, administrators, employers, and so forth, is very fundamental to be initially familiarized at the foundation building stage. It is also important for the success of implementation of any study, since they decide whether to accept, reject or modify the implementation of the study findings.

The findings revealed that a gap existed between the content of the grade 11 curriculum and the perceived needs of the students. The Grade 11 EL curriculum provided little space for students to develop writing competence. This study concludes that any innovation or reform in ELT practise should be based on a meaningful collaboration among various concerned stakeholders, including students, teachers, and other institutional administrators.

The results of this study can be used as a reference for EFL teachers, supervisors and other stakeholders to discover the role their students can play in the decision-making process of their curriculum development. The study helps shift the focus of English teachers' attention towards the specific skill-training that is most important for their particular audience. Further researches on the English language needs analysis of Omani students should highlight students' "lacks" and necessities. Further studies should attempt target situation discourse samples, such as students' homework, quiz or exam paper analysis to determine the actual areas of weakness that are common with Omani students

in Grade 11. An attempt should also be made to study the textual analysis of the types of readings Omani students encounter in their studies.

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## **The Effect of Narrative Structure on Learner Use of English Tense and Aspect in an English as a Foreign Language Context**

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the influence of the discourse narrative structure on verbal morphology in L2 learners' interlanguage temporality system. The aim was to retest the Discourse Hypothesis predictions regarding of the influence of discourse structure on verbal morphology use in oral narrative in an English as a Foreign Language context. The discourse hypothesis predicts that L2 learners will use past forms predominantly in the foreground of the narrative while non-past forms will be used in the background. Data obtained from 36 learners was randomly chosen from a pool of pretest productions by Thai L2 learners of English. Participants were asked to narrate a strange dream after looking at six pictures. Results revealed that participants show more use of the past forms in the foreground than the background while they use more non-past forms in the background. Learners' systematic errors in tense marking could be understood in the light of the results of the present study. The paper concludes that the discourse hypothesis is supported and that English as a Foreign Language learners exhibit similar use of tense and aspect to English as a Second Language learners.

**Keywords:** Discourse hypothesis, tense and aspect, EFL, Thai learners, temporality, interlanguage



## Introduction

The investigation of expressing temporality in second language acquisition research has led to a focus on the surface forms of tense and aspect morphology and the underlying temporal semantics in learners' language production (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2000). As mentioned by Bardovi-Harlig (1999), the acquisition of temporal subsystems has been studied by examining the various linguistics devices and the distribution of verbal morphology employed to express temporality. Tense, grammatical aspect, and lexical aspect have become crucial facets of verbal morphology investigations. These parts have been studied within two main trends in second language acquisition: the meaning-oriented approach, which examines how semantic concepts are expressed through different linguistic devices, and the form-oriented approach, which examines verbal morphology distribution as a marker of the underlying interlanguage semantic system (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000).

The form-oriented trend has focused on identifying and tracing the morphological forms and their distribution in interlanguage in order to determine the underlying system of expressing temporality in second language acquisition. Two main hypotheses under form-oriented trend have emerged: the aspect hypothesis (AH) and the discourse hypothesis (DH). Table 1 shows a comparison of the main principles of the two hypotheses. The AH argues for the influence of the inherent semantics of lexical aspect of verbs and predicates on verb morphology, whereas the DH supports the influence of discourse organization and storyline orientation. The AH is based on a lexical aspect theory, which suggests that lexical verbs have different inherent semantic properties. These properties are classified according to Vendler's (1967) model of lexical aspect (as cited in Housen, 1998). Vendler's model divides lexical verbs into four types: *states*,

*activities, accomplishments, and achievements* based on whether the verb indicates that it is either *stative* or *dynamic*, *punctual* or *durative*, and *telic* or *atelic* (i.e., it has an endpoint). According to Andersen and Shirai (1996), tense aspect morphology is acquired initially with achievement and accomplishment verbs, then with activity and state verbs at a later stage.

**Table 1**

*A Comparison of the Main Principles of the Aspect and Discourse Hypotheses*

	Aspect Hypothesis	Discourse Hypothesis
Influence	Inherent semantics of lexical aspect of verbs and predicates	Discourse organization and storyline orientation
Prediction	Learners will choose tense-aspect morphology according to whether lexical verbs are states, activities, accomplishments, or achievements.	Learners will choose tense-aspect morphology according to whether lexical verbs occur in the foreground or the background sections of the discourse.
Basis	Lexical basis	Discourse basis

On the other hand, the DH is based on the proposed influence of narrative structure on the learner's verbal morphology system (Hopper, 1979). Dahl (1984) defined narrative discourse as a text "where the speaker relates a series of real or fictive events in the order they took place" (p.116). Narrative discourse, according to Dahl, consists of the main-line of events and the interrupted background information. These two components are referred to as foreground and background respectively in discourse literature.

Hopper (1979) defined foreground as “the parts of the narrative which relate events belonging to the skeletal structure of the discourse” while he defined background as the “supportive material which does not itself narrate the main events” (p. 213) but supports, amplifies, or comments on the events in the main foreground narrative. The foreground includes events that succeed one another in the narrative as they actually happened in the real world (i.e., the events in the foreground are sequential) while the background includes events that are not sequential but rather concurrent with the events in the foreground (Hopper, 1979). Hopper presented the following example to illustrate this distinction:

*Example 1*

We went back to the camp, and ran away during the night, and we traveled several days, we passed through several villages, and in all of them we did not have to pay tribute

*Foreground*

We went back to the camp  
and ran away during the night  
we traveled several days

*Background*



we passed through a few villages  
and in all of them we did not ...

Notice that the background events are not sequential in relation to the main story line but concurrent to the third event in the foreground and that they present supportive information to the main sequence of events. Table 2 shows a comparison of the main characteristics of foreground and background.

**Table 2***The Main Characteristics of Foreground and Background*

	Foreground	Background
Function	presents main events.	presents supportive events.
Timeline	moves time in discourse forward.	does not necessarily move time.
Narrativity	includes sequential events.	includes concurrent events to main events.
Punctuality	usually includes punctual events.	usually includes events reporting durative, repetitive, or habitual events.
Completeness	usually includes completed events.	usually includes ongoing events.

The sequentiality of events in the foreground entails a forward movement in time (Dry, 1981). A “narrative of consecutive events creates for the reader or hearer an imagined time stream as a dimension of the narrative world in which the events occur” (Dry, 1983, p. 19). Reinhart (1984) described the temporal criteria of foreground as follows:

1. Narrativity, or temporal continuity: Only narrative units, i.e., textual units whose order matches the order of the events they report, can serve as foreground
2. Punctuality: Units reporting punctual events can serve more easily as foreground than units reporting durative, repetitive, or habitual events.
3. Completeness: A report of a completed event can serve more easily as foreground than a report of an ongoing event. (p. 801)

These criteria identify and distinguish foreground from background, which has different

characteristics and functions. According to Hopper (1979), background events are not as sequential as foreground events and provide supportive information, which elaborates on or evaluates prior, simultaneous, or following events in the foreground. These criteria and definitions were used as the operationalized terms in the analysis of the data of this study.

### **Discourse Hypothesis**

Narrative structure is one of the factors that second language research correlates with the acquisition of tense and aspect morphology (see Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, 1995, 1998; Flashner, 1989; Housen, 1994, Tre´vise, 1987 among others). Godfrey (1980), when studying discourse and tense-aspect morphology in interlanguage, observed that the use of tense verbal morphology cannot be interpreted without considering discourse structure. Native speakers distinguish between foreground and background of narrative by using tense-aspect morphology (i.e., native speakers use simple past to narrate the successive events in the foreground). This use raised the question of whether second language learners would acquire tense morphology based on the distinction of the foreground and the background. It also raised the question of whether the route and sequentiality of events would really entail the consistent use of one form of verbal morphology.

In a case study investigation of the use of tense morphology based on the grounding of a narrative by a Japanese immigrant to the US, Kumpf (1984) suggested that there is a relationship between the use of verbal morphology in interlanguage and the grounding of narrative. Hence, the interlanguage DH evolved to predict that learners use emerging verbal morphology to distinguish foreground from background in narratives. The DH predicts that learners will use more past tense than non-past forms in the foreground

while non-past forms will be predominant in the background (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). Furthermore, as the learners' interlanguage system develops, it is expected that there will be target-like performance and the past tense will be prevalent in both foreground and background.

The study of DH includes early case studies (e.g., Flashner, 1989; Kumpf, 1984) and late larger studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, 1995, 1998). In studying the temporal system and universality of interlanguage, Kumpf (1984) argued for the idea that discourse-function perspective applies to both native language and interlanguage analysis: "it is the discourse context which creates the conditions under which the forms appear" (p. 132). Kumpf focused on tense-aspect morphology and how the narrative discourse influences its distribution in interlanguage. He examined the personal narrative of a low-proficiency English learner of Japanese L1 background, who had been in the States for 28 years. The data of this case study was collected through conversation interviews with the subject. The results showed that completed actions in the foreground were expressed with the base verb form while in the background most verbs were marked for tense, especially the stative verbs. Kumpf then concluded that the basic interlanguage system is influenced by the distinction of foreground and background in narrative.

The influence of discourse structure on verbal morphology has been raised in those studies that focused on the process of expressing temporality in interlanguage. However, the above studies did not focus solely on the influence of discourse narrative on verbal morphology, but rather on all means of expressing temporality. Flashner's (1989) study of tense morphology distribution in the foreground and background of narratives by 3 Russian adults, therefore, seems to be the first study that focused only on this distribution. Flashner examined the spontaneous personal narratives of 3 Russians who had lived in

the United States for more than 2 years and had different levels of English proficiency (1 beginner, 1 intermediate, and 1 advanced). Results showed that all 3 speakers' past forms indicated perfective actions and correlated with narrative foreground while non-past forms, especially base forms, denoted imperfective function and correlated with narrative background. Flashner concluded that "the notions of background and foreground provide a gross distinction that enables us to examine the use of tense and aspect in narrative monologues" (p. 95).

Taking discourse influence as the theoretical basis of the study, Bardovi-Harlig (1992) focused more closely on discourse structure and tense morphology in narratives using a larger number of participants than earlier studies. Examining the narratives of 16 intermediate learners of English in an intensive program, Bardovi-Harlig tested the prediction of the influence of discourse on tense marking. Data was collected through written stories and oral retell. After listening to the story two times, the participants were individually asked to retell it orally to one of the interview team members and then write the story down. The purpose of collecting oral and written versions of the narrative was to provide two ways to test learners' developing knowledge of tense use. Previous studies used only oral narrative and did not investigate written narrative. Results showed that in both the oral and written narrative the foreground was associated with a high rate of appropriate use and dominance of the past tense while the background had lower rate of appropriate use of past tense and consisted predominantly non-past forms especially present tense, which was virtually absent in the foreground. Bardovi-Harlig argued that the use of tense by learners of English as a second language could best be understood from a narrative structure perspective.

Focusing on the distinction between the foreground and background in narrative and the

effect of this distinction on the development of learners' tense aspect interlanguage morphological system, Bardovi-Harlig (1995) replicated her previous study but this time with even larger number of learners: 37 beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners of English in an intensive program. The aim of choosing different levels of proficiency was to evaluate the difference and predict the development in the tense-aspect morphological system of the learners. In this study, the participants were asked to watch a silent film and then retell the story to one of the interview team members; later, the participants were asked to narrate the story in writing. Results indicated that the simple past tense appeared in the foreground first with a much higher rate than in the background at all levels while the background was mainly occupied with base form and simple present. The simple past in the advanced level was dominant in the background but never reached the same high level of use in the foreground. Moreover, while the foreground had both past tense and base forms, the background included past tense, base, progressive, as well as present forms. Bardovi-Harlig concluded that the interlanguage pattern of tense-aspect distribution reflects simple function of the foreground and multiple functions of the background.

The results of these studies support the influence of discourse structure on interlanguage verbal morphology system. However, they report quite contradictory findings. The DH states that, at early stages of interlanguage development, learners will use more past tense forms in the foreground and more non-past forms in the background. Table 3 shows sample studies that supported and did not support the DH.



**Table 3***Sample Studies that Supported and Did Not Support the DH*

Supported	Did not support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Flashner (1989) found that perfective actions were expressed in past forms and correlated with foreground while imperfective actions were expressed in non-past forms and correlated with background.</li><li>Bardovi-Harlig (1992) found that a high rate of appropriate use and dominance of the past tense were related to foreground whereas lower rate of appropriate use of past tense and non-past forms dominance, especially present tense, were related to the background.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kumpf (1984) found that completed actions in the foreground are expressed with the base verb form (i.e., non-past) while in the background most verbs are marked for tense (i.e., past forms).</li></ul>

The results of studies testing a hypothesis are not always consistent and it is therefore sometimes necessary to replicate a study using a different context in order to reach robust and solid grounds that support and confirm the predictions of such hypotheses (see Polio & Gass, 1997). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to retest the predictions of the DH in a different context and using different data. While all the studies mentioned above tested the DH in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context, to my knowledge, no study has tested the hypothesis in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

The present study uses data produced by EFL Thai learners in order to further expand our understanding of the role of discourse structure in second language acquisition and of

the possible effects of foreground and background distinction in narrative on an interlanguage verbal morphology system. Through retesting the predictions of the DH, the present study examines the effect of narrative structure on verbal morphology distribution in L2 EFL learners' interlanguage system. The DH hypothesis would predict that Thai L2 learners of English will use past forms predominantly in the foreground and non-past forms predominantly in the background.

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Participants in this study were 36 Thai learners of English who were selected randomly from a pool of participants in a larger scale study. This larger study used a dream narrative task as the pretest assessment of the participants' use of past tense (McDonough, 2007). Participants were all first-year university students enrolled in a Bachelor's degree program in English at a large public university in northern Thailand. 4 males and 32 females participated in the study; their ages ranged from 17 to 20 years old, with an average age of 18.22 ( $SD = .637$ ). Their length of previous study of English ranged from 7 to 15 years, with an average of 10.72 ( $SD = 2.13$ ).

### **Materials and Procedures**

The testing materials were communicative activities in the form of one-way information-gap tasks that the learners carried out individually in a language laboratory. Each test contained a dream narration task that elicited contexts for past time verbs. Learners were given a series of six pictures, which illustrated related events, and were asked to narrate a

dream based on those pictures. This elicitation task was performed at the beginning of the school year to assess the initial knowledge of temporal morphology in the learners' interlanguage before giving the participants any treatment (see McDonough, 2007). The tests were administered in a language laboratory using a pre-recorded audiotape that gave instructions and controlled the amount of time for each activity. Participants were given six pictures to look over in 30 seconds and then were asked to recount their strange dreams based on the pictures in 15 minutes. The learners were seated at individual carrels equipped with boom microphones. The test sessions took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

### **Analysis**

The data obtained were coded first for foreground and background clauses. Clauses that were sequential and moved the narrative time forward were categorized as foreground while concurrent clauses that either described actions or presented supportive information were categorized as background. The categorization of foreground and background clauses were made independently of the verbal morphology and some clauses were excluded from the analysis for various reasons. The first clause of each narrative - "last night I had a strange dream" - was excluded because participants were asked to begin their narratives in this manner. Irrelevant clauses as in Example 2 were excluded too as the participants were not narrating the dream but presenting irrelevant information or questions.

### *Example 2*

...I ride it and I break home again but my home is disappear. *Do you think it's strange dream.*

The analysis did not include clauses with missing predicators as shown in Example 3. The clauses had no verbs (i.e., the participant did not supply the verb of the clause) and it was not predictable whether the learner would use past tense, present, or base form.

### *Example 3*

- a) It run very fast and I like it too much // *it very strong* // it face look frightened.
- b) Suddenly, // *a lot of water* // *to city* // I try to swim.

Quoted speech was not considered either. However, the verb that introduced the quoted speech, if available, was counted. Example 4 (a) shows a case with a quotation verb while in 4 (b) there is no verb introducing the quoted speech.

### *Example 4*

- a) He said // *you are the prisoner*// I said *No* // *help me please*.
- b) I just came to the door and knock the door. // *Is there any body*//

The grounding coding was followed by verbal morphology coding. Each verb in the narrative was coded for its verbal morphology. Only verbs in obligatory past tense contexts were considered in the analysis. Verbs such as infinitives, which have no tense marking, were eliminated. In keeping with the techniques of Flashner (1989) and Bardovi-Harlig (1992), verbs were classified into past and non-past. Tokens of past forms were essentially simple past, but also contained some instances of past progressive and the past modal forms, such as *could* and *would*. The non-past forms consisted of base, present tense, and present modal, such as *can* and *will*. However, some undistinguishable forms were excluded from this analysis. Verbs that were missing the tense marker, such

as *he seen* or *I flying*, were not counted because the tense marker was not supplied and it was not clear what it would be, past or present. Moreover, verbs that have the same form in the past and present such as *let* were excluded. Another excluded category was in the case of verbs with defected and uninterpretable forms, which could not be classified as base or present forms and were considered to be developmental errors. Example 5 shows some instances of this category.

*Example 5*

- a) I *didn't* // *saw-can't saw* anything
- b) Train *is have* a lot of people
- c) The plane *is land*

As an oral narrative, the data exhibited other analytical problems, such as repetition and self-repair. When a verb was repeated, as in Example 6, it was counted only once so as not to increase the number of verbs in the narratives.

*Example 6*

- a) I go to *go to* the door
- b) It was-*it was* about ...

Moreover, in cases of self-repair, the repetition was not counted either so as not to increase the number of verb tokens. However, in classifying the verbs, the appropriate correction was counted instead of the first inappropriate use. Example 7 shows some of these instances.

*Example 7*

- a) Then it grow-*it grew* higher
- b) The airplane get-*got* me up
- c) I run-*ran* away until I met a big flower

The grounding and verbal morphology coding was performed on the 36 oral narrative texts by the researcher. 20% of the data was coded by another external rater. Inter-rater reliability for the grounding differentiation was 94.34% and 98.73% for the verbal morphology classification. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

## **Results**

In order to test the DH prediction of past and non-past distribution in foreground and background parts of narrative structure, past and non-past forms used in both foreground and background were compared to each other. To test for significance in the use of past and non-past forms in both foreground and background, and since the foreground and background data come from data that is produced by the same participants, a *t*-test for dependent samples seemed the appropriate statistical measure. However, because the descriptives of the data showed that the data had non-normal dispersion of the values of verbal morphology use, the equivalent non-parametric test, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, was used.

To address the first part of the DH prediction (i.e., the use of past forms is considerably greater in foreground than in background), the analysis looked at the difference in past forms use for both foreground and background. The goal of this part of the analysis was to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference in the use of *past forms* in both foreground and background. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was run using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software - Version 16. Table 4 shows the results of this test. To estimate the range of variation in the data, the interquartile range (*IQR*) and the median (*Mdn*) are used since the data is not normally distributed.

**Table 4***Past Forms Use by Grounding*

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Foreground	5.00	6.00		
Background	1.50	6.00	-3.932	.000

Table 4 shows that although the *IQR* of past form use in the two categories are the same (*IQR* = 6), the *Mdn* reveals considerable variability (Foreground = 5.00; Background = 1.50). Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test found a significant difference in past form use based on grounding ( $z = -3.932$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A *Cohen's d*, which is based on standardized mean differences of two groups regardless of sample sizes, was run to account for the magnitude of the difference ( $d = 0.715$ ). It showed that they were different by approximately 72% and so the *effect size* ( $r = 0.33$ ) was large. This means that there is an obvious higher rate of past form use in the foreground than the background and thus the first part of the prediction of the hypothesis is supported.

To determine whether the second part of the DH prediction (i.e., non-past forms are mostly used in background rather than foreground) is supported in the present data, the use of non-past forms in both foreground and background was compared. As shown in Table 5, there is variability in the distribution of non-past use between the foreground and background (*Mdn* = 6.00 and 9.00 respectively) despite the slight difference in the *IQR* (*IQR* = 7.00 and 8.00 respectively). As expected, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test revealed a significant difference in non-past form use in the foreground and the background ( $z = -2.800$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The effect size of this difference is large ( $r = .3003$ ) with a difference

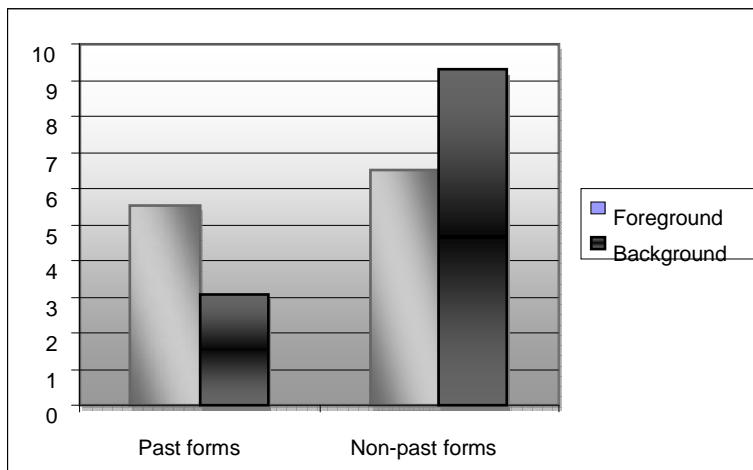
probability of 63 % ( $d = .629$ ). This means that there is a higher rate of non-past form use in the background than the foreground. This result is in compliance with and supports the second part of the DH prediction.

**Table 5**

*Non-Past Forms Use by Grounding*

	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>IQR</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
Foreground	6.00	7.00	-2.800	.005
Background	9.00	8.00		

All in all, the results of this paper support the DH prediction. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of this difference based on *mean* differences: past forms are used more in the foreground than in the background while non-past forms are used in the background more than the foreground.



*Figure 1.* Distribution of past form and non-past form use by grounding



## **Discussion**

The investigation of tense use in oral narrative shows that tense form use in learners' interlanguage is influenced by narrative structure. The DH prediction is that participants use past forms in the foreground more than the background, while non-past forms are used in the background more than the foreground. Results of this paper show that the prediction was supported. These results support the findings of Bardovi-Harlig (1992, 1995) and Flashner (1989) and give more support to the influence of narrative structure not only on ESL learners' interlanguage temporal system development but also on that of EFL learners. While it is believed that there are some differences between ESL and EFL learners, the present data suggests that there is no difference with respect to the DH. This study helps expand the understanding of learners' interlanguage temporal development to a new context: EFL.

The investigation of learners' production is crucial to understanding their interlanguage temporal development. This understanding is also important from a teaching perspective. Teachers who notice that their learners are making systematic errors in tense marking can use the present study as a reference point to become aware of what is happening in their own classrooms. One possibility worth investigation in the classroom is looking at how learners might be making tense-marking errors in their narratives because of the influence of the narrative structure. Discourse structure could help us understand learners' use of verbal morphology in relation to context. Learners tend to use past tense forms correctly in the foreground more than the background. This use might be clear for some learners more than others.

Research on discourse narrative structure and its relationship to verbal morphology in L2 learners' interlanguage temporality systems can also inform teachers with respect to

learners' language development. How accurately learners use past tense in foreground and background may reflect their level of development. Although the level of proficiency in the present study was not controlled, other studies have shown that very low level learners do not use tense forms systematically to distinguish between foreground and background (Schumann, 1987), while advanced learners show high levels of proficiency in the use of past tense in foreground and background (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). We can argue therefore that learners go through stages of development, starting with unsystematic use of verbal morphology in foreground and background to a more correct and systematic use. However, this claim needs to be empirically tested using cross-sectional or longitudinal data.

To conclude, the present study has shown that the use of tense by EFL first-year university students of English (i.e., lower intermediate level) can be understood through narrative discourse structure, supporting the claim of the DH. In light of this, teachers can attain a better understanding of the sources of their learners' errors and may modify their instruction to focus on ways to help their learners achieve native-like performance with respect to the use of verbal morphology.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The present study contributes to DH research and to research on learners' interlanguage temporal systems. This study provides further evidence of the influence of discourse structure on learners' choices of temporal morphology. However, one of the limitations of this line of research is related to the tasks used to elicit narrative structures. Although dream telling based on a sequence of pictures elicits a narrative that provides the

expression of sequences of events, such elicitation techniques may not require reference to current states or future events, which are found in spontaneous personal conversations, yielding texts that are not as authentic as spontaneous narrative (Noyau, 1990). This formal environment may affect learners' performance as they focus on telling what happened (as requested by the researcher) and, therefore, relate the foreground events alone. Nonetheless, in the present study, this was not the case. The number of clauses in the foreground and the background are relatively similar showing that there was no effect of focusing on relating foreground alone.

A major limitation of the present study, however, is that the proficiency level of participants was not assessed in a standardized manner. Although all participants were English majors in their first year of college, they might not have the same proficiency level. By including language proficiency as a variable, future research would provide more substantial information related to the relationship between language proficiency and the distribution of temporal morphology in discourse.

Future research may also provide key information regarding the effect of discourse structure on learners' temporal morphology if the same data is analyzed from both discourse and lexical perspectives. In other words, if the same data was analyzed based on the predictions of both the DH and the AH, results might prove more enlightening. In fact, previous research has already included these two perspectives, but further analyses are needed for reliable results. Bardovi-Harlig (1998), for example, analyzed her data from aspectual (i.e., the aspect hypothesis) and narrative grounding (i.e., the discourse hypothesis) perspectives. She suggested that understanding learners' interlanguage tense-aspect morphology development can be well achieved by taking into account both the aspectual categories of verbs phrases and the discourse structure. In the future, the

replication of Bardovi-Harlig's study would be desirable with the present data to see if the same results would be obtained for EFL learners.

Replication of the study would also be desirable in order to overcome the limitation in place in this study, as well as previous studies, due to only using two groups: past and non-past. A fine-grained analysis of the verbs and their classification based on both tense (i.e., past, present) and aspect (i.e., simple, progressive, perfect) may, in fact, shed more light on the relationship between verbs' aspectual and grounding aspects and how these two facets interact when producing temporal morphology.

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## **A Comparative Study of Intuitive-Imitative and Analytic-Linguistic Approaches to Teaching Pronunciation: Does Age Play a Role?**

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### **Abstract**

The indispensable place of pronunciation in the vast realm of communication has been recognized by many second/foreign language instructors recently. However, another question which remains substantial in the field concerns the way to improve learners' pronunciation. This study explores two different approaches towards pronunciation teaching—intuitive-imitative vs. analytic-linguistic—in the case of non-Persian sounds in an EFL context in Iran. The effect of one personal factor, age, has been investigated as a moderating variable in applying the two instructional approaches. To this end, 50 low intermediate Iranian EFL learners, aged between 13 and 20, were selected and randomly assigned into two experimental groups (intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic groups). To collect the data, a pronunciation test, including 60 test items, was administered to both groups in a pretest-posttest design. Paired *t*-tests showed a statistically significant increase in the posttest pronunciation test scores with a large effect size for the instruction in improving the learners' pronunciation ability. Also, independent *t*-tests indicated the

greater effectiveness of the analytic-linguistic approach in teaching the pronunciation of English sounds which do not exist in Persian. Furthermore, the age of participants was found to be a significant factor in the records of effectiveness for a particular instructive approach. The intuitive-imitation approach was more effective for the younger participants (i.e., 13-16 years old) whereas the analytic-linguistic approach was more effective for the older ones (i.e., 17-20 years old).

**Keywords:** Intuitive-imitative, analytic-linguistic, pronunciation, age

## **Introduction**

Pronunciation is the production of sounds that we use to make meaning. It includes the particular sounds of a language (i.e., segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sounds, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, rhythm (i.e., suprasegmental aspects) and how the voice is projected, that is, voice quality (Yates & Zielinski, 2009). Schmitt (2002, p. 219) defines pronunciation as “a term used to capture all aspects of how we employ speech sounds for communication.” As the sound system is an integral part of any language, there should be a place for pronunciation teaching in any language program. However, as Celce-Murcia (2000) states, the importance of pronunciation has been ignored until very recently. Most approaches and methods of teaching a second/foreign language (L2) place primary emphasis on reading and writing skills and secondary or little emphasis on oral skills. According to Celce-Murcia, pronunciation was overlooked in the syllabus, materials and classroom activities in English L2 classrooms in many countries in Europe, South America and Asia. With the advent of new approaches such as communicative approaches, listening and speaking skills started enjoying some sort of status alongside reading and writing skills. Proving its vitality for effective communication, L2 pronunciation has gained importance.

Wong (1993) states that the importance of pronunciation appears even more distinct



when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension is taken into consideration. Since listeners, whether in L1 or L2, expect spoken language to follow certain patterns of rhythm and intonation, speakers need to employ these patterns to communicate effectively. If the rhythm and intonation are different from what is expected, listeners simply cannot get the meaning. Similarly, listeners need to know how speech is organized and what intonation patterns mean in order to interpret speech accurately. Thus, learning about pronunciation develops the learners' abilities to comprehend spoken language. Even when the non-native speakers' vocabulary and grammar are excellent, if their pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level, they are unable to communicate effectively. Moreover, as Fraser (2006) points out, pronunciation is important to those who have integrative motivation since with native-like pronunciation they will not be marked as foreigners. To move further, pronunciation appears more crucial for those who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) since English is now accepted as a major lingua franca globally despite the fact that this trend, according to Graddol (2006), might change within the foreseeable future. Even Graddol, while predicting that the predominance of English might fade in the future, acknowledges that "the analysis of international travel movements suggests that three-quarters of all travel is between non-English speaking countries. This suggests a large demand for either foreign language learning or the increasing use of English as a lingua franca" (p. 30). It seems that more and more people need to use English for social, educational, and professional reasons in different contexts, either locally or internationally. Given that "there is no single variety of English which provides the target of learning" (Graddol, 2006, p. 82), it is essential that individuals who use English to communicate with other speakers, regardless of a particular variety used, have a high level of pronunciation intelligibility; that is, to use

Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, and Griner's words (2010), they should "surpass the threshold level so that their pronunciation will not detract from their ability to communicate" (p. 9). According to them, intelligibility refers to being easy to understand, without an accent that distracts or causes problems for listeners. Zielinsky (2003) also defines ineligibility "as the degree to which the speech produced by a speaker can be identified by a listener as the words the speaker intended to produce" (p. 1). As she points out, there are situations when the intelligibility of the speaker is a crucial factor in communication breakdown. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009), it is important for us to attend to any aspect of pronunciation that improves intelligibility and helps us to reduce miscommunication. "As long ago as 1949, Abercrombie suggested we should aim for a learner to be 'comfortably intelligible' and this is what most learners want, although some may wish to sound more native-like than others for particular professional or personal reasons" (cited in Yates & Zielinski, 2009, p. 12 ). With poor pronunciation, a speaker can find it very difficult to be intelligible, despite accuracy in other areas such as grammar (Fraser, 2000). As Celce-Murcia (2000) points out, the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is usually accomplished via interaction with at least one speaker. In fact, interaction is a two-way process and thus what is intelligible depends on the listener. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009), what the listener brings to the interaction is just as important as what the speaker pronounces. This notion further emphasizes the importance of mutual intelligibility of English, which is the international language and the most important means of communication now.

As Yates and Zielinski (2009) state, adult learners are not likely to be able to pronounce English (or any other language) exactly like a native speaker, and they do not need to, given that the native speakers of a language like English have a variety of pronunciations

or accents, such as American English, British English, New Zealand English and Australian English. Being aware of the variety of pronunciation, Hockett (1972) states that "Our goal in teaching pronunciation is then the production of a sound system which does not interfere with communication, either from the speaker's or listener's point of view" (p. 62). Thus, the search for exploring the most effective approach to help learners to have good pronunciation skills which make them intelligible (i.e., understandable in the act of communication) to native speakers of language would be sufficient as a goal for language teachers involved in teaching pronunciation in foreign language classrooms. Perhaps what is out of the question, as Scarcella and Oxford (1994) point out, is that pronunciation should be taught in all L2 classes through a variety of activities. The question is not whether pronunciation should be taught, but as Morley (1991) points out, instead what should be taught in a pronunciation class and how it should be dealt with. The uncertainty about the way of teaching, according to Farser (2002), may arise from the selection of pronunciation features, the ordering of the features selected and the type of discourse in which to practice pronunciation. The current problem, then, is that most language teachers are not familiar with useful strategies for teaching pronunciation, and they do not know what strategies are appropriate when facing specific problematic situations. Another part of the problem concerns the fact that those teachers are embarrassed because of this lack of instructional strategic knowledge. As Dalton (2002) states, "We are comfortable teaching reading, writing, listening and to a degree, general oral skills, but when it comes to pronunciation we often lack the basic knowledge of articulatory phonetics to offer our students anything more than rudimentary and often unhelpful advice" (p.72).

Given the above issues, several approaches have been suggested for teaching

pronunciation. Among them, intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches are of great importance for teaching segmental features. According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (1996), intuitive-imitative is an approach to teaching pronunciation based on the learners' ability to listen and imitate the rhythm and sounds of the language without being given any explicit information. In this approach availability of native models to listen to is taken for granted too. Also, some technologies such as audiotapes, videos, computer-based programs, and websites are used today to implement this approach. The analytic-linguistic approach refers an approach to teaching pronunciation which uses the phonetic alphabet, descriptive charts of the vocal tracts, and other tools to supplement listening, imitation and production. According to this approach, different aspects of pronunciation such as place and manner of articulation, position of tongue and other aspects must be clarified by the teacher in the classroom. There is another approach, called an integrative approach, which focuses on the suprasegmentals of stress, rhythm, and intonation as practiced in a discourse beyond the phoneme and word level. According to Lee (2008), pronunciation in this approach is integrated with and practiced within meaningful task-based activities; pronunciation is considered as "an integral component of communication, rather than an isolated drill" (p.1). What language learners should do is to use pronunciation-focused listening activities to facilitate the learning of pronunciation and, as Morley (1991) states, primary objectives of pronunciation teaching are for the language learner to develop intelligible speech and be able to communicate in the target language. A learner, as Munro (2008) states, can have a very strong accent, yet be perfectly intelligible or understood. According to him, unlike accentedness, which refers to degree of difference from local variety, intelligibility refers another dimension of pronunciation, that is, the degree of actual speech comprehension.

To contribute to the developing literature in the field, this research aimed at investigating the effects of two different approaches to pronunciation teaching, that is, intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic, on sounds [ð], [ŋ], [θ], [w], [≡], [I], [Λ], [Θ], [Y], [3:], [O:], [Yə], [eə], [I≡], [aY] and [≡Y], which do not exist in Persian and which, as Yarmohammadi (1969) states, Persian learners of English have trouble mastering . As stated above, these two approaches are of greater importance for teaching segmental sounds, which are the focus of this study. Speculation seems to run to indecision as to which of the two theories to accept: whether there is an automatic capacity to form the correct or better modes of sound production by careful and repeated listening, or whether learning foreign sounds occurs more successfully as a result of conscious attention to articulatory processes involved in sound production.

In addition, along with particular pronunciation teaching approaches, some other factors such as learner age might exert influence. That is the reason why the effect of one personal factor (i.e., age) was investigated as a possible variable in applying the two methods of teaching pronunciation for the nonexistent English sounds in Persian. Hence, the examination of the role of this factor in relation to the type of teaching approach will be studied in this research.

## **Review of the Literature**

### ***A Historical Review of Pronunciation in L2 Teaching***

As Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) state, the earliest method which espoused the principles of the intuitive-imitative approach was possibly the Direct Method in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This method utilized listening-imitation-practice-production to teach English pronunciation. A good model, either a teacher or recorded material, provided the listening

input. Learners used the input for repeated practice, and to finally produce the correct target output. This instructional method drew from the observation and analysis of language learning of very young children in their first language situation.

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), during the 1940s and 1950s, Audio-Lingualism in the USA and the Oral Approach in Britain appeared as a direct offshoot of the *Reform Movement*. The developers of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor and Paul Passy, led a movement in language teaching that was generally known as the Reform Movement. These phoneticians did much to influence the teaching of pronunciation with their contribution to the development of a system for describing and analysing the sound systems of languages by advocating 3 guidelines (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p. 3): (1) The spoken form of a language is primary and should be taught first; (2) The findings of phonetics should be applied to language teaching; (3) Teachers must have solid training in phonetics. The scientific study, analysis and description of the sound system of human languages done by Sweet's group formed the basis of phonetics and later paved the way for the analytic-linguistic approach to teaching pronunciation. Thus, the earliest linguistic assistance to the teaching of pronunciation came forth as part of the Reform Movement in language teaching and, as such, there was a little shift of focus from reflection and unconscious internalization of pronunciation complexities in the earlier methods, which were in line with the intuitive-imitative approach, to conscious efforts to teach pronunciation or phonetics to both teachers and the students.

Around the last quarter of the twentieth century, after the euphoria about the Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method had receded, once more L2 teachers began playing down the role of formal pronunciation teaching in the classroom (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The new argument was that pronunciation should be learnt intuitively. As Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) state, cognitive approaches to teaching de-emphasized pronunciation in favor of grammar and vocabulary. Also, Asher's (1977) *Total Physical Response* and Krashen and Terrell's (1983) *Natural Approach*, built on the Direct method of instruction, proposed a kind of incubation period for a learner when he/she was allowed to listen to the target language without any pressure to perform through speaking. This period allowed the learner time to internalize the phonology and the sound system of the target language through unlimited listening in the learning contexts. The internalization of the phonology and the sound system were expected to happen as the learner used his/her schema to comprehend the language input. Only when the learner was ready for speech production could the articulation process be initiated. Krashen and Terrell (1983), the most fervent advocates of the intuitive approach in the post-reform era, made a strong case against early pronunciation practice. According to them, without any pressure to speak, language learners could internalize sounds. Thus, L2 teachers in the post-reform era could dispense with formal pronunciation teaching.

Nonetheless, Krashen and Terrell's (1983) views were dismissed as a result of the argument advanced by some language-oriented professionals as to the fact that premature fossilization may be a corollary of little or no emphasis whatsoever on pronunciation in the L2 classroom (Ellis, 1990). As Celce-Murcia (2000) and Naiman (1992) stated, the researchers later advocated the formal teaching of pronunciation which was part of a broader view of pronunciation teaching, advocating the use of multisensory modes as major tools to cater for different learning styles. Such a combinatorial approach towards formal pronunciation teaching clearly exemplified the diversity in approaches and the growing concern with pronunciation in the L2 classroom. Wrembel (2001) describes four

types of multisensory reinforcements, which were applied by many pronunciation practitioners to make their lessons more effective. They are (a) visual (e.g. phonemic charts, diagrams and flashcards; (b) auditory (e.g. repetition drills and memory pegs); (c) tactile (e.g. finger tips to feel vibration of the vocal chords, elastic bands to illustrate vowel length, and a piece of paper to introduce aspiration); and kinesthetic (e.g. tracing intonation contours with arms, modeling the mouth with hands, counting the number of syllables on fingers, clapping or stamping the rhythm). Nowadays, the dominant methodology, the communicative approach, holds that *oral* communication is the primary use of language and it should be central to the mode of instruction. As Zielinski (2003) states, effective oral communication involves an interaction of many different variables engaging both speakers and listeners. However, there are situations when the intelligibility of the speaker is a crucial factor in communication breakdown.

A study by Derwing and Rossiter (2002) shows that many speakers of English as a second language may speak in a way that affects intelligibility. In their study, Derwing and Rossiter surveyed 100 speakers of English as a second language and found that 42 participants felt that pronunciation was the primary cause of their communication problems and 37 participants reported that they were often asked to repeat themselves. The effect of suprasegmental features on intelligibility has also been investigated by some researchers considering the possible relationship between intelligibility and broad areas such as intonation (Munro & Derwing, 1995), prosody (Derwing & Munro, 1997), word stress (Benrabah, 1997), incorrect pause insertion (Suenobu, Kanzaki, & Yamane, 1992) and syllable structure (Nakashima, 2006). Focusing on speakers of English as a second language, Zielinski (2003) investigated the relationship between aspects of speech production and intelligibility in three speakers of English as a second language coming



from different L1 backgrounds (Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Korean). In her study, she reported many sites of intelligibility breakdown and raised a number of issues related to intelligibility in a Vietnamese speaker of English as a second language. Therefore, improvement in speech intelligibility through instruction may be an important goal for many speakers of English as a second language.

A strong belief in pronunciation enhancement through instruction has inspired a number of researchers. Although many researchers (e.g., Champagne-Muzar, Schneiderman & Bourdages, 1993; Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998; Hall, 1997) have focused on teaching suprasegmental features of language, there are several researchers who have investigated the effect of pronunciation instruction on the segmental features (vowels and consonant) of language. Henning (1964) in a study investigated the effect of discrimination training and pronunciation practice on French sounds and concluded that the subjects who received discrimination training without pronunciation practice could pronounce the sounds of French more accurately than the subjects who received the pronunciation practice without discrimination training. A careful examination of Henning's study shows that the pronunciation practice was not a scientific and systematic training in the production of sounds. It took "the form of mimicry of the sounds in a wide variety of phonetic contexts, the substitution of the sound being drilled with another one, again in a variety of phonetic contexts" (p. 33). In another study, Catford and Pisoni (1970) investigated auditory versus articulatory training in exotic sounds. Two groups of English speakers received either auditory or articulatory instruction in learning to produce exotic sounds including vowels and consonants. In contrast to Henning's findings, the results of production and discrimination tests in their study indicated a striking superiority for the English speakers who received systematic training in the production of

sounds as opposed to those who received only discrimination training in listening to foreign sounds. Thus, the teacher's scientific knowledge of articulatory phonetics was shown to be successful in leading students to the correct pronunciation and discrimination of foreign sounds. In a recent study, Ruhmke-Ramos and Delatorre (2011) investigated the effects of training and training joined with instruction on the perception of the interdental fricatives–[θ] and [ð]–by Brazilian learners of EFL in a classroom setting. The choice for the interdental fricatives was done since these two sounds have been found to be difficult for Brazilian Portuguese speakers. The participants were organized in three groups: the control group (CG), the training group (TG) and the instruction and training group (ITG). *Training* in the study denoted perceptual practice per se, without metalinguistic input, whereas *instruction* denoted learning activities involving perceptual practice and metalinguistic input or explanation about the target sounds. Perception was chosen as the skill to be investigated. Thus, a pre and a post Categorical Discrimination Test (CDT) and pronunciation teaching materials were used to carry out this study. The results indicated that the participants in the ITG improved their performance from pretest to posttest more than the participants in the TG, despite the lack of statistical significance. The researchers concluded that pronunciation teaching should be encouraged in the classroom.

### ***Age in L2 Pronunciation***

Among the various factors affecting the quality of pronunciation acquisition, age can be considered as one of the important variables. Nunan (1999) suggests that "the best time for students to learn a language in order to become as native-like in their pronunciation as possible is before the onset of puberty" (p. 105). This is because the mother tongue (i.e.

L1) has less influence on the students' L2 pronunciation at this stage. When it comes to vocabulary and grammar, a student's L1 is less apparent than in pronunciation. According to Senel (2006), children are supposed to be better in learning pronunciation abilities because it is quite difficult to teach language learners to acquire a native-like language pronunciation beyond puberty. Also, Harmer (2007) states the advantage that younger language learners seem to have is that they have the ability to replicate pronunciation well, but "older learners of a second language are not ashamed of their L1 being apparent in their second language since language is a part of their culture" (p. 175). Following Jacobs (1988), the neurobiological varieties across different age ranges can affect the speed of nerve impulses in the brain, influencing the capacity to learn. That is why if one begins to learn a new language after the age of 5 or 6, one seldom attains success in achieving a near-native pronunciation of the L2. According to Flege (1992), the lesser degree of pronunciation success in adults as opposed to children is due neither to changes in the perceptual and sensory-motor processes nor to a loss of neural plasticity. It is due to an important shift in speech processing. At the age of 5-6, the phonetic prototype categories and the boundaries between them are refined and stabilized, and there is a growing awareness in the child concerning segmental features in the language. According to this hypothesis, one can establish new phonetic categories throughout one's life, but they have to be perceived as new and different enough, without too much overlap with sounds in the native language.

Although adults may not be able to master pronunciation in the apparently effortless way that children can, they can make great progress (Leather & James, 1991). Ellis (1990) claims that although younger learners seem to have a better chance of acquiring a native-like pronunciation, this does not mean that older learners are not as good at

learning a foreign language as young learners. According to Flege's (1992) hypothesis, it is possible to learn new sounds throughout one's life and if sounds are not classified on the basis of the sound rules of the native language, learners later on in life can achieve a high level of perfection in pronunciation when it comes to new sounds. According to Yates and Zielinski (2009), neurological differences between adults and children seem to result from a change, rather than deterioration, in the way the sounds in a new language are processed, so training can help adults to improve in their ability to discriminate new sounds and establish new phonetic boundaries. In addition, adults are considered different from children in learning L2 pronunciation for a number of reasons: (1) They may have fewer opportunities for interacting in the L2; (2) They may be more reticent to try things out and risk making mistakes; (3) They may be reluctant to speak like someone else. Also, Marinova-Todd, Marshall and Snow (2000) believe that a careful examination of studies which relate age to language acquisition reveals that age differences show differences in the situation of learning rather than in the capacity to learn.

On the other hand, some researchers and neurologists such as Lenneberg have claimed that there is a close connection between language learning and *lateralization*. According to Lenneberg (1967), the diminishing ability for language acquisition is related to how the various parts of the brain cooperate and to the lateralization of the brain. He hypothesizes that lateralization is a gradual organization of work functions to the right and left hemisphere of the brain, which begins around the age of 2 and is completed around puberty. Lenneberg claims that during this period of heightened plasticity, the human brain becomes lateralized, but Krashen (1988) challenges Lenneberg's characterization by claiming that lateralization may be completed by the age of 4. Lenneberg (1967) also states that the right hemisphere in children is more active in the

language function but as a child grows, the two sides of the brain become specialized for different functions and, thus, lateralization takes place. He studied children who suffered damage to the left hemisphere of the brain before and after the age of 12. The transfer of language function to the right hemisphere was found in children who suffered damage before age 12, but the transfer of language function to the right hemisphere was rare in those who suffered damage after age 12. Thus, he concluded that language learning after puberty would be more difficult and the completion of lateralization of language functions in the left hemisphere would be the cause. The *critical period hypothesis* is also proposed as a factor which affects pronunciation. According to Brown (1994; cited in Nunan, 1999, p. 105), "the critical period is a biologically determined period of life when language can be acquired more easily and beyond which time language is increasingly difficult to acquire." This hypothesis assumes that there is such a biological timetable, which might coincide with the period when lateralization takes place. Nunan (1999) states that the critical period exists, but there is controversy about when. According to Ellis (1994), since research studies about the critical period hypothesis are so different in form and focus, conclusions and parallels between the studies are not possible. However, many studies on the critical age period support the claim that "only child learners are capable of acquiring a native accent in informal learning contexts" and "children will only acquire a native accent if they receive massive exposure to the L2" (Ellis, 1994, p. 494). As the critical period hypothesis claims that language and pronunciation are easily learned at an early stage in life, language teachers have responsibility for ensuring that they are able to provide their students with the knowledge that they need at this early stage of their development.

As a result, the age of learners is important in the pronunciation learning of a foreign

language due to the above-mentioned issues. Older language learners might pick up correct pronunciation somewhat late and obtain an acceptable level of good articulation in the long run. However, much debate still exists on the role of age in pronunciation. In addition, the literature on pronunciation teaching methods and the role of the age variable in teaching L2 pronunciation suffers from a lack of empirical studies. Therefore, the need to attend to these aspects appears undeniable. That is why this study has pursued this line of research development.

### **Research Questions**

The indispensable place of pronunciation in the vast realm of communication has been recently recognized in the field of L2 teaching. However, another question which has appeared substantial in the field concerns the way to improve the learners' pronunciation. The necessity for a more instructive approach as against mere focus on automatic perceptions and resulting productions remains the focus of this study. While some are interested in repetition and take advantage of it, as evident in the intuitive-imitative approach, there are others who prefer an analytic consideration of the issues as a way to fix them in the learners' minds. The question remains as to which approach, in a group of EFL learners who are following both extremes, might prove more helpful to a higher number of these learners. Therefore, this study was developed to investigate two distinct approaches (intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic) to see their effects on the pronunciation of sounds such as [ð], [ŋ], [θ], [w], [≡], [I], [Λ], [Θ], [Y], [3:], [O:], [Yə], [eə], [I≡], [aY] and [≡Y]. These sounds do not exist in Persian and have been found to be difficult for Iranian speakers of Persian (Yarmohammadi, 1969), as perhaps for speakers of other languages which also do not have them in their phonological inventory. In

addition, attempts were made to explore the effect of the age variable in the course of applying the two instructive methods of pronunciation for the above sounds. To achieve the goals of this study, the following questions are addressed:

1. Does the intuitive-imitative approach to pronunciation teaching have any effect on an EFL learner's pronunciation of the sounds [ð], [ŋ], [θ], [w], [≡], [ɪ], [ʌ], [Θ], [Y], [3:], [O:], [Yə], [eə], [I≡], [aY] and [≡Y]?
2. Does the analytic-linguistic approach to pronunciation teaching have any effect on an EFL learner's pronunciation of the sounds [ð], [ŋ], [θ], [w], [≡], [ɪ], [ʌ], [Θ], [Y], [3:], [O:], [Yə], [eə], [I≡], [aY] and [≡Y]?
3. Is there any significant difference between the effects of the intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches in teaching the pronunciation of these sounds which do not exist in Persian?
4. Does EFL participants' age make a significant difference in each approach (intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic) to teach pronunciation?

To investigate the above research questions of the present study, the following four null hypotheses are addressed:

H<sub>01</sub>: The intuitive-imitative approach to pronunciation teaching has no significant effect on EFL learner's pronunciation scores.

H<sub>02</sub>: The analytic-linguistic approach to pronunciation teaching has no significant effect on EFL learner's pronunciation scores.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between the intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches in teaching the pronunciation of sounds which do not exist in Persian.

H<sub>04</sub>: EFL participants' age does not make a significant difference in the pronunciation test scores of intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic groups.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The experiment was conducted on a sample of 50 Iranian EFL students, including 25

males and 25 females, from Tolue language institute in Paveh, Kermanshah. All of the participants, aged between 13-20 years old, were native speakers of Persian and were studying English at the intermediate level. Thirty participants were aged between 13-16 and twenty of them between 16-20 years old. Participants were selected randomly from a larger sample of 103 EFL learners. The participants had not taken any course on learning pronunciation before and did not have any history of speech impairment or hearing disorders. It should be stated that reading and grammar are the main focus in L2 teaching materials in high and pre-university public schools in Iran, but, as Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) and Gorbani (2011) state, less emphasis is given to L2 listening and pronunciation (i.e., English pronunciation) in public high schools in Iran since, as Jahangard (2008) points out, a close look at the syllabus for English in public schools in Iran shows that pronunciation does not seem to be considered as one of the most important skills for high school students to master to attain a satisfactory English language competence.

### ***Procedures***

In order to collect data for this study several steps were taken. First, a proficiency placement test, developed by Lesley, Hansen & Zukowski/Faust (2005), was administered to 103 Iranian EFL learners in Tolue language institute in Paveh, Kermanshah in order to select a homogenous group in terms of language proficiency, as it was thought too much variability in language ability in the participants with different levels of L2 proficiency might appear as an intervening or, perhaps, moderating variable, which was not the focus of the study. The test included 20 multiple-choice listening, 20 multiple-choice reading and 30 multiple-choice language use items. Based on the proficiency scores, 50 EFL learners, whose scores were between 12-23, were selected



from the larger sample. Following the scoring guidelines by Lesley et al. (2005), the scores 12-23 (i.e., rating 3-4) were considered as the low intermediate-level. The reason why low intermediate-level learners were selected was EFL learners' perceived needs for pronunciation improvement at the lower level of language proficiency, based on a small-scale informal needs analysis study conducted by the head of the language institute (through observations of classes and interviews with EFL teachers) in the language institute in 2010.

Second, a test of pronunciation was designed to measure participants' pronunciation ability before and after the instructional input of the study. The test consisted of 60 items. The list of items included frequently used words such as *wide, sit, again, cook, thick, then, go* and *there*, selected from the participants' English language teaching (ELT) materials. The scores of the test ranged from 0 to 60, with each item receiving one mark for accurate pronunciation, assessed according to Received Pronunciation (RP English Pronunciation) or, in Roach's (1983) words, the pronunciation used by most announcers and newsreaders on national and international BBC broadcasting channels. As Roach states, RP "has always been chosen by British teachers to teach foreign learners". In addition, it "has been mostly fully described and has been used as the basis for textbooks and pronouncing dictionaries" (p. 5). Meanwhile, following Bachman (1990), the validity of the pronunciation test was accounted for through checking both test development and test use, particularly investigating the table of test specifications, by two Iranian assistant professors who were non-native speakers of English, but had adequate knowledge of English phonetics and phonology and were considered as experts in the area of pronunciation.

Third, the pronunciation test thus developed was piloted on 10 EFL female and male

participants who were similar to the main participants of this study, to check the suitability of words, instructions, and scoring procedure. The result of the pilot study confirmed the desirability of the pronunciation test. Fourth, the pronunciation test was used as a pretest in order to investigate the participants' pronunciation ability. The participants were asked to pronounce the words presented to them. For the purpose of scoring, their voices were recorded in the laboratory where the test was conducted and then were evaluated for accuracy by two native speakers of British English, who were language teachers and had an adequate knowledge of phonetics. Fifth, to make sure that the data obtained from the scoring by the two native speakers were consistent, the inter-rater reliability was obtained, which was found to be above .90 ( $r = .94$ ,  $n = 120$ ,  $*p \leq .05$ ). Therefore, there was a high level of inter-rater correlation, commensurate with the requirements for reliable scoring by Larson-Hall (2010). However, the two raters disagreed on four participants' total scores. As a result, they were asked to evaluate the data obtained from these four participants again to reach an agreement. After an agreement was reached, their scores were included in the data analysis.

Sixth, the participants of this study were randomly divided into two groups to receive the treatments of the study. One group ( $n = 25$ ) received the instruction according to the intuitive-imitative approach and the other group received the instruction according to the analytic-linguistic approach to teaching pronunciation (henceforth, the former group, who received *intuitive-imitative* instruction, is called II group and the latter who received the *analytic-linguistic* instruction, is called AL group). Both groups received instruction for 15 sessions, with each session lasting 20 minutes, 3 days each week. To make comparison between the two groups possible, the focus was on RP English pronunciation, with which the instructor was familiar and which provided the target of teaching in both

groups. The instruction in the II group mainly consisted of listening to the words, including the ones which consisted of the sounds under study, and trying to mimic them as carefully as possible. The focus was on practice by means of a tape recorder. Repetition drills were also used. The instruction in the AL group consisted of the place and manner of the articulation of the sounds in plain language. The focus was on the presentation and analysis of the features of the sounds; features such as voicing, lip rounding, and lengths were explained in English and, whenever necessary, in Persian. Phonemic charts, diagrams, finger tips to feel vibration of the vocal chords, and elastic bands to illustrate vowel length were used. Table 1 displays brief articulatory descriptions of several English sounds as they were used in the AL group (see Kelly, 2000 and Roach, 1983 for the description of sounds).

**Table 1**

*Articulatory Descriptions of Several English Sounds Not Existing in Persian*

Sound	Example	Articulatory Descriptions
θ	<i>thin, teeth, Thursday, health, thousand, think</i>	The tongue is placed between the teeth or inside of the teeth, with the tip touching the inside of the lower front teeth and the blade touching inside the upper teeth. The air escapes through the gaps between the tongue and the teeth.
ð	<i>these, this, then, they, there, there</i>	It is like /θ/, but the vocal cords vibrate and muscles of vocal tract are less tense.
ŋ	<i>sink, tank, sing, hang, hang, long</i>	The back of the tongue is raised against the soft palate. Closure takes place and air escapes through the nose.

w	<i>wheel, weak, want, walk, why, wear</i>	The back of the tongue is raised and lips are rounded. It is like a quick vowel.
≡	<i>better, banana, about, paper, nation, the</i>	The center of the tongue is between the half-close and half-open positions. Lips are relaxed, and naturally spread.
3:	<i>girl, word, bird, shirt, her, serve</i>	The center of the tongue is between the half-close and half-open positions. Lips are relaxed, and neutrally spread.
e≡	<i>hair, pear, there, care, wear, chair, where</i>	The lips remain neutrally open. The sound begins with the same vowel sound as the /e/ in 'get', and then it becomes shorter and quieter.

Seventh, after the instructional input of this study was given, the same pronunciation test was administered to both II and AL groups as posttests to find out whether their pronunciation performance had improved significantly. The posttests were scored by one of the original scorers (i.e., one of the native speakers of English). Finally, *t*-tests were run through SPSS to answer the research questions of this study.

## Results

To achieve the aims of this research, the EFL learners' pretest as well as their posttest scores along with their age records formed the basic foundations of data analysis. Before answering the first research question, the learners' performances on the pretests were analyzed in the II and AL groups. Hence, an independent-samples *t*-test was employed to investigate the homogeneous nature of the pretest scores. The pretest mean score of the II group was 27.80 and pretest mean score of the AL group was 28.20. According to Table

2, the learners in both groups did not show any difference in their primary performance in the pretests. In other words, there was not any significant difference in the pretest performances concerning the type of assigned group,  $t(48) = -.264$  ( $p = 0.793$ ). This further highlights the homogeneous nature of the collected data and hence its reliability for further stages of analysis.

**Table 2**

*T-Test on the Pretest Scores of the II and AL Groups*

	<b>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</b>		<b>T-test for Equality of Means</b>		
	<i>F</i>	<b>Sig.</b>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	0.156	0.695	-0.264	48	0.793
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			-17.56	67.07	0.000

Following this preliminary stage of analysis, a paired-sample  $t$ -test was conducted to evaluate the impact of instruction, in general, on the learners' pronunciation performance. As Table 3 displays, there was a statistically significant increase in the scores from the pre-instruction condition (Mean = 28.00, Standard deviation = 5.31) to the post-instruction condition (Mean = 50.66, Standard deviation = 5.25),  $t(49) = 30.4$ , ( $*p < 0.05$ ). In addition, the eta squared statistic (i. e., the effect size of the treatment) was found to be 0.94, indicating a large effect size for the instruction in improving the learners' pronunciation ability. That means that the pronunciation instruction, in general, improved the participants' pronunciation ability.

**Table 3***T-Test on Pretest and Posttest Pronunciation Scores*

	Paired Differences			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. dev.	Std. Error Mean			
<b>Pretest-Post test</b>	22.66	5.27	0.74	30.40	49	0.000

To answer the first and second research questions of this study, which concern the effectiveness of intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic instructions on the participants' pronunciation performance, two separate paired *t*-tests were conducted. The first *t*-test was conducted on the pretest and posttest scores of the II group, and the second *t*-test was conducted on the pretest and posttest scores of the AL group. As Table 4 shows, for the II group, there was a statistically significant difference in the pretest (Mean = 27.80, Standard deviation = 5.54) and posttest scores (Mean = 47.12, Standard deviation = 4.35),  $t(24) = 24.10$  ( $*p < 0.05$ ). The eta squared statistic (i. e., the effect size of the treatment) was found to be 0.96, which was indicative of a large effect size for the intuitive-imitative approach. Similarly, the significant effect of analytic-linguistic approach appeared in the differences between pretest (Mean = 28.2, Standard deviation = 5.18) and posttest scores (Mean = 53.88, Standard deviation = 3.35),  $t(24) = 27.39$  ( $*p < 0.05$ ). The eta squared statistic was found to be 0.97. Based on the eta squared magnitude (0.97), this latter approach could account for more than 97 percent of the variances in the learners' performance.

**Table 4***T-Test on Pretest and Posttest Pronunciation Scores in the II and AL Groups*

	Paired Differences			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. dev.	Std. Error Mean			
<b>Pretest-Posttest Intuitive-Imitative (IIG)</b>	19.32	4.00	0.80	24.10	24	0.00
<b>Pretest-Posttest Analytic-Linguistic (ALG)</b>	25.68	4.68	0.93	27.39	24	0.00

In order to answer the third research question of the study, which is intended to see whether there is any significant difference between the effects of intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches in teaching the pronunciation of sounds which do not exist in Persian, an independent *t*-test was conducted on the pronunciation posttest scores of the II and AL groups. The results are reported in Table 5. As Table 5 demonstrates, the variances of the differences in the mean scores were equal, hence equal variances were assumed for the *t*-test analysis. According to Table 5, there was a significant difference in the scores of the II group (Mean = 47.12, Standard deviation = 4.35) and the AL group (Mean = 54.20, Standard deviation = 3.35),  $t(48) = 6.44$ , ( $p < 0.05$ ). Such a difference actually favored the analytic-linguistic approach with a higher mean score and lower standard deviation of the recorded scores. Meanwhile, Eta squared statistic was 0.46, indicating a large magnitude of the differences in the means.

**Table 5***T-Test on the Posttest Scores of II and AL Groups*

	<b>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</b>		<b>T-test for Equality of Means</b>		
	<i>F</i>	<b>Sig.</b>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Equal variances assumed</b>	3.173	0.081	6.442	48	0.000
<b>Equal variances not assumed</b>			6.442	45.074	0.000

To answer the fourth research question of the study, which is intended to see whether the age of EFL participants makes a significant difference in each approach to pronunciation, independent *t*-tests were conducted on the posttest scores obtained from each group in the study (intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic). The recorded scores were examined with respect to the respondents' age across two groups of 13-16 and 17-20 years, as reported in Table 6. The reason behind this age range lies in the suggestion made by Lund (2003) as to the impossibility of achieving a near-native pronunciation in the new language after the age of 15 or 16, no matter how motivated a person is or how favorable his or her access is to hearing and using the language. The results then accounted for the degree to which each age group outperformed the other under the influence of the two specific approaches. Based on the results in Table 6, there was a statistically significant difference in the performance between the younger (Mean = 49.20, Standard deviation = 3.68) and the older participants (Mean = 44.00, Standard deviation = 3.36) when the intuitive-imitative instruction was carried out,  $t(23) = 3.57$  (\* $p < 0.05$ ).



The magnitude of the differences in the means was large (eta squared = 0.35). Also, the participants in the analytic-linguistic approach recorded a significant difference in their mean posttest scores in both 13-16 (Mean = 52.67, Standard deviation = 2.89) and 17-20 age groups (Mean = 56.50, Standard deviation = 2.67),  $t(23) = 3.33$  (\* $p < 0.05$ ). The eta squared statistic (0.32) again proved a large effect size. Accordingly, age was found to be a significant factor in the records of effectiveness for both intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches.

**Table 6**

*T-Test on the Posttest Scores between Two Age Groups*

		<i>N</i>	<b>Mean</b>	<b><i>T</i>-test for Equality of Means</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Method/Group</b>			<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
<b>13-16</b>	<b>Intuitive-Imitative (II)</b>	15	49.20	3.57	23	0.002
<b>17-20</b>		10	44.00			
<b>13-16</b>	<b>Analytic-Linguistic (AL)</b>	15	52.67	3.33	23	0.003
<b>17-20</b>		10	56.50			

## Discussion

Achieving good pronunciation is not easily accomplished by all learners of a foreign language. For that reason, careful attention should be directed toward pronunciation

teaching. Despite reluctance displayed by some language teachers, learners place a high value on instruction in pronunciation, as reported in some studies, pointing to a contradiction between teachers' and the learners' views on pronunciation teaching (Edwards, 1992, cited in Barrera Pardo, 2004; Madden & Moore, 1997; Vitanova & Miller, 2002). However, not all teaching methods are equally effective for L2 learners. In addition, as Derwing and Munro (2005) point out, pronunciation is a multifaceted experience affected by personal, social, and psychological variables, which make its learning so complex. That is why in the search for a more flourishing pronunciation teaching method, age, as a personal factor, has been selected and attended to in a sub-part of the present study. That is, keeping the personal differences in mind, attempts have been made to introduce a more promising approach in pronunciation teaching in the course of this research.

One of the major lines of current research development concerned the issue of the effectiveness of instruction as a whole. When the participants' performances on the pretest and posttest were analyzed irrespective of the type of instruction or treatment, the results, as reported in Tables 2 and 3, indicated the contribution of the treatments of this study to the participants' state of knowledge. In other words, intuitive and analytic approaches are among the effective approaches that can lead to some sort of change in the earlier state of knowledge. This further highlights the assertion concerning the enhancing impact of pronunciation teaching in EFL classrooms, no matter which particular variety of English (i.e., American, British, etc) is selected. As with the findings of Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998), who found that both instruction in segmental accuracy and instruction in prosodic features would lead to improved pronunciation, the results reported here should help to dispel the doubts of those teachers who are skeptical about

the value of pronunciation teaching.

As to the first research question of the study, the method of 'listen and repeat' seemed effective in altering the learners' current state of knowledge toward the better. In the intuitive-imitative instructive group, the teacher or the recorder gained success in promoting the learners' recognition and production of English sounds as a whole, and non-existent English sounds in Persian in particular. The intuitive-imitative approach helped to improve the participants' pronunciation of sounds including consonants, pure vowels, diphthongs and one semivowel which seem to be often difficult for Iranian EFL learners to master. Thus, according to the results obtained in this study, the first null hypothesis of this study is rejected. The second research question was intended to examine the effectiveness of the other approach to teaching pronunciation (i.e., analytic-linguistic). Similarly, the influence of explicit interventions like describing articulatory complexities such as place and manner of articulation showed a significant improvement in the EFL learners' pronunciation performance. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis is rejected, too. The above findings support the results of the study by Ruhmke-Ramos and Delatore (2011, who investigated the effect of training (i.e. perception activities without explanation) and training allied to instruction (i.e. explanation of target sounds) on the English interdental fricatives in a Brazilian context. Both studies indicate that intervention programs can be useful and improve speech intelligibility.

The third research question sought to examine the difference between the effects of intuitive-imitative and analytic-linguistic approaches to pronunciation teaching. As pointed out in the results section, these approaches significantly differed in terms of their degree of impact, with the analytic-linguistic approach taking the lead. Put differently, the explicit analytic nature of the analytic-linguistic approach appeared to provide a higher

state of effectiveness with respect to the L2 learners' primary knowledge condition. The practical nature of this latter approach, in general, looks to be more promising in fulfilling the participants' needs with respect to pronunciation. Despite its effectiveness in promoting the L2 learners' production attempts, the intuitive-imitative approach lagged behind the analytic-linguistic approach in improving the participants' pronunciation of the sounds under study when the age factor was not taken into account. That is, there was overall support for 'teacher explanation' as activities in the analytic-linguistic approach. The mere repetitive nature of this sort of teaching, even though effective, did not appear much in line with the L2 learners' general needs in achieving good pronunciation, hence their lower pronunciation improvement. Accordingly, the third null hypothesis is rejected, too. The above results support the findings by Catford and Pisoni (1970) about the effectiveness of systematic production training versus automatic capacity to listen and imitate sounds. Their results indicated that auditory methods were significantly less effective than teaching pronunciation by means of systematic application of articulatory phonetic knowledge. Furthermore, the results of this study agree with Ruhmke-Ramos and Delatore (2011), who found out that training combined with instruction tend to be a more effective tool to improve learners' perception than training alone in pronunciation classes. However, the results of this study are different from Ruhmke-Ramos and Delatore's (2011) findings in that the changes from the pretests to posttests in their two methods were not enough to reach any statistical significance, but the results of the present study demonstrated statistical significance for the changes from the pretests to the posttests as well as the effect of the analytic-linguistic method as opposed to the intuitive-imitative one. Thus, instruction and explanation about target sounds can provide short-term improvement and facilitate L2 learning.

In the last research question, the effect of age as a personal variable was specifically put under investigation. In the present study, age turned out to be an important factor with respect to both pronunciation instruction approaches. In line with the earlier studies (see Lund, 2003; Senel, 2006; Yates & Zielinski, 2009), the younger and older learners attained different rates of success when the two different methods (intuitive-imitative vs. analytic-linguistic) were applied. Possibly due to certain neurological, sociocultural, psychological or physical differences between two age groups of 13-16 and 17-20, different training priorities were observed. The imitation-based instruction appeared more effective in the case of young (13-16) learners. Lacking sufficient knowledge to use in analytic attempts, the younger learners were positively affected by the intuitive-imitative approach, improving their ability to accurately pronounce certain L2 sounds (i.e., British English sounds). Thus, the advantage that younger students seem to have is that they have an ability to replicate pronunciation extremely well, which in turn puts many Iranian EFL teachers at a disadvantage in classrooms in schools since these teachers are almost never native speakers of English and learn English intensively in teacher training universities after the age of 18 in order to be employed as English teachers in public schools. Unlike the younger participants, the older participants (17-20), as suggested by a higher mean of their performance, favored the linguistic-based method of instruction. In other words, the analytic-linguistic approach was significantly effective among the older participants, helping them to establish new phonetic boundaries. The higher state of knowledge in this latter group paves the ground for positive reactions to this specific analytic training approach.

The findings of this study could enrich the literature in the area of second language acquisition development. In general, children learn L1 pronunciation by imitation, which

sometimes remains the basic technique in the course of learning the sound system of the L2 by adults. However, as Brown (2005) states, due to the rarity of perfect mimics, most adult learners appear to successfully benefit from linguistic explanations about the sounds with which they have difficulty. The findings of this study are in line with what Brown claims to be true. Also, similar to Catford and Pisoni's (1970) suggestion, a scientific knowledge of articulatory phonetics is a positive aid to language teachers, enabling them to lead their students step by step into the correct pronunciation of foreign sounds; the application of phonetic knowledge by the teachers can empower the students to pick up some knowledge of phonetic theory by experiencing phonetic activities in their own vocal tract. Hence, it is suggested that L2 educators and teachers leave some room for pronunciation teaching in the course of L2 teaching. It is specifically proposed that they sometimes develop analytic-based pronunciation training sessions to raise learners' awareness of areas of their deficiency since, as Sharwood Smith (1981) states, consciousness and awareness raising are sometimes important in L2 acquisition/learning. Also, the value of "systematically and explicitly incorporating a pronunciation sub-syllabus within the overall syllabus" of L2 learners has been emphasized by Couper (2003, p. 53). Furthermore, it might be helpful for L2 practitioners to clearly specify either intuitive-imitative or analytic-linguistic approaches for young learners' and adult learners' classes, with the purpose of achieving higher rates of success in the learners' pronunciation performance. In addition, the results of this study imply that it is better to have a pronunciation approach which is in line with L2 learners' style of learning. With the advent of learner-centered approaches, L2 teachers have the responsibility of training L2 learners in a way which corresponds with their learning path. As to the field of materials development, L2 materials developers should keep in mind that the type of

pronunciation materials should not necessarily be the same for all age groups to improve speech intelligibility.

### **Conclusion and Limitations**

The significant role played by accurate pronunciation in successfully conveying our intentions and meanings cannot be disregarded in the course of cross-cultural communication. Knowledge of grammatical rules and the lexical diversity of a foreign language, even though important, do not necessarily guarantee success in communicative attempts. According to a number of researchers and writers (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 2000; Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Morley, 1991; Yates & Zielinski, 2009), the accurate pronunciation of foreign language utterances, which makes foreign language learners intelligible in speaking (i.e., easy to understand) to native and nonnative speakers of the language, is also considered important, no matter which variety of language is used in the act of communication with others. "Good pronunciation will be understood even if they make errors in other areas, while those with unintelligible pronunciation will remain unintelligible, even if they have expressed themselves using an extensive vocabulary and perfect grammar (Yates & Zielinski, 2009, p. 11). Thus, there has been some effort to introduce pronunciation into the English L2 curriculum in recent years (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Couper, 2003; Morley, 1994; Pennington, 1994). However, a related question which remains substantial in L2 learning concerns the way to improve language learners' pronunciation. The necessity for a different instructive approach, as against mere focus on imitation and automatic perceptions, was the focus of this study.

The present study was developed to contribute to the existing literature on L2 learning. Through this attempt, two different training approaches were examined with a close look

at age factor as one of the possible moderating variables in this course. The results obtained from this study show that pronunciation ability can improve through intervention training instructions, highlighting the inclusion of formal pronunciation teaching in the L2 curriculum. Also, the results obtained in this study have indicated the more effective nature of an analytic-linguistic approach on the whole. As Fraser (2006) points out, L2 teachers frequently employ an imitative approach towards pronunciation regardless of the age of the learners, trying to apply certain strategies with respect to the learners' needs in their classes. This view is not rejected by this study, yet a more scientific account of the issues would be more acceptable among L2 learners. While some L2 teachers may know intuitively how to teach pronunciation, most may need some formal training in how to teach pronunciation analytically and successfully so that L2 learners can benefit more.

In addition to a scientific treatment of the pronunciation teaching approaches, there are other moderating variables, such as age, exerting influence on choosing a more effective approach to teach pronunciation. The results of this study have indicated that younger and older learners need different pronunciation teaching approaches. The younger state of knowledge span suggests imitation-based training techniques as inspiring in the field. For older participants, an analytic account of pronunciation teaching proves its significance. By implication, a knowledge-based decision in terms of the most useful teaching approaches for certain age groups would be of a crucial role in administering the classes. This advantage also keeps the L2 learners interested and proves effective in achieving good pronunciation levels.

In the course of this study, there were several sources of limitation which exerted some effects in restricting the progressive nature of the findings. For one thing, this study was



limited to low intermediate-level EFL learners, so the issue of weak generalizability of findings to other levels of language ability needs to be considered. A second limitation of this study relates directly to an accessibility issue in terms of the participants. It was found to be extremely difficult to find an appropriate number of students in order to have a random selection out of a larger population. In the third place, evaluation of the oral and aural skills and components of the language is not free of certain limitations. Factors such as subjectivity and impossibility of including a simultaneous assessment of all sounds might affect the accuracy of decisions and the concluding remarks. Finally, some aspects of ~~the~~ pronunciation (i.e. tensing or laxing vowels) may be extremely difficult for listeners, even native speakers, to recognize in utterances. Thus, a little uncertainty still exists about the degree of reliability of the data on pronunciation, including the assessment of participants' pronunciation by the raters in the present study. Thus we must be cautious about making strong generalizations from these findings.

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## **Investigating EFL Learning Strategy Use, GEPT Performance, and Gender Difference among Non-English Major Sophomores at a Technological University**

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### **Bio Data:**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigated the overall English learning strategy use, listening proficiency and gender difference among 238 EFL non-English major sophomores at a technological



university. Language learning strategies were measured through Yang's (1992) Chinese version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Listening proficiency was measured by using one unit of intermediate-level listening comprehension of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). The findings of this study were: (1) the students were medium-level strategy users ( $M=2.90$ ); (2) the frequency of the strategies used ranked in the order of compensation ( $M=3.17$ ), affective, social, meta-cognitive, memory and cognitive ( $M=2.72$ ), and students used significantly more indirect strategies than direct strategies; (3) high achievers of GEPT reported using each of the six subcategories of strategies significantly more frequently than low achievers; all six subcategories of strategies as well as overall strategies were significantly correlated with the GEPT listening test scores; (4) females used more language learning strategies than males; and (5) regarding all participants, significant gender differences were found in memory and affective strategies, with females surpassing males, but no significant gender difference was detected only among the high performing group. These findings provide evidence that EFL learners need strategies in language learning, and proficiency may be a more important factor than gender related to strategy choice and use.

**Keywords:** Language learning strategies, gender difference, GEPT, proficiency

## **Introduction**

Reports of international and domestic standardized test results reflect the poor English performance of Taiwanese students of general and technological universities. According to the 2010 Educational Testing Center report on Asian college students' performance from 2007 to 2009 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language Computer-Based Test (TOEFL-CBT), Taiwanese students ranked 18<sup>th</sup> among 30 Asian countries, behind those from South Korea and China. The British Council's 2006 report on performance rankings of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) placed Taiwanese students at 17<sup>th</sup> among 20 Asian countries. The Cambridge ESOL 2010 reported that Taiwanese students' IELTS performance lagged behind that of test takers from Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea, and was only marginally ahead of those

from China.

Besides, the Taiwan-based General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) showed that Taiwanese technological university students had poorer English proficiency than general university students. The LTTC-GEPT is widely used in Taiwan by government institutions, private enterprises and schools as admissions, placement, or graduation criterion. About 3.70 million people have taken the test since its inception in the year 2000 (LTTC, 2010).

GEPT, a five-level (elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, advanced, and superior) English proficiency test, measures four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The elementary level is a level that junior high school graduates are expected to achieve, and the intermediate level is for senior high school graduates to reach. Each level of the test is administered in two stages. Examinees must pass the stage one of listening and reading comprehension tests before proceeding to the stage two of speaking and writing tests. According to the latest 2008 regulation, the total score for listening comprehension and reading comprehension is 120 points for each and the passing score for the preliminary test has to be 160 points in the sum total with the lowest passing score of 72 points for either the listening comprehension or the reading comprehension test. The passing score for the writing and the speaking test is 70 and 80 points respectively (LTTC, 2010).

Score Data Summary for 2009 GEPT Elementary-Level in the 2010 LTTC Annual Report indicated that the technological university students had a lower passing rate than student groups from general universities and above, junior colleges, general high schools, vocational high schools, and junior high schools. Besides, Score Data Summary for 2008 GEPT Elementary-Level in the 2009 LTTC Annual Report showed that in both Stage One

Listening and Reading Tests and the Stage Two Writing and Speaking Tests, the passing rate of technological university students was only 32%, whereas the passing rate of general university students and above was 65% (p. 11). In addition, Score Data Summary for 2008 GEPT Intermediate-Level showed that the passing rate of technological university students for the Stage One was 26%, whereas the passing rate for general university students was 40% (p. 11).

The poor performance of students has forced Taiwanese technological universities to implement several strategies to address students' English ability, including establishing graduation thresholds (GT) (Hsu & Wang, 2006). Students must earn a specific score on standardized English proficiency tests, such as GEPT, TOEFL, or Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). As GEPT is locally initiated and more widely accepted by Taiwanese high schools and universities, this study adopts GEPT as the test instrument.

In the past decade, the focus of language teaching has shifted to a more learner-centered approach (Nunan, 1991). Among the numerous aspects intrinsic to language learning, learning strategies have been acknowledged since the 1970s as being one of the determining factors affecting learning success. Rubin (1975) suggested that some learners were more successful than others were because they approached their learning tasks with more effective strategies. Subsequent researchers studying the characteristics of good language learners reported that higher achievers use a greater quantity and better quality of learning strategies, and have a superior ability to directly manage their learning process, most often consciously (Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). A rich body of research has acknowledged a correlation between using language learning strategies and learner factors such as learning styles, age, proficiency, achievements, attitude,

motivation and beliefs, social factors such as situations and gender, and other factors such as academic majors and cultural contexts (Chang, 2003; Ellis, 1994; Gan, Humphreys, & Hamp-Lyons, 2004; Green & Oxford, 1995; Gu, 2002; Oxford, 1996; Sheu, 2009; Wen & Johnson, 1997). Additionally, a school of research claims that effective learning strategies can be enhanced through raising awareness, and proposes explicit strategy training and instruction (Brown, 2002; Chamot, 1993; Oxford, 1990, 1993; Teng, 2008; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Weaver & Cohen, 1997; Yang, 1996, 1999, 2002).

Chamot (2004) highlighted the importance of identifying students' language learning strategies to enable teachers to discover their students' learning strategies prior to teaching them. Students of technological universities in Taiwan, especially non-English majors, who originally come from vocational senior high schools, have poorer English performance compared to students of general universities (LTTC, 2009; 2010). To investigate students' use of English language learning strategies and its relationship with their L2 performance may facilitate a greater understanding of their learning problems.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Language Learning Strategies***

"Learning strategy" refers to any specific action or behavior a student performs, most often consciously, to improve his/her own learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1989; 1990). Chamot (1987) defined learning strategies as "techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students perform to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information" (p. 71). Rubin (1987) concluded that "learning strategies are strategies that the learner constructs and that affect learning directly, contributing to the development of a target language system" (p.22). According to Oxford

(1989), “language learners consciously employ learning strategies to help retrieve, save, search, and use the target language. Therefore, language learning strategies are “behaviors or actions that learners employ to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable” (p. 235).

Researchers have applied various data collection methods: Some have asked language learners to describe their learning processes and strategies through retrospective interviews or stimulated recall interviews; some have collected data using questionnaires, written diaries or journals; others have used think-aloud protocols or verbal protocols concurrent with a learning task (Chamot, 2004). Though each method has limitations, they still provide insights into learners’ mental processes.

Attempts to identify the use of different learning strategies, such as observing how learners approach learning tasks or interviewing learners by listening to their description of their learning behavior, have been conducted. For example, after interviewing and observing their students, O’Malley and Chamot (1990) distinguished three major strategy types according to the information-processing model: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social/affective strategies. Cognitive strategies directly link to the operation of the learning tasks, involving the problem-solving steps or methods that require the direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials; metacognitive strategies refer to plans to self-regulate learning by planning, organizing, monitoring, and evaluating; while social/affective strategies refer to the strategies learners use to interact with native speakers and other learners. More specifically, social-affective strategies involve interactions with others through questioning for clarification, asking for help, seeking partners, and working cooperatively, while affective strategies involve managing one’s own emotions and motivations (Nam & Oxford, 1998).

### ***Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)***

The most efficient and frequently used method for identifying students' learning strategies is descriptive questionnaires. Among the various taxonomies for examining L2 learners' use of language learning strategies, the most comprehensive classification is the SILL with 49 strategy items and one open-ended question provided by Oxford (1986-1990). Based on the factor analyses, Oxford classified language-learning strategies into two main categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies, with three subcategories each. Direct strategies directly involve learning the target language through mental processing. The first subcategory, memory strategies, concerns the storage and retrieval of new language. The second, cognitive strategies, concerns the understanding and production of the target language by interacting messages, analyzing, reasoning, and creating a structure for input and output. The third, compensation strategies, is used to compensate for having inadequate knowledge to comprehend and reproduce the target language.

Indirect strategies are strategies that do not directly involve using the target language, but “provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means” (Oxford, 1990). The three subcategories of indirect strategies are metacognitive strategies for coordinating learning processes, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating the target language; affective strategies for regulating emotions and motivations of language learning, which reduce anxiety, enhance self-confidence, and regulate emotions; and social strategies for facilitating learning engagement through interaction with peers and by becoming culturally aware.

Despite the limitations such as inability of learners to remember the strategies they

previously utilized, learners' claim of never employing some strategies, or lack of understanding the strategy descriptions in the questionnaire items (Chamot, 2004; 2005), SILL is acknowledged as being the most consistent with learners' strategy use (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002) and is widely adopted for its high reliability and validity (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). Therefore, Chamot (2004) suggested that teachers could use SILL to obtain a more comprehensive picture of students' learning strategies.

### ***L2 Proficiency and Language Learning Strategy Use***

In most cases, students with higher English proficiency tended to use strategies more frequently (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). While studying 332 EFL students by SILL at two Korean universities, Park (1997) found that the relationship between language learning strategies and L2 proficiency was linear, and that the high strategy group had a significantly higher TOEFL mean score than the medium strategy group. Similarly, the middle strategy group again achieved a significantly higher TOEFL score than the low strategy group. Chang (2003) studied the use of listening strategies by students of technological institutes and reported that high-performing students used listening strategies more frequently while low-performing students displayed a lower frequency of listening strategy use. Green and Oxford (1995) investigated the connections between learning strategy use, L2 proficiency, and gender. They reported that the more proficient learners used more strategies, including more active and practical strategies such as asking questions in English or pursuing opportunities to read in English. Huang and Tzeng (2000) conducted a survey and personal interviews with 32 Taiwanese EFL learners whose TOEFL scores were above 600. They found that learners with a higher proficiency tended to use more strategies to improve their listening abilities than

strategies to improve their speaking and reading abilities. Yu (2003) found that the use of strategies among medical major university students strongly correlated with listening proficiency. Sheu (2009) studied three proficiency levels of ability-grouped technological university freshmen in Taiwan and found that the higher the level, the higher the mean scores of strategy use. Additionally, students with the highest proficiency level reported a significantly higher use of learning strategies in the four categories of memory, cognitive, compensation, and metacognitive strategies.

In contrast, some research revealed contradictory findings regarding the relationship between strategy use and L2 proficiency. The study by Mullines (1992) of 110 EFL English majors in Thailand indicated no significant correlation between overall strategy use and any of the three proficiency measures, including entrance examination scores, placement test scores, and G.P.A., though placement test scores and G.P.A. did correlate with compensation strategies. Chang (1992) used SILL to study students from China and Taiwan. Their TOEFL scores did not significantly relate to their overall strategy use, but students with high scores on the oral interview used significantly more social strategies. In summation, whether English listening proficiency correlates to language learning strategy use still requires further examination.

### ***Gender Difference***

Gender differences have been identified in the areas of human social and cognitive development and have been reported to play a significant role in the use of English language learning strategies. In most cases, females were reported to use more strategies, and they used strategies more frequently than male students (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Sheu, 2009; Yang, 1992). Politzer (1983)



highlighted that females tended to use more social strategies. Ehrman (1990) found that females reported higher overall strategy use compared to that reported by males in his study of teachers and students in the Foreign Service Institute. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) reported that gender had a profound influence on strategy choice. They found female learners used more formal rule-related practice strategies, general study strategies, and conversational input elicitation strategies than males. In Yang's (2000) study of 976 Taiwanese senior high school students (2000), females used compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies at a significantly higher frequency compared to males. Lee (2003) found females scored higher in five of the six strategy categories during his study of Korean high school students. In the study by Liu (2004) of 428 Chinese technological institute English majors, significant gender differences were detected in their overall strategy use, memory strategies, and affective strategies, with females exceeding males in each case. Sheu (2009) studied 381 Taiwanese technological university freshmen and reported significant gender differences in all six categories, with females surpassing males.

However, a number of studies do not support the assumption that gender differences significantly affect strategy choice. Peng (2002) reported that in terms of two individual variables, learners' achievement was significantly correlated with their strategy use and with motivation, while gender did not have a significant effect on their strategy use. Radwan (2011) found that male students used more social strategies than female students, thus creating the only difference between the two groups in terms of their strategic preferences. Kaylani (1996) reported that females exceeded males in the use of four strategy categories, but the study revealed that successful female students' language learning strategy profile more closely resembled the strategy profile of successful males

than that of unsuccessful females. Contrary to the findings that females significantly exceeded males in learning strategy use, Kaylani's finding implied that L2 proficiency is possibly a more significant influence than gender difference on language learning strategy use.

### **Research Questions**

As the preceding review shows, an abundance of research has explored the relationship between language learning strategy and L2 proficiency, or between language learning strategy and gender difference. Nevertheless, further investigation is still required for several reasons. Firstly, the results of the explorations are conflicting, with some reporting a correlation while others report no significant correlation. Additionally, for measuring the learners' L2 proficiency, TOEFL scores were used most frequently in previous studies. However, the GEPT has been adopted as the graduation threshold by the majority of colleges in Taiwan; hence, it is also necessary to consider students' English proficiency in this test. Finally, while numerous researchers have examined the differences in how male and female learners use learning strategies, few have explored further to determine whether gender differences still exist when the learners are at the same proficiency level. Considering the reasons provided above, this study investigated the English learning strategy use of 238 technological university students, comparing them with their GEPT scores. The research objectives included:

- 1) Determine the overall distributions of language learning strategies that sophomore students of the technological university employ when learning English;
- 2) Identify whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of direct and indirect strategy use, and establish the most and least frequently used strategy

categories;

- 3) Establish whether students' GEPT listening test performance relates to their English language learning strategy use;
- 4) Determine whether gender difference exists in English language learning strategy use among all participants;
- 5) Identify whether gender difference exists in English language learning strategy use between high-performing and low-performing students.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

In this study, 242 students were surveyed and tested. Among these, 4 were not completed. Therefore, the valid sample number was 238 sophomores, comprised of 118 males and 120 females, from 5 classes belonging to three colleges at the National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences. All the subjects had studied English formally for 6 years in junior and vocational high schools, for 1 year as technological university freshmen in a two-hour Freshman Practical English class focusing on English reading, and for one semester in a Sophomore Listening and Speaking class. The teacher used the textbook *Interactions 1 Listening/Speaking* published by The McGraw-Hill Companies in 2007.

Additionally, as Table 1 shows, subjects with scores in the top 25 % for the GEPT intermediate-level listening test (N=60; male=33, female=27) were defined as the high achievers, and the bottom 25 % (N= 60; male=38, female=22) were defined as the low achievers (Gronlund, 1985). The high achievers scored between 80 to 114 points during the GEPT listening test, while the low achievers scored between 24 and 57 points. The total score of the GEPT listening test was 120 points.

**Table 1***Distribution of Participants in the GEPT Intermediate-Level Listening Test*

Major/colleges	engineering		business		social sciences		total
	male	female	male	Female	male	female	
All sample	83	14	31	86	4	20	238
High achievers	28	4	3	12	2	11	60
Low achievers	26	5	12	17	0	0	60

***Instruments***

Two instruments were used in this study: The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) ESL/EFL Student Version and the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). The first instrument was Yang's (1992) Chinese version of Oxford's (1990) SILL, used to assess students' employment of English language learning strategies. SILL is a five-point Likert-scale, self-report questionnaire that comprises 49 statement items and one final open-ended question: "What additional strategies do you use when learning English?" Students responded by selecting (1) never or almost never true, (2) usually not true, (3) sometimes true, (4) usually true, and (5) always or almost always true. The numbers 1 to 5 in SILL represent the points; higher points indicate a more frequent use of the specific strategy. According to Oxford (1990), a mean score above 3.4 points indicates a high frequency of strategy use, a mean score between 2.5 and 3.4 indicates a medium frequency, and a mean score lower than 2.5 indicates a low frequency. Additionally, individual background information items were added to the SILL questionnaire to better understand the results. These questions included students' gender, age, major/college, years of studying English, and high school attended.

The other instrument used to measure students' listening proficiency was an

intermediate level GEPT listening test, a set of authentic tests purchased from LTTC. The listening test of the GEPT intermediate level contains three sections with 15 questions each. In part A, *Picture Description*, each question has four possible spoken answers. Examinees choose the best-spoken answer based on pictures. In part B, *Choose the Best Response*, examinees listen to a question from person A and choose the best response for person B from four printed possible answers. In part C, *Short Conversation*, one dialogue matches one spoken question. Examinees choose the best answer from four printed possible choices.

With a relatively large number of low English proficiency students enrolling at technological universities, the GT at KUAS for non-English majors in this study was the stage-one GEPT intermediate level, which contains listening and reading comprehension tests. However, considering sophomore students take the Listening and Speaking Course, only the listening test was adopted as the measurement of English proficiency in this study.

### ***Procedure***

The questionnaire and GEPT were conducted in class time during the first week of the second semester. Students were reassured in the printed questionnaire that the data collected were used for this research exclusively. With the approval of the students, they underwent the GEPT test first, which lasted approximately 30 minutes. Upon finishing the test, they then completed the questionnaire, which took approximately 20 minutes.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

After data were collected through questionnaires, the quantitative data were analyzed and

decoded using SPSS for Windows 13.0. To achieve the research objectives 1 and 2, descriptive analysis was used with the mean scores and standard deviation to understand the overall frequency of English strategy use and the ranking of each strategy category. A paired-samples t-test was used to examine the difference between the use of direct and indirect strategies. To achieve the research objectives 3 to 5, an independent-samples t-test was used three times to further analyze the gender difference, listening proficiency difference, and whether gender difference exists between the high achievers' English language learning strategy use and that of the low achievers.

In this study, the reliability test of SILL yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.9507 (N=237). The reliability coefficients of the six strategy categories described above are 0.70. The alpha value of the six strategies of memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, affective, and social are 0.7135, 0.8683, 0.7420, 0.8913, 0.7275, and 0.7546, respectively. Additionally, a Pearson's correlation analysis was used to detect correlations between students' GEPT listening test scores and their strategy use.

## **Results**

*Research Objective 1: Determine the overall distributions of language learning strategies that sophomore students of the technological university employ when learning English.*

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of the 49 items ranges from a minimum of 1.98 to a maximum of 3.57, which reveals that the participants used strategies to various extents. Additionally, the mean score 2.90 of the frequency of overall learning strategy use indicated that the participants were primarily of a medium-low frequency level.

**Table 2***Mean Scores of Sophomore Students' Overall English Language Learning Strategies*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Overall strategy</b>	2.90	0.48
<b>Part A : Memory strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. When learning a new word, I create associations between new material and what I already know	3.06	0.78
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.	2.47	0.77
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.	3.03	0.91
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.	3.15	0.84
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words (e.g. rice and ice; no and know).	3.41	0.96
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.	2.45	0.97
7. I memorize new English words by grouping them into categories (e.g. synonym, antonym, noun, verb)	2.50	0.96
8. I review English lessons often.	2.57	0.71
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.	2.77	0.94
<b>Part B: cognitive strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
10. I say or write new English words several times.	3.18	0.78
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.	2.72	0.95
12. I practice the sounds of English.	3.13	0.87
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.	2.76	0.81
14. I start conversations in English.	2.67	0.85
15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to the movies.	2.92	0.98
16. I read for pleasure in English.	2.16	0.77

17. I try not to translate word by word in speaking or reading English.	2.93	0.92
18. I write notes, messages, letters, and reports in English.	1.98	0.80
19. I try to think in English	2.11	0.84
20. I look for similarities and contrasts between English and my own language.	2.88	0.92
21. I try to find patterns in English.	2.76	0.83
22. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.	3.28	1.01
23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.	2.53	0.87
<b>Part C: Compensation Strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.	3.57	0.84
25. When I cannot think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.	2.96	0.97
26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English (air ball for balloon).	3.00	0.97
27. I read English without looking up every word.	3.15	0.94
28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.	2.80	0.93
29. If I cannot think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.	3.52	0.85
<b>Part D: Meta-cognitive strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.	3.02	0.88
31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.	3.11	0.82
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.	3.45	0.92
33. I try to find out a better way to learn English.	3.38	0.83
34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.	2.32	0.70
35. I look for people I can talk to in English.	2.44	0.84
36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.	2.62	0.83
37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.	2.68	0.87



38. I think about my progress in learning English.	<i>3.11</i>	<i>0.83</i>
<b>Part E: Affective strategies</b>	<b><i>Mean</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
39. I try to relax wherever I feel afraid of using English.	<i>3.10</i>	<i>0.89</i>
40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.	<i>3.19</i>	<i>0.87</i>
41. I give myself a reward or a treat when I do well in English.	<i>2.85</i>	<i>0.99</i>
42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.	<i>3.28</i>	<i>0.93</i>
43. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.	<i>2.76</i>	<i>0.87</i>
<b>Part F: Social strategies</b>	<b><i>Mean</i></b>	<b><i>SD</i></b>
44. If I do not understand something in English I asked the other person to slow down or say it again.	<b><i>3.66</i></b>	<i>0.82</i>
45. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk English.	<i>3.05</i>	<i>0.92</i>
46. I practice English with other students.	<i>2.87</i>	<i>0.95</i>
47. I ask for help from English speakers.	<i>3.12</i>	<i>1.05</i>
48. I ask questions for clarification and verification about English.	<i>2.66</i>	<i>0.83</i>
49. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.	<i>2.64</i>	<i>1.02</i>

According to Oxford (1990), a mean score above 3.4 points indicates a high frequency of strategy use, a mean score between 2.5 and 3.4 indicates a medium frequency, while a mean score lower than 2.5 indicates a low frequency. Examining the specific strategies closer, of the 49 strategies, 5 achieved a higher level of frequency, though 3 were compensation strategies.

The five most frequently used strategies were:

(5) I use rhymes to remember new English words (e.g., rice and ice; no and know) (memory) (M=3.41).

(24) To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses (compensation) (M=3.57).

(29) If I cannot think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing. (compensation) (M=3.52).

(32) I pay attention when someone is speaking English. (meta-cognitive) (M=3.45).

(44) If I do not understand something in English, I asked the other person to slow down or say it again. (social) (M=3.66).

In contrast, 7 items had a low level of frequency. The least used strategies were from the subcategories of cognitive, metacognitive, and memory strategies including:

(2) I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember the meaning. (memory) (M=2.47).

(6) I used flashcards to remember new English words. (memory) (M=2.45)

(16) I read for pleasure in English. (cognitive) (M=2.16)

(18) I write notes, messages, letters, and reports in English. (cognitive) (M=1.98).

(19) I try to think in English. (cognitive) (M=2.11).

(34) I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English. (meta-cognitive) (M=2.32).

(35) I look for people I can talk to in English. (meta-cognitive) (M=2.44)

Interesting comparisons can be made between the findings of this study and the findings of the study of 381 freshmen from the same university (Sheu, 2009). The sophomore students appeared to use a number of strategies more frequently than the freshmen. Firstly, sophomore students scored over 3.4 in 5 strategies, while the freshmen only scored over 3.4 for one item (item 24): *To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses*. In contrast, the strategies with the least frequency of use were relatively similar between the

sophomores and freshmen; 6 items (items 2, 3, 16, 18, 19, and 35) of the 7 strategies least used by sophomores were also the least frequently used by freshmen.

*Research Objective 2: Identify whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of direct and indirect strategy use, and establish the most and least frequently used strategy categories.*

Firstly, a paired-sample t-test was used to examine whether a significant difference existed between the use of direct and indirect strategies. As shown in Table 3, the mean scores of 2.85 and 2.97 indicated that the learners' use of direct and indirect strategies was medium in frequency, and students use indirect learning strategies more frequently than direct ones.

Secondly, in Table 4, the mean scores of the six categories are of a medium frequency level in the ranking of compensation strategies, which include guessing and using gestures ( $M=3.17$ ), followed by affective, social, metacognitive, memory ( $M=2.84$ ), and cognitive ( $M=2.72$ ) strategies. Students' higher frequency of using compensation strategies may be explained by their need to overcome knowledge limitations to cope with various interaction situations in their English class. The least frequently used strategies were cognitive and memory strategies, indicating that students lacked the strategies of practicing naturalistically, analyzing contrastively, and summarizing. They also lacked strategies such as grouping, imagery, and structured review to store and retrieve learned information. This result is contradictory to the finding by Phillips (1991), who used the SILL to measure 141 university-level Asian ESL students and reported that metacognitive ( $M=3.70$ ) and social ( $M=3.65$ ) strategies were used more frequently than affective ( $M=3.12$ ) strategies were. However, the results of this study echoed Sheu's

(2009) findings regarding the freshmen of the same technological university, and also echoed the findings by Yang (1992) and Ku (1995), who reported that Taiwanese university students tended to use compensation strategies most frequently.

**Table 3**

*Comparison between Direct and Indirect Strategy Use*

Direct strategies		Indirect strategies		P value
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
2.8467	0.4785	2.9666	0.5572	.002**

\*\*p<.01

**Table 4**

*Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the SILL*

Strategy category	Mean (N=238)	SD	Ranking Order
1. Memory	2.8377	.54535	5
2. Cognitive	2.7152	.53105	6
3. Compensation	3.1667	.60685	1
4. Meta-Cognitive	2.9043	.61176	4
5. Affective	3.0361	.62995	2
6. Social	3.0021	.62707	3

*Research Objective 3: Establish whether students' GEPT listening test performance relates to their English language learning strategy use.*

To investigate whether the high achievers in the sample used strategies more frequently than the low achievers, the researchers classified the top 25 % of the subjects as the high performing group and the bottom 25 % as the low performing group. The high and low groups were determined by the subjects' scores in the GEPT intermediate level listening

test. The results supported the findings of some domestic and overseas studies, which suggested that more successful language learners use more strategies more frequently than low achievers (Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Sheu, 2009; Yu, 2003). As shown in Table 5, high achievers used significantly more strategies when learning English in all six strategy categories. Additionally, the most frequently used strategy of both groups was a compensation strategy; both groups used significantly more indirect strategies than direct strategies.

**Table 5**

*Difference in Strategy Use between the High Performing Group and the Low Performing Group*

Strategy	High GEPT performing group		Low GEPT performing group		P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Overall</b>	3.13	.48	2.71	.48	.000***
<b>a. direct</b>	3.12	.48	2.72	.47	.000***
1. memory	2.96	.49	2.64	.45	.002**
2. cognitive	2.98	.52	2.52	.53	.000***
3. compensation	3.43	.63	2.99	.63	.000***
<b>b. indirect</b>	3.24	.55	2.80	.55	.000***
4. Meta-cognitive	3.20	.59	2.68	.64	.000***
5. affective	3.27	.62	2.86	.63	.000***
6. social	3.24	.60	2.87	.61	.000***

\*\*\* p<.001

In addition, similar to Park's (1997) and Yu's (2003) findings, all six categories of language learning strategies and overall strategy use were significantly correlated with the GEPT listening scores; the most significantly related strategy category was cognitive.

The result indicated the significance of the quantity of strategies used in L2 learning. Also, an appropriate employment of language learning strategies contributed to the success of L2 learning (See Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Correlations among Six Strategy Categories, Overall Strategy use and the GEPT*

*Listening Scores*

	GEPT	1. mem	2. cog	3. com.	4. meta.	5. affe.	6. soc.	Overall
GEPT	1							
1. mem.	.213(**)	1						
2. cog.	.351(**)	.613(**)	1					
3. com.	.312(**)	.548(**)	.660(**)	1				
4. meta.	.320(**)	.522(**)	.798(**)	.578(**)	1			
5. affe.	.246(**)	.506(**)	.666(**)	.563(**)	.695(**)	1		
6. soc.	.219(**)	.489(**)	.679(**)	.541(**)	.683(**)	.734(**)	1	
Overall	.343(**)	.748(**)	.922(**)	.767(**)	.879(**)	.810(**)	.810(**)	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Research Objective 4: Determine whether gender difference exists in students' English language learning strategy use among all participants.*

Among the sample, as shown in Table 7, female students tended to use strategies more frequently than male students. The mean scores of all of the six categories of female students were higher than those of the male students, and they reported significantly greater overall use of the two categories of memory and affective strategies, which was similar to Liu's findings (2004). Additionally, the similarity between male and female students was that they both used compensation strategies most frequently and used

cognitive strategies least frequently.

**Table 7**

*Gender Difference in Strategy Use among all Participants*

Strategy	male		female		P
	mean	SD	mean	SD	
1. memory	2.7667	.55350	2.9076	.53026	.046*
2. cognitive	2.7006	.56825	2.7296	.49370	.675
3. compensation	3.1072	.60051	3.2249	.61026	.135
4. Meta-cognitive	2.8449	.65011	2.9633	.56822	.136
5. affective	2.9203	.62710	3.1500	.61426	.005**
6. social	2.9744	.66830	3.0294	.58483	.50

\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

*Research Objective 5: Identify whether gender difference exists in English language learning strategy use between high-performing and low-performing students.*

As shown in Table 8, a different finding was detected when gender difference in strategy use was analyzed between the high and the low performing groups. In the high performing group, no significant gender difference was found in any of the six strategy categories, though the mean scores of female students' strategy use frequency were higher than those of the male students. In the low performing group, the only significant gender difference was in the use of affective strategies, with females surpassing males. This finding was partly consistent with Kayani's (1996) finding that successful female students used language learning strategies in a manner more similar to successful males than to unsuccessful females.

**Table 8***Gender Difference in Strategy Use between the High and the Low Performing Group*

	High GEPT performing group						Low GEPT performing group				
Strategy	male		female		P	male		female		p	
	mean	SD	mean	SD		mean	SD	mean	SD		
Overall	3.0853	.4253	3.1935	.5357	.398	2.6815	.5099	2.7505	.4208	.575	
direct	3.0073	.4516	3.1393	.4912	.288	2.6552	.5046	2.6536	.4018	.989	
1. memory	2.9024	.5342	3.0329	.4334	.300	2.6345	.4867	2.6465	.3735	.916	
2. cognitive	2.9307	.4516	3.0336	.5880	.459	2.5338	.5985	2.4967	.4133	.778	
3.compensation	3.3434	.6095	3.5432	.6432	.226	2.9693	.6162	3.0303	.6560	.724	
indirect	3.1985	.4592	3.2722	.6418	.619	2.7197	.5842	2.8909	.4891	.230	
4.Meta-cognitive	3.1347	.4990	3.2881	.6900	.339	2.6550	.6940	2.7273	.5342	.653	
5. affective	3.2364	.5530	3.3185	.7088	.625	2.7158	.6056	3.1091	.6039	.019*	
6. social	3.2626	.5744	3.2099	.6331	.739	2.8202	.6614	2.9545	.5148	.385	

\* p&lt;.05

*Response to the Open-Ended Question*

In response to the open-ended question “What additional strategies do you employ in learning English?”, 100 out of the 106 respondents for the open-ended questions answered, “Watch English movies or programs”; 88 of them answered, “Listen to English songs; 66 responded, “Read English learning magazines”; 5 of them reported making foreign friends in chat rooms online.

**Discussion***Medium-low frequency level of language learning strategy use*

The first major finding of this study was that the overall strategy use in English learning



of non-English major sophomores at KUAS was at a medium-low level, with a mean score of 2.90 on a 1 to 5 scale. The most frequently used strategies were compensation strategies (M=3.17), followed by affective (M=3.04), social (M=3.00), metacognitive (M=2.90), memory (M=2.84), and cognitive strategies (M=2.72). Additionally, the indirect strategies were used at a significantly higher frequency than direct strategies.

In addition, the sophomore students in this study could not actively use the target language, and their use of cognitive and memory strategies was less frequent. Regarding cognitive strategy use, students seldom read in English for pleasure (Item 16), and they seldom wrote notes, messages, letters, and reports in English (Item 18). Additionally, they did not attempt to think in English (Item 19). This has revealed that when students were attending listening/speaking class, they were busy translating their Chinese thoughts into English, a common phenomenon to non-native speakers. Oxford (1990) highlighted that some students unconsciously use false learning strategies such as relying too much on native language translation. Similarly, students in this study were also poor at employing a number of metacognitive strategies, such as actively looking for people to communicate with in English (Item 35). This has indicated that students had to ask for clarification to finish a speaking task in class, and students could not actively use the target language despite a higher percentage of students reporting they would listen to others carefully and would ask others to slow down when they could not understand (Items 32 & 44).

Furthermore, this study found that students obtained extremely low mean scores in several memory strategies related to the use of new words. Students were not accustomed to using new English words in a sentence (Item 2) and did not memorize new English words by grouping them into categories (Item 6). In other words, students could not memorize words well or actively use the words they had learned in context. In contrast,

more students reported that they used rhymes to remember new English words (rice and ice; no and know) (memory) (Item 5). The result was probably because the instructor had conducted sound-letter connection strategy training in their listening/speaking class.

### ***L2 Listening Performance and Language Learning Strategy Use***

The second major finding of this study was that students who performed better in the GEPT listening test tended to be the more frequent strategy users. They demonstrated significantly higher strategy frequency use than the low achievers in all six strategy categories. This result has supported the conclusion by studies on both EFL learning (Chamot & Kupper, 1989) and ESL learning (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989) that successful learners tend to use more learning strategies and their use is more frequent than less successful learners.

Additionally, the results in this study indicated that L2 proficiency related to the quantity of strategy use. In other words, appropriate employment of language strategies could result in better language learning. The above findings highlight the importance of increasing students' awareness of successful learners' language learning strategy use (Chiang & Liao, 2002; Yang, 1996).

### ***Gender Difference***

Another significant finding was regarding gender difference. Most previous studies reported significant gender differences regarding strategy use in different subcategories, with females surpassing males. (Ehrman, 1990; Lee, 2003; Liu, 2004; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Politzer, 1983). Similarly, in this study, when all participants were considered, the mean scores showed that females surpassed males in the use of all six strategies, but

significant gender difference in strategy use was detected in the two subcategories of memory and affective strategies.

However, when only the high performing group was examined, no significant gender difference was detected, though the mean scores showed that female students surpassed male students in all of the strategy categories. The findings indicated that L2 proficiency may be a more significant factor than gender difference regarding strategy choice and use, which is more congruent to the findings of Kaylani (1996). Kaylani reported that females exceeded males in the use of four strategy categories, but successful female students' language learning strategy profile resembled the strategy profile of successful males more than that of unsuccessful females.

### **Suggestions**

The above findings suggest that instructors should increase students' strategy use awareness (Fewell, 2010). The lack of knowledge of good language learning strategy use may be one of the factors leading to poor language learning. Instructors can conduct SILL in class for all students to identify which strategies they use more frequently and which strategies they use less frequently in order to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses regarding strategy use.

Secondly, instructors can integrate strategy-training tasks into instruction to familiarize students with applying strategies to English learning and encourage them to use strategies autonomously. Oxford (2002) has suggested that integrating training modules into regular classes guided with explicit instruction is beneficial. Students must be convinced that to be successful language learners, they require some training in language learning strategy use (Liang, 2009). A number of studies conducted on strategy training have proved to be

relatively successful (Brown, 2002; Chamot, 1993; Oxford, 1990, 1993; Teng, 2008; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Weaver & Cohen, 1997; Yang, 1996; 2002), but the effects may vary with different learner characteristics (Rees-Miller, 1993). Therefore, when conducting strategy training, instructors are advised to start from the most effective strategies that high achievers use frequently, such as cognitive strategies. As Park (1997) has highlighted, teaching effective strategies used by successful learners can increase poorer learners' motivation for learning and for using those strategies.

Thirdly, strategy training challenges instructors when teaching students the four skills of English learning in an EFL setting, expanding students' practice time, immersing students in an English learning environment, and encouraging them to actively use the target language. Sheu, Hsu, and Wang (2007) pointed out that the weekly two-hour classes with over 50 students per class obviously could not provide enough assistance to students. Hence, methods to encourage more extensive reading (Item 16), increase thinking in English (Item 19), and build students' habit of taking notes, writing letters, or reports in English (Item 18) may be better implemented through a whole language approach if the instruction/learning time is limited to 2 hours a week. The findings of student perception towards the curriculum design of the freshman English class indicated that students preferred a class covering the four skills for a complete language approach (Wang, Lo, Sheu, & Hsu, 2011). Presently, students at this university can only participate in either the reading-based freshman English class or the listening and speaking-based sophomore English class, and either choice may have disadvantages as the students only have one 2-hour English class per week. If students' class time cannot be extended, the complete language approach may be required to fulfill students' needs.

Fourthly, the results from the open-ended question showed that a number of other

strategies students employed included listening to English songs, reading English novels, reading English learning magazines, and making foreign friends in chat rooms online. Interestingly, 100 out of the 106 respondents in the open-ended question also wrote “watch English programs or movies” although it was already included in the SILL questionnaire item 15. The results implied that introducing a variety of learning tasks, other than textbooks, may also be an effective strategy to motivate students.

## **Conclusion**

This study has provided new evidence for the use of learning strategies in Taiwan. Most of the results were congruent with the findings of previous studies, namely, that successful language learners tend to be frequent users of language learning strategies and students’ L2 proficiency is significantly related to their strategy use. Additionally, to raise students’ awareness and address individual differences in learning characteristics and proficiency, instructors are strongly advised to conduct the SILL at the start of a new class.

A significant difference between the results of this study and previous findings showed that variances in L2 proficiency might be a more crucial influence affecting strategy use than gender differences. However, this result cannot be considered conclusive. Due to the fact that the subjects were from only one technological university and that the findings regarding gender differences might be more culturally or socially inherent or affected by situational factors, it is highly recommended that further studies be conducted with learners of different regions and from various cultural or learning backgrounds.

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## **Analysis of the Contributions of In-school Language Clubs in Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

Scholars mentioned that in order for students' growth to take place, students need to actively engage in their environment. In countries like Taiwan, the trend of using English as a medium of instruction has become an increasingly important element in higher education. Therefore, great importance is placed on finding effective ways in teaching English to EFL students. On the other hand, it is also observed that there is an increasing number of in-school Toastmasters club in Taiwan. Their goal is to help their student members gain personal growth through the training of communication and leadership skills in a positive and cooperative environment. In light of the rapid growth and perceived contributions of the campus Toastmasters club, this study shall seek to provide an empirical analysis of the various underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the in-school language clubs in Taiwan. Results indicate that students are helped by means of *bridging-the-gap* between their acquired knowledge and actual application of communication skills. Lastly, the adaptation of the in-school language clubs has also brought forth new non-threatening ideas in the language teaching pedagogy.

**Keywords:** communication skills development, students' leadership skills development, co-curricular activities, cooperative learning, student involvement, language proficiency

## **Introduction**

As a global language, English has already become one of the most important academic and professional tools (Crystal, 2003; Schutz, 2006). In Taiwan, English is highly regarded as the de-facto language in the areas of banking, commerce, trade, research, technology, and tourism (Tsai, 1998). Furthermore, as Taiwan engages more centrally as a player in the global economic stage (Mok, 2005; Zaharia & Gilbert, 2005), the trend of using English as a medium of instruction has become an increasingly important element in Taiwan education. Therefore, it is of great importance to find effective and non-threatening ways in teaching English to Taiwanese students.

Beyond language learning, many have mentioned that having good communication skills is regarded as an indispensable asset (Evans & Green, 2001). It has already become one of the indispensable skills a college graduate should possess before graduation (Coldstream, 1997). In addition, within the age of globalization and internationalization, collaboration and cooperation among students of diverse cultural backgrounds is also strongly encouraged (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). Hence, it is strongly encouraged that the current curriculum in Taiwan include both communication and leadership skills development (Hsu & Gregory, 1995).

Looking beyond formal curriculum programs, in Taiwan a recent increase in numbers of Toastmasters clubs was clearly observed. Campus Toastmasters clubs are co-curricular activities with the sole purpose of helping their student members gain personal growth. Such personal growth is achieved through the training of communication and leadership

skills in a positive and cooperative environment. With the first Toastmasters club established in 1958, the number has now grown to 146 clubs. The majority of the clubs are English clubs, and the others are Japanese, Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Hakka clubs (Toastmasters International District 67, 2009). Within these clubs a total of 112 are English clubs and 20 of them are situated within the higher education institutions in Taiwan as campus clubs or organizations, wherein the number of student members increases each school year.

For today's student, having good English communication skills and leadership capacity before graduation is seen as vital component in their future careers. Moreover, with English communication becoming so commonly used, taking a lead will definitely be more effective in making social connections. Therefore, the help of a creative and cooperative way to master English communication skills is an important methodology that must be explored. In addition, the importance of making the habit of speaking out will also benefit the students' further development in English speaking. In light of these issues, this paper shall detail an empirical analysis of the various underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the Toastmasters club in the development of Taiwanese students' communication and leadership skills.

The next section reviews the guiding ideas of co-curricular activities, student involvement, cooperative learning, and communication skills development. A description of the research setting is provided in a subsequent section which leads into an outline of the methodological framework. Next, a summary of the analyses are provided along with a discussion of the results. Lastly, a concluding discussion regarding the implications of the realities and dilemmas brought about by the campus toastmasters club shall be given.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Co-curricular Activities and Student Involvement***

Co-curricular activity is defined as the activities being outside of, but usually complementing the regular curriculum (Cocurricular, 2010). Sometimes they are also known as extra-curricular activities; such activities are either required or voluntary depending upon the institution's requirement. In Singapore, co-curricular activities are recommended by their Ministry of Education. Co-curricular activities are believed to be a means of enhancing the students' social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline, and self-confidence (Teo, 2000). In addition, in higher education levels co-curricular activities participation may even translate into academic points.

College students nowadays are primarily involved in their studies and classroom activities. However, involvement in student clubs and organizations are also quite common. In a study involving the quality of student involvement in a group of college educational psychology students, findings suggest that overall quality of experience was greater during cooperative learning. Benefits occurred specifically for thinking on task, student engagement, perceptions of task importance, and optimal levels of challenge and skill (Peterson & Miller, 2004). Similarly, in Taiwan, several studies involving college students have also pointed out that students learn more by becoming more involved (Chang, 1990; Huang & Chang, 2004). Hu, Ching, and Chao (2012) also mentioned that having an enriching educational experience in school is important in fostering student success. In essence, for students' growth to take place, students need to actively engage in their environment. In a way, the effectiveness of any educational policy, practice, or program is directly related to the capacity of that policy, practice, or program to increase student involvement.



### ***Cooperative Learning and Communication Skills Development***

Cooperation is mainly defined as the association of persons for a common benefit (Cooperation, 2010). Within cooperative activities individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members. Cooperative learning is a relationship in a group of students that requires positive interdependence (a sense of sink or swim together), individual accountability (each of us has to contribute and learn), interpersonal skills (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution), face-to-face interaction, and processing (reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better) (Johnson, 1993). Hence, cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning.

Current changes in teaching pedagogy have already changed the notion that language is knowledge, but rather it is both a skill and ability. However, in order to become an effective oral communicator, one is required to have the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions (Kang, 2002). The cross-border mobility of people, whether for employment, education, and/or immigration purposes, has started to increase. These events have actually given grounds for the need of cross-cultural communication effectiveness. Furthermore, effective communication is also said to be positively correlated with a person's social interaction and involvement. In essence, it helps individuals cope better during social difficulties (Chen, 1992).

### ***The Present Study***

Thus far, most of the previous studies have pointed out the advantages brought about by applying the Toastmasters way in a classroom setting and wherein the students are

automatic members. However, there seems to be a lack of studies regarding the underlying factors behind the campus Toastmasters club perceived benefits and wherein membership is voluntary. Therefore, the current study shall detail an empirical analysis of the various underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the campus Toastmasters club in the development of Taiwanese students' communication and leadership skills. More specifically, the study seeks to answer these three major questions:

1. What are the underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the Toastmasters club?
2. What are the perceived benefits in joining the campus Toastmasters club?
3. What are the barriers in organizing and sustaining a campus Toastmasters club?

## **Methods**

### ***Paradigm***

This study uses methodology from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms in an attempt to enhance the strengths of data collection and advance insights surrounding the different factors brought about in the development of communication and leadership skills through the joining of the campus Toastmasters Club (Axinn, Fricke, & Thornton, 1991). The qualitative and quantitative part of the study is completed in two sequential stages. Participants for the qualitative focus group interview (stage one) and quantitative questionnaire survey (stage two) of the study are volunteer Toastmasters club members and officers coming from the different 20 campus Toastmasters clubs all over Taiwan. The purpose of the qualitative part study is to gain deeper insight into the perceived benefits and issues surrounding the campus Toastmasters club in higher education institutions in Taiwan. Consequently, a survey questionnaire was developed to gain

further understanding about the factors involved in developing students' communication and leadership skills. On the other hand, the purpose of the quantitative part of the study is to examine the different factors involved in the development of the Taiwanese students' communication and leadership skills. Through the survey questionnaire; a quantitative outlook on the implications of joining the campus Toastmasters club with regard to the students' communication and leadership skills was collected and investigated to gain further insight in the different skills reinforced and factors that hinder improvement.

### ***Procedure and Participants***

Stage *one* of the study involves the formulation of the survey questionnaire by using focus group interviews. Five focus group sessions with a total of 60 campus Toastmasters members coming from 10 schools were interviewed. Similar questions regarding the perceived benefits (communication skills and leadership skills) and barriers in joining the campus Toastmasters club were asked. Table 1 shows the demography for the stage one focus group sessions. Results show that the focus group session participants have an average age of 21 years old, with the number of female and male students almost similar. In addition, the participants exhibit an average of 16.5 months membership and an average of 6 speeches done. The participants' background information illustrate that the respondents are quite familiar with the campus Toastmasters club, since they have been with the club for more than a year and done a lot of speeches. Responses of experienced student members with the campus Toastmasters club is deemed crucial to the reliability of the resulting themes brought out from the focus group sessions. In addition, participants who are officers in their respective campus Toastmasters club were asked to give their rank and major responsibilities.

Table 2 shows that 38 of the 60 focus group participants or 63% are officers. Results also show that the gender distribution among the officers is almost equal with the female students (20 students or 53%) slightly higher than the male students (18 participants or 47%). Moreover, Table 2 also shows that all major club officer positions are well represented with at least one student per position. Furthermore, a lot of former officers (mostly students in the graduate school) who are still very active in the campus Toastmasters club have also participated (8 participants or 21%) in the discussions.

**Table 1**

*Stage one focus group participants (N=60)*

Item	<i>n</i>	%	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Female	32	53		
Male	28	47		
Age (years old)			21	3
18	5	8		
19-20	21	35		
21-22	8	13		
23-24	5	8		
25-26	5	8		
27-28	2	3		
29-30	0	0		
31	1	2		
Missing	13	22		
Membership (months)			16.50	15.50
1-6	18	30		
7-12	20	33		
13-18	7	12		
19-24	1	2		
25-30	6	10		
31-36	5	8		
More than 36 months	3	5		
Speech given			6	5
1-5	39	65		
6-10	13	22		
11-15	4	7		
16-20	4	7		

**Table 2***Toastmasters officers among the focus group participants (N=38)*

Item	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	20	53
Male	18	47
Position		
President	5	13
Vice President Education	5	13
Assistant Vice President Education	5	13
Vice President Membership	2	5
Assistant Vice President Membership	3	8
Vice President Public Relations	4	11
Assistant Vice President Public Relations	1	3
Secretary	3	8
Treasurer	2	5
Past Officers	8	21

Stage two of the study involves the actual implementation of the survey questionnaire. Copies of the survey were sent to all the 20 campus Toastmasters clubs situated all over Taiwan (with a minimum of 20 members per club, a total of 400 copies of the survey were distributed). After a month, a total of 87 valid respondents from 14 campus Toastmasters clubs were collected and analyzed. Statistical analyses such as the mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage, and correlation reports between the various factors were computed by means of the statistical software Statistics Package for Social Scientist (SPSS). Factor analysis was then accomplished to further analyze the inter-relationships among the variables (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005).

**Table 3***Stage two survey questionnaire participants (N=87)*

Item	<i>n</i>	%	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Female	34	39		
Male	49	56		
Age (years old)			21	3

17-18	5	6		
19-20	34	39		
21-22	13	15		
23-24	7	8		
25-26	3	3		
27-28	4	4		
29-30	2	2		
31-32	1	1		
Membership (months)			14.50	12
1-6	26	30		
7-12	32	37		
13-18	10	11		
19-24	7	8		
25-30	6	7		
31-36	1	1		
More than 36 months	3	3		
Speech given			5	6
0	2	2		
1-5	58	67		
6-10	19	22		
11-15	1	1		
16-20	3	3		
21-25	1	1		
26-30	0	0		
More than 30	1	1		

Table 3 shows the demography for the stage two survey questionnaire respondents. Results show that the respondents have an average age of 21 years old, with the number of male students (49 respondents or 56%) a little greater than the female students (34 respondents or 39%). In addition, the respondents exhibit an average of 14.5 months membership and an average of 5 speeches done.

### ***Survey Reliability***

The measure of reliability as internal consistency of the survey questionnaire was done by computing for the Lee Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha. The overall alpha of the survey questionnaire is computed as **0.750** and is considered to be of acceptable fit (Nunnally & Bemstein, 1994). *(For more details, please see table 5)*

## Results and Discussions

### *Underlying factors of the Campus Toastmasters Club*

In order to understand the various underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the Toastmasters club in the development of Taiwanese students' communication and leadership skills, factor analysis was accomplished on the results of the survey questionnaire. The instrument used is a 25 item Toastmasters Survey Questionnaire (TSQ), which was developed from the resulting themes of the stage one focus group sessions. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they perceived the items mentioned in the TSQ. Responses were on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = "Extremely disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Don't know", 4 = "Agree", and 5 = "Extremely agree".

The results of the TSQ are encoded and factor analysis was accomplished. The minimum amount of data for factor analysis was satisfied, with a final sample size of 87, with over 10 cases per variable (Bryman & Cramer, 1990). The factorability of the 25 items TSQ was further examined with several well-established criteria in factor analysis. First, all of the 25 items correlated at least 0.30 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Second, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was computed to be **0.709**, above the recommended value of 0.600 (Kaiser, 1970). Hence, the factor analysis is considered appropriate. Lastly, communalities were all above 0.30, further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. As a result, a total of eight (8) underlying factors were found from the factor analysis procedures. (*For more details, please see table 4*)

**Table 4***Factor analysis of the Toastmasters Survey Questionnaire*

Items	Loading	Communality	Mean <sup>a</sup>
<b>Factor 1: <i>Face to face Promotive Interaction and Group Processing</i> (FPI/GP)</b>			<b>4.17</b>
Improve my social skills by face to face interaction	0.785	0.718	4.29
Reinforce my social interaction by face to face interaction	0.769	0.746	4.25
Better understanding of others through face to face interaction	0.685	0.633	4.25
Members take turn leading in group discussion or activities	0.653	0.555	3.84
I learn to build up group cohesion in Toastmasters	0.596	0.594	4.21
<b>Factor 2: <i>English Language Competence</i> (ELC)</b>			<b>3.94</b>
My presentation skills improved	0.772	0.691	3.97
My listening comprehension is better than before	0.758	0.742	4.06
My reading comprehension is better than before	0.718	0.801	3.75
I feel less anxiety when I speak English now	0.664	0.617	4.13
My writing looks more organized when I write my script	0.613	0.664	4.00
<b>Factor 3: <i>Barriers for Improvement</i><sup>b</sup> (BI)</b>			<b>3.69</b>
I skip meetings in order not to embarrass myself	0.801	0.828	3.89
I don't express what I feel in order not to have conflicts	0.770	0.688	3.63
I am not willing to point out other members' flaw	0.764	0.743	3.50
Some members insist on their own opinions	0.532	0.659	3.76
<b>Factor 5: <i>Positive Speech Deliverance</i> (PSD)</b>			<b>4.09</b>
I use vocal variety to add emphasis and meaning to my messages	0.869	0.855	4.10
Gestures, movements, and expressions are natural (spontaneous)	0.841	0.825	4.18
<b>Factor 6: <i>Leadership Skills Development</i> (LSD)</b>			<b>3.86</b>
Overall, Joining Toastmasters makes me a good leader	0.842	0.786	4.03
Joining Toastmasters allows me to learn how to help others	0.790	0.734	3.79
<b>Factor 7: <i>Time Mismanagement</i> (TM)</b>			<b>2.99</b>
Meeting overtime affects new members from joining the club	0.777	0.738	3.17
Some members in our club are unwilling to attend	0.766	0.777	2.91
<b>Factor 8: <i>Training Provisions</i> (TP)</b>			<b>3.88</b>
Joining Toastmasters workshops help me become a leader	0.736	0.760	3.84
Joining Toastmasters workshops help me communicate better	0.692	0.701	3.95

Note. <sup>a</sup>Mean scores of items.

<sup>b</sup>Negatively worded items.



The first factor was labeled ***Face to face Promotive Interaction and Group Processing*** (FPI/GP); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the cooperative learning process in interpersonal interaction and group processing. This includes face to face interactions, communications, and leadership. While the second factor was labeled ***English Language Competence*** (ECL); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the development of the English language competences such as presentation skills, listening, reading, writing, and speech anxiety.

The third factor is labeled ***Barriers for Improvement*** (BI); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived issues and dilemmas that hinder the development of the students' communication and leadership skills. This includes the different negative attitudes of students, which are culturally oriented. Chu (2008) mentioned that besides having less opportunity to use English outside the classroom Taiwanese students are quite shy. In addition, Taiwanese students have difficulty expressing themselves (Liao, 2006).

The fourth factor is labeled ***Positive Interdependence*** (PI) with three negatively worded items. Items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the cooperative learning process of positive interdependence. This includes the notion of cooperation and camaraderie among the teammates. The fifth factor is labeled ***Positive Speech Deliverance*** (PSD); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the development of speech presentations. This includes the issues on gestures, facial expressions, and intonations.

The sixth factor is labeled ***Leadership Skills Development*** (LSD); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the leadership development of an individual. The seventh factor is labeled ***Time Mismanagement*** (TM); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived negatively issues regarding time management. Lastly,

the eighth factor is labeled **Training Provisions** (TP); items loading on this factor pertain to the perceived benefits towards the communication and leadership trainings offer by the campus Toastmasters club.

Factor analysis also revealed three factors that contribute to the development of the students' communication and leadership skills. The first two factors; **Face to face Promotive Interaction and Group Processing** (FPI/GP) with an overall mean of 4.17 and **Positive Interdependence** (PI) with an overall mean of 4.04, are all cooperative learning processes (Johnson, 1993). The third factor is **Training Provisions** (TP) with an overall mean of 3.88 is inherent to the campus Toastmasters club.

Table 4 also shows that within the factor **FPI/GP**, social interaction skills are developed through the face to face interaction among the student members (*Improve my social skills by face to face interaction in Toastmasters* with a mean of 4.29, *Reinforce my social interaction by face to face interaction in Toastmasters* with a mean of 4.25, and *Better understanding of others through face to face interaction in Toastmasters* with a mean of 4.25). In addition, group processing is also found to be a contributing factor with a moderate to high significant (*Members take turn leading in group discussion or activities* with a mean of 3.84 and *I learn to build up group cohesion in Toastmasters* with a mean of 4.21), which are also well mentioned during the focus group sessions.

Further analysis shows that **FPI/GP** is positively correlated to **ELC** with  $r(81) = 0.237$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , **PI** with  $r(80) = 0.256$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , and **PSD** with  $r(80) = 0.455$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Results indicate that the students' **ELC** and **PSD** are highly dependent on the cooperative learning processes of **FPI/GP** and **PI**. In essence, the appropriate use of social skills by means of face to face interaction and group processing provides a sense of social interdependence. Such interdependence exists when individuals share common goals and

each individual's outcomes are affected by the actions of the others. In the campus Toastmasters club, student members worked together cooperatively to accomplish shared learning goals. Hence, this helps to improve their communication skills.

Positive interdependence exists when one perceives that one is linked with others in a way so that one cannot succeed unless they do (and vice versa) and/or that one must coordinate one's efforts with the efforts of others to complete a task. Within the campus Toastmasters club, through cooperative learning processes, students begin by structuring positive interdependence. Club members practice the notion of “*to sink or swim together*”, which is to maximize their own productivity and to maximize the productivity of all other group members. Within the factor **PI**, Table 4 shows that students are willing to share what they know (*I am willing to share to those who are in need, of what I know about speaking skills* with a mean of 4.26 and *I am willing to share to those who are in need, of what I know about leadership responsibilities* with a mean of 4.21) and seek assistance from others (*I am willing to let others know my difficulties in English* with a mean of 3.64). In sum, when the goal and role of interdependence are clearly understood, students realize that their efforts are required in order for the group to succeed. Positive interdependence ensures that one member's efforts do not make the efforts of other members unnecessary; in essence, each individual member is unique and important and each individual member is vital for group success.

### ***Perceived Benefits of the Campus Toastmasters Club***

The campus Toastmasters club builds on the concept of ***cooperative learning***. Such cooperative learning process only exists when students work together to achieve joint learning groups (Johnson, 1993). In the campus Toastmasters club, student members

undertake different speaking assignments and various active meeting roles. During the stage one focus group interview, the students were asked, “What are the perceived primary benefits of joining the campus Toastmasters club?” Students mentioned that the main benefits of joining the campus Toastmasters club is to *develop and improve a person’s social skills* (Mean score of 4.29, located in factor 1 or **FPI/GP**) and *diminish speech anxiety* (Mean score of 4.13, located in factor 2 or **ELC**).

I believe that the first lesson that I learn is to take away my fears in speaking English. Since, English is not my major; therefore, I felt that I lack this capability. But after three months of membership and two speaking assignments, I am much confident now. (*Focus Group Session - FGS 4*)

Results also show that the factors English Language Competence (**ELC**) with an overall mean of 3.94, Positive Speech Deliverance (**PSD**) with an overall mean of 4.09, and Leadership Skills Development (**LSD**) with an overall mean of 3.86, all received positive feedback from the students. Students ranked **PSD** with the highest factor overall mean. Further analysis shows that the students improve the way they speak by means of gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and speech intonations. (*My gestures, body movements, and facial expressions are purposeful, natural, and spontaneous* with mean of 4.18, and *I use vocal variety to add emphasis and meaning to my words and messages* with a mean of 4.10). These results are quite expected since the Toastmasters speaking exercises are specifically geared toward skills related to use of humor, gestures, eye contact, speech organization, and overall speech delivery.

Besides being able to confidently interact with others, **ELC** is also deemed very important, with an overall mean of 3.94. Table 4 shows that students felt less speech anxiety after joining the campus Toastmasters club with a mean of 4.13 (*I feel less*

*anxiety when I speak English now*). This is then followed by the students' listening skills (*My listening comprehension is better than before* with a mean of 4.06), writing skills (*My writing looks more organized when I write my speech script than before* with a mean of 4.00), presentation skills (*My presentation skills improved* with a mean of 3.97), and reading comprehension (*My reading comprehension is better than before* with a mean of 3.75). Results indicate that diminishing the students' speech anxiety through the cooperative learning processes in Toastmasters is highly recognized. Students then become accustomed to the English language environment through listening and observing other student members talk, which is actually deemed the most important of the three basic skills by most Taiwanese students. This is then followed by their writing skills, since most students tend to prepare and write their speech first before they perform their speeches, hence, improvement in their writing skills is seen before their presentation skills improvement. Lastly, presentation skills and reading skills improvement were considered the two last competences to be developed.

Besides communication skills, members also developed their leadership skills by means of undergoing various carefully conceptualized training modules; a series of 10 projects in the *Competent Leadership Manual*, and by serving the role of club officers. Responsibilities are given to the members and opportunities to lead are provided. Table 4 shows that students' perceived their **LSD** to improved moderately with an overall mean of 3.86. Furthermore, Table 5 also shows that **LSD** is positively correlated with **ELC** with  $r(87) = 0.265, p < 0.05$ ; however **LSD** is not correlated with **PSD**. Such results indicate that a prerequisite of **LSD** is **ELC**. Simply put, students would first establish a confident level of English language skills before taking on club responsibilities. This is also mentioned during the focus group sessions, emphasizing that students' primary

objective (or motivation) in joining the campus Toastmasters club is to improve their **ELC**.

One problem that I see in the campus Toastmasters club; is that most students join only to practice speaking English. However, Toastmasters is not only about communication skills it involves leadership training too. One more thing that I noticed is that students will wait till they reached a certain level of confidence with regards to their English language communication skills, before they will start volunteering for officer duties. (*Club officer's response - FGS 2*)

When students take on club responsibilities, they are obliged to keep the meeting sessions running smoothly. In most cases, officers tend to do a lot of *impromptu* speeches. Hence, students will prefer prepared speaking tasks over the club officer's responsibility.

### ***Barriers in Organizing a Campus Toastmasters Club***

Table 5 shows a list of the strengths and barriers mentioned during the focus group sessions. As for the strengths, results show that the campus Toastmasters club is categorized as an educationally purposeful co-curricular activity. Such activity which is focused on productive interaction is said to have a persistent improvement effect on the students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Similarly, results also confirm the previous findings with regard to the benefits of the cooperative learning process in Toastmasters and the provision of a venue (or opportunity) for communication and leadership skills development.

As for the barriers in organizing and sustaining a campus Toastmasters club, most student officers mentioned the problem with regard to the *dialogue between the club and the school administration*. The establishment of a campus Toastmasters club requires a

certain amount of monetary expenditure with regard to membership fees and a series of project manuals used toward the advancement of communication and leadership skills awards. Most schools will hesitate and adopt the *wait and see attitude* (which is to wait for other schools to go into the campus Toastmasters program first and see what happens). During the focus group sessions, solutions to the various barriers were also brainstormed. As for the problem with school administration (including *financial support*), some club officers mentioned that it is quite effective to invite school administrators to join campus Toastmasters club meeting sessions in other schools. In this way, school administrators can experience firsthand the outcomes of actual campus Toastmasters club meetings.

**Table 5**

*Strengths and dilemmas in organizing and sustaining a campus Toastmasters club*

Items
<p><b><i>Strengths</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish an educationally purposeful co-curricular activity</li> <li>2. A cooperative learning approach in enhancing the students' communication and leadership skills</li> <li>3. Utilizes a non-threatening approach in developing the students' communication and leadership skills</li> <li>4. A process of learn by doing</li> <li>5. Provides opportunities for students to practice their English communication skills</li> <li>6. Leadership opportunities for all the student members</li> <li>7. Enhance the sense of responsibility and team work</li> </ol>
<p><b><i>Dilemmas (Barriers)</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Securing permission from the school administration</li> <li>2. Financial support</li> <li>3. Hard to recruit new members</li> <li>4. Low participation</li> <li>5. Lack of experienced members, which leads to decreased quality of meetings</li> <li>6. Students are more focused on the communication skills track than the leadership track</li> <li>7. Disagreement between club officers</li> </ol>

Another issue is the problem with low school exposure which leads to *recruitment problems*. Solutions suggested are as such: updated campus Toastmasters club Website, a

door to door recruitment procedure, establishing a campus Toastmasters club monthly newsletter, and posters and flyers. More established campus Toastmasters clubs will have less difficulty in member recruitment, however, newly established clubs will tend to have a much difficult time in doing so. With regard to the issue of *low participation* and *poor meeting quality*, such phenomenon mostly happens to newly established clubs where the officers are still new and lack experience in handling the meeting sessions, new members tends to shy away gradually. In order to minimize such issues, senior campus Toastmasters club officers of other schools can be invited to help boost the quality of the meeting sessions. In addition, guest speakers and competitions can be held to further improve the meeting.

Meeting sessions are held twice a month during the semester, while once a month during the midterms and finals month. In addition, we try to invite guest speakers and other campus Toastmasters club to join our meeting sessions. In this way, meetings are very interesting. (*Club officer's response – FGS 4*)

For the issues regarding the *lack of students taking the leadership track* and *misunderstanding among the officers*, such phenomenon are quite common, since students tend to be motivated to join the campus Toastmasters club just because of the reason of improving their communication skills. This can actually be minimized after they (the students) realize that the leadership track is also quite promising. As for the issue of the *misunderstanding among the officers*, almost all organizations have internal problems and issues. However, almost all of the club officers present in the focus group sessions suggested that with the help of the leadership training workshops and open forums, issues of misunderstandings can be resolved as they arise.



In my club, the president is quite open to suggestions. We always talked about and agreed beforehand the general direction and agendas of the club. Besides the leadership workshops, I believe this method is a good way to diminished misunderstanding. (*Club officer's response – FGS 1*)

## Conclusion

The primary objective of the present study is to analyze the various underlying factors behind the contributions and impact of the campus Toastmasters club in the development of Taiwanese students' communication and leadership skills. Implications of the study include the indications that students are helped by means of *bridging-the-gap* between their acquired knowledge and actual application of communication and leadership skills. Findings suggest that the major contribution of the campus Toastmasters club is the cooperative learning processes situated in a co-curricular educationally purposeful activity. Besides the improvement in communication and leadership skills, students are given a venue to practice what they learn and consequently help others in doing so.

Other findings show that the students' overall communication and leadership skills are correlated to the cooperative learning processes such as *Face to face Promotive Interaction and Group Processing (FPI/GP)*, and *Positive Interdependence (PI)*. Furthermore, results from factor analysis illustrates that there are three distinct underlying factors inherent to the campus Toastmasters that contributes to the development of the students' communication and leadership skills. Two negative factors were also noted. These factors are caused by new members who are from higher academic years. Lastly, as Taiwanese higher education institutions are focusing on the development towards global competitiveness, this study will be able to provide ways on how to promote

English language communication skills and enhance students' leadership capabilities beyond the four walls of the classroom. Finally, further investigation on the feasibility of implementing co-curricular advanced language clubs (such as Toastmasters), which are geared toward the persistent motivation for improvement, needs to be undertaken in the higher education milieu all over Taiwan.

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## **Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Asian Learners and Users going Beyond Traditional Frameworks**

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### **Abstract**

Traditional frameworks for understanding Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), whilst still useful, are today nevertheless somewhat limited for a variety of reasons, and in many respects, it is the practices of Asian learners and users that are driving forward the need for new thinking in this area. This discussion paper provides an articulation of where such frameworks are located, what they have offered and why we now need to go beyond them. It provides an historical critique of the theory and practice of CALL and then goes on to draw on some of the author's most recent studies, which examine the practices of non-native speaker students of English (NNSSoE) working in independent study contexts. The narrative leads to a proposal that Mobile Assisted Language Use (MALU), together with an educational theory of connectivism, may now provide a better framework for examining technology in self-access centres and elsewhere. This argument, as will become apparent, is being driven in significant measure by the practices of learners and other users from Asia.

**Keywords:** Computer assisted language learning, mobile assisted language use, Asian learners, tutorial CALL, connectivism

## Introduction

Computer assisted learning (CALL) has been with us for over 40 years and there is now a plethora of publications devoted to researching its impact and to discussing implications for practice. Examples include: *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09588221.asp>), *System* ([http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws\\_home/335/description#description](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/335/description#description)) as well as some free on-line journals such as *Language Learning and Technology* (<http://llt.msu.edu/>) and *CALL-EJ* (<http://callej.org/>). The field is clearly well-established, with a healthy and ever growing tradition of research, practice, and dissemination. At its heart is the notion that a desktop or laptop computer explicitly helps our students with input and/or practice activities in order to learn, hence the “assisted learning” part of the CALL acronym. A range of computer programs or Computer-based materials (C-bMs) are used to deliver CALL and are typically characterised as having a valued tutorial function within the classroom and beyond (Jarvis, 2004). To further emphasise the role of the computer in explicitly assisting with input and/or practice activities, a more precise term “tutorial CALL” is often used. Arguably it is such CALL which historically has been at the forefront of discipline specific work within humanities and led Levy (1997) to comment that “... within the field of computers in Education, especially within humanities computing, it is teachers in the area of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and foreign languages more generally that have been in the vanguard” (p. 3). Whilst today there is certainly richness and diversity in CALL, over the years it is the value and limitations of such tutorial CALL in a variety of forms and contexts, particularly self-access centres, which has dominated the field.

## **Development of and Issues in CALL**

### ***Historical Development of CALL***

CALL has, of course, developed and changed significantly since its inception. There have been two driving factors behind such changes, namely, the possibilities offered by the technology and the educational theories which provide a rationale for our practice. In the early days of tutorial CALL, up to the late 1970s and early 1980s, students would typically work on a mainframe computer in a laboratory, library or self-access centre. They would work on one text-based program installed on the hard drive of each computer. They would input answers and receive some kind of feedback such as “correct, well done” or “wrong - try again”. Such activities might have replicated the exercises found in a text book or be presented as a game. For example, a favourite was ‘hangman’ whereby students tried to guess a word by typing in possible letters one by one, the object of the game being to guess the correct word before being hanged. Teachers could buy a ready-made package of exercises (which in the terminology became known as “dedicated CALL”) or they could create exercises (“authoring CALL”), which provided an opportunity to tailor activities around specific class-based input (usually grammar or vocabulary). Behaviourism and the work originally developed by Skinner (1954) formed the theoretical base to such activities. Learning was seen as filling empty heads with knowledge and was achieved through rewarding good behaviour with stimuli such as “well done” or punishing bad behaviour with stimuli such as “wrong – try again”. Practice makes perfect and repetition leads to the learning was the prevalent framework. Such activities have been characterised as “drill and kill”, but this is perhaps a little unfair. They were implemented at a time when students had no access to computers outside their educational institution and as such they were often inherently motivating. Tutorial CALL



was a novelty, and in the case of ‘hangman’ it was fun, too!

Behaviourism became increasingly discredited in education theory and from the mid 1970s onwards we see a shift away from a view of learning as behaviour, and with this we slowly witness the emergence of more interesting tutorial CALL which is based on an educational theory of cognitivism. Here, the starting premise is that learning is comprised of thinking, constructing or working things out. In language education, we see a shift from seeing language exclusively in terms of structure (grammar) and more in terms of communicative functions. Tutorial CALL now focused on pair or group work activities which involved discussions and were followed by inputting responses into the computer and then responding to output from the computer. In this phase of CALL, we see the emergence of simulation packages such as *The London Adventure* (Hamilton, 1986), which involved students working in small groups to plan a trip round London. Another activity was text reconstruction packages such as *Storyboard* (Jones, 1992) in which students built up a full text on screen by typing in missing words. This era also saw the widespread use of word processors outside the classroom in business contexts, and so tutorial CALL responded by developing activities based on the manipulation of model texts, such as ordering sentences and paragraphs. In addition we see a stress on ‘process writing’, which focused on writing stages such as brainstorming, drafting and editing, and with this development came the idea of CALL not only as a tutor, but also as a tool (see Jarvis, 1997). During this period, whilst many of the more mechanical exercises of behavioural CALL remained (and are indeed still with us today), there were additional aspects which challenged students to think and work things out.

As CALL moved into the 1990s we see further, and arguably more significant, changes arising out of technological developments, together with a need to consider social

interaction with educational theory. Tutorial CALL in this stage goes beyond being text-based to include multi-media and hypertext which were delivered on what were then new high speed Pentium processors via CD ROMS, but more recently the arrival of broadband delivery has shifted activity to the internet. This represents a particularly significant development in language education as it marks the arrival of multi-media tutorial CALL. For the first time, in addition to grammar, vocabulary and reading and writing activities, it becomes possible to integrate listening, too, and to a lesser extent, accuracy-based speaking activities (pronunciation). During this period we see a rapid growth of multi-media self-study packages, and they became one of the defining characteristics of self-access centres. Later with the arrival and widespread availability of fast internet connections, tutorial CALL could be easily authored using free packages such as Hot Potatoes (<http://hotpot.uvic.ca/>) and delivered via virtual learning environments such as Blackboard (<http://www.blackboard.com/>) or Moodle (<http://moodle.org/>). In educational theory, socio-cognitive views begin to prevail and go beyond the cognitive to emphasise the role of social interaction in learning (Jonassen and Land, 2011). Founded in the work of Vygotsky (1978), learning is viewed as taking place not just through thinking, but also through interaction and negotiation with others – i.e. learning is socially constructed. In language education, this has manifested itself as task-based pedagogy (Ellis, 2003) and in terms of networked computers, students are for the first time interacting with each other via the computer (Warschauer and Kern, 2000). Here we also see the development of the notion ‘CALL the medium’.

Tutorial CALL has clearly come a long way from its behavioural roots and there is now a wide variety of opportunities for learners. Knowledge dissemination initiatives such as The Khan Academy (<http://www.khanacademy.org/>) provide a huge number of free video

resources to teachers and learners across a wide range of academic disciplines. In subject specific disciplines such as language education we see smaller scale individual initiatives such as [WWW.TESOLacademic.org](http://WWW.TESOLacademic.org) which gives students of TESOL and Applied Linguistics historically unprecedented access to free web casts from cutting edge leaders in the field and other researchers. As we move to the globalisation of learner autonomy (Schmenk, 2005), the popularity of such sites can only grow and even ‘hangman’ has become much more fun (see, for example, [http://www.cambridgeenglishonline.com/Phonetics\\_Focus/#](http://www.cambridgeenglishonline.com/Phonetics_Focus/#))! Today, the importance of input and practice is still recognised as part of an eclectic mix in the teaching and learning process, but few would justify this in terms of overall education theory based on a view that learning is equated with behaviour – we now recognise the significance of thinking and interacting.

### *A Critique of CALL*

Let us briefly critique tutorial CALL before moving on to suggest a need to go beyond this term. Firstly, CALL is essentially a means to an end. The end is specified learning outcomes and the computer assists their realisation in some way, shape or form. The focus is on delivering or assisting “conscious learning”. Secondly, it is usually discussed and researched in terms of students working on one C-bM and the extent to which this does or does not assist with learning. Frequently, the research design for such discussions is conducted in fairly controlled contexts. Learners are exposed to treatment (CALL) in the form of working with a particular C-bM in the classroom or self-study centre; thereafter, its effectiveness is measured. Thirdly, CALL is often both characterised and justified as being motivating, a characterisation which arguably goes

back to the days when it was a novelty as students had no access to computers beyond their educational institutions. Fourthly, a desktop or laptop computer historically is central to CALL, and whilst there is an ever-increasing body of work which looks at other devices, the primary term of reference remains, by definition, ‘the computer’. As we have seen over the years, there has been a changed underlying educational theory. At one extreme is the behavioural phase of CALL which involved working on a C-bM through mechanical exercises or a game. More recently, the sociocognitive phase might involve a project with on-line chatting to other participants and posting work on a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). However, in all such examples, the educational theory is essentially independent of the technology. Whilst CALL cannot be separated from such theory, the theory stands alone and is frequently derived from work outside CALL.

### ***Beyond CALL***

If we accept even some of our brief critique above and look at recent work in the field, then it suggests a need to go beyond CALL. This, however, does not mean a summary dismissal of over 40 years of CALL research, dissemination and practice, but it does involve recognising a bigger picture. Within language education, by far the largest area of activity globally is Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and the argument presented here is drawn from a number of studies over the last seven years with such NNSSoE in both “host country contexts” (in the UK at Salford University) as well as with Thais and Arabs in their “home country context”. The range of research methodologies includes both quantitative and qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus groups, observations and questionnaires. For many students, CALL was not seen primarily as a means to an end at all; rather, learning to operate successfully in a

digitalized world was the end and English was the means to that end. This suggests that “... one of the most important questions for the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession today is less about the role of C-bMs in ELT and more about the role of ELT in a Cb-M dominated environment” (Figura and Jarvis, 2007: 460). Furthermore, NNSSoE tended to view a much wider range of C-bMs as helping them learn English when compared to British students learning other foreign languages. This was reported across a wide range of C-bMs irrespective of whether they had a clear and explicit tutorial function. Many NNSSoE reported activities such as accessing websites for personal information, live chatting or watching YouTube videos as helping them, to some extent at least, with their English (Jarvis, 2012; Jarvis, 2008a).

In language education, Krashen (1982) originally made the distinction between learning, which is viewed as conscious, and acquisition which, in contrast, is unconscious. It is suggested (Jarvis, 2008b) that when applied to an electronic environment, unconscious acquisition is almost certainly taking place through exposure to authentic English from a variety of C-bMs. It is also worth noting that in one study (Jarvis and Szymczyk, 2010), which explicitly focused on the comparative value of paper and computer-based tutorial materials for learning grammar, students actually expressed a preference for books. We have noted a tendency within CALL to focus on one C-bM and yet today’s web generation rarely work on only one C-bM at any one time. They are frequent users of technology and they multi-task, which includes social networking and studying; furthermore, they do so in both their mother tongue and the English language. A recent study (Jarvis, 2012) reports that as few as 3.4% of Thai and Emirati NNSS use only their mother tongue even when using computers outside their language studies.

All of these issues suggest a need to revise the traditional view of CALL. It is also

worth noting (Jarvis, 2005) that, in language education, we see the technology impacting on the subject matter itself with computer-mediated-communication varieties of English emerging. How significant is this? It's probably too early to say; perhaps we need to wait and see! There is no novelty value to CALL for these web generation learners who access the internet and other programs all the time in their daily lives. In short, "unconscious acquisition" arising out of frequent access to authentic English through globally networked environments using any number of C-bMs, frequently in combination, suggests a need to go beyond CALL.

Two other factors are worth stressing in this argument. Firstly, the field is clearly no longer just about the desktop or laptop computer – increasingly, it is about a range of other devices. The tutorial value of 'apps' (applications) and tutorial C-bMs on a range of devices, such as mobile phones, iPads, notebooks and tablets, logically takes our terms of reference to Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). It is worth repeating that the tutorial value of technology is set to remain with us. However, the arguments presented here logically take us to the acronym Mobile Assisted Language Use (MALU); such use allows for both conscious learning using tutorial packages as well as unconscious acquisition through accessing and transmitting information in English. It also more fully encompasses the range of devices being used, virtually all of which are now mobile. MALU then serves as a new framework which takes us beyond CALL. Finally, and most controversially, there must be a brief mention of connectivism which has, at its theoretical base, a view that technology changes learning theory from a notion that knowledge is an objective that is attainable through either reasoning or experiences. Siemens (2005) suggests: "How people work and function is altered when new tools are utilized" and that "We can no longer personally experience and acquire learning that we

need to act. We derive our competence from forming connections”. For the first time, we are seeing the emergence of an educational theory which cannot be separated from technology.

## **Conclusion**

According to Internet World Stats (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/>) the vast majority of internet users in 2010 were located in Asia (825.1 million). Considerably way behind, in second and third place, are Europe (475.1 million) and North America (266.2). Moreover, the dominant language is English with an estimated 536.3 million users followed by Chinese (444.9) and Spanish (153.3). It is clear that users throughout Asia and beyond are accessing and communicating information in both their first language and in the English language, and they are doing so for study, business and social purposes. In many ways the practices of such users are driving forward our changed frameworks for understanding. First and foremost, they are users of English in a globalised world. While the internet is being used to develop their English language, the various studies by Jarvis as cited in this paper suggest that this is largely through unconscious acquisition and it is done with a variety of devices.

Against the background of such significant change, further research, dissemination and discussions are clearly needed. In particular, the proposed MALU framework suggests that whilst we are likely to continue to need to provide tutorial packages for learners, we will also need to provide other opportunities for students to access information and interact with the world using a wide range of devices and operate in the target language. The future is an exciting one, and in many respects, it is being driven forward not by practitioners but by student use of a variety of technologies in the English language.

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## **Choice and Its Influence on Intrinsic Motivation and Output In Task-Based Language Teaching**

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John Thurman has been working in Japan for 25 years. He is very interested in the confluence of motivation and task-based language teaching. He has presented on these topics in the USA, China, Europe, and New Zealand. He is currently working at Otaru University of Commerce, located in Hokkaido, Japan.

### **Abstract**

The first aim of this study is to examine whether the existence of choice of a task topic, compared to when there is no choice of topic, has a positive effect on participants' interest (*Task Interest*) and self-efficacy (*Task Self-efficacy*) while conducting a descriptive type of task. The second aim of this paper is to examine whether the oral output of the participants (*Time on Task*, *Accuracy*, *Complexity*, and *Fluency*) while they conducted the task increased due to the implementation of choice. Data from two sessions was collected; one without and one with the choice implemented pre-task. Survey ( $N = 143$ ) data elicited after the task was collected, in addition to production data collected while a smaller sample conducted the same task. Results of each collection of data were analyzed utilizing t-tests for between-subjects data. Results of the survey data indicated that *Task Interest* was greater for the limited choice of topic treatment than the no choice of topic treatment, but not statistically significant. Results of the production data indicated that *Time on Task* was significantly greater for the choice of topic treatment than for the no choice of topic treatment, possibly indicating greater intrinsic motivation

when choice is available. Lastly, *Complexity* was significantly greater for the choice of topic treatment than for the no choice of topic treatment, possibly indicating greater complexity in the oral output of the participants when choice is available. Implications for these results are indicated for task design, task implementation, and cross-cultural psychological research.

**Keywords:** Affect, choice, task-based language teaching, accuracy, complexity, fluency

## **Introduction**

The first aim of this study is to investigate how increased autonomy, introduced through the implementation of a choice of task topic, may enhance foreign language learners' interest and self-efficacy when they are conducting the task in a task-based language teaching (TBLT) classroom environment. This first aim is accomplished through survey data and the time the participants utilized to accomplish a task.

The second aim of this study is first to investigate if a smaller selection of the participants' intrinsic motivation was greater for the choice treatment than for the no-choice treatment, and second, to investigate if the changes that occur in the language output for accuracy, complexity, and fluency were greater when choice is introduced than if there was no choice.

Common in research assessing output in TBLT are the three measures mentioned above. In this section, the recorded conversations of the participants were analyzed. With these measurement guides, the possible changes in the output the learners produce due to choice can be gauged.

There are two studies in the paper; Study 1 is based on survey data. This will give a more general understanding of the effects of implementing topic choice in the curriculum.

Study 2 looks more closely at a selection of the participants in Study 1 to understand better the effect of choice upon participants' intrinsic motivation and oral production while conducting the task.

The method of increasing autonomy used in this study is simple and unobtrusive. It is simple in the sense that preparations needed for increasing autonomy take little time, while the benefits are potentially great. It is unobtrusive compared to other ways of introducing autonomy in the curriculum, such as self-access centers (e.g., Benson & Voller, 1997), which are sometimes difficult to implement without extensive curriculum revisions, and can be culturally insensitive (e.g., Jones, 1995).

The results from this study may help teachers improve their participants' affect and the quality of oral language output by a relatively minor change in the curriculum. Both enhanced affect and enhanced oral output may help learners acquire the language that they encounter in the classroom more effectively.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Motivational Basis of Language Learning Tasks***

In the task-based language teaching literature, research into task implementation that can help promote motivation has been sparse. Although Ellis (2003) has claimed that task-based language teaching in itself may be motivating, little research has been conducted to investigate the affective components of TBLT.

Dörnyei (2002), however, has contributed research that may suggest a connection between TBLT and motivational research. In his article, he discovered positive, statistically significant, correlations between high task attitudes and two output measures common in TBLT research, a greater number of turns in the interaction and a greater

number of words produced. Dörnyei claimed that task motivation is co-constructed by the task participants and that motivational research adopting a task-based framework may result in a clearer and a more elaborate understanding of language learning motivation (p. 155). A potential benefit of the current study is that it may provide additional information on the role of motivation in the TBLT environment.

More recently, Dörnyei and Tseng (2009) tested the Motivational Task Processing System model of Dörnyei (2003), using interactional tasks. This system consists of three interrelated mechanisms; task execution, task appraisal, and action control. These researchers found that when the participants were divided by language ability according to vocabulary achievement scores, into novice and expert learners, some differences in the task appraisal strategies were evident. In this case, the novice learners could not monitor and evaluate their learning activities and outcomes as proficiently as the expert learners. Because of this, according to the authors, novice learners could not activate effective action control strategies, which, in turn, prevented them from scaffolding their learning and participating in the interaction.

Gilabert (2004, 2007) found that participants had significantly higher stress with a There-and-Then narrative task (a task where the participant is not looking at the task paper while conducting the task, usually because it has been collected by the researcher before the task commences), compared to a Here-and-Now narrative task (a task where the participant is looking at the task paper while conducting the task). The participants in Gilabert's research also had significantly higher confidence with the Here-and-Now task, compared to the There-and-Then narrative task. However, there were no differences for interest or motivation between the two types of tasks.

Julkunen (1989, 2001) claimed that the tasks in which the learners are involved can have an impact on the motivation of the learner. According to Julkunen (1989, p. 63), the features of the task may increase or decrease the participants' personal involvement in task accomplishment. Also, learners' intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and task demands may interact and result in appraisal processes in which learners will assess their performance after the task and will attribute task success or failure to various attributional processes, such as task difficulty, luck, ability, effort task attraction, and feelings during the carrying out of the task (Julkunen, 2001, p. 31).

Lastly, Poupore (2008) conducted a very extensive examination of the motivational aspects of group work dynamics, task topic, and motivational changes in pre-, during-, and post-task surveys. Poupore found that there was a relation between English Use Anxiety and perceived task difficulty and between English Use Anxiety and language production, namely the total number of words (a measure of fluency used in this paper) produced by the groups for the entire task. The comparison of an output variable with anxiety is original.

Poupore also found that while low anxiety and high proficiency produced a high level of production, the opposite was true for learners with high anxiety and low proficiency. In relation to this finding, learners with high motivation and low anxiety also produced a high level of language production while the opposite was true for learners with high anxiety and low motivation. As for perceived task difficulty, Poupore found that anxiety was significantly negatively correlated with motivation and perceived group dynamic, while anxiety was significantly positively correlated with perceived pre-task difficulty. These findings are salient for many teachers and this research is a significant step in examining the motivational antecedents of task-based language teaching.

One of the strengths of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is that there is a greater amount of autonomy (i.e., learner choice) inherent in the TBLT curriculum. Such being the case, it might seem redundant to have study autonomy (operationalized through choice) when there is already autonomy in the methodology, as a reviewer of this article pointed out. However, one difference might be that autonomy inherent in TBLT is an implicit choice while the autonomy studied in this paper is an explicit choice.

### ***Choice and Its Role in Self-Determination Theory***

The power of choice to motivate has been shown to exist in several studies (e.g., Corah & Boffa, 1970; Geer, Davison & Gatchel, 1970; Geer & Maisel, 1972; Glass, Singer & Freidman, 1969; Langer and Rodin, 1976; Pervin, 1963; Reim, Glass & Singer, 1971). Even the illusion that there is a choice, such as when gambling (Langer, 1975), has been shown to be a powerful motivator. For example, Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, and Deci (1978) studied university participants who were given a choice of a puzzle form to complete and participants who were not given a choice. The result was that the participants who could choose the puzzle form spent more time completing the puzzle, possibly indicating greater intrinsic motivation. Zuckerman et al. (1978) stated, “people’s motivation is greater when they have more rather than less control over their environment” (p. 445).

However, Iyengar in her research has proposed that individuals from interdependent cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), such as those raised in Asian cultures, value independent choice less and will choose according to the group norms or be more highly influenced by others, such as a parent or a peer, than those from independent cultures, such as those raised in Western cultures. Iyengar (*née* Sethi, 1997) and Iyengar and

Lepper (1999) found that children from an East-Asian culture (Chinese-American) in the San Francisco area were significantly more motivated to engage in an activity when their mothers chose it than were children from Anglo-American cultures in the same situation. In fact, Iyengar and De Voe (2003) stated that individuals from interdependent cultures (see above), which these authors referred to as *dutiful choosers*, will have little, if any, intrinsic motivation (p. 163).

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), there are three main components to intrinsic motivation: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The strongest influence in Deci and Ryan's hypothesis of intrinsic motivation is autonomy. Under the theory of self-determination, autonomy occurs when individuals "act in accord with their authentic interests or integrated values or desires" (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003, p. 98), but it can also occur when a person is forced, for example, to accept guidance from a parent or to submit to a traffic policeman, where one sees value in following the commands. Just as importantly, Deci and Ryan (2000) stated what autonomy is not. Autonomy, in their theory, is not "equated with ideas of internal locus of control, independence, or individualism" (p. 231).

In Deci and Ryan's conceptualization of autonomy, the most important component is choice. If there is no choice, there is no autonomy, and if there is no autonomy, there is no intrinsic motivation. According to Dworkin (1988), being autonomous, i.e., human, means to be able to choose on one's own. "What makes a life ours," wrote Dworkin, "is that it is shaped by our choices" (p. 81).



### ***Definitions of a Task in TBLT***

In over twenty years of research, many definitions of a task have been elucidated, mostly encompassed by the outlook of the researcher and the dictates of the research itself. There are two definitions that are more appropriate for the research in this paper, one by Skehan (1998), and a more recent definition by Samuda and Bygate (2008).

Skehan (1998) defined tasks from a cognitive perspective. To Skehan, a task is: (a) an activity in which meaning is primary, (b) there is some communication problem to solve, (c) there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, (d) task completion has some priority, and (e) the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome (p. 95).

Samuda and Bygate (2008), through their research with tasks in general education as well as in language learning, have added a holistic dimension to the definition of a task in TBLT. Their definition consists of five elements. According to Samuda and Bygate, a task: (a) is a holistic pedagogical activity, (b) involves language use, (c) has a pragmatic, non-linguistic outcome, (d) is used in such a way as to create some challenge aimed at language development, and (e) is aimed at promoting language learning through process or product or both (p. 69).

In comparing Skehan's definition of a task of with that of Samuda and Bygate's, the latter consider the context in which a task is used to a greater degree. This is also important for this research because, according to some researchers (e.g., Gorsuch, 1998; Takashima, 2000), TBLT may be unfamiliar to many participants in the context of the English language classroom in Japan.

### ***Task-Based Language Teaching in Japan***

One of the proponents of using task-based language teaching in secondary schools in Japan has been Takashima (2000). Takashima modified the design of a task in task-based language teaching, which he called a task activity, to fit the situation in Japan. The task activity uses the idea of a structural focus during task-based language teaching as proposed by Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993). Takashima proposed that a task activity should: (a) be message-focused, (b) have a sense of completion, (c) invite negotiation of meaning, (d) involve a comparison of structures, (e) include an information gap element, and (f) be of interest to the learners (p. 36).

### ***Assessing Output in TBLT***

Based on the work of Swain (1985; 1995), Skehan (1998, p. 5) speculated that there are three aspects to oral production: accuracy, complexity, and fluency. A lynch pin in Skehan's conceptualization of spoken language production concerns how well learners attend to one of these aspects over others under certain conditions. This means that attentional resources may shift, emphasizing one area of oral production and de-emphasizing other areas of oral production, in order to better handle the considerable cognitive load required by producing output (p. 73).

Accuracy is performance that is native-like through its rule-governed nature and is connected with a learner's capacity to handle the language capabilities at whatever level of interlanguage complexity the learner has acquired at the time. Accuracy is also related to the learner's norms in regards to beliefs about the necessity of accuracy. Complexity indicates how advanced, (i.e., subordinated) the learner's language is at the time (Skehan, 2007). Increasing complexity indicates change and development in the interlanguage

system and is based on the ability of learners to take risks, use more syntactically complex language, and use more language subsystems with the possibility that such language may not be controlled effectively. Fluency is the ability to use linguistic resources to the best of one's ability during communication as well as the ability to produce speech at a normal rate of speaking. Fluent discourse is characterized by an optimal mix of highly automatized chunks of language and learner creativity. Fluency is effective when there is an automatization of stored chunks of speech that were restructured on previous occasions. Fluency in task performance is calculated using temporal variables (e.g., amount of speech and pausing) and hesitation phenomena (e.g., false starts, repetitions and reformulations and replacements).

### ***Research Outline***

The independent variable in this paper is the level of choice. There are two levels of choice—the no choice of topic treatment in which the topic was pre-selected by the teacher, and the limited choice of topic treatment in which the participants conducted the same type of task but could choose one task topic from amongst three topics pre-selected by the teacher. The type of the task, a static task (Brown & Yule, 1983), does not change.

For this research there are two studies. For Study 1, survey data is utilized. The dependent variables are *Task Interest* and *Task Self-efficacy*. For Study 2, there is one dependent variable to assess intrinsic motivation, *Time on Task*, which is the entire amount of time the participants utilize to complete the task and three measures of oral output; the dependent variable of *Accuracy* will be calculated using error-free clauses, *Complexity* will be calculated using type-token ratio<sup>1</sup>, and *Fluency* will be calculated using word count.

## ***Research Questions***

### **Study 1**

The primary purpose of Study 1 is to examine the participants' task interest and task self-efficacy.

Research Question 1: To what degree does the level of task interest change across the levels of choice?

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that task interest will increase significantly when choice is available. This hypothesis is based on studies comparing the presence and absence of choice when adults are engaged in a task.

Research Question 2: To what degree does the level of task self-efficacy change across the levels of choice?

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that task self-efficacy will increase significantly when more choice is available. This hypothesis is based on studies comparing the presence and absence of choice when adults are engaged in a task and that more control of the environment increases the ability to do a task (e.g., Monty, Rosenberger, & Perlmutter, 1973; Stotland & Blumenthal, 1964).

### **Study 2**

The primary purpose of Study 2 is to examine the participants' intrinsic motivation, and, if there is an increase in intrinsic motivation, whether that lead to greater levels of accuracy, complexity, and fluency in the participants' output. In this study, the conversations that occurred while participants were engaged in the tasks were recorded, transcribed, and coded for time and for occurrences of accuracy, complexity, and fluency.

Research Question 1: Do the participants utilize more time to complete a task when limited topic choice is involved compared to when there is no choice of topic?

Hypothesis 1: It is hypothesized that participants will use more time to complete a task when choice is involved compared to when no choice is involved. This hypothesis is based on research into intrinsic motivation (e.g., Zuckerman et al., 1978) which supposes that participants will conduct a task longer when choice is available because the behavior is more intrinsic.

Research Question 2: To what degree does the level of accuracy change across the levels of choice?

Hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that accuracy will increase significantly when choice is available. This hypothesis is based on studies comparing the presence and absence of choice when adults are engaged in a task requiring high levels of attention (e.g., Dember, Galinsky, & Warm, 1992).

Research Question 3: To what degree does the level of complexity change across the levels of choice?

Hypothesis 3: It is hypothesized that complexity will increase significantly when more choice is available. This is hypothesized because it is possible when choice is introduced in the implementation stage of a task, attentional resources may be freed and allocated towards complexity (e.g., Dember et al., 1992).

Research Question 4: To what degree does the level of fluency change across the three levels of choice?

Hypothesis 4: It is hypothesized that fluency will increase significantly when more choice is available because increases in task interest caused by the introduction of choice can positively affect fluency. This could be an effect of an increased willingness to communicate (e.g., MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998; Yashima, 2002). In addition, there may be a lessening of anxiety with choice (e.g., Stotland & Blumenthal,

1964) causing greater fluency (total number of words produced in this paper) (Poupore, 2008).

## **Method**

For Study 1, the participants from which the data was elicited were 185 mostly first-year participants attending English classes at a Japanese university. Their average age was 18.8 years. Of these participants, 78 were male and 107 were female. However, not all of these participants attend both treatment sessions and, because a between-groups design is used for this study, after removing those participants who missed either session, 157 participants remained for Study 1. These were further reduced to 143 through cleaning up the data according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p. 60). For Study 2, because the requirements for using the data from the participants was stricter (the same pair of participants had to be sitting together for both treatments), only 37 pairs (or 74 individual) participants could be utilized. All participants gave their written consent to participate in this study.

## ***Task Materials***

The participants used a static type of task, which for this research will be called a descriptive task, during the treatment sessions. According to Brown and Yule (1983, p. 109) a descriptive task is a type of task in which learners describe static relationships and by doing so are describing object properties, the location of objects, and the relationship between the objects. A common version of this type of task uses a picture that has to be described by one of the learners to complete missing information.

The tasks in this study were one-way, information gap tasks modified from Nicholson and Sakuno (1982) (Appendix A). In each session, there was one participant who held the complete picture (the top box in Appendix A). The other participant, however, had two pages where one page (“Page 1” in the bottom box in Appendix A) had the original pictures but with six parts removed and replaced with numbers, and another page (“Page 2” in the bottom box in Appendix A) where the removed parts were printed. The goal of this task was for the participant with the incomplete or missing information to reconstruct the picture by placing the correct number next to the cut out portion of the picture according to where it should be in the correct position. An example of the modifications for the session with no choice of topic is in Appendix A.

For the session with limited choice of topic, participants chose a topic from three different topics (Appendix B). The participants then commenced the task as explained above. It is important to point out that the participant who had the complete information could see the entire task on this choice paper but could not see the modifications made on the task papers for that participant’s partner.

### ***After-Task Survey***

A 12-item after-task survey used for Study 1 is in Appendix C. This survey was administered each time the participants finished the task. Some of the survey items were written originally for this study, some were taken from Japanese research (Takashima, 2000), and some were garnered from sources in English (Julkunen, 1989; Robinson 2001b).

## ***Procedures***

The data collection procedures for the no choice and limited choice sessions are shown in Appendix D. As shown in the figure, to be fairer to the participants, each task was conducted twice during each treatment session, for a total of four times. Participants were asked not to use dictionaries, nor to look at each other's papers.

On the left of the figure in Appendix D are the procedures for the no choice of topic treatment sessions and on the right are the procedures for the treatment sessions with limited choice of topic. In the case of the data sessions with a limited choice of topic, the paper with the three task topics printed on it was distributed to the participant who would make the choice. This participant then chose the topic and the teacher gave this participant the task in a large envelope. Upon a signal, the participants took the papers out of the envelope and gave the two pages of the missing information to his or her partner and kept the page with the complete information. The example in Appendix A is the task from the second round of the task session used for analysis in Study 2 and Study 3.

### **Study 1 Data Collection Procedures**

As shown on the procedures diagram in Appendix D, the asterisks indicate from which participant the survey data were taken from after each round of conducting the task. In either case, the survey data were taken from the participant who had the complete information for that round.

### **Study 2 Data Collection Procedures**

To calculate intrinsic motivation for Study 2, the total time in seconds for the entire task was tabulated for all the available tapes (from the second round, or the "B" side of the tape). The start of the transcript was marked when the participants started to do the task in English in a consistent way, that is, without a false start in commencing the task. Some



pairs of participants talked about the task (or other things) in Japanese and then started the task in English while many pairs started the task immediately. The end of the transcript was when the participants had completed the task.

To code the transcripts of the oral production, the recording from the second round (or the “B” side of the tape) was used because the participants were more used to doing the tasks, and there was less talk about how to do the tasks and more talk was focused on the task itself. This was done in order to control for planning as well.<sup>2</sup>

## Results

### *Study 1*

In preparing the data for analysis, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p. 60ff) suggest cleaning up the data so as to meet the assumptions of multivariate data analysis. The progression goes from examining the data for univariate outliers, to transforming the data after a descriptive data analysis, and then to examining the data for multivariate outliers. From the original pool of 185 participants, there were 149 remaining after those who were absent for one of the two treatment sessions and those who were univariate outliers were removed. Basic descriptive statistics were calculated with this total (Table 1 and Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for the No Choice of Task Topic*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Skewness	<i>SES</i>	<i>Z</i> <sub>skewness</sub>	Kurtosis	<i>SEK</i>
Item 1	4.19	.06	.75	.56	-.52	.20	-2.60*	-.40	.39
Item 2	3.64	.07	.86	.73	-.27	.20	-1.35	-.18	.39
Item 3	3.92	.08	1.00	1.01	-1.02	.20	-5.10*	.68	.39

Item 4	3.68	.09	1.15	1.31	-.68	.20	-3.40*	-.31	.39
Item 5	4.32	.05	.63	.39	-.35	.20	-1.75	-.65	.39
Item 6	4.01	.07	.84	.71	-.49	.20	-2.45*	-.40	.39
Item 7	3.51	.08	1.02	1.05	-.31	.20	-1.55	-.34	.39
Item 8R	2.81	.09	1.09	1.18	.11	.20	0.55	-.65	.39
Item 9	3.42	.08	1.00	1.00	-.07	.20	-0.35	-.59	.39
Item 10	4.05	.06	.75	.56	-.47	.20	-2.35*	-.01	.39
Item 11	4.18	.06	.77	.60	-.77	.20	-3.85*	.37	.39
Item 12	3.44	.09	1.13	1.28	-.48	.20	-2.40*	-.56	.39

Notes.  $N = 149$ .  $\alpha = .82$ .  $SES$  = Standard Error of Skewness,  $SEK$  = Standard Error of Kurtosis.

\* $p < .05$ .

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Limited Choice of Task Topic*

	$M$	$SE$	$SD$	Variance	Skewness	$SES$	$z_{\text{skewness}}$	Kurtosis	$SEK$
Item 1	4.21	.07	.82	.67	-.87	.20	-4.35*	.23	.39
Item 2	3.71	.07	.90	.81	-.29	.20	-1.45	-.39	.39
Item 3	3.79	.09	1.11	1.22	-.81	.20	-4.06*	-.07	.39
Item 4	3.54	.11	1.30	1.68	-.44	.20	-2.20*	-1.08	.39
Item 5	4.33	.06	.67	.45	-.50	.20	-2.50*	-.75	.39
Item 6	4.15	.07	.84	.71	-.85	.20	-4.25*	.21	.39
Item 7	3.72	.08	.96	.92	-.24	.20	-1.20	-.68	.39
Item 8R	2.51	.09	1.08	1.16	.25	.20	1.25	-.76	.39
Item 9	3.40	.08	1.03	1.05	-.10	.20	-0.50	-.59	.39

Item 10	4.05	.07	.90	.81	-.67	.20	-3.35*	-.33	.39
Item 11	4.21	.06	.77	.60	-.73	.20	-3.65*	.10	.39
Item 12	3.33	.10	1.20	1.45	-.31	.20	-1.55	-.94	.39

Notes.  $N = 149$ .  $\alpha = .82$ . *SES* = Standard Error of Skewness, *SEK* = Standard Error of Kurtosis.

\* $p < .05$ .

After identifying multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distance;  $\chi^2 (11, N = 149) = 31.26$   $p = .001$ ) six outliers were removed. After removing these cases, 143 participants remained.

Previous research (Thurman, 2008) revealed that the items for the survey loaded onto two factors. Eight items, Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11, loaded more consistently across all nine treatments into the *Task Interest* dependent variable, and Items 3, 4, 8 (reverse-coded), and 12 loaded more consistently across all nine treatments into the *Task Self-efficacy* dependent variable.

Next, the data were prepared for final statistical analysis. First, the items with the original item scores that comprised each factor were copied from the original file and pasted into a new SPSS file only for that variable (e.g., *Task Interest*) for that treatment (e.g., no choice of topic). For *Task Self-efficacy*, a reverse coded version of Item 8 was used.

Then, these files were prepared for use in Winsteps (Linacre, 2007), a computer program that analyzes data according to the principles of Rasch analysis (Rasch, 1960). This model, according to Bond and Fox (2001), transforms raw data into equal-interval scales through log transformations of raw data odds and probabilistic equations (p. 7). Through this, the measure of a person is separated from the scale to which he or she is

measured. The person measure, called the ability estimate, is reported in logits. The entire sample is placed on a logit scale, which is an interval scale where the interval between two and three, for example, is the same distance as that between three and four.

Tables 3 and 4 detail the descriptive statistics according to the different levels of choice before the data analysis was commenced. The Rasch Item Reliability (RIR) estimate is analogous to the KR-20 or the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for assessing reliability, but, according to Linacre (1997), it is more conservative and less misleading. A low estimate may indicate that a larger sample from the population is needed.<sup>3</sup>

There is an indication in Table 3 for *Task Interest* that the mean for the limited choice treatment is greater than the mean for the no choice of topic ( $M = 62.54$  and  $M = 60.58$  respectively), possibly supporting the hypothesis. However, the reverse is indicated in Table 4 for *Task Self-efficacy* with the mean for the no choice of topic greater than the mean for the limited choice of topic ( $M = 57.30$  and  $M = 53.96$  respectively). This result was not predicted in the hypothesis. Figure 1 below the tables shows these results in a graphical format.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Task Interest*

Treatment	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% Con. Int. <sup>a</sup>		<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Max</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>S</i> <sup>d</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>e</sup>	<i>RIR</i> <sup>f</sup>
			Low	High						
No Choice	60.58	1.21	58.18	62.98	14.47	34	100	.85	.72	.86
Limited Choice	62.54	1.44	59.69	65.38	17.17	24	100	.51	.07	.89

<sup>a</sup> 95% Confidence Interval. <sup>b</sup> Minimum. <sup>c</sup> Maximum. <sup>d</sup> Skewness. <sup>e</sup> Kurtosis. <sup>f</sup> Rasch Item Reliability.

$N = 143$ .  $SES = .20$ .  $SEK = .40$ .

**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics for Task Self-efficacy*

Treatment	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% <i>Con. Int.</i> <sup>a</sup>		<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Max</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>S</i> <sup>d</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>e</sup>	<i>RIR</i> <sup>f</sup>
			Low	High						
No Choice	57.30	1.30	54.72	59.87	15.51	0	100	-.35	1.64	.98
Limited Choice	53.96	1.20	51.59	56.32	14.25	0	100	-.56	2.53	.98

<sup>a</sup> 95% Confidence Interval. <sup>b</sup> Minimum. <sup>c</sup> Maximum. <sup>d</sup> Skewness. <sup>e</sup> Kurtosis. <sup>f</sup> Rasch Item Reliability.

*N* = 143. *SES* = .20. *SEK* = .40.

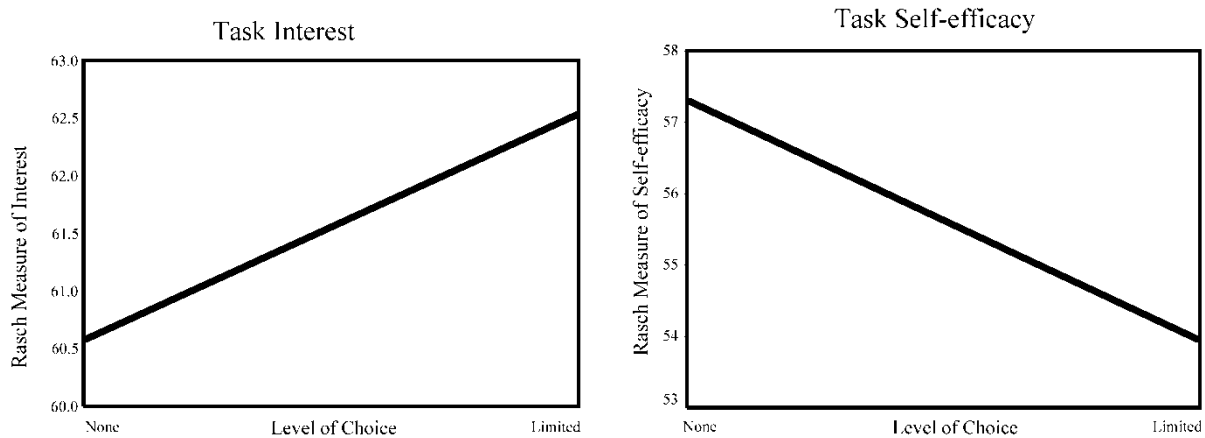


Figure 1. Task Interest (left) and Task Self-efficacy (right) for each level of choice.

Each variable was then applied to separate *t*-tests. To correct for the number of comparisons in Study 1, interactions at the  $p < .025$  ( $.05/2$ ) significance level were considered statistically significant. In addition, Cohen's *d* measure of effect size was calculated by dividing the difference of the means by the standard deviation of the difference of the means. According to Kotrlik and Williams (2003), a Cohen's *d* score of over .20 would indicate a small effect size, a score of over .50 would indicate a medium effect size, and a score or .80 or more indicates a large effect size.

Table 5 below shows the results for the *t*-test analysis for the *Task Interest* and *Task Self-efficacy* dependent variables. The test for differences for the *Task Interest* variable was not significant, but there was a trend towards greater interest in conducting the task when choice was available. Contrarily, the results for *Task Self-efficacy* were in the direction opposite to the hypothesis to a statistically significant degree.

**Table 5**

*Between-subjects Differences for the Task Interest and Task Self-efficacy Variables*

	<i>No Choice</i>		<i>Limited Choice</i>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (142)	<i>d</i>
<i>Task Interest</i>	60.58	1.21	62.54	1.44	-1.79 (ns)	.15
<i>Task Self-efficacy</i>	57.30	1.30	53.96	1.20	2.56*	.21

\* $p < .025$

## ***Study 2***

The next study in this research is a comparison of the time (in seconds) the participants utilized to complete the entire task and then to examine the differences in oral production during the two task sessions.

By the end of the data collection sessions, 37 (or 74 individual) pairs of participants had participated in both of the data collection sessions. The production data are of both participants in the pair combined. The number of participants for this study was much lower than those for Study 1, even though the data were collected from the same pool of participants, because the same participants had to attend both treatment sessions as well

as be paired with the same person. It was often the case that one of the pair was absent, removing the entire pair from any further analysis.

### ***Time on Task Data Results***

*Time on Task* is an accepted measure of intrinsic motivation (e.g., Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) with the assumption that the more time a participant utilizes to complete a task possibly indicates more intrinsic motivation. Table 6 contains the descriptive results of the two treatments. According to the results, the participants in the limited choice of topic treatment session utilized 43 more seconds to complete the task compared to session where the same participants when they conducted the task in the no choice of topic treatment. Figure 2 below the table shows this result in a graphical format.

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics for Time on Task (seconds)*

Treatment	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% <i>Con. Int.</i> <sup>a</sup>		<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Max</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>S</i> <sup>d</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>e</sup>
			Low	High					
No Choice	207	9.36	188	226	56.96	75	349	.25	.36
Limited Choice	250	12.04	225	274	73.23	120	388	.35	-.99

<sup>a</sup> 95% Confidence Interval. <sup>b</sup> Minimum. <sup>c</sup> Maximum. <sup>d</sup> Skewness. <sup>e</sup> Kurtosis.

*N* = 37. *SES* = .39. *SEK* = .76.

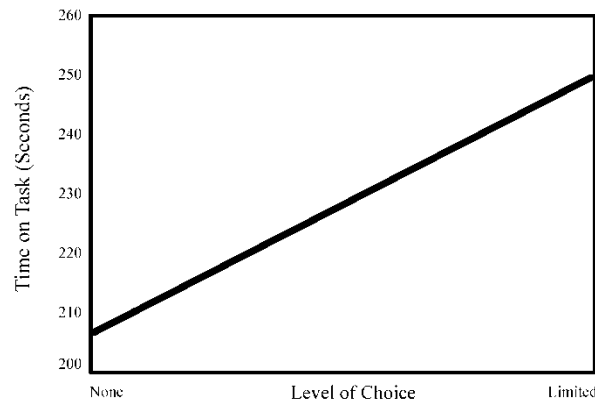


Figure 2. *Time on Task* (seconds) for each level of choice.

A single *t*-test was used to examine the differences between the two treatments. Because there was a single treatment, there was no need to correct for the number of analyses in this study and an interaction at the  $p < .05$  significance level was considered statistically significant. In this case, the differences between the two treatments was statistically significant ( $M_{diff} = 43.05$ ,  $SD = 62.34$ ,  $t(36) = 4.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .70$ ).

### ***Oral Production Data Results***

As stated previously, there are three dependent variables for this section of Study 2; *Accuracy*, *Complexity*, and *Fluency*. *Accuracy* was operationalized as the ratio of error-free clauses (EFC). *Complexity* was operationalized as type-token ratio (TTR), and *Fluency* was operationalized as total word count for the selected portion of the transcript (WC).

Tables 7 and 8 show the descriptive statistics for the no and limited choice of task topic treatments. A cursory examination indicates that *Accuracy* (ratio of error-free clauses (EFC)) was not greater for the limited choice of task topic treatment than for the no



choice treatment. However, *Complexity* (type-token ratio (TTR)) and *Fluency* (word count (WC)) showed increases in the limited choice of topic treatment compared to the no choice of topic treatment. Although the decrease in *Accuracy* was not hypothesized, *Complexity* and *Fluency* were hypothesized to increase for the limited choice of topic treatment. Figure 3 below the tables shows these results in a graphical format.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics for No Choice of Topic*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% <i>Con. Int.</i> <sup>a</sup>		<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Max</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>S</i> <sup>d</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>e</sup>
			Low	High					
EFC	.66	.06	.54	.78	.37	.00	1.00	-.61	-1.15
TTR	.37	.01	.35	.39	.06	.24	.56	.72	1.67
WC	73.81	3.59	66.54	81.08	21.81	40	145	1.12	2.29

<sup>a</sup> 95% Confidence Interval. <sup>b</sup> Minimum. <sup>c</sup> Maximum. <sup>d</sup> Skewness. <sup>e</sup> Kurtosis.  
*N* = 37. *SES* = .39. *SEK* = .76.

**Table 8**

*Descriptive Statistics for Limited Choice of Topic*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SEM</i>	95% <i>Con. Int.</i> <sup>a</sup>		<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>Max</i> <sup>c</sup>	<i>S</i> <sup>d</sup>	<i>K</i> <sup>e</sup>
			Low	High					
EFC	.35	.04	.27	.43	.23	.00	.78	.24	-.90
TTR	.41	.01	.38	.44	.09	.26	.63	.35	-.34
WC	78.95	3.88	71.08	86.81	23.59	32	123	.26	-.66

<sup>a</sup> 95% Confidence Interval. <sup>b</sup> Minimum. <sup>c</sup> Maximum. <sup>d</sup> Skewness. <sup>e</sup> Kurtosis.  
*N* = 37. *SES* = .39. *SEK* = .76.

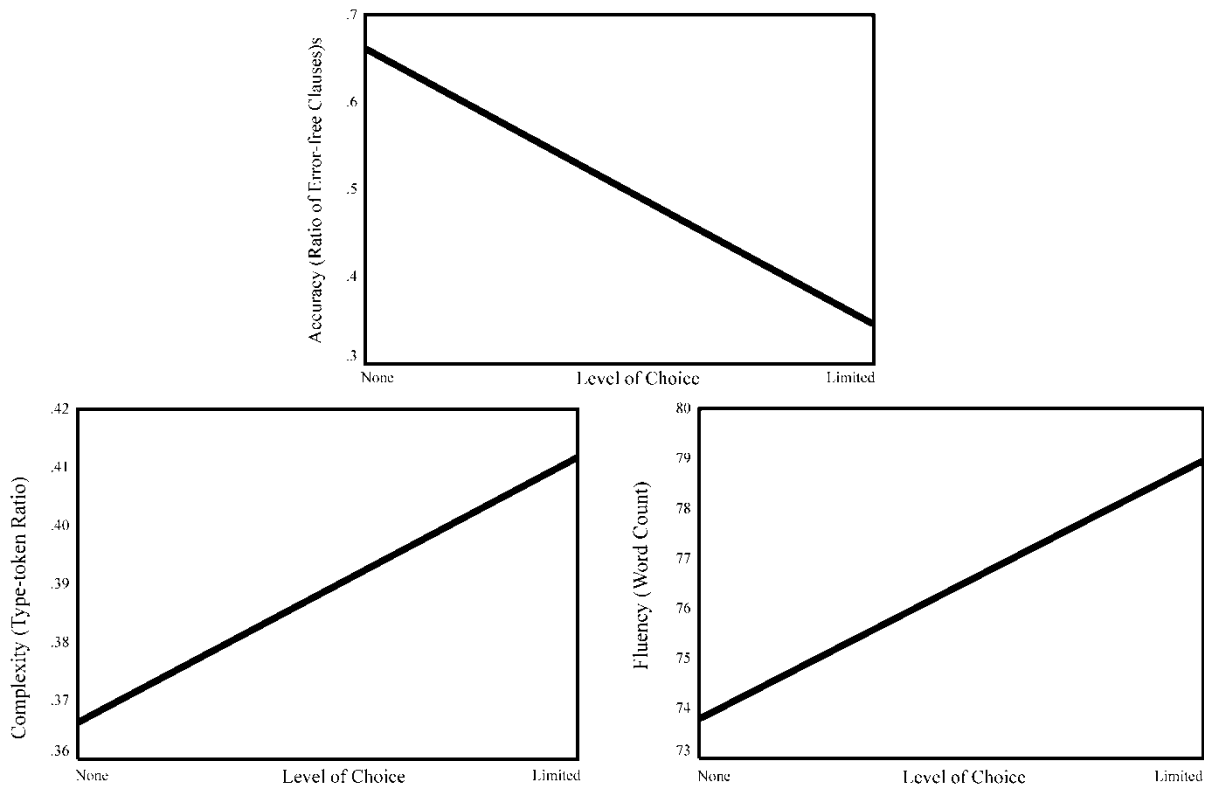


Figure 3. Accuracy (top), Complexity (bottom left), and Fluency (bottom right) for each level of choice.

Next, each variable was then applied to separate *t*-tests. To correct for the number of comparisons, interactions at the  $p < .017$  (.05/3) significance level were considered statistically significant. Table 9 below shows the results for the *t*-test analysis for the three dependent variables in this study. The test for differences for the *Fluency* variable was not significant. However, there was a statistically significant greater increase of *Complexity* in conducting the task when choice was available but there was statistically significant less *Accuracy* when choice was introduced.

**Table 9***Between-subjects Differences for Accuracy, Complexity, and Fluency*

	<i>No Choice</i>		<i>Limited Choice</i>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (36)	<i>d</i>
<i>Accuracy (EFC)</i>	.66	.37	.35	.23	3.77*	.62
<i>Complexity (TTR)</i>	.37	.06	.41	.01	-3.64*	.63
<i>Fluency (WC)</i>	73.81	21.81	78.95	23.59	-1.76 (ns)	.29

\* $p < .017$ **Discussion**

Regarding the research questions and the hypotheses related to them, some of the hypotheses were supported and some were not. For Study 1, although *Task Interest* had an increase, it was not statistically significant. In addition, *Task Self-efficacy* had a statistically significant decrease for the limited choice of topic treatment compared to the no choice of topic treatment. In Study 1, the hypotheses were not supported for either variable.

In the construct of self-efficacy, anxiety is an important component. The effects of choice on anxiety is an important issue in this case as language learning anxiety is one of the key individual differences that participants bring to the foreign language classroom (e.g., Horowitz, Horowitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre, 1998). MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément (1997) found that when anxiety was low, the quality of the participants' speaking performance improved and the participants felt more proficient when they felt less anxious. For the no choice of topic group, *Task Self-efficacy* was greater than for the limited choice of topic group, possibly because of a negative influence caused by the

combination of the presence of choice and limited proficiency. As Burger (1987) wrote, there is some degree of pressure on the one doing the choosing when choice is introduced (the survey data were taken from the participant of the pair who made the topic choice), and this may lead to increased anxiety. This anxiety may be reduced when choice of a topic is *not* a part of the task implementation, and this lessening of anxiety may increase feelings of *Task Self-efficacy*. These results may possibly be used to support the assumptions in studies by Iyengar and colleagues (Iyengar & De Voe, 2003; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999, 2002; Iyengar, Lepper, & Ross, 1999; Sethi, 1997)

The participants for Study 2 were taken from the same pool as those in Study 1, using the same tasks implemented in the same way. Therefore, I believe that the tasks for these two treatments are very similar and therefore comparable. As the results show, the hypothesis for *Time on Task* was supported. As I wrote previously, the time participants use to complete a task is a common measure of intrinsic motivation. This measurement was used as a dependent measure operationalized for choice for university participants in Zuckerman et al (1978) as well as children, as in Cordova and Lepper (1996), Iyengar and Lepper (1999), and Sethi (1997). In each case, when participants utilized more time, a greater level of intrinsic motivation was indicated. This was the result in this study as well. *Time on Task* had a strong effect size ( $d = .70$ ) indicating a more definite relationship between the introduction of choice and intrinsic motivation while conducting the task.

*Accuracy* had a statistically significant greater level for the no choice of topic treatment than for the limited choice of topic treatment. The participants may have been unable to mobilize their linguistic resources (e.g., morpho-syntactic, collocational, and pragmatic knowledge) to a degree that was high enough to increase the accuracy of their spoken

output compared to when there was no choice of topic. Thus, the introduction of choice had no positive effect on spoken accuracy.

Next, *Complexity* was significantly greater for the limited choice of topic than for the no choice of topic. The reason that *Complexity* increased when choice was introduced may stem from an increased utilization of attentional resources in the limited choice treatment. In the psychological literature, Dember et al. (1992) found that participants were more vigilant (in detecting bar flashes on a computer screen) when they were told that they had a choice of a difficult or easy task compared to those who had no choice of the difficulty of the task. Vigilance requires a high level of attention. In this study, if the participants were paying attention more closely when engaging in a self-selected task, they may have monitored the language forms in their output more carefully. As noted above, Dember et al. (1992) found that their participants were more vigilant when they were told that they had a choice of a difficult or easy task. Therefore, the attentional resources of the participants may have been stimulated to some degree towards improving lexical complexity when they had choice in this study.

The allocation of attention is vital for increased complexity in oral output. Derryberry and Tucker (1994) made a strong case for the connection between motivation and the allocation of attention. In their paper, they claimed that “motivational processes recruit attentional mechanisms to adaptively regulate perceptual and conceptual processes” (p. 168). In this case, motivational processes in part control attention, which can influence the direction (spotlight) and breadth (zoom lens) of attention. The breadth of attention is the working memory, which, according to Robinson (2001a), is important in the learning of a second language. Derryberry and Tucker also stated that attention to local features requires left-brain usage but that attention to global features requires the right-brain.

However, anxiety can enhance left-brain processing, bringing attention to local features, which may not meet the needs of the task. A recent definition of a task (Samuda & Bygate, 2008) includes a holistic dimension, which attention to local features may not augment. According to Stotland and Blumenthal (1964), on the other hand, anxiety can be reduced by choice, perhaps matching the needs of the task.

In summary, spoken *Complexity* was positively influenced by choice to a significant degree. The finding that choice affected complexity, which requires a manipulation of cognitive resources, is unique to this study. There was, in addition, a large effect size ( $d = .63$ ) in the positive direction. This result may be guidance for the optimistic use of choice in the task implementation stage in the classroom.

Lastly, *Fluency* was greater for the limited choice of topic treatment than for the no choice of topic treatment, although not to a statistically significant degree. Affective factors may have exerted an effect on the increase in *Fluency*. A higher level of *Task Interest* when choice was available in conducting the task may have influenced the total number of words that the participants produced when conducting the task. In addition, Kormos and Dörnyei (2004) found that the learners with positive task attitudes displayed statistically significant correlations between willingness to communicate and the number of words produced ( $r = .93$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a measure of fluency also used in this study. Interest and willingness to communicate are possible determinants of various aspects of task performance and when choice is available, *Task Interest* and participants' willingness to communicate may increase and this in turn may positively influence linguistic variables such as spoken fluency.

## Conclusion

In this study, choice seemed to be a factor in increasing participants' interest in the task, in increasing participants' complex and fluent output, as well as increasing participants' intrinsic motivation in completing the task. The results are mixed in this study, but some conclusions can be offered. I am much more optimistic with the results of Study 2 as a gauge of participants' affect when conducting the task and its connection with their oral production.

In the case of *Time on Task*, there were definite increases of intrinsic motivation with the simple introduction of choice in the implementation of the task. An implication of this result is not just that participants' exhibit more intrinsic motivation by the introduction of choice, which has been shown in many studies, but there is also the implication that, contrary to studies by Iyengar (Iyengar & De Voe, 2003; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999, 2002; Iyengar, Lepper, & Ross, 1999; Sethi, 1997), who claimed that children from Asian cultures do not value the concept of choice very highly, exhibit little or no increase in motivation, and will sometimes defer the choice to a caretaker or a friend when choice is introduced via a task; however, an implication of this study is that mature teenage Asian participants in Asia value choice and when choice is presented to these participants, greater intrinsic motivation is likely to result. So, while results of Study 1 may support the assumptions of studies by Iyengar and colleagues, the results of Study 2 are different from those assumptions. In this case, there is more relativity because this study used the same method of assessment of intrinsic motivation, time on task, as Iyengar.

In addition, when choice was introduced before the task was implemented, the participants were more lexically complex in their oral output. I believe that there may be two implications from this result. First, as stated previously, increasing complexity

indicates change and development in the interlanguage system and is based on the ability of learners to take risks, use more syntactically complex language, and use more language subsystems with the possibility that such language may not be controlled effectively. In terms of language acquisition, complexity is very important. With increased complexity, participants may affect more changes in their interlanguage, possibly increasing their acquisition of the language. Complexity in oral output in the task-based language teaching environment is seen as important enough that an entire colloquium at the AILA conference in 2008, was centered on the importance of complexity in task-based language teaching. In addition, researchers such as Robinson (1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2007) and Skehan (1998, 2007) center their concepts of language acquisition on increased complexity.

Many teachers desire increased complexity in the oral output of their students. However, Robinson (2001a) stated that more complex tasks are more difficult; therefore some teachers may not wish to increase complexity through task design if it would increase the task's difficulty and cause a demotivating affect. However, through choice, complexity can be increased with no loss to intrinsic motivation and with the provision of choice, even relatively difficult tasks may not adversely affect students' intrinsic motivation.

In this study, the results indicated that choice is a viable procedure to implement previous to conducting lessons utilizing tasks based on task-based language learning guidelines. In the future, by incorporating more types of tasks (i.e., narrative tasks) and to eliminate some of the limitations of this study (i.e., using type-token ratio to assess complexity) by including more methods of assessment (i.e., turns, words per turn, dependent clauses per T-unit, and others to assess complexity), a stronger relation of



choice to affect and oral output may be revealed to build a better foundation for curriculum design.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is a very commonly used statistic, but it has one weakness in that it is influenced by text length: the shorter the text is, the higher the ratio is likely to be (e.g., Malvern & Richards, 1997; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). The final figure depends on what is counted as a word.

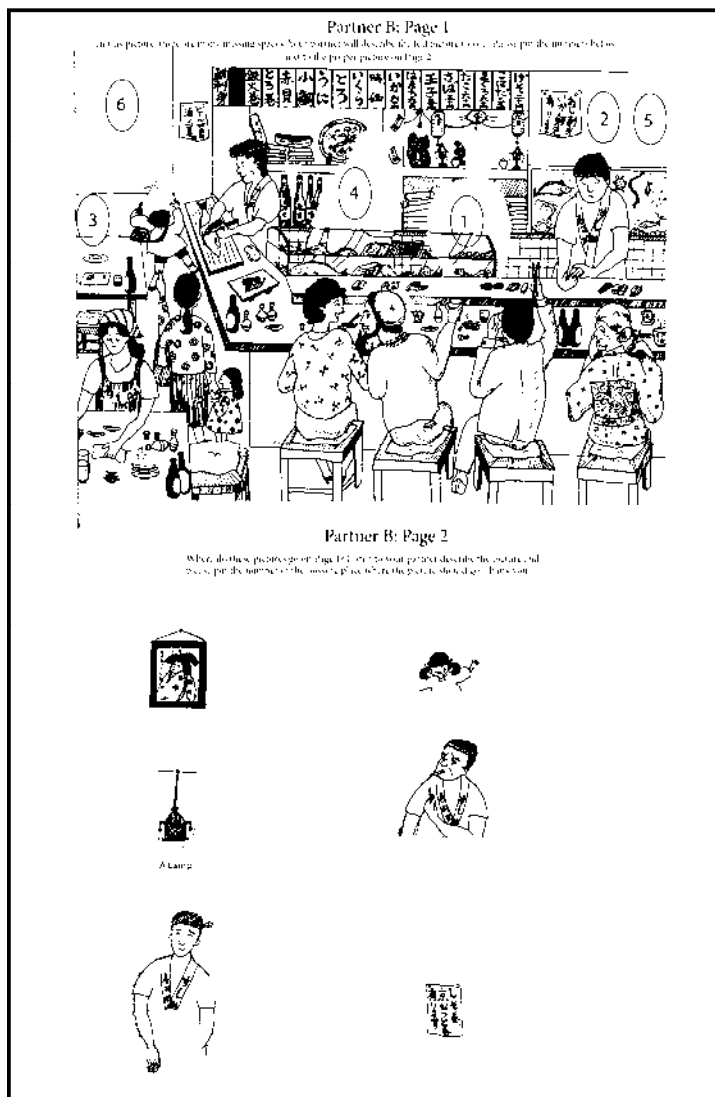
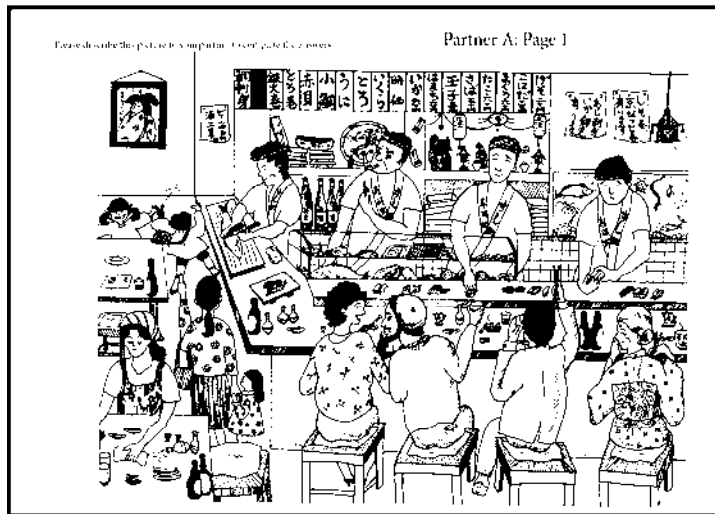


This method of assessing output has a long history in both first and second or foreign language situations (Johnson, 1944; Wolfe-Quintero et al. 1998). In addition, as Samuda (2001) has shown, low proficiency learners often overcome communication difficulties lexically rather than grammatically. Only when a form has been explicitly taught, in the case of Samuda's research, will the learner start to utilize grammatical knowledge. Considering the proficiency level of the participants in this study, the use of the type-token ratio to gauge complexity was considered appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> The procedures for calculating the transcript data for Study 2 are detailed and complicated. For an in-depth explanation of the methods used for calculating oral production data (as well as reasons why some other methods were not utilized) in addition to a great amount of detailed examples, the reader is advised to consult Thurman (2008), pages 89 to 97 and pages 290 to 326.

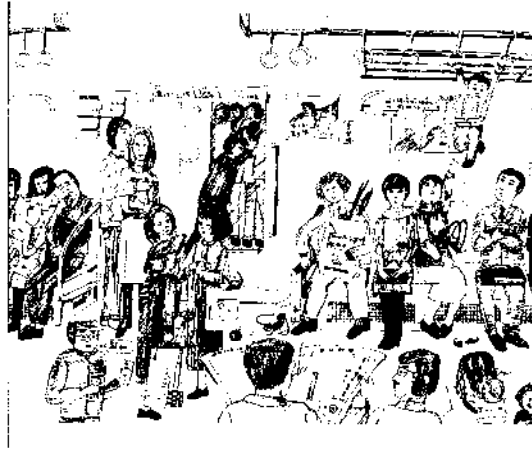
<sup>3</sup> The results of the reliability analysis of the items in each factor using Cronbach's alpha are as follows: *Task Interest*:  $\alpha = .83$  for the no choice of topic treatment, and  $\alpha = .88$  for the limited choice of topic treatment; *Task Self-efficacy*:  $\alpha = .79$  for the no choice of topic treatment, and  $\alpha = .74$  for the limited choice of topic treatment.

**Appendix A** Example of Descriptive Task (no choice of topic, second round task)  
(Nicholson & Sakuno, 1982, p. 25)



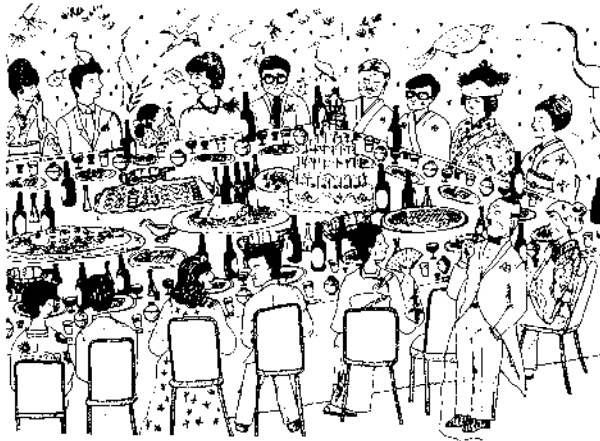
## Appendix B Example of Paper used for Choice Session

Please choose a scene that you would like to do for this exercise. Please put your student number next to the picture you choose.



1) 学籍番号:

A Train Scene  
(chosen by 26 pairs)



2) 学籍番号:

A Wedding Party Scene  
(chosen by 8 pairs)



3) 学籍番号:

A Temple Scene  
(chosen by 6 pairs)

## Appendix C: After-Task Survey

### タスク行った後の質問

あなたの考えを最もよく表す言葉を選んでください。

この調査は授業評価には関係ありません。

(An after-task survey.)

(Please choose a response that best explains  
your thinking.)

(This survey has no connection with grading.)

(I do not think so at all = 1)

(If I were to say, I do not think so = 2)

(I can not say either way = 3)

(If I had to say, I think so = 4)

(That is {exactly} what I think = 5)

全くそう思わない。= 1

どちらかといえばそう思わない。= 2

どちらとも言えない。= 3

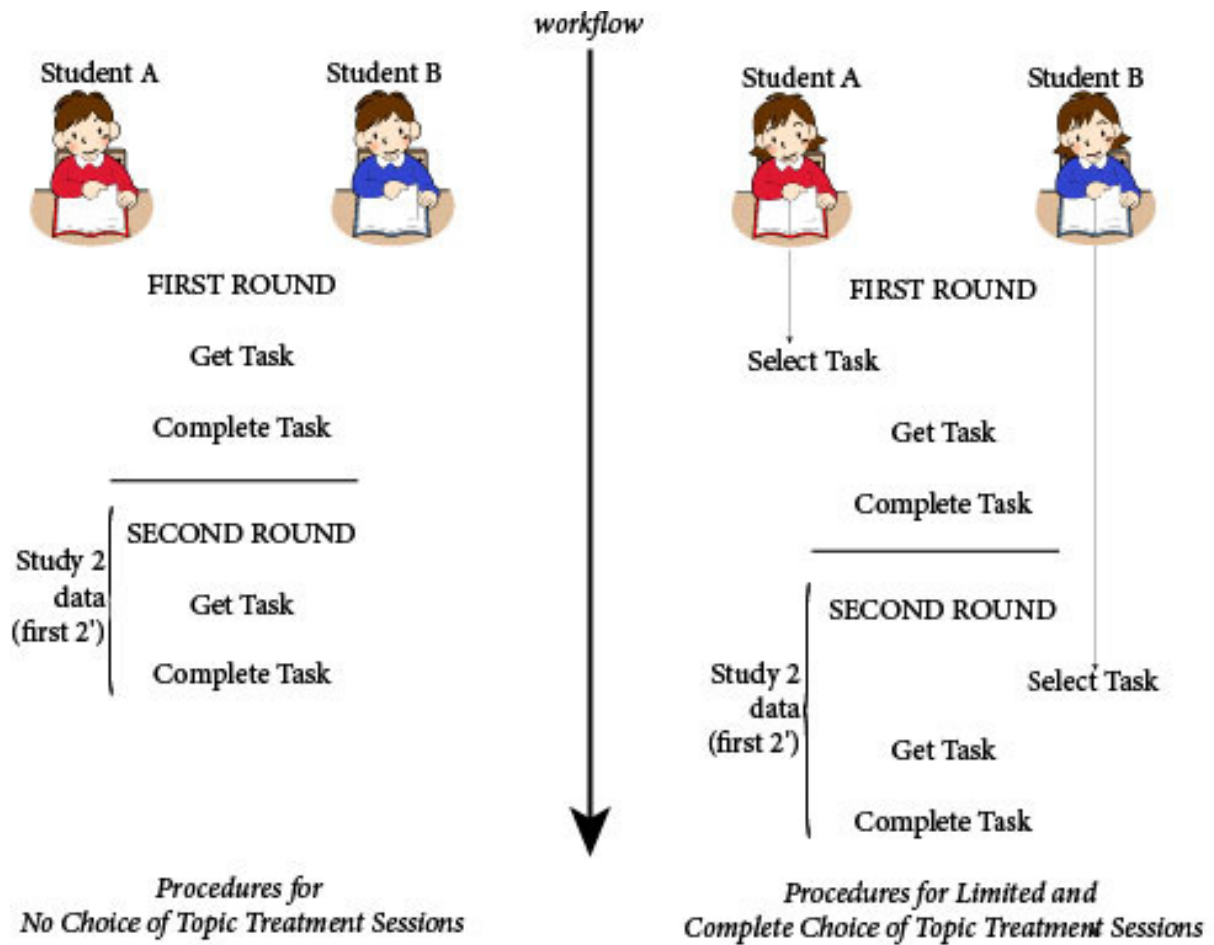
どちらかといえばそう思う。= 4

その通りだと思う。= 5

1. 私はこのタスクを楽しんで行った。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I liked this task. (original item))
2. 私はこのタスクから何かを学んだことができた。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I learned from this task. (Julkunen, 1989))
3. 私は自分の気持ちを自由にパートナーと話すことができたと思う。... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I told my feelings to my partner while doing this task. (Takashima, 2000))
4. 私は不自然な沈黙なしにパートナーと話すことができたと思う。... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I talked with my partner without undue silence. (Takashima, 2000))
5. 私は、自分のパートナーと協力できたと思う。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I cooperated with my partner while doing this task. (Takashima, 2000))
6. 私はこのタスクが楽しむことができた。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I enjoyed doing this task. (original item))
7. 私はこのようなタスクをもっと行いたい。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I want to do more tasks like this. (Robinson, 2001b))
8. 私にとってこのタスクは難しかった。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(This task was difficult. (Julkunen, 1989))
9. 私はこのタスクにたくさんの時間を使ったと思う。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I used a lot of time doing this task. (Julkunen, 1989))
10. 私は全力を尽くしてこのタスクをやりとおすことができたと思う。... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I did the task to the best of my ability. (Julkunen, 1989))
11. 私はこのタスクに集中した。..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I was able to concentrate while doing this task. (Julkunen, 1989))
12. 私は自分のできばえに満足している..... 1 2 3 4 5  
(I am satisfied with my performance doing this task. (Julkunen, 1989))

ご協力ありがとうございます。  
(I thank you for your cooperation)

## Appendix D Procedures Diagram



## **The Role of Source Text Translation in a Simulated Summary Writing Test: What Do Test Takers Say?**

**Weiying Wang**

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### **Bio Data:**

Weiying Wang received her Ph.D. degree from Michigan State University in 2009 and is currently teaching at the Department of English, Xiangtan University, Hunan, China. Her major research interest is form-focused L2 instruction.

### **Abstract**

This paper reports on a small-scale study which examined test takers' perceptions of the role of source text translation in a simulated summary writing test. Three Chinese learners of English who were living in the United States took a test which required them to summarize a Chinese text, their first language, into English, their second language. A telephone interview was then conducted with each participant. Analysis of the interview comments revealed that while two of the participants tried to avoid directly translating the original text in the writing process, one participant used source text translation as the major strategy. Accordingly, the test assessed either more of their writing skill or more of their translation skill. This result suggests that summary writing based on an article in a test takers' first language may not always fully assess test takers' writing ability.

**Keywords:** Summary writing, source text translation, test-taker perception

## **Introduction**

As an important language skill, writing has always been an integral part of English as a foreign language tests in China (Hu, 1999). Most, if not all, major standardized English tests such as College English Test (CET) and the Test for English Majors (TEM) include a writing component. With the objective to assess test takers' abilities to express their ideas in a clear and coherent way in English, most of these tests expect test takers to write an essay illustrating their own ideas. An illustrative case would be the TEM, which varies the prompt each year with a thesis statement, an outline or a title (Liu and Zhang, 2004). In each case, test takers have to express their own ideas. One type of writing that has also been used in high-stakes tests but to a lesser degree is summary writing. Examples can be found in the National English Qualification Test for Medical Doctoral Candidates (NEQTMDC), a test administered annually to those who want to be admitted to a doctoral program in medicine. Unlike the writing tasks implemented in popular standardized tests, the summary writing task in NEQTMDC requires test takers to first read an article in Chinese and then write a summary of approximately 200 words in English in 50 minutes (National Medical Examination Center or NMEC, 2009). Such writing tasks differ from those in popular standardized tests in that the expected response must be based on the content of a given text in test takers' native language.

Norm-referenced tests produce information associated with the relative ordering of test takers with respect to their test performance (Glaser, 1963). In norm-referenced tests which carry high-stakes value, any incorrect inferences about subsequent candidate performance may have serious consequences for the candidate and others who have a stake in related decisions. Investigation of the defensibility of the inferences made on the basis of test performance, therefore, is an indispensable part of test development. Tests

that adopt the type of summary writing in NEQTMDC are often norm-referenced. Unfortunately, while the writing subtests of popular standardized English tests in China often receive heavy attention concerning their potential to correctly assess test takers' writing ability, summary writing tests as found in NEQTMDC are often put to use with much less caution. This is evidenced in the fact that a search in large scholarly databases like CNKI would result in a myriad of studies on the validity of CET and TEM (e.g., Gao, 2011; Yang, 1998; Zhao, 2010; Zheng, 2009; Zou, 1998) and yet none about the NEQTMDC summary writing test. On the other hand, summary writing based on an article in test takers' native language is starting to gain more popularity in the country. For instance, in the revised test syllabus of CET (Band 6), it is clearly stated that one type of writing task that may be adopted in the test is to write a summary based on an article in English or in *Chinese* (National College English Testing Committee, 2006). Moreover, summarizing an article in learners' first language into their second language is also taught in classroom settings. Ono (2011), for example, found that both his Japanese and Taiwanese participants had received training on writing an English summary based on a text in their native language. Given such circumstances, the type of summary writing in NEQTMDC merits more attention.

In summary writing adopted in NEQTMDC, the objective of the test is to assess test takers' abilities to express their own ideas in English (NMEC, 2009). However, the presence of the text in the native language might tempt test takers to simply translate the important sentences in the original text into English rather than summarize and organize the ideas in their own way. Therefore, it is possible that such summary tests assess test takers' translation skill and neglect some aspects of their writing skill. Although a lot of researchers have investigated how learners think in their native language and then



translate their ideas into the second language when writing an essay (e.g., Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Uzawa, 1996; Zhai, 2008), research on learners summarizing a text in their native language into their second language by translating sentences in the original text is hard to find. This is probably because summary writing tests based on a text in test takers' native language are not widely adopted. The present study is an attempt to investigate source text translation by analyzing test takers' reports about their writing process in a simulated summary writing test. The specific question asked is:

What is the role of source text translation in participating test takers' summary writing based on a text in their native language?

### **A Review on Writing, Summary Writing, and Translation**

Writing and translation are similar in terms of approach and features (Sager, 1994). Writing is a language skill which integrates knowledge about vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, paragraph writing, and organization of the larger discourse (He & Chen, 2004; Liu, 2003). Translation is a language skill which also involves vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics and the like. It is therefore considered by some as a form of writing (St-Pierre, 1996). Even so, the two language skills are quite different from each other. In actuality, there is a plethora of research based on the view that there is a difference between writing and translation (e.g., Bagheri & Fazel, 2011; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1996; Zhai, 2008). In general, the writer starts with what is on his mind whereas the translator starts with "someone else's words and ideas in another language" (Costa, 2008, p. 137). Both the translator and the writer may need to search for the right word to express an idea. However, while the writer can choose a word as long as it can properly express his idea, the translator has to take into account factors such as the

style of the source text and the untranslatable cultural information in the source text.

Summary writing is a special and sub-categorical type of writing. It is similar to translation in that the summary writer also strives to offer as accurately as possible the full sense of the original text (Levy, 2009). The writing is therefore also constrained by the original text. Summary writing based on the writer's native language can be even more similar to translation because the writer of such a summary also has to transfer the information in one language into another language without distorting the message of the original text. Despite such similarities, summarizing a text in the writer's native language into another language is still different from translation. First of all, to summarize is to condense lengthy sources into a concise form (Bailey, 2011). The summary writer therefore does not need to give all the detailed information in the source text. In practice, specifics such as illustrations and examples are not desirable in a summary (Wyrick, 2010). The translator, by contrast, is expected to reproduce "in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message" (Nida & Taber, 1982, p.12). He therefore cannot simply select the important information in the source text and translate it. Moreover, the summary writer has the freedom to organize his writing in his own way although he might choose to follow the way the information is presented in the original text. The translator, however, often does not have so much freedom in the effort to reproduce both the message and the style of the source language text. Furthermore, the summary writer often gives information about the original text (e.g., the name of the author, the title, the publication date, and the source) at the very beginning of his writing (Wyrick, 2010); the translator does not put such information in the body of his translation.

Given the differences between writing and translation, the two are often treated as distinct language skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes conducted in the

People's Republic of China. Accordingly, writing items and translation items are often designed as separate tasks in EFL tests. In the 2010 test syllabus of TEM (Band 8), for example, translation was designed as Part IV and writing was designed as Part V (Steering Committee of College Foreign Language Teaching, 2010). In the case of NEQTMDC, although translation and writing are sometimes put together in the same section as written tasks, the prompt and requirement for each type of test item are totally different as shown in the test syllabus (NMEC, 2009). This means that NEQTMDC developers also regard writing and translation as two different language skills. The writing task, therefore, should only test writing ability and not translation ability.

## Method

### *Participants*

Three Chinese EFL learners with different educational backgrounds living in the United States participated in the study. All were males and none had taken English as their concentration area. Table 1 shows the basic information about the participants.

**Table 1**

#### *Participant Information*

Participants	Age	Length of residence in the US	Degree earned in China	Position in China before visiting the US	Position in the US
Ding	36	6 months	M.S. in finance	Manager of a transnational corporation	Prospective M.S. student in a business school
Feng	29	1 months	Ph.D. in chemistry	Student	Newly arrived post-doctoral fellow
Yang	27	22 months	M.S. in chemistry	Student	Second year doctoral student

### ***Instrument***

Discussing approaches to test validation, Messick (1989) proposes that “We can directly probe the ways in which individuals cope with the items or tasks” (p. 6). Illustrating the cycle of test development, McNamara (2000) also suggests that test-taker feedback should be gathered in addition to trying out test materials. Messick and McNamara’s suggestions can find support in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* developed by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education (1999):

Theoretical and empirical analysis of the response process of test takers can provide evidence concerning the fit between the construct and the detailed nature of performance or response actually engaged in by examinees. (p. 12)

Drawing on the view that test-taker feedback can greatly contribute to our understanding of test construct, the present study attempts to answer the research question by test-taker interview, a method frequently used in validation studies (e.g., Dávid, 2007; Le, Gallagher, & Kupermintz, 1999; Mickan, Slater, & Gibson, 2000).

### ***Materials***

For the test, a summary writing task was adapted from a test in a NEQTMDC workbook. The prompt was essentially the same as the original: the text to be summarized was in Chinese; the expected response was an English summary of approximately 200 words; and the time limit was 50 minutes. In the original text, there were a few technical terms that might be familiar only to the medical profession. The English equivalents of these terms were provided given that what the present study’s aim was to shed light on not just

NEQTMDC summary writing, but summary writing in general, and that the original writing task was targeted at medical students whereas the participants in the present study were from other fields. For the same reason, dictionaries were allowed in the testing process.

To assess the quality of participants' writings, it was decided that the scoring rubric in the NEQTMDC writing subtest would be used. Unfortunately, the rubric was not accessible to the researcher, so a 6-5-4-3-2-1-0 point rating system (See Appendix B) was adapted from the one developed by the Florida Department of Education (2009). To suit the nature of summary writing, a major change concerning the contents of test-taker writings was made. While the Florida rubric examined whether the response focused on the topic with adequate development of supporting ideas or examples, the adapted rubric examined whether the writing product covered the key points in the original text.

To gather information about the writing process from test takers, an interview protocol was developed. The protocol covered a variety of issues. Topics most closely related to the present study consisted of:

1. participants' opinions of the writing task in the test;
2. participants' learning experience of summary writing; and
3. strategies participants used when writing the summary.

Among the topics, Number 3 directly probed into test takers' writing process. The other two questions were asked to elicit background information.

### ***Procedure***

The writing task was emailed to participants separately at their convenience. Because they did not have any information about one another, the differences in time and space

should not affect the test results. After participants sent back their writings, each piece was assessed separately by two raters following the 6-5-4-3-2-1-0 point system. Both raters had received substantive training in the CET rating sessions and both practiced assessed a sample test-taker summary from NEQTMDC according to the 6-5-4-3-2-1-0 point system before actually evaluating the summaries of the participants. After both raters had finished grading and correcting the participants' writings, the scores of each piece were compared and discussed. The final score resulted from the discussion. After the rating session, the rating rubric and the corrections the raters made on the writings were sent back to the participants. The rubric and the feedback were explained in detail to allow participants to reflect on their work and pave the way for the interview. Also, the explanation might benefit the participants by making them aware of the qualities of a good summary and what they need to improve. Finally, the researcher conducted a telephone interview with each participant. In order to reduce memory loss, the interview with each participant was conducted within 24 hours after they received the feedback. Each interview lasted 30 to 50 minutes, depending on how much each participant had to say about the questions. In addition to hand-written notes, a Sony™ voice recorder was used to record the conversation. The interview was conducted in Chinese. Participants' comments related to the present study were first transcribed in Chinese, then translated into English, and finally analyzed according to participants' opinions of the writing task in the test; their learning experience of summary writing; and the strategies they used when writing the summary.

## **Results**

Table 2 shows the results of the test. All the three pieces of writing covered the key

points in the original text and all three demonstrated a clear organizational pattern. The main differences among the three lie in word choice, sentence structures, and grammar, with Ding's writing showing more adequate word choice, a bigger variety of sentence structures and fewer grammatical mistakes than that of Feng and Yang.

**Table 2**

*Test results*

Participants	Scores	Features of writing
Ding	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers all the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• The writing has a clear organizational pattern.</li> <li>• Word choice is adequate.</li> <li>• Sentences vary somewhat in structure.</li> <li>• There are some grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
Feng	3?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers all the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• The writing has a clear organizational pattern.</li> <li>• Word choice is limited.</li> <li>• Sentences vary somewhat in structure, but many are simple.</li> <li>• There are some serious grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
Yang	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers all the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• The writing has a clear organizational pattern.</li> <li>• Word choice is somewhat adequate.</li> <li>• Sentences vary somewhat in structure, but many are simple.</li> <li>• There are many grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>

\*3?: the score is nearly 3 but not quite up to standard.

Table 3 is a summary of the three participants' answers to the interview questions. In terms of their opinions of the test task, Ding thought it was easier than tasks based on a given topic, whereas both Feng and Yang thought it was more difficult. While both Ding and Yang only learned to write English summaries based on English texts, Feng learned to write English summaries based on both Chinese texts and English texts. With respect to the strategies adopted in the writing process, Ding reported that he simply picked out the important sentences from the original text and then translated them into English. Different from Ding, neither Feng nor Yang directly or purposefully translated the sentences in the source text.

**Table 3***Summary of participants' answers to the interview questions*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Opinions of test task</b>	<b>Learning experience of summary writing</b>	<b>strategies in the writing process</b>
Ding	Easier than writing tasks based on a given topic	Learned to write English summaries based on English texts	Picked out important sentences; translated these sentences; put translated sentences together
Feng	Harder than writing tasks based on a given topic	Learned to write English summaries based on both Chinese and English texts	Highlighted key information; reorganized information; tried to avoid direct source text translation
Yang	Harder than writing tasks based on a given topic	Learned to write English summaries based on English texts	Took notes of key information; reorganized information; wrote with no purposeful source text translation

**Discussion**

The research question of the present study asked about the role of source text translation in the simulated summary writing test based on a text in test takers' native language. As can be seen from Table 3, the three participants used different strategies to handle the writing task. Accordingly, the role of source text translation varied in the writing process.

Feng did not treat the writing test as a translation task and believed that the major language skill he employed in the test was writing:

This is a writing test, not a translation test. Of course I used my writing skill! You can't just translate the original text into English, can you?  
Otherwise, your writing can't be called a summary.

As the researcher inquired about his learning experience of summary writing, Feng revealed that he had learned to write English summaries based on both English texts and Chinese texts in his doctoral program. Summarizing Chinese texts in English was equally emphasized as summarizing English texts in English because the instructor believed that many of the students taking the course would become researchers and would need to write summaries for both Chinese texts and English texts in their research career (Interview Note 12).



After talking about his learning experience, Feng continued to explain the reasons why he tried not to use direct source text translation in his writing:

The instructor insisted that we should not misunderstand summary writing for translation. Besides, translation is too difficult. You may not be able to go on when you can't find out the right English equivalent for just one word or you don't know how to translate a special expression like a pun.

So I didn't translate the text. I worked hard to say things in my own words.

In this comment, Feng indicated two reasons why he did not count on source text translation as the major strategy when writing the summary. For one thing, the instructor had told him not to misunderstand summary writing as translation. For another, he believed that translation was more difficult than writing in one's own words.

Asked if he translated anything at all, Feng hesitated:

Well, I tried not to, but I can't say I didn't at all... I can't think in English all the time, you know. But what I translated was not the original text, but my own sentences....

Although Feng tried not to directly translate the sentences in the original text, translation was still involved in his writing process. However, Feng noted that the translation he did was not about the sentences in the text to be summarized, but those created by himself. This issue was also taken up by Yang.

Like Feng, Yang reported that he did not directly translate the original text in his writing process:

Of course it is more about my writing ability. Summary writing is not supposed to be the same as a translation exercise. You should not just translate the original text. My teacher told me that.

The reason why Yang did not treat the summary writing task as a translation task was also related to what he learned from a writing course:

Actually, it was not the teacher who told me that. (Laughs). I only learned about how to summarize an English text in English, not the kind

in the test. The teacher told us again and again that we should use our own words rather than copy sentences from the original text. I guess if you directly translate the sentences in the original text, that'll be stealing too.

Different from Feng, Yang did not really learn about how to write an English summary based on a Chinese text, but he extended the write-in-your-own-words rule from summarizing an English text in English into summarizing a Chinese text in English.

Like Feng, Yang explicitly admitted that translation was involved when he was writing the summary, and the translation he did was also about his self-created sentences:

...as English is not your mother tongue and you tend to think in Chinese, there is always a translation process going on when you write in English. So translation can't be totally excluded. But overall...I didn't purposefully translate sentences from the original text. I could have translated the Chinese sentences in my own head.

Although in different words, both Feng and Yang expressed the same idea: because they sometimes thought in Chinese during the writing process, translation could not be totally avoided. In a study investigating Taiwanese college students' beliefs about and strategic use of translation in English learning, Liao (2006) found that the participants in his study generally believed that translation was inevitable in their learning process. Feng and Yang's comments echoed this view.

Different from Feng and Yang, the major strategy Ding adopted in summarizing the text was direct translation of the sentences from the original text.

Well, to be honest, I'm the lazy kind. I underlined the important sentences in the original text, and then translated them into English. It's a strategy...I did a lot of translation work in the test.

This comment shows that Ding's writing involved two major steps: to pick out the important sentences in the original text and to translate these sentences into English. In later conversations, Ding revealed that because the original text was in his native

language, the time he spent getting the key points was actually much less than the time he spent translating the sentences (Interview Note 31). The translation of the original text therefore played a vital role in his writing process.

To prove that translation is an effective way to write a summary, Ding continued:

When I was working in a transnational corporation, I wrote a lot of summaries, sometimes from English into Chinese and sometimes from Chinese into English. The first thing I did was always to pick out the topic sentences and important information. After that, all that is left to do is translation work. It worked well, I mean, always!

From the remark “all that is left to do is translation work”, it seems that to Ding, source text translation is not only *an* important strategy but also *the* important strategy when summarizing a text from one language into another.

The reason why Ding chose the translation strategy in writing the summary seemed to be closely related to his work experience. Asked about what he learned about summary writing at school, Ding responded:

I know what you are getting at. My teacher did tell us we shouldn't simply use the topic sentences in the original text and then put them together, but what I believe is not what teachers say, but what actually works.

From this comment, it can be seen that Ding was fully aware that he was supposed to use his own words when writing a summary, but his personal belief about what worked well pushed him to provide the response with direct translation of the original text.

To defend himself, Ding added:

I didn't learn about how to summarize a Chinese text into English, so I got that translation strategy by my experience. I'm not sure if that's against the rule, but you can't say I am not using my own words. When I was translating the sentences from the Chinese text, I *was* using my own words. I didn't copy anything from the original.

Ding's view resonates with experts' opinion that translating is creative writing (e.g. St-Pierre, 1996). When translating the original text, Ding *was* using his own words to re-present the ideas in the original text, not copying. However, Ding's further talk about the test task showed that although one could get a glimpse of his knowledge about vocabulary and grammar, some aspects of his writing skill were not demonstrated in his final product:

To me, this test is much easier. The original text is very well structured. I'm really bad at logic, but this time I didn't need to worry about logic. I just needed to concentrate on my language... and put the translated version of the important sentences together in the order of the original text. That's it. Done! .

In this comment, Ding acknowledged that he did not worry about logic, which he defined as how to arrange the information in a particular paragraph and how to arrange the paragraphs in the whole text (Interview Note 36). Given the text-based nature of summary writing, it is not surprising that test takers would re-present the key points mostly in the order of the original text. Nonetheless, they would still need to think about how to start the summary, how to conclude it, and how to make it a coherent and cohesive whole. Ding's comment, however, shows that his heavy reliance on source text translation could have made his real discourse organization skill invisible in his writing.

To sum up, the interview data suggest that because of their different experiences and beliefs about summary writing, the three test takers in the present study held different views about the role of source text translation in the summary writing test they took. In Feng and Yang's opinion, summarizing the Chinese text in English was different from translating the important information into English; hence direct translation should be avoided in the writing process. In Ding's opinion, however, translating the important

sentences in the original text was a good strategy to handle the task. Despite the differences in beliefs and writing strategies, all three participants used translation in the writing process. However, Ding's translation was different from that of Feng and Yang. First of all, the sentences Ding translated were from the original text while those of Feng and Yang were framed in their own mind. Secondly, while Ding's translation was an intentional strategy, the translation by Feng and Yang, as they claimed, was not purposeful.

To think further about the interview data, participants' comments point to the construct validity of the simulated summary writing test. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), construct validity "pertains to the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations that we make on the basis of test scores" (p. 38) and that in justifying the interpretations we need to provide evidence that "the test score reflects the area of language ability we want to measure, and very little else" (p. 39). In Feng and Yang's case, translating sentences from the original text was not the strategy although they did translate some of their self-made sentences into English. As shown in many researchers' discussion about the process of second language writing (e.g., Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; He, 2009; Lay, 1982; Wolfersberger, 2003), mental translation of learners' ideas in their native language into their second language is common in any type of second language writing. If we view such mental translation as a natural part of second language writing, the test scores Feng and Yang received would to a large extent reflect their writing skill, the area of language ability the test aimed to measure, and relatively little about translation, the "else" in Bachman and Palmer's statement.

Ding's case is more complicated. While the test scores showed that Ding's writing was better than that of Feng and Yang, the interview data showed that this could be the result

of his heavy reliance on the direct translation of the original text. As Ding admitted, by following the structure of the original text and doing translation work, he was able to concentrate on his language. The test was therefore easier for him than topic-based writing tasks. If asked to write an essay on a given topic, a task with no given text for him to rely on so that he could not focus only on his language, would Ding's writing be as clear as the summary? Would his word choice be as good? Would he still be able to use a bigger variety of sentence structures than Feng and Yang? Would he still make fewer grammatical mistakes than Feng and Yang? As discussed earlier, translation and writing are closely related and overlap each other in many ways, but there are still differences between the two. Given the nature of Ding's writing process, the "else" reflected in his score is not "very little", but quite a bit.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

To conclude, the test takers in the present study handled the writing task in different ways. While two of the participants tried to avoid directly translating the original text in the writing process, one participant used source text translation as the major strategy. Accordingly, the test assessed either more of their writing skill or more of their translation skill. This is a problem that threatens the construct validity of the test. This result carries important implications for both test developers and classroom practitioners.

For test developers who have designed the same type of summary writing test and similar scoring rubric, necessary measures should be taken toward the test response and the scoring rubric. For example, it may be necessary to make it clear in both the directions for test takers and the rubric for raters that direct translation of the original text would not count. By doing so, test takers would try to avoid direct source text translation

and raters would be able to make a better judgment about test takers' summary writing skill. For classroom practitioners, if they wish to teach students how to summarize a text in one language into another language, and if they want to hone students' ability to write such a summary rather than "translate" such a summary, it would help to hold in-depth classroom discussion about the role of translation in the summary writing process.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because of time and space limitations as well as various technical difficulties, this study concedes some limitations. First of all, the sample is too small. A bigger trial population might reveal more about test takers' thinking. Secondly, the study only investigated the role of source text translation through test-taker interviews. A full validation study would be much more helpful in understanding the nature of the test.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that because the scoring rubric in the NEQTMDC summary writing subtest could be different from the rubric used in the present study, and that the summary test administered in the present study was a simulated one, the findings of the present study do not necessarily mean the NEQTMDC summary writing test is invalid.

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## **APPENDIX A – Summary Writing Test**

### ***Directions:***

Read the following article, and then write a summary in English. Do NOT illustrate your personal opinions in your writing. Use a dictionary if necessary. (50 minutes)

### **挂号难、住院难、容易受骗**

(改选自《环球时报》)

### **就医三“难”**

每年，从各地到北京看病的人成千上万。可许多人到北京求医带有很大的盲目性。这种盲目性导致了很多问题，其中不了解情况误投庸医 (quack) 是最常见也是最严重的问题。

北京人民医院骨肿瘤 (bone tumor) 科主任郭卫教授说，一位来自内蒙古的骨盆肿瘤 (pelvis tumor) 病人，由于错误地认为只要是北京的医院就一定是最好的，糊里糊涂就住进了一家小医

院。结果花光了积蓄，瘤子却一点没动。“其实在当地省医院就能治，在我看过的病人中，像这样的病例 (case) 有不少。”郭教授说，这些病人满怀希望来到北京，结果却错投庸医，被骗去血汗钱事小，耽误了治疗的最佳时机才真要命。

接下来就是挂号 (register) 难。北京大医院挂号难是出了名的。外地人很少见过北京这样通宵排队挂号的“盛况”，常常心理准备不足。一天没挂上号，就要多花一天的钱，多焦虑一天，对于大多数经济并不宽裕的人来说，这简直就是一种折磨。

住院难也是一个问题。北京协和医院徐景蓁教授说，目前协和的床位已有近 2000 张，可还是无法满足需求，有些住院条压上半年都不稀奇。北京火车站一个铺盖卷，一瓶自来水等待住院的外地患者，早已成为人尽皆知的“风景”。不过，对大多数横下心来北京看病的人来说，熬到等待住院的阶段几乎已经胜利了一半，再等多久他们都会坚持。

### 专家给医院的建议

到底有多少外地人到北京看病呢？一些全国著名的大医院，每年有 60% 左右的患者都是外地人。

为什么会有这么多人到北京来看病呢？医疗水平 (the level of medical treatment) 的差异是一个首要因素。这种差异让人们到北京有了一种盲目的信任。在这些人中，有些是得了要命的大病，但也有人只是得了不太要紧的病，在地方医院看也能治好，但他们固执地认为北京治得最好。

针对这种情况，北京大学公共卫生学院胡永华院长分析说，在医疗水平的差异和患者对本地医生的不信任背后，是我国医疗资源配置 (the allocation of medical resources) 的不合理以及基层转诊制度 (local medical transfer system) 的不完善。

胡永华院长认为，现在我们缺乏有效的转诊制度，也就是医疗秩序不正确。在发达国家，从家庭医生开始，病要一级级往上看，到哪一级能治了就在哪一级停住，以免给上面的医院造成额外的负担，让最好的金字塔尖专门对付最难的病例。而我国缺乏医疗分级制度 (medical

gradation system) 和转诊制度，没有一个有效的手段来分流患者。

面对这种现实，胡永华提议，医院其实可以在院内进行分流，让一般大夫先给病人进行初步诊断，把真正的疑难病例留给权威专家。这样不但充分发挥了专家的作用，也给病人节省了时间。

### 专家对病人的忠告

专家们一致认为，抛开社会问题不谈，从患者利益出发，来北京看病一定要三思而后行。

首先，患者对当地医院和医生要足够信任。徐景蓁教授认为，其实很多地方都有非常好的医院，外地患者在进京求医前，最好能先在当地医院进行初步诊断 (diagnose)，这样不但省钱省力，还能避免盲目行动而上当受骗。

其次，如果一定要来北京看病，就要做好充分的了解和咨询，最好能有医生或者亲朋的推荐，找好了医院再来。要是实在信息不灵通，比如农村的患者，来了以后也要首先选择耳熟能详的大医院。

最后，胡永华院长提醒，患者千里迢迢来看病，面对病情和金钱的压力，本来就等不起，这时可以避开大医院繁忙的专家号，先挂普通号，使病情能得到初步的诊断，以免延误治疗时机。

## APPENDIX B – SCORING RUBRIC

Score	Descriptor
6	• The writing covers all the key points in the original text.
	• The writing has an evident organizational pattern.
	• The writing shows a mature command of language, with adequate word choice.
	• Sentences vary in structure.
	• Punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar are generally correct.

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers all the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• The writing has an organizational pattern, though lapses occur.</li> <li>• Word choice is adequate.</li> <li>• Sentences vary in structure, though some are simple.</li> <li>• Punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar are generally correct.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers most of the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• The writing has an organizational pattern, though lapses occur.</li> <li>• Word choice is adequate.</li> <li>• Sentences vary somewhat in structure, though many are simple.</li> <li>• Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are correct, but there are some grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers most of the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• An organizational pattern has been attempted, but lapses occur.</li> <li>• Word choice is adequate.</li> <li>• Sentences vary somewhat in structure, though many are simple.</li> <li>• Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are correct, but there are many grammatical mistakes.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing covers some of the key points in the original text.</li> <li>• There is little evidence of an organizational pattern.</li> <li>• Word choice is limited or immature.</li> <li>• Sentences are limited to simple constructions.</li> <li>• Frequent errors occur in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writing only covers minimum key points in the original text, and unrelated information is included.</li> <li>• No organizational pattern is evident.</li> <li>• Ideas are provided through lists, and word choice is limited or immature.</li> <li>• Frequent errors occur in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.</li> </ul>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no writing or writing is totally unrelated to the original text.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Florida Writing Assessment Program, Florida Department of Education)



## **Book Review**

*Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia.*

Muller, T., Herder, S., Adamson, J., and Brown, P. S., (Eds). London: Palgrave

MacMillan, 2012. Pp. xxiv + 301.

**Reviewed by Jim Bame**

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*Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* is an edited volume of research in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching. The book has many articles generally about teachers' and students' beliefs, program design and implementation, pedagogical and instructional approaches, and descriptions of various cultural, national and institutional contexts.

It contains twenty chapters (separated into five sections), a Contents, Preface, Index, and very complete and current References sections. The editors include a list of technical abbreviations specific to the Asian EFL context, short authors' biographies, and short introductory articles for each of the book's five sections. Theron Muller's Introduction describes the book's purposes and scope.

Section A, chapters 1-4, describes changing contexts of Asian EFL teaching. In "Teaching the new English curriculum," Xi Fang clearly describes the Chinese public primary and secondary schools and outlines the new English curriculum's (NEC) impact on instruction. Her ethnographic study analyzes teacher's perceptions, experiences, and

changes and challenges in NEC's implementation. In the second article, "Global cultures and identities," Will Baker argues that English teaching in EFL situations should offer learners ways to acquire multiple, changeable identities in English alongside their identity of first language and culture. He then outlines 12 intercultural awareness features and offers 6 ways to develop them in an example classroom in Thailand. In "Training the Pesantren," Gillian Palmer and Itje Chodidja describe a British Council funded project for twelve Islamic boarding schools in East Java, Indonesia. The 1-year project's stages, aims and purposes are described. It then discusses materials design, the pedagogical framework, and teacher development. In "Language learning styles and beliefs of EFL university students in Korea: Are they really stereotypical," Andrew Finch studies reflection journals and other activities and presents interesting findings about typical stereotypes of Korean learners.

Section B has studies about perspectives of students' and teachers' about the learning process. Fumiko Murase's "Learner autonomy in Asia" analyzes student questionnaires and teachers' interviews about opinions concerning learner autonomy in Japan. In "Thai national culture and student's behavior," Chutigarn Raktham studies classroom observations, student interviews, and students watching a short film of a British classroom and found a great diversity among them. John Adamson's "Teacher beliefs about qualifications" is a study using a free-form, 8-question interview of four Japanese and four American ex-patriot teachers to look at the diverse attitudes about levels of teachers' qualifications. In "'Reconceptualizing' self as a teacher," Rosemary Erlam and Susan Gray describe how a 4-week, pre-departure program for Malay scholarship students affects assuming identities as teachers.



Section C's articles investigate how Western methodologies have been adapted to Asian contexts. In "Strategy teaching in the Asian EFL oral classroom," Wendy Lam researches oral strategy training in a Hong Kong situation with 13- and 14-year-old students. She reports on findings used by lower proficiency with more proficient learners. Philip Shigeo Brown in "Innovating a vocabulary learning strategies program" describes a vocabulary learning program in a first-year, Japanese medical program with intermediate to high-level learners in a 13-week class. Then, Theron Muller and Mark de Boer's "Student's use of language scaffolding" examine how formulaic language scaffolding and dynamic scaffolding -- emerging from student needs -- affect language use in tasks in five, second-year Japanese high school classrooms. The next article, "Innovating EFL teaching of reading," Hongzhi Yang and Eva Bernat report on classroom observations and interviews of two teachers in a medium-sized, private university in China concerning effectiveness of reading techniques.

Section D, chapters 13-16, present investigations of young English learners. In "Curriculum innovation in ELT primary education," Yasemin Kirkgöz reports on research done with grade 4 and 5 teachers in Turkey using questionnaires, observations, and interviews. These describe curriculum goals, teaching materials, assessment procedures, and teachers' perceptions of a new government-mandated ELT curriculum. Then, Junko Matsuzaki Carreira's "Motivation to learn English in elementary school" investigates 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> graders' motivations in a private elementary school in Tokyo with Japanese instructors. In "Adapting English picture books to an EFL context," James Hall, Tomoko Yamazaki, Chohei Takahashi, and Takeru Ishigame report on research on using picture books to introduce English in meaningful ways in an elementary school in rural, northern Japan. In Chapter sixteen, "Let's speak English: Bridging the linguistic

divide,” Kirsten A. Anderson and Parvathy P. Narayanan report on activity-based learning adopted in government primary schools in poor rural areas Tamil Nadu, India.

Section E has three articles about writing in EFL contexts. The first chapter, “A fluency-first approach to EFL writing,” Steven Herder and Peter Clements describe a two-year project of a fluency-first program for grades 11 and 12 in a private Japanese girls high school. In article eighteen, Huahui Zhao’s writes “Peer feedback or teacher feedback.” In it, Zhao reports on two research questions about student and teacher feedback on writing in a Chinese university in South China. In “Assessing EFL writing: Innovations through SFL,” Toshio Hisaoka argues for the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics to make assessment criteria clearer to students in the Japanese school system.

In the book’s Epilogue, “Description and evaluation of the process of creating this book,” Theron Muller and John Adamson report on the book’s creation process and give questionnaire results. They finish by echoing the book’s Introduction by challenging teacher-researchers in Asia to share the importance of local contexts in language teaching.

This very informative book presents a clear picture of how EFL is being taught in a variety of contexts at many different levels in many, specific situations. It discusses practical ideas for classrooms and presents useful research studies. It is an accessible, excellent read for teachers in both EFL and ESL situations, graduate students, materials and course designers, and researchers. The only weakness is one of its strengths. Asia is enormous; in only nineteen articles spanning only eight countries, readers can only get a quick glimpse at the innovative teaching and research being done in Asia.

## **Book Review**

*How To Teach Writing Across The Curriculum: Ages 6-8*

2<sup>nd</sup>ed. S. Palmer. New York: Routledge, 2011. Pp. xii + 94

**Reviewed by Seyede Zahra Hashemi**

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*How to Teach Writing Across The Curriculum: Ages 6-8*, is a practical resource which equips teachers with the essential skills and materials required to teach non-fiction writing skills. It provides teachers with innovative suggestions for teaching writing skills to children. The author believes that learning to write is a “critical element in the development of children’s thinking skills” (Palmer, 2011, p. x) and that literacy “change[s] the architecture of the brain” (ibid, p. xi). The book provides the reader with:

- “techniques for using speaking and listening, drama and games to prepare for writing;
- suggestions for the use of cross-curricular learning as a basis for writing;
- planning frameworks and ‘skeletons’ to promote thinking skills;
- information on key language features of non-fiction texts;

- examples of non-fiction writing;
- guidance on the process of creating writing from ‘skeleton notes’(ibid, p.i).

In the introduction, the author discusses the differences between speaking and writing, the importance of writing, and the starting point at which writing should be learnt. The sub-skills that children require before they start writing are described and speech is referred to as a type of spontaneous, interactive activity which occurs “within a shared context” (ibid).

The book has four chapters. The first one, entitled “The two horse’s model for cross-curricular writing”, argues that before children learn how to talk you can’t teach them how to write. As the author points out, you can’t put the cart before the horse (p. 1). Two sorts of talk are mentioned as the foundations of writing: talk for learning and talk for writing. This chapter discusses four major non-fiction text types; recounts, reports, instructions, and explanations. Also, in this chapter, the author provides the reader with skeleton planning frameworks and the advantages of using such frameworks to develop children’s thinking skills. The second section of chapter one pays special attention to certain language features that characterize each text type. To familiarize children with the types of words, phrases, and sentence structures associated with different types, the author offers two practical suggestions: read examples of the text type to children using the RA-RA-RA technique (Read Aloud, Read Along, Read Alone), and use the language of writing by creating speaking frames for the sorts of sentences the children are expected to produce in their writing.

The second chapter, “Case studies”, includes four sections. In the first section, “recount writing” the author recommends using pictures or simple words on timelines to improve children’s recognition of time. In addition to developing memory skills, such visual

models can aid children's concentration ability so that they will stop worrying about what to write. In the second section of chapter two, "report text" the author introduces a spider-gram skeleton to aid in writing reports. The steps involved in making a spider-gram are summarized in the acronym BOS (Brainstorm, Organize, and Spider-gram). The reported case studies in this section show how interactive whiteboard, hoops, and BOSsing technique can be used to make the spider-gram report skeleton. Such visual aids can be very useful in producing ideas in writing reports. The third section of part two, "instruction writing", deals with making flow charts to assist children in sorting out steps involved in instruction writing. In the fourth section of part two, "explanation writing", flow charts are introduced as a useful way of writing explanations that require an understanding of cause and effect. This section provides case studies and ideas from teachers who have used explanation flowcharts, timelines, and spider-grams with their classes.

In chapter 3 of the book, "Teaching materials", the author elaborates on the four types of writing and explains the purpose, text structure, and language features of each type along with some valuable key teaching points. Recount texts which are used to "retell events in time order," are the most common type of non-fiction writing; report texts, used to "describe the characteristics of something," are usually non-chronological; instruction texts are used to "tell someone how to do or make something"; and explanation texts "explain how or why something happens". The author includes an example for each type of writing and shows how shared reading followed by shared writing can improve children's writing skills. Collaborative work is emphasized throughout the book.

Chapter 4, "Appendices", contains three sections. The author supplies the readers with some nuts and bolts of teaching writing skills in the first appendix, elaborates on shared,

guided, and independent writing in the second one, and provides some case study materials in the third. Practical suggestions in this chapter are designed to foster collaboration amongst children, as well as boost their confidence and independence in doing written work.

The main focus of the book is the significant role that speaking and listening play as a prerequisite to any writing activity. Providing opportunities for children to learn to talk before teaching them how to write and using skeleton planning frameworks as well as a timeline skeleton are crucial to the development of ideas and concepts necessary for good writing. The first chapter leaves the reader with some ambiguities which are resolved in the chapters that follow. Besides contributing to the understanding of recount, report, instruction, and explanation texts as teaching materials, the book boasts enlightening case studies, and effectively addresses teachers interested in using innovative ways to teach writing. The book's major strength lies in its comprehensive coverage providing teachers with clear guidelines along with detailed case studies. Overall, for its practical ideas, its readability, and its many examples, this book is recommended to teachers in search of innovative methods of writing.



## **Book Review**

*Pragmatics for Language Educators: A Sociolinguistic Perspective.*

Virginia LoCastro. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. xv + 331

## **Reviewed by**

**Thi-Thuy-Minh Nguyen**

*National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

*Pragmatics for Language Educators*, by V. LoCastro, provides an impressive discussion of what the study of pragmatics involves, how the different core areas of this field contribute to our understanding of language in use in today's diverse world, what implications pragmatics research has provided for second/foreign language (L2) teaching, and how data-based studies on pragmatics topics are conducted. Offering a broad perspective on pragmatics with a wealth of multilingual data for readers' examination, the book proves itself to be an excellent reference for language professionals, teachers, and students who wish to broaden their knowledge of the subject and familiarize themselves with empirical research in the field.

The book comprises four major sections with thirteen chapters, each ending with a helpful list of suggested readings, discussion questions and data analysis activities for readers' further exploration and reflection. Contents discussed throughout the book are

well informed by an ‘inclusive’ view of pragmatics that draws not only on linguistic analysis, but also on cognitive and sociolinguistic dimensions to interpret interactional meaning.

Part 1 (chapters 1-3) provides an introduction to the field of pragmatics by examining foundational concepts, principles and theories of pragmatic meaning. Chapter 1 (“Defining the territory”) settles on the definition of pragmatics, describes its scope of study and how it differs from other related areas of language study. Chapter 2 (“Principles of pragmatic meaning”) explains key concepts and terminology needed to build background knowledge of the field such as sentence and utterance meaning, intentionality and force, reference and indexicality, entailment and presupposition, inference and implicature. Chapter 3 (“Sociolinguistic theories of pragmatic meaning”) discusses four influential approaches to understanding speaker meaning, including Grice’s Cooperative Principle, preference organization, speech act theory and interactional linguistics. In addition, the author addresses the limitations of Grice’s theory and the speech act theory in accounting for interactional behavior and argues for the need to include both linguistic and non-linguistic context of utterance in the analysis of language use.

Part 2 (chapters 4-10) explores the various core areas of interest in pragmatics research and their applications to language teaching. Chapter 4 (“Cross-cultural pragmatics”) addresses cultural influences on language behavior and critically assesses communication glitches arising from clashing values and beliefs. The author helpfully points out the need for a ‘non-deficit’ view of L2 speakers’ pragmatic behavior that acknowledges linguistic and cultural diversities. Chapter 5 (“Interlanguage pragmatics”) looks into issues on developing pragmatic competence in a L2 and covers a range of topics such as learner



language characteristics, stages of pragmatic development, influences of previously acquired languages, as well as teacher-related and learner-related factors that constrain L2 pragmatic development. Chapter 6 (“Politeness”) touches upon politeness in social interaction, another aspect of pragmatic competence. The chapter provides a critical review of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness and an alternative approach offered by Watts (2003) and Locher (2004). The chapter also presents a range of instructional strategies to facilitate the teaching of politeness at different proficiency levels. Chapter 7 (“Interactional construction of identity”) discusses the enactment of identity in language use and its implications for language educators. In particular, L1 identities can affect L2 acquisition as learners often find themselves caught between conflicting L1 and L2 identities and as a result, may consciously or non-consciously seek to converge to or diverge from L2 norms. Chapter 8 (“Institutional talk”) addresses interactions that are constrained by norms of institutional settings such as oral examination contexts, doctor-patient discourse, courtroom trial discourse, and workplace communication whereas Chapter 9 (“Language, gender, and power”) focuses on the enactment of gender and power in language use. The issue of identity claims previously discussed is again picked up in these two chapters and examples from relevant research studies are examined for insights. Chapter 10 (“Classroom pragmatic development”) discusses how pragmatic competence can be fostered in classroom settings, particularly where there is little opportunity for contact with target language norms. It covers a variety of issues related to developing pragmatic competence in the globalized context, such as the role of pragmatic competence in intercultural communication, the potential of and constraints on pragmatic instruction, as well as the much-debated question of whose norms to teach, given the evolving variations in language usage and use among English-

speaking communities. The chapter concludes with recommendations for classroom teachers who wish to teach pragmatic skills both inside and beyond the classroom context. For example, it is suggested that students be given more control of classroom discourse so that they can practice interactional rules of speaking. Teachers may also consider training students for future workplace communication by including in the syllabus job interviewing skills, business letter writing and so on.

Part 3 (chapters 11-12) introduces methodologies for researching pragmatics with a view to guiding novice researchers. Chapter 11 (“Guidelines for small sociopragmatics projects”) presents important issues and procedures involved in doing research such as ethical concerns, research design, data collection and interpretation whereas Chapter 12 (“Ideas for research projects in sociopragmatics”) reviews exemplary studies to encourage readers to think about possible topics for future research.

Part 4 (Chapter 13), “Pragmatic competence in our diverse world”) concludes the book by reiterating the author’s goal and approach to studying pragmatics, as well as bringing together issues that have been discussed throughout the previous 12 chapters. The author once again emphasizes the value of researching and acquiring knowledge of pragmatics to develop a non-judgmental stance in intercultural communication.

In short, *Pragmatics for Language Educators* is a valuable addition to the field of pragmatics and language teaching. The book’s clarity of exposition and extensive use of illustrative materials makes it accessible to everyone. Particularly, the inclusion of non-Western data caters well to readers who are non-native speakers of English and allows for a balanced, unbiased perspective on human interaction. Moreover, the inclusion of reader’s hands-on tasks at the end of each chapter, as well as detailed guidelines for students’ research projects, sets the book apart from other books dealing with similar

topics. Students and instructors would find this book an engaging and thought-provoking read.

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## **Book Review**

*Planning and Teaching Creatively Within a Required Curriculum for Adult Learners.*

Anne Burns and Helen de Silva Joyce (Eds.). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2007, Pp. iv + 288.

**Reviewed by Ko-Yin Sung**

*Utah State University, Utah, USA*

In the book *Planning and teaching creatively within a required curriculum for adult learners*, Burns and de Silva Joyce illustrate examples of creative curriculum changes to current and future teachers and teacher trainers who may encounter teaching conditions in which they are asked to adapt curriculum which does not match their teaching styles or expectations. To do this, the authors present teachers' and teacher trainers' research articles on making changes to curriculum that they (the teachers) had no involvement in designing but were required to teach.

The book consists of 13 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the backgrounds of the 12 research studies in the book, including the extent to which changes were made and what prompted the changes. The scale of change made in each of the 12 study sites ranges from institutional changes, which refer to long-term changes implemented across the institution; to component changes, which affect one aspect of curriculum across the institution; and to classroom changes, which are changes limited to individual classrooms.

Chapters 2 and 3 are descriptions of two research projects involving institutional changes, both of which refer to long-term implemented institution wide changes. Chapter

2 outlines the modifications of the English course curricula in two Central Australian educational institutions. The old curricula focused on language teaching while the new one combined teaching of language and vocational competencies. The authors describe the use of a gardening project which provided ESL learners with purpose and context for learning. Chapter 3 details the development of a study skills program initially designed to improve students' learning strategies and how it flourishes and becomes a core element of the first-year basic introductory seminar at Okinawa University. The seminar originally was an introduction to the lecturer's specialization for the students, but after the change, the teaching of study skills became the focus of the first-semester seminar.

Chapters 4 to 6 focus on examples of component changes, which might be taken up more broadly across the institution. In chapter 4, the author incorporates action research as part of the required tasks for a TESOL postgraduate certificate program in Vietnam, which increases the development level of the postgraduate students' teaching skills. Chapter 5 offers an example of innovative curriculum development in which a group of elementary students and a group of international college students in Hawaii effectively and engagingly collaborate on producing children's literature. Chapter 6 describes the innovation of a highly practical learner-centered language learning project implemented for English for specific purposes courses at a Thai University.

The remainder of the book, chapters 7 to 13, focuses on changes limited to individual classrooms. Chapter 7 describes the successful use of a non-traditional textbook to improve students' literacy skills in an adult ESL class in the United States. Chapter 8 demonstrates how a new literacy project that improved the motivation of ESL students in the United States as they read a murder mystery and wrote about the historical background of the story. Chapter 9 offers ideas about how incorporating arts, music and poetry into a high-stress adult ESL classroom in the United States may enlighten language learners. Chapter 10 demonstrates a project in Japan that used students' L1 as a starting point to help them develop appropriate language use in the target language. Chapter 11 suggests that teachers should use the teaching of critical inquiry techniques, such as using self-designed interactive activities to engage ESL learners in effective and active debates. Chapter 12 shares an example of using genre approach to writing instead of a standard teaching package to enhance students' writing level in an intensive ESL

program in Cambodia. Chapter 13 provides examples of using freewriting as a way of boosting students' confidence level.

The diverse learning and teaching contexts discussed in *Planning and teaching creatively within a required curriculum for adult learners* give a wide range of successful curriculum change examples which can be easily applied to teacher-readers' teaching situations. These successful examples serve as curriculum change models for teachers who are eager to make changes to their curriculum and hungry for new ideas.



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